Japanese Sword Society of the United States, Inc.

# NEWSLETTER

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## CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

A great deal of the sword collector's money goes into reference books, so I shall look into the question of a useful library in this issue of the Newsletter.

First of all, it must be noted that there are three levels of sword collectors. First is the beginning level, where a new collector knows little about swords or Japanese history, and reads no Japanese. We all start there.

Most of us populate the middle level. We know a good deal about swords and fittings; we can identify kotō from shintō (not always as easy as the scoffers might think), and we can tell which of the five schools a given kotō blade comes from. By the time we get to this stage of connoisseurship we can also read some Japanese.

Reading "some" Japanese really means reading what we already know. We can read a nakago inscription. If it is a complex one we can at least find the smith's name in an English language reference book, then follow that lead back to a Japanese language reference book for the final word. Let me give an example: we look at a nakago having many characters. We read, by now easily--Bishu (no) Kuni Osafune ju------Sukesada. We note a parallel column of characters and, on the other side, a date column. By going to Hawley we can decipher the unknown kanji and can then look in the Shintō Taikan or the Shinshintō Taikan, or another pertinent reference book and read quite a lot. Knowing the characters for ji hada, hamon, sugata, boshi, nakago, and a few others, we can come up with a great many details about the smith we've identified. In fact, in level two we really know very little Japanese, but we can squeeze considerable information out of our sources with this slight fluency.

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The Japanese Sword Society of the United States is registered with the State of California as a non-profit organization for the appreciation and advanced study of the Japanese art sword and related fields of interest.

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**REWARD** - $1,000 will be paid by the Society for information leading to the apprehension and conviction of anyone stealing sword or fittings from a JSS/US member, and the recovery of the lost items. Payment will be subject to Officers and Directors approval.

**ADVERTISING POLICY** - Paid advertisements will be accepted for publication in the Society **Newsletter**. Ad contents must be restricted to services and items for sale. High pressure type ads and ads not benefitting the format of the **Newsletter** will not be accepted. **Descriptions and Attributions of items advertised are the sole responsibility of the advertiser.**

**ARTICLE POLICY** - Articles of a research nature are of course always welcomed for publication in the Society journals. The Society will pay a $25 Honorarium to the author of original research or reporting articles when of sufficient stature. Brief articles and news items will not be awarded this Honorarium but are nevertheless solicited. **Contents of published articles and authenticity of illustrated items in the society journals and publications are the sole responsibility of the authors of said articles.**

CHAIRMAN cont'd.

The third level is a rarified one. The collectors skilled enough to relax here can read Japanese well and can perform a reasonable kantei. I guess there cannot be more than a few dozen in our Society so skilled. Most often they will be native Japanese living here, or nisei. Sansei will probably not have gained fluency in their parents' language--and they will be regretting the lack.

It is to the first two levels I offer some suggestions. At entry level I offer this advice: 1) see swords and have them explained by a level 2 or 3 collector, 2) read the Newsletter carefully, 3) build a reference library. What references I found most useful in level 1 were, first, B.W.Robinson's, The Arts of the Japanese Sword. It is clear, orderly, literate, and well illustrated. My only objection to it is having the index before the plates--a bit inconvenient. Next, John Yumoto's The Japanese Sword; a Handbook. This is a simple, straightforward description that touches the experience of every American collector somewhere along the line. Then, but not until the new collector has digested these books, Hawley's Japanese Swordsmiths. There's no point in looking up smiths before one has some idea of periods of Japanese history, schools and their characteristics and some feel for the subject. One other book for upper level collectors is B.W.Robinson's, A Primer of Japanese Sword Blades. It is brief--far less comprehensive than Hawley--but it teaches rather than simply informs. Beyond these basic books in English, I can recommend these: 1) R.B.Caldwell, ed., The Book of the Sword, Token Kenkyu Kai, Dallas '72; Alfred Dobree, Japanese Sword Blades, Shumway, York, PA, 1971; 3) Roger Dunn, ed., Token Taikai '76; 4) B.W.Robinson, Arms and Armour of Old Japan, HMSO, London, 1951; 5) Souther California Token Kai, Arms and Armor of Ancient Japan, Los Angeles, 1964. Let me note the basic level 2 picture books. Thanks be to those who give us pictures. Those books which are mostly illustrations form the basis of a level 2 collection, and I cite these particularly: Nipponto Zuikan (Kotohen), Shinto Taikan, Shinshinto Taikan. They all have oshigata, photos, and texts that relate directly to these illustrations. It is these books which the collector only semi-literate in Japanese can use.

Beyond these bosic reference books I have found most useful are Nihonto Jiten, and Nihonto Meikan. The Jiten is clearly organized to teach about the elements of sword making and hence kantei. Styles of hada, hamon, boshi, yasuri-mei, sugata, and much else are all in it, but each variation is followed by the names of schools or smiths who typify that style. The Meikan is simply a list, but what a list! It is indexed by name and by title of smiths, and it contains the basic information of dates, origin, signatures, and characteristics of each. It even designates those smiths of special merit. There are many books on the five koto schools (the Gokaden) and many written by great sensei like Dr. Homma and Dr. Sato and others. The juyo books and those published by the Yoshikawa group are all useful. The last came with an English language supplement. These are all useful in one way or another, but I've emphasized what I consider basic.

CHAIRMAN cont'd.

As for level 3, all of the above and more than I can name. For those well enough equipped to be able to read Japanese fluently, the sky is the limit.

One other book that can buoy the learner up in stormy seas is Nelson's Dictionary, Andrew Nathaniel Nelson, The Modern Reader's Japanese-English Character Dictionary, Tuttle, Rutland, VT, 1966. The instructional sections in it will teach the beginner how to look up kanji and how to use hirogana and katagana. There is great satisfaction in puzzling out a rank of beautiful kanji and having them let loose the information they contain.

This emphasis on books and reading is not misplaced. Sooner or later a collector of Nihon-tō must accept a status. If he stays at level 1 he remains a beginner and can not fully appreciate his swords. But achieving level 2 requires determination and the patience to stick at learning a difficult language even when it seems to remain just out of one's grasp. Once level 2 books are opened to the mind, real appreciation begins.

If you are at level 1, get busy at mastering the excellent books available to you. If you are at level 2, you may well stay there, but reach for level 3. Last, if any members can suggest other books and periodicals not cited here, do so. All is for the common good.

A.Z.Freeman

A WORD OF WARNING FROM THE F.B.I.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has asked that the Society alert its membership to the recent activities of a suspect operating in the New England area. This suspect, presently under investigation for extortion, is suspected of having been associated with well known sword thefts in the recent past. The ploy has been to bring swords into a collector's home for examination, thereby gaining entry into one's home, and often, one's private collection. This individual has been known to operate with a female accomplice. Anyone suspicious of recent contacts made in this manner should inform their local F.B.I. office immediately.

This announcement, although alarming, had to be made. The membership must be made aware of such activities. Certainly, we can not all run and hide in a closet, we need to associate, but it is very wise to know with whom one is associating with. Before one opens his home and collection to a new-found party, check him out to some degree. If another member's name is used as a reference, call that member and verify this reference. Again, please do not over-react, but do be cautious. A little awareness could save much grief!

GARRETT S. OLMSTED ACCEPTS BULLETIN EDITORSHIP -

The JSS/US Bulletin may once again become a reality. The Publications Committee was advised, several weeks ago, of the interest expressed by Mr. Garrett S. Olmsted of Tazewell, Virginia with regards to the editorship of the long neglected Bulletin publication. Mr. Olmsted was contact about this and after some discussion, was asked to accept editorship of the publication. Mr. Olmsted was most happy to accept this position.

Mr. Olmsted appears very well qualified for this position, and obviously has great personal interest in seeing the Bulletin brought back on a regular basis. The Bulletin will remain an occassional publication, to be released whenever enough material is gathered for a good issue. Strict guidelines for both content and printing quality will be set down by the Publications Committee, including a review board for screening all material intended for the Bulletin, to assure that it will maintain a high, scholarly format. (Material of a more general nature will continue to be published in the bimonthly Newsletter, as in the past.)

Our thanks to Mr. Olsmsted for accepting this responsible position. We wish him the best of luck in this adventure.

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PHILADELPHIA AREA TOKEN KAI AND THE JSS/US -

Since its founding less than a year ago, the Philadelphia Area Token Kai, officially a branch of Nippon Bijutsu Hozon Kyokai, significant accomplishments have been made. Two very impressive research papers have been issued, the first, entitled "Hizen-tō", and the second, "Yokoyama Bizen-tō". This small but serious group of sword students are to be congratulated for their fine, productive efforts.

The JSS/US has been corresponding with the officers of this club, primarily through Bruce Kowalski, pertaining to our groups working together towards the distribution of their research material. In a recent letter, Bruce commented:

"Our group in Philadelphia is very interested in pursuing scholarly projects jointly with the JSS/US in the future. In fact, we are all members of the JSS/US and are anxious to do what we can to see that scholarship of the highest order, accessible to and understandable by all levels of students, be encouraged."

Towards this end, the Philadelphia Area Token Kai has offered their paper, "Hizen-tō", to the JSS/US for publication in our Bulletin. This is a fine, well-researched paper and we are very grateful to this group for this cooperative gesture. Other joint ventures will be announced as they are developed.

PHILADELPHIA cont'd.

Dues for the group are $20 per year for those who are members of NTHK. Non-NTHK members may subscribe to the publications for $25 per year. They anticipate publicing a minimum of four papers annually. It is their intent that this reasonable subscription rate will support research that, to date, has not been possible (in America).

More discussion is planned between our two groups in an effort to promote their continued efforts towards research for promoting sword study outside of Japan.

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A VIEW TOWARDS 1985 (NEWSLETTER EDITOR)

The Newsletter has progressed rather well this past year, and judging from comments heard, is generally what the member-wants in a newsletter. However, some "improvements" are in the planning stage for 1985.

Most noticeable will be the improved quality in over-all appearance. A better quality paper stock will be selected to give the publication a more attractive appearance. Printing quality has improved this past year and our printer promises to work with us towards quality control on his end of publication. (We could go to a much more costly printing method, but personally, it is felt that we should maintain a reasonable quality of printing, with an eye towards operating within our present membership dues structure.)

The size and content of the Newsletter will remain much as it has been this past year. We will continue to be a sword study publication with an eye towards art and history. We will not get into the martial arts end of the sword. Newsy material will continue to be presented which is of interest to the membership in general. Study articles will be presented with both the very new novice and the advanced student in mind. It is very possible that we will move to a word processor operation in 1985.

