

Japanese Sword Society of the United States, Inc.



NEWSLETTER

The Official Bi-Monthly Publication of the Society. Membership - \$10.00 Annually

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November - December 1977

ELECTION OF DIRECTORS -

The official Ballot for the Election of Directors, for the two-year term-of-office 1978/1979, is included with the mailing of this issue of the Newsletter. The importance of your vote as a member of the society can not be over stressed. To assist in making your choice, a new format which provides some basic background on the nominees has been initiated. Give this election your serious consideration and most important - DO VOTE!

The "accumulative vote" used on the ballot this time was brought to light by one of our early members after the election of last year. The ballot explains it fully and because it is in our official records, we must offer this option. Comments on this form of voting would be appreciated and will help decide the future use of this voting practice.

1978 MEMBERSHIP DUES -

For most of our membership (those with 1/1 dates on their membership cards) annual dues for 1978 will be due as of the 1st of the year. If you are one of those members, a separate DUES NOTICE will be attached to this issue of the Newsletter. Your prompt payment and continued support of your society is appreciated.

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN -

Early in September I was able to visit the sword museum in Tokyo and talked with Dr. Homma and Dr. Sato concerning, among other things, our request that the NBTHK conduct another shinsa in the United States in 1979. Dr. Homma had taken this to the Directors and for a variety of reasons it was decided that they could not commit themselves to this and have a full shinsa team that would be up to the standards maintained in Japan. Neither Dr. Sato nor Dr. Homma are able to consider overseas travel. I have the impression that the major reason they do not want to make a commitment at this time is that both Dr. Homma, Dr. Sato and the NBTHK board of directors are very anxious to try to organize and set up an official International Sword Society to expand the activities of the NBTHK. This idea was brought out more fully at a meeting held at the annual meeting of the NBTHK at Takarazuka.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT cont'd.

At this meeting John Yumoto translated the remarks of Dr. Homma and Dr. Sato as well as the discussion that ensued from some of the directors of the NBTHK and the Americans present. One of the general goals of this seems to be to have a center in the United States where information on blades and their authenticity could be established in a preliminary way, followed by a more convenient method of transmitting them to Japan for formal shinsa and/or polishing. An International Journal to be published rather infrequently (annually) was also proposed. Although the Japanese society has been authorized to raise a considerable amount of money (over \$200,000) for this new International Society, a very real question arose as to whether or not the collectors outside Japan would be willing to support this financially, as it would be expensive.

The sword society of Japan has a relatively small group of employees and, as I will discuss a little later, they have so many activities in Japan that it is impossible for them to cope adequately with letters, requests, and receipt of swords from other areas of the world. Dr. Sato mentioned that they receive an average of ten letters a day primarily from the United States. With no staff to specifically handle this, they would be paralyzed if they tried to answer each one adequately. It was suggested that such an International Society would have additional staff to take care of these matters, handle receipt of swords for shinsa, etc.

All of the above was also discussed at a director's meeting of the JSS/US Inc., held in Chicago when the midwest Token Study Group had its annual show in October. It was decided at that time that we would still have a combined meeting in May of 1979 in Chicago. The JSS/US plans to organize an extensive display of fine blades and informative discussions and we are exploring the possibilities of providing detailed descriptive material on each blade, making this an important learning experience for those who participate. Please send in your suggestions, as this can be the start of having the JSS/US get together in a real sense in a meeting and not merely by correspondence. I know that in addition the local Token Study Group plans to have at that time much more than just the usual show, and I think we can look forward to the possibility of an exciting meeting in 1979.

(signed) Robert M. Lewert
JSS/US Chairman

Editor's comments:

As one of the JSS/US officers in attendance at the several meetings held during the TSG show in October, I would like to add a few brief comments on the subject of the 1979 event and our role as a sword society.

EDITOR'S COMMENTS cont'd.

It was stressed many times during these meetings that the role of the JSS/US during the proposed 1979 events be one of "Educator". Our reputation apparently has grown through the years and our image of educator, well established. To maintain this image, our primary functions at the 1979 activities will be to arrange a well-organized study room of swords and fittings. The intent being that when one examines the various exhibits of the room and takes the time to read the available material pertaining to each item exhibited, he will leave the room with considerably more knowledge and understanding of the sword and it's related items than when first entering the exhibit room. It will be intended as a "learning experience"!

