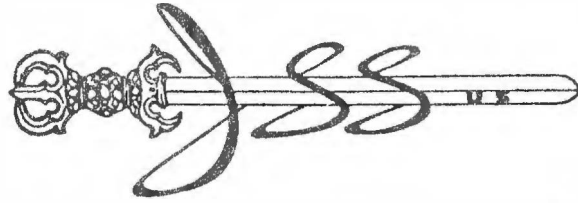


# Japanese Sword Society of the United States, Inc.



## NEWSLETTER

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Volume 10 No. 4

July - August 1978

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### TOKEN TAIKAI '79 -

Chicago, Illinois  
May 23rd thru 27th, 1979

A flyer pertaining to this event is being printed and will be mailed to all known interested parties within the next couple of weeks. Response to this flyer is of utmost importance. Do your part as a member and provide your early response to this flyer as directed

### NEW MEMBERS -

The following new members are welcomed into our society:

Ian N. Brookes, Frank R. Przybylski, Barry E. Stein,  
George E. Moody, John W. Pettibone,

### ADDRESS CHANGES -

Jack D. Elliott,  
Richard Oswald,  
James R. Kirby,  
Jerold B. Millendorf,  
TSG SWORD SHOW -

The 10th annual Token Study Group Sword Show will be held in Chicago the weekend of October 13, 14 and 15, 1978. As always, it will be held at the O'Hare Inn, 6600 N. Mannheim, Des Plaines. For complete info write: Ted Wysocky,

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The Official Bi-Monthly Publication of the Japanese Sword Society of the U.S./Inc.  
Annual Membership \$10 U.S./Canada and \$14 Foreign  
For Information Write:

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## POT-POURRI

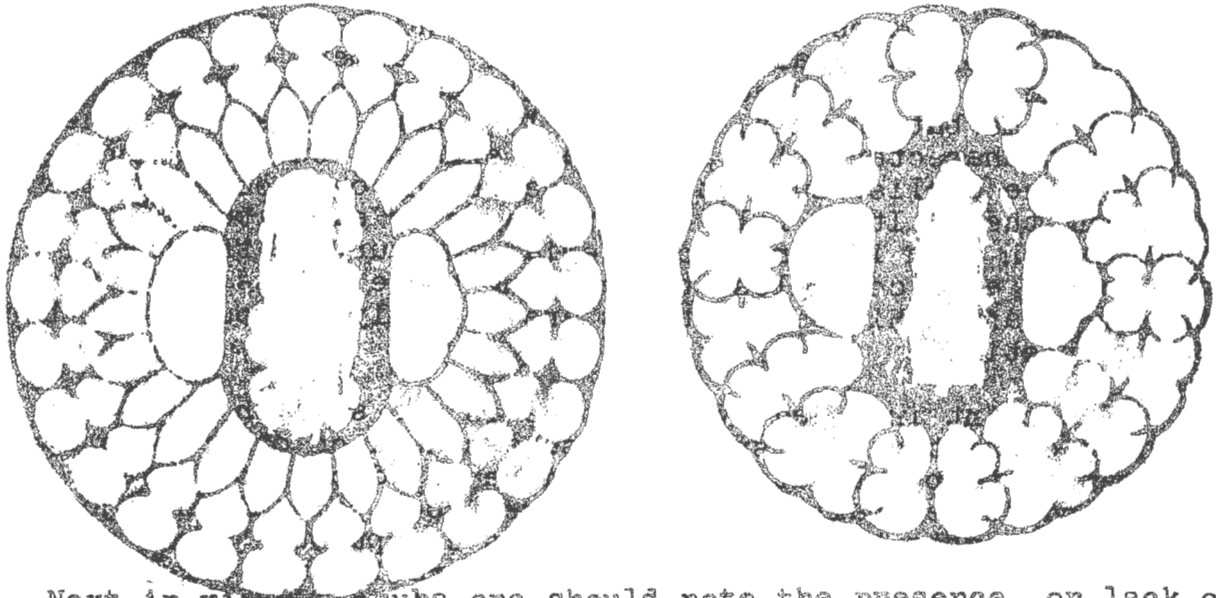
by Ron Hartmann

The dictionary defines pot-pourri as, "a literary production composed of unconnected parts", and this hodgepodge of material might well fit that definition. The following is an article composed of bits-and-pieces of information gathered through the years by the author, on the various aspects of tsuba and sword study and appreciation. The article is directed towards the beginner collector. Hopefully, it will answer some questions and possibly even inspire some novice into allowing himself to look past the obvious and proceed into the inner world of a fine art, this field of study called Tōken.