1984 has been a taxing and demanding year, but a rewarding one. With the help of the membership, and the various committees, 1985 promises to be a year of advancement.

# REMINISCENCES OF AN "OLD TIMER", 1920-1945

by B. W. Robinson

I have often felt that I have done little or nothing to show my sincere appreciation of the Honorary Membership of the JSS/US which was generously conferred on me in the early days of the Society. But the suggestion in the current Newsletter under the heading "International History of Sword Collecting" seems to provide an opportunity of doing so. As one of the "old timers" there referred to, I thought that perhaps a few personal reminiscences of the past sixty years or so might be of interest to the present generation of collectors and enthusiasts.

I was born (1912) and brought up in South Kensington, London, within a stone's throw of the museums, and my mother often took me into them on our afternoon walks. After a brief but intense love-affair with the dinosaurs in the Natural History Museum, I "graduated" to the Victoria and Albert Museum, little thinking that I should one day join the staff of that august institution. From the very beginning it was the oriental exhibits, Japanese and Persian, that took my childish fancy--the racks of immaculate Japanese blades, case after case of exquisite sword-fittings meticulously arranged, and well set-up suits of fantastic armour.

The Victoria and Albert Museum was extremely fortunate in having Albert J. Koop (author of the immortal "Japanese Names") as Keeper of the Department of Metalwork at that time. He had entered the Museum in 1900, and from the beginning exhibited an almost fanatical enthusiasm for the Japanese side of the collections. This was the era of the great sales at Glendinning's --Hawkshaw, Naunton, Behrens, Tomkinson and the rest--from which Koop was able to skim most of the cream for the Museum at what now appear ludicrous prices. Before his time the Japanese arms and armour collections were small, but remarkable. In 1860 the last Tokugawa Shōgun had sent to Queen Victoria a large cargo of presents including a bundle of spears with shell-encrusted shafts, a fine ō-yoroi, a number of swords by good contemporary smiths such as Tsunatoshi and Korekazu, and a few earlier blades in shirazaya bearing attributions to Kaneuji, Kanemoto, and other masters. All these were handed over to the Museum in 1865. In the 1870s a few tsuba were acquired (catalogued as "key-holes"!). A loan of Japanese arms from a certain Colonel Alt was also exhibited in the Museum at this time. It consisted of the magnificent Asano family armour and a remarkable daishō with fine old Bizen blades and carefully selected mounts by some of the greatest kinkō artists, including Iwamoto Konkwan. When I became Keeper I made great efforts to trace any heirs or descendants of Colonel Alt, but without success, so the loans were taken over by the Museum. Nor was I able to ascertain the circumstances of such a magnificent gift to an Englishman in Japan in the early years of Meiji. Such were the foundations upon which Koop had to build.

By the time I had begun to visit the Museum (early 1920s) Koop had completely transformed this part of it. In 1908 the large Davidson collection of swords was acquired, which included, amongst a certain amount of doubtful material, fine blades by Muramasa, Yozō Sukesada, and Shinkai. Then in 1912 Alfred Dobrée, the first European to be accepted as a member by a Japanese sword society, bequeathed to the museum his small but choice collection of blades, the most noteworthy being a Masamune with signature and Honnami authentication inlaid in gold. It would be tedious to list the vast numbers of acquisitions made on Koop's initiative in the 1920s and 1930s, but mention must be made of the munificent gift in 1931 by Dr. W.L. Hildburgh of over 2,000 pieces of sword-furniture acquired by him in Japan in the early years of the century.

Meanwhile I had begun to collect. My acquisitions were naturally as limited as my schoolboy's pocket-money dictated. Christmas and birthday presents however enabled me to pick up the odd piece, and though I had already begun to collect the warrior-prints of Kuniyoshi, I also purchased one or two pieces of metalwork. In particular I remember an iron tsuba (which I still have) by Masanaga of Bushū, chiselled with pine-branches and with a fine clear "ring", which I found while on holiday in the Isle of Wight in 1927 and for which I paid half-a-crown; and two fine tobacco-pipes for which I was charged three shillings at a shop in Winchester (where I was then at school) at much the same time. One of these, with a design of a carp leaping a waterfall, was signed, and my mother took me to the Victoria and Albert Museum to seek a reading. We were received most kindly by the great Koop himself; he read the signature (Shunudō Norihide) which was new to him, and which he entered in his book. I found it there still when I eventually took over the Department.

But my favourite dealer was a small elderly Japanese named Katō Shōzō, alleged to be of an old samurai family, who kept a small shop in New Oxford Street near the British Museum. I wasted hours of his time going through piles of prints, swords, and tsuba, making him read the signatures and captions, and in the end buying something for two or three shillings, but he was invariably patient and kind. I learnt later that he was a well-known figure among London collectors, who held him in the greatest respect and often used to meet in his shop. He was responsible for the calligraphic poems that appear from time to time in the margins of Joly's "Legend in Japanese Art". Alas, shortly before the war he was run over by a bus outside his shop.

I entered the Museum on January 2nd, 1939, and after a spell in the Library was transferred to the Department of Metalwork. Koop had retired, but used to come in once a week to deal with Chinese and Japanese queries that were beyond the capabilities of the staff as it then was. After having been a considerable athlete in his youth he was by this time sadly crippled by rheumatoid arthritis, and used to arrive in a wheel-chair. I think he was rather pleased to find that the new recruit to the Department was ready to carry on his tradition.

Then came the war. I ended up as an Intelligence Officer at Singapore after the Japanese surrender. Then our Headquarters moved up to Kuala Lumpur, where I was given the job of sorting some 1,800 surrendered Japanese swords. If only I had known then what I know now! I sent down to the Prisoner of War Camp to ask if they had an officer there who had a good knowledge of swords. They sent me a Colonel Yamada Sakae, a quiet and courteous man in his fifties, who had been an official judge of swords to the Japanese Army for twenty years. We had a good interpreter, a young Lieutenant named Horiguchi, andgot on well. Yamada went through the swords methodically, attributing each to its school and period, and noting the signatures. Eventually, seeing my genuine interest, he wrote for me a short introduction to the study of blades, which Horiguchi translated, and which I still have. I also have a copy of a list of the most notable surrendered blades as drawn up by Colonel Yamada; he marked with a cross those he considered to be particularly fine, and these include, among the kotō, examples of Ichimonji, Kanemitsu, and Sukesada (Tenshō) of Bizen, and of the Naminohira of Satsuma; and among the Shintō, Kunisuke and Kunisada of Ōsaka, and Tadayoshi of Hizen; he also marked blades by the modern smiths Yasutoshi, Yasunori, and Yasuhiro. After the swords had been distributed as war trophies I made a collection of about 150 oshigata (very rough and primitive, I'm afraid) from blades owned by fellow-officers. No doubt many of these are now rusting away in garages and attics. After my return to civilian life and the Museum in 1946 I managed, through a Japanese friend, to re-establish contact with Colonel Yamada, who was then running a radio business with his two sons at Koganei, Tokyo. We exchanged a few letters and photographs till his death about twenty-five years ago.

The end of the war seems a convenient stopping place for these rambling reminiscences. If they have provided entertainment for latter-day sword addicts, they have been well worth the trouble of writing, and, indeed, could easily be extended into a second instalment covering the immediate post-war period.

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Editor's note: Mr. Robinson is of course the author of those two classic books, A Primer of Japanese Sword Blades and The Arts of the Japanese Sword. The above article is a delight to read and we can hopefully look forward to "part two" of this "history". Lets hope some of our other "old timers" will be moved to the typewriter and share their experiences with us in a like manner.

MORE HISTORY -

While searching for "sword pictures" depicting how swords came to be scattered around the globe after World War Two, the following two pictures surfaced. They came into the hands of Dave Scott who in turn gave them to the Newsletter for publication. Truly, these pictures "show it as it was then", giving us who were not there at least some idea of what took place. Our thanks to Dave for sharing these "classics" with us. They are truly thought provoking!





## A VISIT TO THE N.B.T.H.K. - MARCH '84 -

by Roy Hashioka

Late in March while waiting for a train in the Shinjuku station in Tokyo, I took the opportunity to visit the nearby NBTHK Headquarter and museum in order to meet Mr. Tanobe and personally thank him for many years of help not only for myself but also for the JSS/US. The NBTHK building did not appear as imposing as it did prior to the construction of large buildings and a network of major roadways in the area. As it happened, Mr. Tanobe was tied up with a shinsa on the third floor. However, he came down and greeted me and graciously asked that I view the exhibit of fine blades on display on the second floor and, if possible, return on the following Saturday with a promise to show me some fine blades from the NBTHK collection.

In the display room were thirty fine blades of Juyo or higher grade. The lighting was such that much of the fine qualities could be readily appreciated. One of the blades appeared familiar--it was a very fine mumei katana attributed to Soshu YUKIMITSU, rated Tokubetsu Juyo, which again impressed me as it did some twenty years earlier. Usually the blades are displayed over a two month period after which time a new group of blades are put on display. Just outside of the display room there are many interesting books on sale as well as back issues of the NBTHK journal, Token Bijutsu.

With Mr. Tanobe's promise of some super blades, I managed to return and had a friendly chat over the inevitable cup of hot tea. He brought out five blades--a TOMONARI, father of the Bizen Osafune school, a Shintogo KUNIMITSU, founder of the Soshu school, a NAGAMITSU, a KAGEMITSU and an Aoy SUYETSUGU. The TOMONARI was minus a boshi and quite tired but was nevertheless rated Juyo Bijutsu. The KAGEMITSU has a rather worn down horimono but still it was exceptional carving. The NAGAMITSU was niji mei (two-character signature) with I-no-kubi kissaki and clear utsuri. I was especially pleased to see the I-no-kubi kissaki because we rarely see one in the states. According to Mr. Tanobe, it is still uncertain whether the niji and naga mei (two-character and long signing) NAGAMITSU were the same or different individuals. The Shintogo KUNIMITSU, teacher of MASAMUNE, had an exceptionally "live" and profuse kinsuji and the peculiar and distinctive hige-no-ke (chin wiskers) in the boshi area. The Aoye SUYETSUGU was a classic Aoye blade exhibiting the characteristic chirimen (crepe) and sumi (charcoal) hada.

Mr. Tanobe mentioned many of our most active JSS/US members as well as many of the Japanese dealers. I remarked that the dealers have returned most of the better blades to Japan and therefore good blades are increasingly scarce outside of Japan. It seems possible that once again the fine art form of the Nihontō will become isolated and appreciated solely in Japan. Mr. Tanobe agreed that the tempo of blades returning to Japan had decreased however, he did point out that JSS/US director

VISIT cont'd.