The success of this entire affair can only be assured by the full cooperation of everyone. Assist in the success of this event by thinking unselfishly as a group and by responding to the plea of your society Chairman for feedback. Think constructively and let your suggestions and efforts work towards our success. Write your Chairman and other officers and offer your support as an active and interested JSS/US member.

THE NIPPON BIJUTSU TŌKEN HOSON KYOKAI - by Robert Lewert

A fair number of our members are also members of the Japanese Society for Preservation of Art Swords but I find that not very many of us know much about the society or the Token Haubutsukan, the Japanese sword museum. Since this is the largest and most important society of its kind, I thought it might be well to make a few brief notes, and in doing so I learned quite a few things about the society that I myself did not know.

The basic purpose of the society is to preserve Japanese art swords, not only those that are Kokuho, Juyo Bunkazai and Juyo, but all other swords that are officially registered with the Japanese government as works of artistic value. To do this they have established a permanent registry of swords classified according to their merit, and have provided a center for sword study and information on polishing, preservation and appreciation of swords. Three kinds of memberships are provided: a Futsu Kain, which is general membership; a Shushin Kain, lifetime membership; and Meiyo Kain, honorary membership. For general membership it costs 1,000 yen to join the society, plus 7,000 yen per year. I think the ¥7,000 may be raised this year to ¥9,000 or ¥10,000, although I am not sure. At ¥7,000 per year, members in the United States essentially get their monthly journal free. If you notice, it costs ¥480 to mail the journal, which is about two dollars per issue or 24 dollars a year, and your membership only costs \$28 annually. Life members are expected to make a contribution in cash for an amount of approximately ¥300,000 or a gift of a sword or art object equivalent to or more than this value. Honorary members are appointed by the Board of Directors. Once you are a member of the society, you will receive twelve issues of the Journal a year. If you deliver

NBTHK con'td.

swords to the sword museum or arrange for them to be delivered, they will take care of the registration with authorities, make contacts with appropriate artists for their repair and polishing, and will submit them for a fee to an appropriate shinsa. Most of the activities of the society and the general offices are in the Token Hakubutsukan in Yoyogi, in the Shibuya area of Tokyo. This is not a very easy place to find as it is not very close to any of the subway or rail stops, but it is well worth hunting up if you ever get the chance to visit Tokyo. The museum is a modern, four story building constructed specifically for the purpose of housing the society and was first opened in 1969. It has exceptional precautions for security and a battery of carbon dioxide tanks that serve as part of the fire prevention system.

The society, which will be 30 years old in 1978, is directed by Dr. Homma Junji (Kunzan) who is Chairman of the society and Director of the sword museum. Dr. Sato Kanichi (Kanzan) is the Executive Director of the society and the Vice-Director of the sword museum. Mr. Honnami Seiyo is the Director of General Affairs and Mr. Fukae Yasunobu is the Chief of the various officers. These include five general officers and three clerks, one polisher, and ten other employees including guards. Dr. Homma, Dr. Sato and the Board of Directors make decisions on activities of the society and the museum. The museum, which is the main headquarters, has a major shinsa four times a year and in the various chapters throughout Japan, there are 20 to 30 minor shinsas usually conducted by only two judges, one of whom is Dr. Sato. Duplicates of all origami that are granted are kept in bound volumes in a vault at the museum and are numbered serially but not indexed.

At the present time in Japan there are five honorary members, 182 life members, 9,183 general members, and about 400 student and supporting members. Outside of Japan the total membership is only 104, so you can see that we in the U.S. do not make up any major portion of this society, even though we do make extensive demands on it from time to time.