Andy Quirt just had two of his blades go Juyo as did director Bob Coleman's mouthwatering big KIYOMARO. The KIYOMARO I remember well because I once bounced it off an overhead pipe while I was scanning it. All in all, Mr. Tanobe seemed to be well informed of sword happenings in the states.

In our brief talk I thought most significant was the fact that NBTHK members outside of Japan can now send blades directly to the NBTHK through most major express carriers without the hassle and expense of having a representative of NBTHK go to the airport, obtain clearance and transport it to NBTHK--an all day task. According to Mr. Tanobe, NBTHK now welcomes polishing and other restoration work. From our experience, it takes longer and may cost a bit more but, you do receive quality work in tune with the caliber of the blade. Quality is the key word. All too often, in our anxiety, we opt for the quick polish which invariably is not good enough when a higher grade origami is sought.

It was interesting to note that visitors frequently dropped in carrying bundles of rusty swords and had the people at NBTHK look at them.

My visit with Mr. Tanobe was all too short. I departed wishing that someday we might attend one of his sword discussion sessions. Meanwhile I had better brush up on my Japanese.

The blades on exhibit at the NBTHK during this visit:

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| 1 - KUNITOMO | 11 - MASAMUNE | 21 - KUNIMASA |
| 2 - YOSHIMITSU | 12 - HIROMITSU | 22 - MASATOSHI |
| 3 - RAI KUNITOSHI | 13 - MASATSUNE | 23 - SUKEHIRO |
| 4 - NOBUKUNI | 14 - NORIFUSA | 24 - HANKEI |
| 5 - RAI KUNIMITSU | 15 - NAGAMITSU | 25 - YOSHITSUGU |
| 6 - KANENAGA | 16 - YASUMITSU | 26 - KOTETSU |
| 7 - NORINAGA | 17 - SUKESADA | 27 - KUNIKANE |
| 8 - KANETOMO | 18 - TOSHITSUGU | 28 - TERUHIRO |
| 9 - GO YOSHIHIRO | 19 - SA HIROYUKI | 29 - TADAYOSHI |
| 10 - YUKIMITSU | 20 - KUNIHIRO | 30 - MASAKIYO |

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A HELPFUL SUGGESTION FOR EXHIBIT VIEWING -

Last May, while feasting on the treasures exhibited in the TTK'84 Meibutsu Room, Bob Lewert was encountered busily looking over a display case while using a small penlight flashlight. Bob went on to explain that, having been to many sword exhibits in Japan, he soon found out the great advantage of having one's own suplimental light to aid in viewing. A small penlight flashlight works very well for this purpose. A good point to remember.

# A POTPOURRI OF COMMENTS

by Arn Slettebak

Looking through my correspondence file, I see that there have been some interesting tidbits of information which have trickled in to me in response to the various articles which it has been a privilege to have had published in this fine Newsletter (thanks, Ron). At least some of this data is of sufficient interest to be shared, so here goes...

In my article on scabbard lacquering (Newsletter, Vol.15, No.5), I referred to the fact that, after priming and filing the surface of the object to be lacquered, hemp cloth might be pasted over the base using starch and lacquer. I also stated that I had personally never seen evidence of this on damaged scabbards. Subsequently, I was informed by both Tim Reed (of Falls Church, Virginia), and Barry Thomas (of Emerald, Victoria, Australia), that they each own scabbards which have been reinforced with cloth in this manner. Barry thinks that perhaps only older, or better quality saya were given this treatment. At any rate, he tells me that the majority of saya which he has seen have had lacquer applied to paper which has been wrapped tightly around the wood, apparently a cheaper method of construction.

Barry keeps a file on saya lacquering. He hopes, at some time, to publish a book on the subject. I think it is interesting to note that he has seen only one signed saya, black-lacquered with sprinkled gold cherry blossoms. In response to my comments about the quality of restoration work on saya which I had seen, Barry agreed that he has also been unimpressed by the few repairs he has seen which were done in Japan.

Tim is, judging from his letters, a very sincere and dedicated craftsman who does quite a bit of restoration work on swords, and is quite proud of his work. He rightly states that craft and care are what produce quality, not just the material used. In fact, in his opinion, modern materials used properly are not inferior to the traditional ones. I guess that, for the most part, I can agree with that. I would, however, stress the words "used properly". As far as I can tell, there is no consensus on when it is proper or improper to completely rebuild or refinish rather than simply to repair and stabilize. Without belaboring this, I would simply like to say that I favor doing as little as is necessary to a koshirae, and trying to salvage as much as is feasibly possible of the original. Please refer to my article on restoration in Newsletter Vol.14, No.3 for further comments on this subject.

In my articles on matchlocks (Newsletters, Vol.15, No.4; Vol. 16, Nos. 2 and 5, etc.), I didn't say much about the type of wood used for the stocks, and that's because I didn't have much to say. Recently, however, I have compared the grain on the Shibatsuji gun (Newsletter, Vol. 16, No.5) with that of a sample of American persimmon and found them to be almost identicle. More surprisingly, I now believe that a number of match-

locks are stocked with oak of some kind. This oak seems to resemble the American red oak, and may be the same type which is used in Taiwan to make contemporary practice weapons for martial arts training. This is also called red oak, whatever its scientific name is.

That's about all for now, and please keep those letters trickling in. I really have enjoyed corresponding with those of you who were motivated to respond to my articles. Just think, there are answers out there to questions which nobody has even asked yet.

(Editor's note: Arn's address is listed on the Membership Roster)

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SUPPLY LIST UP-DATE -

Tōsō Sōran by K. Torigoye - Temporarily out-of-stock but more copies are enroute from Japan.

Kanshokei by K. Torigoye - (same as above)

Nihontō Zuikan Kotōhen by Kataoka - This important title remains out-of-stock. We are having difficulty in getting copies. Perhaps it would be best to hold any new orders until we announce a supply on hand in a future Newsletter notice.

Yushutō Zuroku (Vol.2) - Catalogue of Excellent Swords, a publication by the Nippon Bijutsu Hozon Kai illustrating oshigata (of excellent quality) of swords which have received the high "Yushu" rating by that group. Japanese text, English index. A few copies of this fine publication are in stock and priced at $125.

Sword Guards and Fittings from Japan; Collection of the Museum of Decorative Art, Copenhagen -

The publisher, Kodansha Ltd., has supplied us with several more copies of this impressive works (as reviewed, Newsletter, Vol.16 No.1). These copies are available at this time for the price listed in the 1984/1985 Supply List. A "limited publication", the supply of this works is, as it says, limited. It is advised that those considering buying the set, do so while some remain.

Perhaps this is a good time to mention that our new "Keeper of the Supplies", Ken Wichmann, has been literally swamped with orders since the new supply list was distributed. When Ken was asked to assume this duty, he was told that the initial "surge" of a new list would soon taper down to a reasonable rate of orders. He is still waiting for that lull. Realizing this, please be patient if your orders are not filled as quickly as you might wish them to be. A volunteer job, it must be handled evenings and weekends when available time is at hand. Realize this. Ken has done a great job so far--lets give him our support.

RESPONSE TO ROBERT A. COLEMAN'S LETTER -

(Editor's note: The following letter was received from Mr. Earle J. Stone, author of "An Interesting Akihiro Sword", Newsletter Volume 16, Number 4, pages 15 - 17.)

Having read Mr. Coleman's letter of criticism (Newsletter Volume 16, Number 5, page 9) of my short article describing a sword attributed to Akihiro, I feel obligated to respond.

For those members who do not know me, I am a retired business man, having spent 22 years in top management in the newspaper business, years with Texaco oil company, and served as a special investigator for the United States government.

During that time, I owned four oriental antique businesses, as proprietor, partner, and chairman of the board of corporate directors. I have accumulated one of the largest fine oriental antique collections in private hands in California. Portions of my collection have been exhibited in major museums and catalogued.

A number of our pieces rest in some of the largest museums in the United States and Europe. We are life members-benefactors (Gift in excess of $25,000) of at least one major museum. Last year we gave a gift of artefacts valued at $100,000 to the people of the State of California. Our family estate collection originated in Kyoto in 1880, and we have added to this collection for 50 years.

I became interested in Japanese swords after WWII, and was inspired by Wendell J. Furnas' famous article "Fortunes in Souvenier Swords" which appeared in "Esquire" magazine in November 1946. After some formal education in Japanese, I qcquired sufficient ability to translate 10 volumes of the Nihontō Kosa (which I received from Mr. Morihiro Ogawa at NBTHK in Yoyogi) into English, and cross-referenced to Hawley, etc., for my own use.

My personal library of over 2,000 volumes on oriental antiques and art contains over 200 volumes and journals on Japanese swords and related materials. I am considered connoisseur of Chinese, Japanese, and Tibetan arts, and am also recognized as one of the top appraisers of Asian antiques in the United States. I am licensed to this effect.

I have written and been published on oriental antiques, not for commercial purpose, but for educational purpose, for such outstanding publications as the "Arts of Asia" magazine, Hong Kong. I have written newspaper columns as ghost writer for well-known art columnists. I have lectured on oriental antiques to collectors and investors numerous times, especially for museum groups, and organizations as Japanese Sister City Societies (of which I was a member) and for my own University Club.

RESPONSE cont'd.

For 30 years I have been a member of one major museum, and a member of the Asian Arts Committee for the same length of time. I was chairman of that committee for 7 years. I was a charter member of the JSS/US Southwest Chapter in 1960. I was a nine year member of NBTHK at Yoyogi. In recent years, I renewed my membership in JSS/US just to keep abreast of sword activity.

I could bore you with several more pages of my interests and accomplishments, however I would rather make a few more statements that members may find of some benefit to themselves, be they "experts" or "novices".

First, know that there is no such person, in any field of oriental antiques, who is the ultimate authority. This does not mean that a limited number of persons do not have great knowledge and skill in judgement of an item such as a sword, for we certainly have several such learned sensei among us. However, no person can truthfully say he has absolute knowledge and assurance that he knows everything there is to know about an object, or that he has seen evertthing in that field, and has an audit trail to the artist or artisan of that object.

I must say I have never had real faith in shinsa. Japanese swords and related materials have been just as suspect as any other work of art in any field as long as "art" has been produced in history. Volumes have been written on this. Recent scandals, here and abroad concerning "expertise", not only regarding swords, but many phases of art, support my philosophy and opinions.

I spent a good deal of time traveling the U.S., and abroad to Canada, Europe and England, and the Orient, and have visited all museums and private collections my time permits, to view first hand the swords and other Asian art items. I have made the acquaintance of many curators, directors, keepers, and other fine persons who have dedicated their lives and studies to Orientalia.