I know that many people believe that the sword museum has an extensive collection of its own because every time one goes there an entirely different display of superb blades is seen. Actually, the museum only owns outright, ten blades: one Kokuho, four Juyo Bunkazai, four Juyo Bijutsuhin, and one Tokubetsu. In addition, they have as semi-permanent loan objects 63 other blades. The display in the exhibit hall is changed every six weeks and regular seminars or training sessions for members are held in the meeting hall every second Saturday each month throughout the year. Considering the large number of activities, it is amazing that this small staff can manage the numerous meetings and shinsas, prepare all origami, and the monthly bulletin, as well as supervising the publication every year of the results of the annual Juyo shinsa and other publications that come out on frequent occasion. These include the excellent volumes of all the blades exhibited at the annual
(continued on page 9)

SATSUMA YUKIMITSU TANTŌ

Oshigata by Richard Mantegani

TYPE AND SHAPE - Late Kamakura Period tantō.
Hira-zukuri shape with shin-no-mune. The
tip is Taka-no-zori. This tantō is slim,
light and delicate in appearance.

HAMON - Hako-suguha, straight temper broken by
box-like gunome. It is done in nioi with fine
ko-nie in the gunome and arranged in and along
the sugu-ha portions of the yakiba. The boshi
is in dense ko-nie and turns back slightly
(kaen).

JIHADA - Coarse flowing itame throughout. This
tantō has been polished down over the years.
It is somewhat tired but by no means worn out.

KIZU - A small blister in open hada has appeared
in the jihada $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches below the boshi on
the omote side.

NAKAGO - Ubu although the machi have been moved
up over an inch, extending its length. Slight
taper, katesagari yasurime. Two mekugi-ana
both punched. Two character mei: YUKIMITSU.

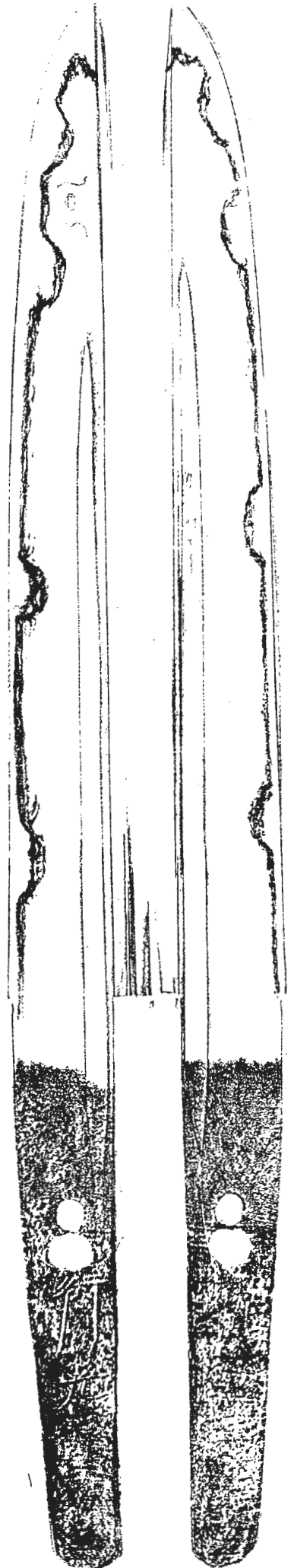
DIMENSIONS - Blade length $6\frac{3}{4}$ inches and tang
length $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

HI - koshi-hi longer on ura than omote side and
extending into the nakago slightly.

SCHOOL - Old Satsuma work.

REMARKS -

Tantō from this period and school are rare.
This is a very rare item. The smith was follow-
ing a very definite style in this work. Strong
Soshu-den influence is evident. The style of
yakiba resembles early Soshu Yukimitsu and also
Sa. This smith is not to be found in most
listings of smiths. He is unrecorded in Hawley's
volumes. The blade is a very interesting study
piece; an old scarce example of sword-art from
a famous school that reached it's peak during
the period that this tantō was produced.



MIYOSHI NAGAMICHI TACHI w/cutting test

Oshigata by Howard Sloan

SHAPE - Tachi of shinogi-zukuri form. Shinogi-ji is slightly narrow and the shinogi is raised (high). Mune is of ihore (two-sided) form and is high. The blade is of medium taper and has a medium-deep torii-zori.

HAMON - Yakiba is of wide nioi style with wide midare gunome hamon. The abundant nioi and nie becomes ara nie in the ji in places. There are patches of tobiyaki above the hamon in the monouchi area. There are strings of nie (hakikake) running through the peaks of the gunome hamon. The whole hamon is very flowery and typically Shinshinto.

JIHADA - The hada is a very tightly forged running itame (itame and masame mixed).

NAKAGO - The nakago is ubu. It is of a straight and tapered form with horizontal yasurime. The nakago-mune is slightly rounded (maru) and has slanting-left yasurime on it's surface. The tip of the nakago is uneven shape leaning towards the cutting edge (ha-agari).

BLADE LENGTH - 70.8cm (2.34 Shaku) NAKAGO LENGTH - 21.1cm (6.96)

SIGNATURE - (omote tachi-mei) To-O Kaiyo Shin Miyoshi Nagamichi
(ura)

嘉永 = 己 酉 秋

KAEI NI TSUCHINOTO TORI AKI

嘉永五年 壬 子 七 月 六 日 裁 断

KAEI GO NEN MIZUNOE NE HICHIGATSU ROKU HI SAIDAN

脇毛落 中原 初 光 一 十 九 歳 刃 而 誠 之

WAKIGE OTOSHI NAKAHARA TACHI MITSUKAZU 19 SAI HANE SHIKOSHITE KORE TAMESU

東 奥 會 陽 臣 三 善 長 道

TO O KAI YO SHIN MIYOSHI NAGAMICHI

MIYOSHI NAGAMICHI OSHIGATA



MIYOSHI NAGAMICHI cont'd.

This fine blade is enhanced by the presence of a rather colorful test inscription which, as the mei, has been simply chiseled onto the nakago (rather than kin-zogan style). It is unclear as to which Miyoshi Nagamichi this maker is, but it is either the 8th (born 1794 - died 1865) or possibly the 9th (born 1818 - died 1888). The Miyoshi Nagamichi lineage was known as the most famous Shinto smiths of Northern Japan during that period.

In summary, the inscriptions state that MIYOSHI NAGAMICHI, vassal (shin) of To-O of Kaiyo (To-O means eastern Aizu and Kaiyo is a place name in Aizu), made this blade in the 2nd year of Kaei (1849), the zodiac year-of-the-chicken. The test portion of the blade states that NAKAHARA TACHI MITSUKAZU, at age 19, as he "spread his wings" (Hane Shikoshite), tested this blade by the cut called WAKIGE OTOSHI (a position right below the arm pits), and cut the body through. The test was performed on July 6th, 1852.

Editors note: There is some confusion as to the area from which Nagamichi came from. Anyone who wishes to clarify this somewhat should feel free to do so. It is believed that the area mentioned is of Rikuoku Province at a town called Aizu, but again this is not clearly understood.

NEW BOOK AVAILABLE FROM SOCIETY -

A number of copies are still available of the French catalogue entitled, Japanese Armor in French Private Collections, by Robert Burawoy - 1977. The soft bound catalogue is 80 pages showing 140 items (70 in color) ranging from armor to swords and fittings. Although the text is in French (with Japanese index), this proves not to be any great problem in understanding the excellent picture presentations. It is very interesting to see the French taste in collecting today and the book is recommended as a worthy addition to any sword library.

Soft-bound copies are available from the society (NL Editor) at \$21US, post paid, per copy. Hard bound delux copies are available but must be ordered direct from Galerie Robert Burawoy, 12 rue Le Regrattier, 75004 Paris, France, at \$28US post paid.

HARTMAN CATALOGUE -

Although our first two supplies of this auction catalogue have sold out, a third order has been placed. They will therefore still be available from the society at \$25 per hard bound copy. A copy of both the Hartman catalogue and the French catalogue have been placed in the society library and are available for loan. Contact your Librarian if a loan is desired.