Would you believe, with a few exceptions, these persons confided that while they are in charge, they are "mainliners". In other words, they specialize in and concentrate on one classification of art/antique in their department, and will only speak with full confidence on this one subject.

Understand, I have great respect for these persons, and am empathetic to their situation, as I know what effort and concentration it takes to become a top authority in their specialization, however, they are the first to tell you they are not the "ultimate" authority on any object, and that one must seek out all the authorities he can, then must still rely on his own knowledge and instincts to judge. This is especially true with swords.

RESPONSE cont'd.

Consider the major auction houses here, in Europe, Hong Kong, etc. I have subscribed to their oriental catalogs for over 25 years, and have met some of their department "experts". I have had them confide to me that they are also "mainliners", (objects of one field class) and outside of their own specialization, they know very little concerning the very broad field of oriental art.

In perusing hundreds of catalogs, I have noted literally hundreds of errors in listing, descriptions, and attributions by the catalogers. (Caeat Emptor!). It is noted that the recent tendancy, particularly with Chinese paintings, the items are seldom described as "by so-and-so", but a few are "attributed to", and most are "in the style of". This certainly protects the house, but it puts the buyer on his own devices to protect his investment. This also applies to purchasing of swords and tsuba from any source.

I'm certain many of you have observed descrepancies in such great works as the Yamanaka Nihontō Newsletter, Torigoye's Toso Soran and Kanshokei, and the Copenhagen set, amongst other publications and catalogs, and yet I have seen no direct criticism of these works, and probably rightly so, as we can overlook these minor differences in view of the impressive mass of good material.

The short article I wrote was intended to present a vignette of the personal feelings of the Japanese owner of the blade, and how he related to it, not to enhance the sword to my benefit. Most written material on old swords is at best second hand, especially when describing what a sword meant to its possessor. (i.e. "...soul of the Samurai, etc.).

The Akihiro sword originally had a paper, which is long lost, and perhaps I should have stated "attributed to Akihiro". In researching it, as I have done with all my blades, I found that there are only a few classic blades attributed to Akihiro, repeated in various illustrations, and they are mostly tanto, with the nakago crowded with mei and inscription. B. W. Robinson illustrtes an Akihiro long sword. Without further close-up the mei appears to be toward the end of the tang. Perhaps a reader has a better picture somewhere. Akihiro, like his contemporaries Masamune and Sadamune, made variations on hamon. Also, both used similar horimono to that on my blade, notably the renge or lotus bud and Kannon Fudo bonji, which I believe is more than coincidental.

A long sword, atributed to Akihiro, was sold at Sotheby's New York on January 25, 1979, item #125. One may note variations of characteristics, and that the mei was engraved at a later date, according to the catalog description. Ergo, a mumei Akihiro can be attributed, as can any mumei blade be attributed to a certain artist-smith or school.

On extended stays in Japan, and traveling with Japanese friends, I have seen at least three long swords attributed to Akihiro, all mumei or O-suriage, and with varying hamon and hada patterns.

RESPONSE cont'd.

In judgement of any work of art, I'm sure my auditors will have noticed the appraiser will play it safe, and say "no" to any work he is unsure of, especially when the object, be it sword, painting, or ceramic, is of a rare or controversial nature. Does this sound like some of the comments on Shinsa?

The present owner of the Akihiro is having it polished, which may tell a fuller story, at which time we may re-assess it, with his permission.

I feel Mr. Coleman, with all due respect, with his hip-shot comments, has embarrassed me, and the editor of the Newsletter. This can have a deleterious effect on potential contributors, and we all know the Newsletter needs more articles and fresh blood, as the staffers have requested.

Mr. Coleman, as a director, should know there is a way to make constructive criticism that is not objectionable, and if he aspires to attain sensei, he should first learn a little humility.

* * * * *

CALENDAR OF EVENTS -

Exhibition, "Swords of the Samurai" - present through 1/3/85 Whatcom Museum of History and Art, Bellingham, WA. 3/25/85 - 4/29/85 Sheehan Gallery, Whitman College, Walla Walla, WA.

Houston Sword Show - 2/2 and 2/3/85, Houston, TX. Information call Cookie Davenport @ or Gordon Bailey @

Southeast Token Kai Sword Show - 3/15 and 3/16/85, Birmingham, AL. Information call Paul Couch @

Token Kenkyu Kai Sword Show - 5/3,4 and 5/85, Dallas, TX call Mike Quigley

St.Louis Japanese Festival (sword exhibit) - 6/15 through 6/23/85,

Token Study Group Sword Show - (no word on October dates at this writing).

Editor's note: As mentioned in the last issue of the Newsletter, this feature will become a regular item to be included in each issue. Such a listing of events is important so that members can plan vacations and make other plans to be able to attend the events. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that planners advise the Newsletter as soon as possible when an event of interest is scheduled. All information should be sent to the Newsletter. Please....do not wait until the last minute to make your announcement.

ANALYZING A 1,500 YEAR OLD SWORD -

The following article of interest was sent in by Chris Sora of St. Catharines, Ontario. The article was originally published in a recent issue of "Corrosion '84" technical magazine. This same sword was illustrated in one of the Japanese editions of Token Bijutsu earlier this year also.

# Rust yields knowledge on Japanese history

Japan's cultural bureau was on the verge of discarding rust from some ancient treasures until the country's national television network asked Dr. Tomomi Murata to analyze the rust for a program.

What he and his colleagues discovered using the world's most sophisticated scientific instruments produced an abrupt change of heart at the bureau. Today, the rust, like the artifacts from which they came. has also been declared a national treasure.

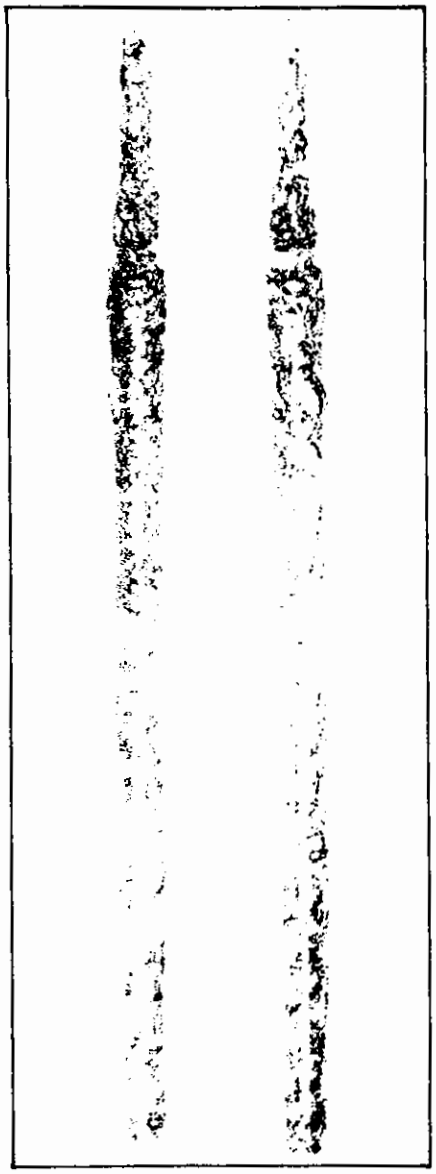
Since the late 1960's archaeologists and historians have been studying many of the thousands of centuries-old burial mounds scattered throughout Japan. And hundreds of them, measuring from just a few metres in length to one that is 800 metres, are located near Tokyo.

Just as several deep inner chambers of Egypt's pyramids were plundered for their treasure, so have many of Japan's mounds been similarly vandalized. But those that haven't are yielding valuable finds that are filling some missing gaps in history.

Steels swords, spears, arrows, iron chest armor, helmets, horse stirrups, gold belts and shoes, dolls depicting armored soldiers and fashionable women, earrings, jade necklaces, and bronze ceremonial bells have all been excavated from antiquity — and presumably from the spirit world where the deceased must have felt little need for them. A tradition of the times that possessions be buried with the dead is now serving to enrich Japan's history.

Murata, who is general manager, center for surface science, Nippon Steel Corp., Kawasaki, told NACE's annual meeting, Corrosion '84, in New Orleans, La., recently that he was able to collect several specimens of rust, the largest of them weighing 0.1 grams, which had been taken during preservation treatment from a sword made in Japan in 471 A.D.

The sword, whose owner had been buried during the reign of Emperor Yuryaku, bore on front and back 115 gold-inlaid characters, the oldest Japanese characters found to date.



**Overall appearance of the Inariyama sword: front (right) and back surfaces.**

The characters gave the name of the owner, stated the sword was made in July, 471, and carried a statement:"I am making this sword in memory of our achievement. We succeeded in unifying Japan (this refers to the unification of Japan's 100 independent regions). My ancestors have been dedicated to the government." There follows a list of names dating back eight generations.



**Murata**

Murata is part of a team of scientists, all of whom work for Nippon Steel, who for the past two years have been examining the rust specimens as a hobby, meeting after 5 p.m. in Nippon's laboratory where, Murata's says, they have access to the finest analytical instruments in the world.

Examination of rust from the sword via a microanalyzer and a computer,which provided a two-dimensional analysis of a large area, showed that a copper content in the metal had retarded corrosion drastically to a meagre 0.001 mpy and that contrary to popular belief, iron-making technology was not first established in Europe during the seventeenth century but in China more than 2,000 years ago. Japan imported iron from China then to make its swords. Today, Murata notes, Japan is a steel exporter.

# Copper-bearing magnetite ore showed sword came from Asia

**by Dr. Tomomi Murata**

Both structural and chemical analyses were made with small pieces of rust. The largest piece, weighing 0.1 grams, was chosen for analysis by the Computer Aided Micro-Analyzer and micro-focused X-ray diffraction. Another five pieces were used for chemical analysis and yet more kept for future investigation.

The result obtained through ICP analysis showed a considerably high concentration of Cu, suggesting the original ironore was most likely copper-bearing magnetite, $Fe_3O$.

In those days, copper-bearing magnetite ores were produced only on the Asian continent, either China or Korea, which means the iron or steel used for the sword was possibly manufactured there and brought to Japan afterwards.

A back scattered electron image of the cross-section of the largest rust piece showed light areas corresponding to $Fe_3O_4$, dark areas to $-Fe_2O_3$, and a curved dark line that represented cracks. The high concentration of Cu was also superimposed on the electron image.

The quantitative analysis for Cu in the area studied revealed a deviation from 2.4 to 90 per cent, assuming Cu as being CuO.

It is interesting to note that Cu is always concentrated in the $Fe_3O_4$ zone. The role of Cu in the rust formation of iron and steels has not yet been clarified, but a suggestion has been made that the Cu ion accelerates the formation of $Fe_3O_4$ from $Fe(OH)_2$ as a catalyzer. The Cu ion, then, tends to agglomerate to form either CuO or $Cu_2O$.

The average Cu concentration in chemical analysis is about 0.35 per cent and the original Cu content in the steel is estimated at around 0.2 - 0.3 per cent, considering the compact rust layer and the very low corrosion rate: 0.001mm/y and the very small volume of solution to the reacting surface ratio. It is a reasonable value as a Cu-bearing magnetite ore.

The close up view of the back scattered electron image at the Fe-enriched zone clearly indicated the presence of white networks similar to the pearlite structure of low carbon steels.

This observation was confirmed by a micro-focused Laue pattern analysis as $Fe_3C$ networks.

The two dimensional distribution at around grain boundaries suggests the steel contains approximately 0.2 - 0.3 per cent carbon, and it was cooled slowly from above 910°C so that it was not quenched to martensite structure.



**Some of the rust pieces examined. Corrosion rate was a low 0.001 mpy.**

The observation of carbides in ancient metallic oxides was firstly made by R. Knox (Archaeometry, 1963) as the evidence for the original metal oxides being iron.

Analysis of non-metallic inclusions was made. The main phase was composed of a $CaO\text{-}Al_2O_3\text{-}SiO_2$ system, containing a lot of alkaline components, which suggests the inclusions were slag formed during the refining process of iron ores.

To estimate the original slag composition, CaO, MgO, $K_2O$, $Na_2O$ $Al_2O_3$, and $SiO_2$ were chosen as the main components and their percentages were 17.4, 4.3, 3.4, 2.6, 11.6 and 60.8 respectively.

They are likely to be calcinated materials of a mixture of shells, clay, and local sands. Further study is required before clear conclusions are drawn on the iron-making process of those days.

SWORD STUDY; A FEW BASIC SUGGESTIONS -

During the past few years a good number of new members have written in to the Newsletter to plead for more material on the basics of sword study. A similar plea was presented in the latest Programme of the Tōken Society of Great Britain. Obviously, there is a real need to get back to the basics. In an effort to fill this void in our publications, we will start to present reprints of significant past material along with fresh material as written by the membership. If there are questions, please feel free to ask them. Such questions and answers will be presented to the membership through a Letters to the Editor column. We can all benefit from this approach. Questions and articles should be directed to the Newsletter editor. Several pieces of information were presented in the last issue of the Newsletter. To continue along these lines, the following suggestions for sword study are presented in the hope that they will be of some value to our struggling new members.

Ron Hartmann - editor

* * * * *

Seeing your sword: The late Albert Yamanaka always preached the need for a more concentrated examination when one examines a sword. Most collectors, particularly the novice collector, become overwhelmed by a new sword. They become so preoccupied at looking at their new treasure that they do not really "see" the sword. Test yourself. Next time you examine a sword, put it out of sight and attempt to fill out a complete record of all the swords characteristics. You will be surprised at how many details were not noticed. How can this acquired "sight" be improved? One very good method of training is to fill out a thorough record sheet for your files. The "Record Sheets" as supplied by the society will assist in doing this. Another very helpfull exercise is to make an oshigata of the blade portion of the sword and attempt to accurately sketch in the hamon of the blade. This exercise demands great concentration. in the time taken to do this, you and your sword will become one. It will be a dramatic experience. Try it--it works!

Seeing the true sori of a sword: According to the comments presented regularly in the English Tōken Bijutsu of the NBTHK, one of the most common errors made when judging a sword is the misjudging of the period in which the sword was made. Again, this gets back to "seeing" the sword, recognizing the "shape of the era" so to speak. One important shape which is often viewed wrong is the sori or curvature of the sword. The late Dr. Kanichi Sato stressed the importance of the correct method of viewing a sword to see the true sori, during extensive lectures presentedat Dallas Tōken Kenkyu Kai in 1972. To see the true sori of a sword, it must be held at arms length, with the mune of the nakago held perpendicular to the floor (see illustration 1). In this way, the true curvature will appear, showing the viewer if it is koshizori, toriizori or sakizori, all very

important characteristics to be noted for the accurate identification of a sword. This correct method of viewing a sword is often overlooked. If memory serves, the only book which has ever illustrated swords in this manner has been Dr. Compton's Nippon-tō; Art Swords of Japan (pages 13 and 16). Train yourself to view a sword in this manner when studying the sori.

A helpful tool which has proven most useful to me personally, in the thorough examination of a sword, is the "measuring board" (see illustration 2). This is the same device used by the shinsa team while measuring and recording a sword's statistics. By actual measurement, one can determine the point of deepest sori along the blade while actually measuring the degree of curvature. Although such statistics can be misleading at times (realizing that a sword was not made with such precision) the observation will aid in improving one's "seeing" the total sword. It is a simple project to make a measuring board. Refinements can also be added to the design to whatever degree suits the user.

Nioi and nie: Perhaps the most important sign of quality to look for in a sword is the quality of the nioi and nie in the hamon. What is nioi and nie? It is my understanding that nioi and nie are the crystallization forms (hard steel) which seperate out during the tempering process. This action takes place between the hard steel (the cutting edge which is being hardened) and the soft steel (the malleable body steel of the sword). These hard crystal formations will appear along the yakiba of any properly tempered sword. (If these crystals do not appear, possibly the sword has been artificially tempered or has received a poor tempering.) A good way to remember nioi from nie is that the "large word", nioi, is the "small size formation". The "small word", nie, is the "large size crystal formation". What is quality nioi and nie? It is the same in both--they should appear as crisp, well-formed, diamond-like formations. Poor quality nioi and nie will seem flat and dead. It is good to examine the hamon of a sword with a jewler's loop to get a good impression of these crystal formations. It is of utmost importance to understand nioi and nie. Remember, a good quality sword will have good quality nioi and nie. If the quality of these formations are lacking, it will not be a good sword. One word of caution. Being "hard steel" formations, nioi and nie will be most striking when the sword is polished. If a sword is in poor condition it may be difficult or impossible to see the true quality of these things.

Quality is perfection: A sword of quality had that quality since its creation. Logically, this quality would had been recognized through the ages. Realizing this, it would also seem logical that the sword would had received quality care in the form of polishing. To recognize this appreciative care it is important that one learns to look for quality workmanship in a polish. A good polish should preserve the perfect form of a sword. Lines of form must be correct for the sword, well proportioned and crisply done. Poor quality workmanship will exhibit an uncontrolled appearance, sloppy lines, wavy surfaces and poorly

carved grooves and horimono. If upon initial examination a sword exhibits sloppy workmanship by the polisher, most likely it is a low quality sword. If the sword exhibits great care by the polisher then one can become excited and go on to look for more indicators of a fine sword. The word of caution here is to be aware of polishes done during the war years, post-war years, and outside of Japan today. Many "war time polishes" seem to have been done in haste. Postwar polishes (which cost about $10 in 1946) often left something to be desired.

A good sword will "talk to you": Albert Yamanaka always pointed out that a good sword will bring you back time and again for study, whereas a poor quality sword will soon bore you. How true! As one studies the subtile, inner qualities of what makes a quality sword, one learns. Subconciously, the mind becomes trained to recognize and appreciate this quality. In time, one will soon find that a high quality sword will "talk to them" as this subconcious appreciation is aroused. Observe your reaction to a sword. Listen to what it has to say to you (or what it does not say). Perhaps a little mystical--but a sense which does come with appreciation. Recommended reading along these lines is Paul Allman's article, "Visions Within Visions", Token Taikai book of lectures, 1976. Paul truly stimulates the mind in this extensive, thrilling paper.

To "see", one needs correct lighting: Florescent lighting is not good for viewing swords. It is best to use incandescent lighting to study swords. Remember, to view a sword one must have a light source from two different directions. To see the hamon, the nie and the forging of a sword, the light source should be come from behind the viewer. To see the nioi of a sword, to examine for ashi, yo, utsuri, other nioi based characteristics, one must hold the sword at eye level and look towards the light source, walking the light source down the surface of the blade. While doing this, it also helps to roll the blade gently to pick up the light in different ways.

Books, books, books: There is no finer way to study swords than to have a treasury of swords at one's disposal and a sensei to lead the way. Obviously, few of us have this luxury. To suppliment this lack of first hand study material, we must turn to examples illustrated in books. Every serious student must have a library of such books. To assist in the selection of fine books, particularly worthwhile titles are stocked for resale to the membership. Every title available through the society should eventually find its way to your library. The taikan books are of particular value. Although most are published in Japanese, the illustrations alone will "train the eye" with regards to what to expect from the various schools and sword manufacturing periods. Periodicals are important also. The ultimate periodical, and most useful single publication available, is the English edition of Tōken Bijutsu, journal of the NBTHK. Anyone who does not subscribe to this journal is truly missing out. (This journal is available for loan from the society library also.)

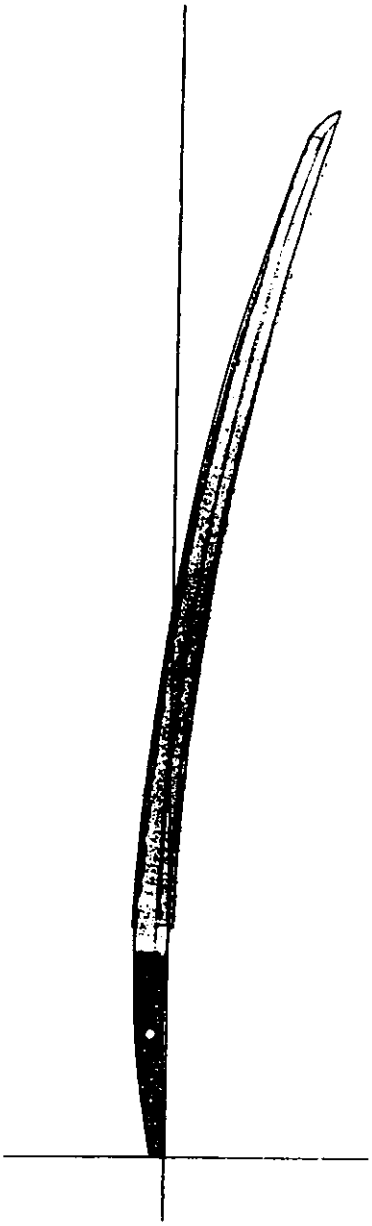


Illustration 1

Illustration 1 - When a sword is held as shown in this drawing, with the nakago of the sword held perpendicular to the horizon, one will see the true shape of the sword.