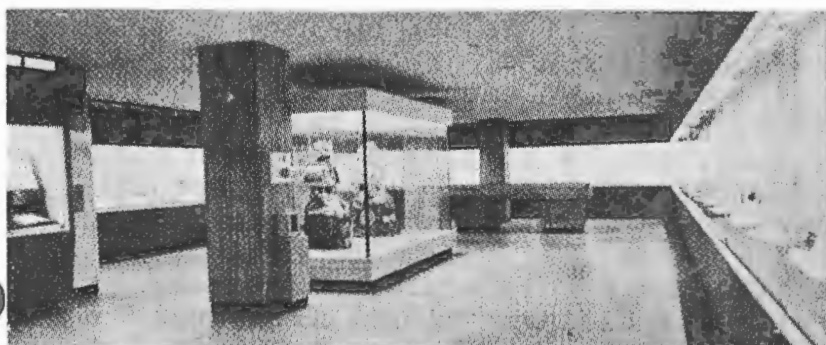
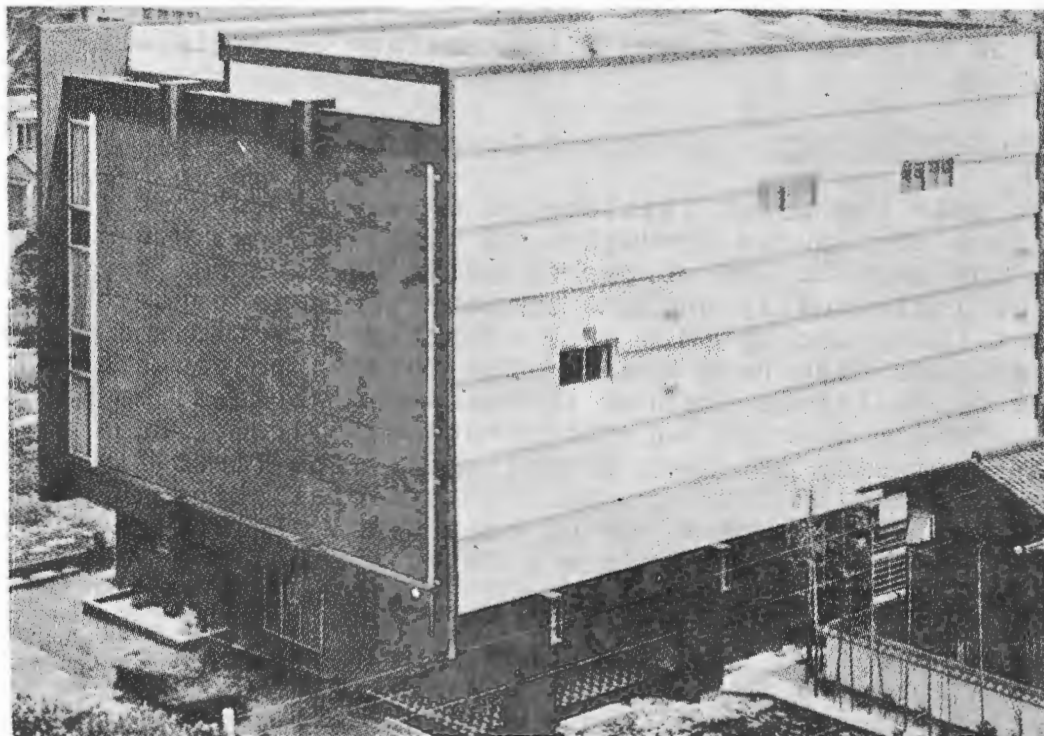
NETHK cont'd (from page 4)

meeting as well as a series of books such as the recent publication by Dr. Homma on Soshu blades and by Dr. Sato on living gendai smiths. I hope everyone somehow manages to have the opportunity to visit this remarkable establishment. Next year should be a particularly fine time to attend the annual meeting of the NBTHK. It will be held in Tokyo the third week in October and should be something special as it is the 30th anniversary of the founding of the society.

The official society address is: Nippon Bijutsu Token Hoson Kyokai c/o Token Hakubutsukan, 4-25-10 Yoyogi, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo, Japan (Telephone Tokyo 379-1386/1387).

Editor's comments:

Below, you can see a few pictures showing the sword museum. In a sense, the museum is basically a large vault built with unique storage, atmospheric and security engineering solely for the safe keeping of Japan's unique treasure swords.



NBTHK cont'd.

The most convenient payment of dues appears to be via an International Bank Draft or Check. One can easily buy such a check (in yen) from any large bank which has an International Department. Obviously, International Money Orders are available from your local Post Office, but since the Post Office actually transmits the money order (it is out of the buyer's hands), this is not nearly as safe as an international check. Do not send a check in U.S. dollars.