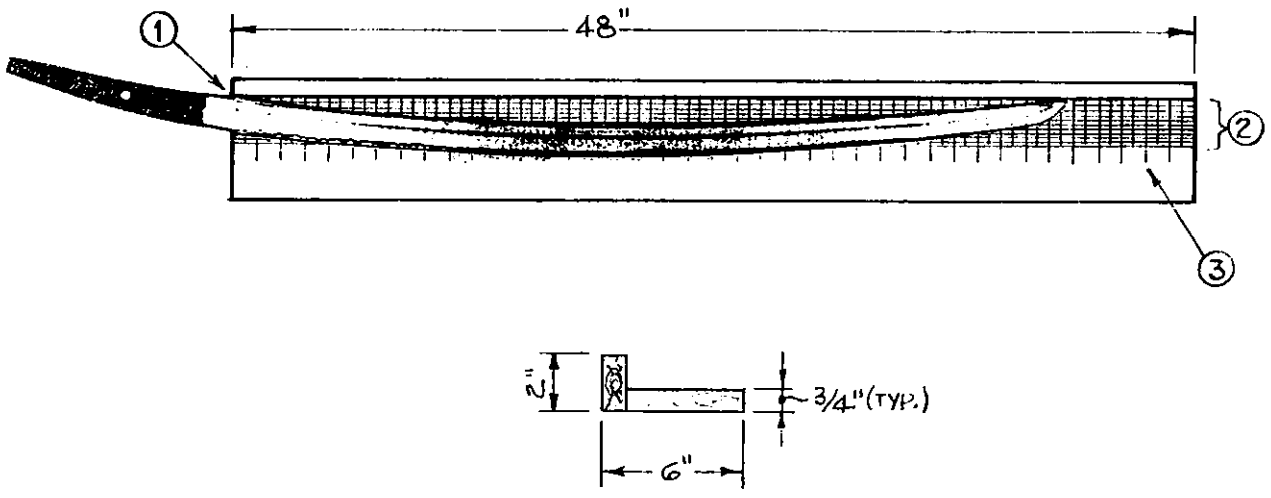
Illustration 2 - The "measuring board" can be made of anything which will not scratch the sword when it is placed upon it. Wood is perhaps best. An ideal grid would be a mylar grid made to precision (if such a grid is able to be found). The grid is recommended to be metric, but inches or shaku, sun, bu scales can be used equally as well.

Note #1 - index the top notch of the blade to this end of the backboard.

Note #2 - This linear grid should be made in very small dimensions so as to be able to measure sori (curvature) to exact dimensions.

Note #3 - The vertical grid can be in larger dimensions (centimeters) and then broken down in steps for closer measuring.

To measure sori, a piece of paper can be slipped under the blade and a pencil mark made at the deepest part of the sori. A sliding "inside caliper" could also be devised if one is clever enough.




CROSS SECTION

Illustration 2

BIZEN TOMOMITSU TACHI

(Jūyō Tōken Nado Zufu - Vol.1, plate 17)

Reprinted with permission

TACHI - Mei (signature) BISHŪ OSAFUNE TOMOMITSU and dated ŌAN 6TH YEAR, A DAY IN AUGUST. (1373)

MEASUREMENTS - 2.65 shaku (80.3cm) cutting edge, 1 sun sori, Motohaba 1.04 sun (width at machi, notches), Sakihaba 7 bu (width at yokote), kissaki 1.2 sun (length of point measured from yokote). Nakago 6.75 sun (20.5cm) with .8 bu sori.

STYLE - Shinogi-zukuri (with ridgeline), ihore-mune (two-sided back-edge), sori (curvature) slightly high, chū-gissaki (medium sized point).

KITAE - Itame (woodgrained forging), slightly running with ji-nie and midare utsuri.

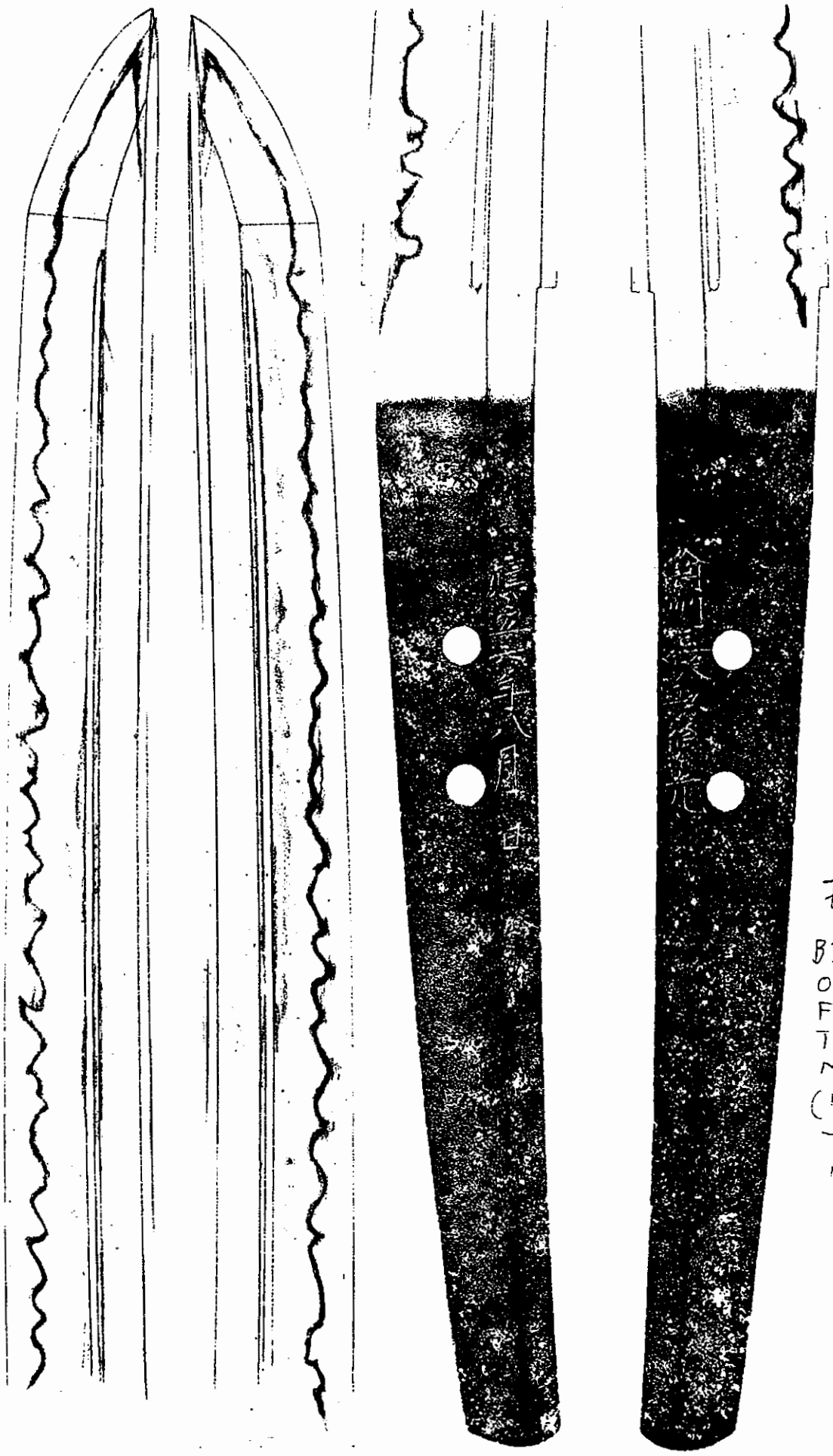
HAMON - Gunome (peaked) with ko-notare (small pattern undulating), nioi-guchi (nioi line along yakiba) is sharp (clear) and has slightly course nie (larger crystals) with sunagashi and many ko-ashi.

BOSHI - Mild midare-komi (irregular), tip in togaru (pointed) and has tendency to hakikake (strings of sweeping sunagashi). Kaeri (return down mune) is slightly long.

HORIMONO - Narrow hi (groove) in shinogi area on both sides.

NAKAGO - Ubu (virgin) tip in kurijiri. Nakago has sori. Yasurime are kattesagari. There are two mekugi-ana. Nagamei (long signature) in fine writing placed near the mune edge of nakago.

EXPLANATION - Tomomitsu was one of the students of Kanemitsu of Bizen province. There are quite a few signed tantō and small wakizashi by Tomomitsu but almost all tachi made by him are unsigned. One exception to this is the National Treasure tachi belonging to Nikko Shrine, which is a very long tachi. This indicates that in Tomomitsu's time, the making of tachi was limited. With this understanding, this particular blade is seen to be very rare and valuable. Tomomitsu's jigane or iron is slightly inferior to that of his teacher Kanemitsu, and has a tendency to have rough hada. This particular blade has a very smooth jigane compared to others, and the yakiba is one of his favorite styles. It is well done, and indicates the character of his work as well as his colleagues. This particular blade was one of the swords handed down by the Yamanouchi family, Lords of the Tosa Province.



毛 (17)

BISHŪ
OSA
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# A MYSTERIOUS JAPANESE SWORD IN EUROPE?

by Klaus Leibnitz

Translated from the original Japanese by the author
Published in Tōken Bijutsu, Tokyo, August 1983

Every now and then one comes across a weapon which defies proper classification and then the question arises: What is it? One such weapon I found in the book: Princely Arms and Armour, a catalogue-like picture book which shows part of the arms and armour collection of the Saxon kings, now in the historical museum at Dresden, East Germany. In this book on page 94 it states:

> "No. 89a, sabre with scabbard, in the shape of a Japanese samurai's sword. The handle is inlayed with flat, ground amethysts with colored rings between them, these made of translucend email which show a leaf and flower design. The round sword guard is also covered with an excellently made colored leaf and flower design and has on the upper side in an oval gold plate the signature: Tho. KAPUSINO TRANSSILVAN FECIT 1674. The scabbard is covered with shark skin and has fittings which are decorated in the same style as the handle. Work of the goldsmith Thomas Kapustran, Klausburg (Cluj), Transsylvania 1674. Length overall, 91cm, blade length 77cm, weight 1350 gr, scabbard 340 gr. HMD Y 108 Inventory: Indian Cabinet 1684 page 148."

This weapon, which is shown in part only on page 139, is very interesting because of its obvious contradictions. I decided to investigate this matter further and can now present my findings and theories to the membership.