It may further be worthwhile to mention that our society library does have a number of the official NBTHK publication, Token Bijutsu. Anyone wishing to see an example of this excellent publication can do so simply by requesting a copy from our society Librarian, Mr. Howard Sloan. Even though most of this publication is Japanese, the excellent oshigata and pictures are well worth the cost of a membership. Visually studying the oshigata will at least teach you what a "good hamon" is all about, not to mention the benefits of seeing many examples of good signatures. The basic format of the magazine is quickly learned and the english index is also of great help.

TATARA PROJECT UPDATE - by Robert Lewert

Last year the NBTHK initiated a drive for support for the more or less continuous operation of a Tatara that would provide iron for the manufacture of swords using traditional techniques. Some of us individually and the society too have contributed modestly to support this, and by this date approximately two and a half million dollars have been spent. The Tatara project started from scratch with buildings erected to house the workers, as well as a mining operation started to concentrate sand iron; thus a small permanent community has been established. The first firing of the Tatara took place in October, but the official opening ceremony was scheduled for November 8th of this year. This ceremonial was scheduled for November 8th since this is the Bellows Festival Day of ancient Japanese tradition.

After the Tatara is constructed, three men work continuously for three nights and four days on a single firing which is called a "hitoyo". At each one of these firings, only 8 kilograms of tamahagane is produced that is usable for sword making. At the same time about 24 kilograms of other metal of lesser quality is produced that is not considered satisfactory for use. Because of the nature of the process, the Tatara is broken down each time a firing is completed. Consequently, it is probable that only two firings a month, or three at the very most, can be completed and each firing will produce quality metal for only two to four swords. Actually, Dr. Sato said that he believed there would be enough material for about 75 swords produced in the first year. I asked him how this would be distributed and he said that this would, of course, go only to the master smiths, with the Living National Treasures having first choice. Since swordsmiths are limited by law to produce no

TATARA cont'd

more than two swords a month, it is possible that quite a number may obtain small amounts of this material during the first year. I am sure that most of you will be surprised to find out what a difficult and expensive project this is, and how low the production will be. Naturally, this will be a continuous drain on the finances of the sword society and they must look for outside endowments. (although we had trouble in translation at this point) that they are trying to raise something in the neighborhood of 2 billion yen (\$8,000,000!) for continuing operations.

In talking with Dr. Sato, who has outstanding knowledge about the gendai (modern) smiths, we discussed Yasunori who worked at the Yasukuni Jinja in Tokyo in the 1930s. He mentioned that it was here that the last Tatara with any continuous operation was maintained, and Yasukuni and his students used the output of this Tatara for forging their blades.

STOLEN SWORD REPORT -

The following theft was reported to us. Anyone who has any information concerning this sword should contact: Token Study Group c/o Otto Nishida, The description is as follows:

Length overall: about 3 feet.
Sheath diameter: about 5 inches
Sheath material: ivory
Handle material: ivory
Blade: steel

The sheath is in tachi form, carved with an unusual and elaborate relief design of monkeys, waterfalls, and ginkgo and persimmon trees. Color is natural ivory, with details picked out in light brown. The handle or hilt matches the sheath; it is held onto the tang (the part of the blade which extends into the handle) by two ivory pegs, one of which may be missing. The sheath is signed in Japanese writing with the name of the carver: "Ichi ryu"--he is a well-known 19th century carver of netsukes.

The blade is relatively thick and has a few light rust-spots on it. The tang is believed to be inscribed with the name of the swordsmith, but we have no record of this. the blade is deeply inscribed with two mottoes in Japanese writing. On one side it reads, "Satsu jin" (killing-man sword); on the other it reads, "Kwatsu jin ken" (resuscitating man sword).

NAGAMAKINAOSHI WAKIZASHI

Oshigata by Andrew Quirt

LENGTH - 48.3cm (1.59 Shaku)

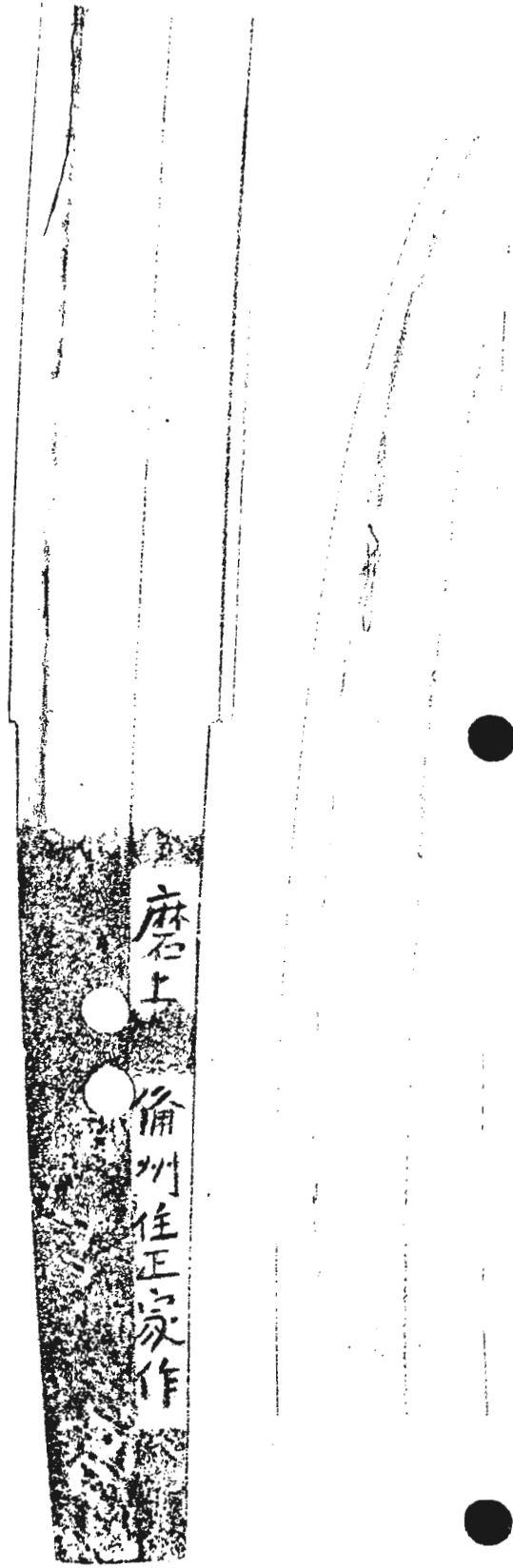
NAKAGO - O-suriage with kinzogan-mei attributed "Suriage (shortened) Bishu ju Masaiye saku".

HAMON - Hirosuguba, konotare, midare. Ha nie. Some shallow ashi with kin-suji and inazuma. A great deal of activity within the hamon in the form of strings appearing along the laminations.

HADA - Mokume hada is predominant in the jigane, with masame hada in both the shinogi-ji and in the area of the hamon. There is a good deal of ji-nie especially in the form of chikei. One side of the blade is slightly fatigued but remains tight despite the presence of shintetsu.

KOSHIRAE - Tachi style koshirae of black saya with plain silver kodogu throughout. Excellent iron tsuba with signs of the zodiac in takabori. The tsuba has a slight mimi which is equal in height to the radiating lines and kanji. The tsuka is wrapped with baline and has a silver dogane with same insets to accommodate the menuki which are unfortunately missing. This koshirae appears to come from Higo Province.

COMMENTS - Although this blade has never been presented to a shinsa, there are several things that can be safely said about it. The blade has very good workmanship, belongs to the Mihara school of Bishu Province, and probably pre-dates Muromachi Period. Nihonto Meikan lists five smiths who signed "Bishu ju Masaiye saku"; two are in Muromachi (1394 & 1492), one in Yoshino (1375), and two in late Kamakura (1306 & 1326). It is my personal feeling that this is a Yoshino (Nambokucho) Period sword.



WANTED * TRADE * FOR SALE ITEMS -

This section of the NL is offered as a free service to members. Specific wants and items of interest are welcome although members are asked to please not abuse the intent of this column.