Two things immediately became apparent when one looks at the picture; that the saya has clearly and unmistakably a "Japanese look" with its dark same' covering and black horn kurikata, and the blade (shown is a very small part only, about 60mm) has the shape, cross-section and look of a Nipponto. Faintly, one can see on the blade the outline of a yakiba, which appears to be midare. The koiguchi, elaborately made in gilded brass and shippo has on its four corners clearly cut I-no-me. The tsuba is round, also made of gilded brass and is decorated with shippo and karakusa and has one hitsu of an undefinable shape, scarce, but not unusual on tsuba.

What is contrary to the Japanese appearance described here is the decoration of kojiri and the one ashi which is set about 60mm below the kurikata. The decoration is en suite with the tsuba and koigushi, shows on the corners I-no-me and brass scrollwork on gilded metal, inlayed with white and green email (shippo) and carries additionally a square of nine semi-precious stones set into kojiri and ashi. The tsuka is round, set with flat, semi-precious stones (amethysts) pasted to the wood of the tsuka. The joints of these stones are covered with gilded brass rings, decorated with scrollwork and shippo. The handle is riveted onto the nakago and could not be taken off, so the nakago could not be inspected for shape, yasurime and possible mei.

On my suggestion the whole tsuka was X-rayed to see whether any mei could be found, but although the shape of the nakago could be clearly seen through the wood and stone tsuka, no mei (signature) could be made out. It also appears quite obviously that the nakago has been reshaped and shortened. My theory that the blade is Japanese is, besides the "shibui" - look - is supported by the following dimensions: Length of blade from munemachi to kissaki is 770mm (2.54 shaku), width of blade is 8mm (2.6 bu).

The blade appears very dull and has possibly been sharpened in Europe, this makes it almost impossible to judge with any degree of certainty what kind of hada the blade has. The same goes for the yakiba, where only faintly a shape similar to or resembling midare (irregular) is visible. The shape of the blade is clearly u-no-kubi-zukuri, as can be seen from the drawing, the shinogi stops well before the point and is very narrow, shinogi semashi, with the curvature of the blade symetrical, torii-zori. It has a very shallow ihori-mune and the cutting edge is hiraniku-kareru with almost flat sides. The blade has a very small habaki (possibly cut down), made of brass and fitting tightly on blade and saya, apparetnly originally made for them. The saya is about 820mm long (about 50mm longer than the blade, which is not unusual) and is covered with same' in such a way that the joint of the covering is at the rear and not visible when the sword is worn like a katana with the edge upwards. The only part which is signed is the tsuba which, on a tiny gold plate left undecorated has the following inscription:

"Tho. Kapusino Transilvan Fecit - 1674"
(made by Thomas Kapustran in Transsylvania in 1674)

It is thus suggested that the sword may have been originally completely mounted, come into the hands of Thomas Kapustran or possibly been brought to him by a wealthy customer for "improvement" and there been redecorated, because quite clearly blade and scabbard belong together and are obviously Japanese made. Again, a look upon a map makes this doubtful. Klausenburg (Cluj) in Transsylvania is completely land-locked and has no obvious connection to the countries which traded extensively with Japan or neighboring countries at that time, such as Holland, England, Spain or Portugal. How the sword may have come to Klausenburg we shall probably never know, but I suggest that the original sword may have had a simple iron kojiri with I-no-me piercings, a round iron tsuba with an irregularly shaped hitsu, and a plain fuchi-kashira with karakusa-style decoration on all, because this is what Kapustran copied quite faithfully in shape and "improved" on it in European style since these fittings are much too hade (gaudy) for any Nipponto decoration of that period. But the style of the decoration, a floral scroll pattern, does however look similar to Turkish or Persian pattern of the period.

This leaf and flower design was extensively used by Benvenuto Cellini, the celebrated Italian artist from about 1525 onwards, and was very popular for quite a time in Europe. The ashi, mounted below the kurikata, had become necessary since the sword was to

be worn in European style, hanging down on the belt with the edge downwards. The complete sword as it is now in the museum had been purchased in 1697 by Duke Frederick Augustus I of Saxony (1670-1733), and had been part of his personal armory and came from there into the arms collection and thence into the museum.

Thomas Kapustran of Klausenburg (Cluj), Transsylvania, was active about 1660 to 1680 and as far as one can judge by some of his work which is on display in various museums, liked to experiment with styles. The Dresden museum shows in the same book another sword in Turkish or Persian style. Indicative of Kapustrans work is the extensive use of semiprecious stones and email. His work is of the highest quality, but he seems to have been more a kinko-artist than a maker of plain fighting weapons. The sword must have come in that period, at the latest, in his possession because the purchase by Duke Frederick Augustus I in 1697 is well documented. No doubt, the Duke, who was interested in anything strange, may have purchased the sword because of its strange appearance. Thus this sword is an important link that even in fairly early times (one must remember that Japan was a closed country since the Tokugawa era) Nipponto have come to Europe and have been appreciated enough to be acquired by lovers of fine blades. On reflection, one wonders if it could have been one of the blades which were given by the Taiko to the Portugese viceroy of India, Albuquerque, or has this sword come via China, Turkey or Russia to Europe or did it come via Burma, the Phillipines and Spain? We probably shall never know, but Japanese blades have appeared in Europe around 1650 and later in various places. So for instance the swords reputedly to have been in the possessionof King Frederick III of Denmark, now said to be in the National Museum of Copenhagen. These blades must have come to Europe at about the same time as the Dresden sword because King Frederick III died 1670. The Dutch artist Karl von Manders living at about the same period is supposed to have owned two tanto which he deemed important enough to mention in his will. The military museum in Prague, Czechoslovakia has a sabre in their collection, a naval officers model 1845 which has a Japanese blade fitted.

There may be more Nipponto in disquise, stemming from the late Muromachi to Tokugawa period in European museums in various European mountings. I certainly shall keep my eyes even more open from now on.

Sources: (1) Schoebel - Karpinski: Prunkwaffen und Rüstungen, Leipzig 1976

(2) Token Taikai 1976: Hartley and Buttweiler The wandering arms of Japan

(3) Token Taikai 1976: (same)

(4) Wagner, E.: Hieb-und Stichwaffen Dausien, Hanau 1975



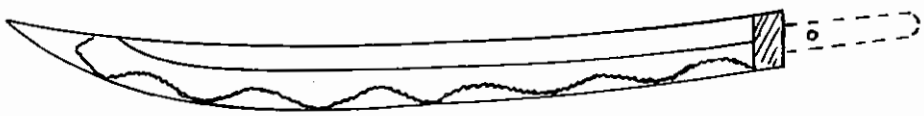
An ink drawing of the sword as it appears in the book, Princely Arms & Armour.




The tsuba on the upper left side it has a golden plate inscribed "Tho. Kapusino Transsilvan fecit 1674"



Detail of kojiri



Outline of the blade (tsuka only approximate)



# 2ND ANNUAL TOKEN KENKYU KAI
# JAPANESE SWORD AND ART SHOW
# MAY 3RD, 4TH, 5TH, 1985
# HOLIDAY INN CROWN PLAZA
# DALLAS, TEXAS

The location has been changed this year to a better location. Holiday Inn Crown Plaza is located in the North Dallas area. Direct DFW Airport limo service is available. The super large Galleria Shopping Center is located only 5 miles away and the area has many fine restaurants.

SHOW HOURS:
Friday, 3rd - set-up noon - 10:00 p.m.
Saturday, 4th - 9:00 a.m. 6:00 p.m.
Sunday, 5th - 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

SPECIAL NOTE: The Buy-Sell-Trade Show will be open to the public on Saturday and Sunday. A $5.00 admission for each entry to the show will be charged. There will be much local advertising.

WHERE: Holiday Inn Crown Plaza, 4099 Valley View Lane, Dallas, TX 75234. Room rate is $45.00 for a single or a double. The hotel has two restaurants and lounges, indoor pool, workout room, Sunday buffet brunch, and super live entertainment in the lounge.

COST: 8' tables are $50.00 each, good for all three days. A $10 Registration Fee will be charged non-table holders, good for multiple entry all three days.

RESERVATIONS: Both room and table reservations can be made through:

Please submit your hotel reservations to me and I will set them up for you. Include the following information:
1. Name, address, phone.
2. Number in your party, one or two.
3. Arrival and departure dates.
4. If guaranteed reservations are required for late arrival, be sure to include type of credit card, card number and expiration date.

**SPECIAL EVENTS**

**★ Display of items from R.B. Caldwell's collection including Juyo Swords and Kodogu.**

**★ Kendo demonstration by Dallas Kendo Club**

**★ Return visit by Fred Tart of Sandia Budokan from Albuquergue, New Mexico to demonstrate Kenjutsu and Iaijutsu. Fred will also lecture.**

BANQUET: JAPANESE STYLE AS WAS DONE LAST YEAR. Let's go out on Saturday night as a group. Cost will be around $25.00 per person. Let me know if you're interested in attending.

SEE YOU IN DALLAS.....

**MIKE**

## BUY-SELL-TRADE SECTION

**This section of the NEWSLETTER is offered as a FREE SERVICE to the membership. Please keep ads brief and direct. For larger ads announcing items for sale, it is advised that the members be asked to write for a complete listing of items. Business ads are not allowed. Paid advertising is offered at reasonable rates for professional ads. Direct all ad copy to the NEWSLETTER EDITOR. Please note deadline dates.**

● FOR SALE - Canadian collectors. Sword collection for sale including tsuba, prints, ivory, and miscellanious.
Contact: Fred Fimio (416) 743-0639

● FOR SALE - Tsuba, mostly iron sukashi and brass inlay type, one late mirror-maker style. A few menuki and fuchi-gashira sets. Prices, or will trade on early quality menuki. (one Ezo pair available).
Contact: Ron Hartmann

● WANTED - Photographs showing swords before, during, or after WW2, including advertisements in which swords were illustrated. If not for sale, items will be copied and returned. This material is for the "sword history" idea, a personal interest project.
Contact: Ron Hartmann (address above)

● WANTED - Swords by smiths of Satsuma province.
Contact: Bill Miller

● WANTED - Kogai and kodzuka, seperately or with kogatana blades. Kogatana (blades) also wanted as individual items.
Contact: Don Beck

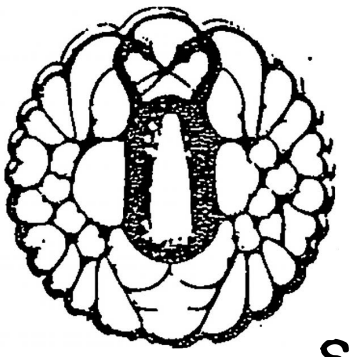
● WANTED - Good quality katana for use in practicing art of kenjutsu. Also need tsuba, menuki and koshirae.
Contact: Daniel Gilroy

● WANTED - Auction catalogues dealing with Japanese swords and other works of Japanese art.
Contact: Douglas McDonough

● WANTED - Book, Zen and Confucius in the Art of Swordmanship. The Tengu-Geijutsu-Ron or Discourse on the Art of Mountain Demons -by Tokuan.
Contact: Bob Giannini

BUY-SELL-TRADE cont'd.

- WANTED - Good quality katana for Iai-do/jutsu, approx. 70cm, chu-gissaki, torii-zori, tensho zukuri hilt. Nothing fancy, just good solid sword.
  Contact: Anthony S. Thomas



ヒューストン刀剣会

HOUSTON TOKEN KAI

# SWORD SHOW

***Feb 2 & 3 1985***

## Sheraton Crown Hotel

**Houston Intercontinental Airport**

*The HOUSTON TOKEN KAI announces it's 2nd annual sword show. To be held at the Sheraton Crown Hotel, 15700 Drummet Blvd. This show is being organized with your convenience in mind. The Sheraton is just a 5 minute drive from the Houston Intercontinental Airport (free limo service provided by the Sheraton). Two lounges and restaurants, indoor and outdoor pool and workout room in the hotel should make for a very relaxing weekend. Free limousine service is provided to and from the Greenspoint shopping mall located just 10 minutes away. Numerous fine restaurants are within a few minutes drive.*

**Date:** *Sat. Feb.2 and Sun. Feb.3, 1985 9 am to 6 pm. Set up 8 pm Friday. Armed security guards on duty Fri. & Sat. night.*

**Place:** *Sheraton Crown Hotel-for room reservations call 1-800-325-3535. Rates are $45.00 for a single or double. When you check in be sure to mention you are with the Houston Token Kai.*

**Cost:** *For those registering before Jan. 10th. each 6'-trade table is $40 for the weekend. After Jan.10th - $50. Non-table holders entrance fee is $5.00.*

*This is a buy-sell-trade show and will be advertised locally as open to the public on Saturday afternoon and Sunday.*

**For table reservations write:**

**For more info. call:**

**For room reservations call 1-800-325-3535.**

1985 MEMBERSHIP DUES -

Dues Notices will be distributed by JSS/US secretary Gary Murtha as a seperate mailing in mid December.

Return the Dues Notice form along with payment to the secretary as instructed on the notice. This procedure will speed up the distribution of Membership Cards to paid up members.

Please check to see that the information contained on the address label, which will be affixed to the Dues Notice, is correct. Necessary corrections should be made directly on this label and the label circled.

Members outside of the U.S.A. are reminded to make payment in U.S. funds only. International Money Order or International Bank Draft drawn on any U.S. bank is preferred. (No foreign "personal checks" can be accepted)

Any questions pertaining to dues should be directed to JSS/US treasurer Ron Hartmann (not the secretary). All treasury records are in the hands of the treasurer.

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**-NEWSLETTER DEADLINE-**

## January 26

**All material and ads intended for inclusion in the next issue of the NEWSLETTER must be in the hands of the Editor by the above closing date.**

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*Wishing you happiness*
*at the holiday season*
*and all through the coming year.*

Best Wishes —
Ron
and family

NEW MEMBERS -

It is our pleasure to announce the following new members into the organization:

Tony Barrett,
Douglas P. Brazy,
Robert W. Morancy, Jr.,
Brett Mayfield,
David Chobat,
Angelo Fama,
Stephen H. Randall,
Wallace E. Matthews,
John A. Coffman,
Louis Hesselt van Dinter,
Garner C. Gill,
Alan H. Davis,
John Reid,
Thomas J. Maurer, Esq.,
Simon G. Beatty,
James R. Watkins,
George C. McCarten,
Kam B. Ng,
Thomas E. Mountjoy

K.White - WESTERN AUSTRALIA

*correction of notice, last Newsletter.

SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT THE JSS/US -

So many of our new members mention how thrilled they were to discover the existance of an active, productive organization for the sword collector, such as the JSS/US. As a satisfied member, we can all "advertise" the Society by talking it up at gatherings and advising your local libraries of our existance. There are many ways to "spread the word" about our organization but the best way is through a membership which will tell their local fellow collectors of the benefits of membership. The JSS/US is a good organization and I for one am proud to be part of it.....how about you? Invite a fellow collector to join in 1985!

TITLES OF SWORDSMITHS -

> One area of confusion, well remembered from "level one" days, pertains to the use of the term "no" which is used along with some swordsmith titles, but not used with others. The following material is a condensed version of an article on this usage which was presented in Nihontō Newsletter, Volume 1, Number 5.

The two most common "honorary titles" found on swords would be the titles, "Kami" or "Lord", and "Daijo" or "assistant Lord". Most sword books go into these titles to some degree. To summarize, generally speaking, if a swordsmith attained a relatively high degree of ability, and this ability was recognized by his patrons, such titles could be officially bestowed upon him. Usually, the first title encountered, typically at a smith's early advanced stage of progress, would be "Daijo". Later, if he advanced in recognition, he would be granted the title of "Kami". This progression is most evident when studying the different forms of signatures of a specific smith. Although politics did come into play with regards to awarding titles, generally speaking, a smith who had the title of "Kami" did produce works which are, even today, regarded as better than works by the smiths who never received such titles. This generalization pertains to Shintō smiths. (Titles became popular in late kotō era and rather deteriated or became less significant as the late Edo period developed)

Titles of "Kami" or "Lord" are read with the term "no" or "of", for example, "Yamashiro (no) Kami" or "Lord of Yamashiro Province". Other titles which are used with the term "no" are "Jo", as in "Iga (no) Jo", "Suke", as in "Kaga (no)Suke", "Hitachi", as in "Hitachi (no) Daimoku", and "Sho", as in "Mondo (no) "Sho" to name a few. Again, the most common title will be Kami and possibly the title Suke.

Titles of "Daijo" or "assistant Lord" are read without the use of the term "no", for example, "Omi Daijo". Other titles used without this term are "Shoken", as in "Sakon Shoken" (as in nidai Nagamitsu), "Hogan", as in "Aki Hogen", and other titles usually of lesser ranking.

If one will remember the rule for the more common titles such as Kami, Daijo and Suke, their termonology of swords will be greatly improved. Knowing correct termonology does not make one an expert, but it avoid embarrassment from improper use of these terms.

A PARTING THOUGHT.....

Your new Bulletin editor will be looking for lengthy, very scholarly and advanced articles for the coming journal. This is a good time to pull one's research together and produce a significant paper for posterity. Contact Mr. Olmsted today if such a paper is possible. Naturally, the Newsletter editor is always in search of "newsy" items and articles of a shorter nature. Many of you have the ability....put your talents to work!

'JAPANESE ART SWORD POLISHER'

KOTOKEN KAJIHARA

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FUKUOKA, 814 JAPAN
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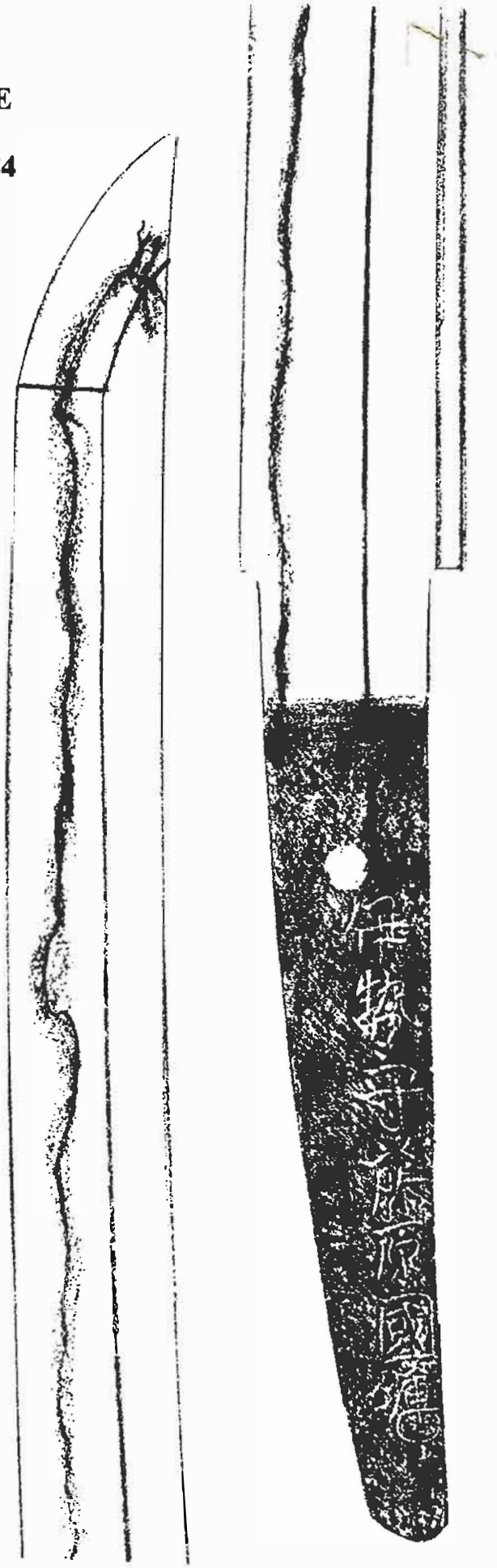
# NIHON-TO LTD.

**AUCTIONEERS OF FINE SWORDS, ARMOR AND ACCOUTERMENTS OF THE SAMURAI**

## FINE KOSHU WAKIZASHI BY KUNITERU

Length: 54.9 cm. Sori: 1.8 cm.
Sugata: Shinogi-zukuri, Torizori, Chu-kissaki
Omote Mei: Ise no Kami Fujiwara Kuniteru

Kuniteru, who was a leading smith of the Osaka school, was the student and son-in-law of the 1st generation Kawachi no Kami Kunisuke. This sword is an example of his finest work. The forging is a beautiful tight itame with masame in the shinogi-ji. The hamon is toran of thick fine nie. The hakikake boshi is rare in his work. The blade is in polish and mounted in shirasaya.



**NOTE CHANGE OF DATE**
**SALE CLOSES FEBRUARY 10, 1985 - 10:00 P.M. CST**

Catalogues available: $20.00 U.S. & CANADA
$25.00 FOREIGN

For Catalogues and further Information, contact:

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Collections also purchased.