- FOR TRADE - Approximately (20) blades have been selected from my collection and are open for trade for openwork iron tsuba. For more information contact: Phil Davis

- FOR SALE (5 items):
Unique display board, 61" x 38" w/3" frame. Carved mahogany frame depicting two dragons on nanako-like ground. Around border are (11) cutouts for tsuba. Japanese circa 1860.

Double-mei wakizashi, (omote) Omi Daijo F/W Tadahiro and (ura) Hizen Kuni Mutsu (no) Kami Tadayoshi. 19 $\frac{1}{4}$ " length. JuHo papers (SF shinsa). Good polish. Very serious inquiry only please.

Aikuchi, SS piece, signed and dated 1848. VG polish. Jo saku papers (SF shinsa). JoJo saku koshira.

Bitchu Tachibana Yasuhiro wakizashi (YA381) w/o kiku. Condition good and fittings ensuite.

For complete info and prices, contact: Hank McGonagle,

- WANTED: A copy of the book, Legend in Japanese Art by Joly. Also looking for 1st rate SHAKUDO work menuki. Will trade well or pay cash. Also looking for any good books pertaining to menuki. Contact: NL Editor Ron Hartmann

AN ANNOUNCEMENT -

Polisher Bob Benson asked that mention be made that as of 1/1/78 he will be polishing full time (after retirement from the AF). As of this date (1/1/78) his address will be: If anyone wishes to have any tanto polished at this time, he will be able to hand carry these with him and do these upon his setting up. Long blades will have to wait until a later date after he is completely settled in his new location. Items can be sent to his Andrews AFB address up till 12/18th, but no later please.

KAJIWARA KOTOKEN

During the Chicago TSG show, John Yumoto was asked about the "confusion" mentioned briefly in the last Newsletter, pertaining to polishing thru John by Kajiwara Kotoken and Associates. John has assured us that he is still handling the orders for work for members of the Northern California group and our society members. Therefore, anyone interested in information on this service should still contact John Yumoto, as mentioned in the July-August Newsletter.

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NL Post Script: Word has just reached us that our very good friend and sensei, John Yumoto, has recently had a mild stroke. A call to his wife has brought the promising news that he is doing very well and hopefully will be home soon. Our best wishes and our prayers to you John, for a fast recovery!
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NEW MEMBERS -

The popularity of this area of collecting must be growing if the following list of new members is any indication. We are very happy to announce the following new members to our society:

Jay S. Goodman,
Tom Kiernan,
John R. Meyer,
Frederick B. LeMond,
James R. Kirby,
Paul R. Allman,
Henry R. Milliron,
F. Karel Wiest,
G. J.F.J. Tammens,
Richard J. Krieg,
H. Ray E. Hicks,
Ralph E. Brandli,
I. Richard H. Oswald,
J. Wesley Walker,
Stephen A. Ledonne,
Frederick A. Fimio,

ELECTION COMMITTEE SELECTED -

During the TSG Chicago sword show in October, the question of an official Election Committee came up. Mr. Clarence Siman and Mr. Neil Keen, both of St. Louis, volunteered to act in this capacity. The enclosed ballot is a product of their efforts. Our many thanks to our society Secretary, Rick Mantegani, for his handling the elections the last several times. As in most volunteer jobs, there is much more work involved than meets the eye, and the job of handling an election is no exception. Many thanks to all involved!

IN RETROSPECT -

Looking back over the year 1977, we can feel proud of our society growth. Our membership has grown approximately 40% this year, and this proves that we are doing something right. Of course the true test of success must be measured in the extent that have accomplished our goals as a society. Our regular publications have apparently held their own status-wise, but it is time we do something truly worthwhile. The proposed 1979 event is of course one way of doing this. Once again, please give your society your support.

After close to nine years of being your editor, the old boy has become a bit slow and sluggish. It is time to give public credit to the real worker of the NL staff, my wife. Without her running with the printing, stuffing of envelopes, trips to the post office not to mention collating and stapling...there would not be any Newsletter! So on behalf of all of us "members", thanks Kathy!

Next Newsletter will come out around the end of January, 1978. Have all material into the editor well ahead of that time please. We also need Bulletin material...help please. **SEASON'S GREETING!**