Everyone collecting Japanese swords eventually becomes involved, if only in passing, in the collecting of tsuba. Prior to learning some basics for judging tsuba, we have all experienced the ownership of junk pieces which at the time were our "collection" which we fondled, treasured and searched for satisfaction in. (Well is remembered that atrocious junk tsuba, proudly displayed on my table at the Dallas Token Kenkyo Kai back in 1972. The moment of truth came when Roy Hashioka kindly advised that "that tsuba should not really be on your table, Ron.", and I reluctantly removed it from my collection of four tsuba!) One must understand that tsuba, as in swords, the percentage of "fine pieces" is very small as compared to the many average examples found. The "key" to understanding and recognizing fine tsuba starts with personal examination of fine examples. Although few really fine tsuba are ever displayed at shows, some collectors do "exhibit" select items from their collections. Search out these displays and study them. Once you actually are exposed to fine examples of the tsuba art you will have at least taken that first step towards learning what you should be looking for when studying tsuba.

One of the most basic offenses seen when viewing tsuba is the exhibiting of tsuba up-side-down or reversed! Tsuba, as in menuki, have a primary and secondary view (menuki have a primary one and secondary one). The primary or "front" side of a tsuba is the side viewed when a sword is worn. This primary side is usually obvious, displaying the more complex design. If the difference eludes one, the primary side can be identified by placing the tsuba so that the nakago-ana has the "cutting edge" up, with the half-moon kodzuka-ana to the left (and half-quadrefoil kogai-ana to the right). If the hitsu-ana are of the same shape, the primary side of the tsuba is almost always identified by the presence of "punchings" around the nakago-ana, intended to make the tsuba fit tight on the nakago. These punchings are almost always placed on the primary side of the tsuba. Tachi tsuba will follow this same rule except that, being worn cutting edge down, the nakago-ana should be placed in this position. Usually Tachi tsuba will lack the hitsu-ana. Once these basics are recognized one will be surprised at how often tsuba are

incorrectly exhibited at shows and in books. It is almost like viewing a painting upside down, when one thinks of it!



Next in viewing tsuba one should note the presence, or lack of, hitsu-ana. If they exist, take note of their size and shape. Are they of the usual half-moon and half-quadrefoil shape or are they different. Older hitsu-ana tend to display hitsu-ana of the same half-moon shape or square shape (or other odd shapes). Older ones tend to be more elongated in shape or possibly the kodzuka-ana being noticeably larger than the smaller kogai-ana. These are points to be noticed.

Generally speaking, tsuba should be of good size, usually a bit larger than the "standard" tsuba found on katana. This is not a firm rule since some tsuba were made small (Kanayama, Yagyū, etc.), but in general the rule fits. The tsuba should display a good, naturally aged patina plus a good, flowing design. All of this is written as a generality, with exceptions, but again it is a basic rule-of-thumb to follow. Better tsuba should "stand out in a crowd", so to speak.

Upon examining tsuba one should look for characteristics such as color, surface treatment, and activities such as "bones" as often found in some iron tsuba. The recognition of tekkotsu or "iron bones" in either the rim or surface of a tsuba is not only a pleasing discovery, but usually helps to establish the source of the tsuba and often its age. Learn to recognize these lovely "bones" and your appreciation of iron tsuba will double. These tekkotsu will appear as small (or large) bumps or as running ridges of linear tekkotsu, usually around the rim of a tsuba and sometimes on the surface of the tsuba. Do not mistake "grained or mokume tsuba" for ones with bones. The difference is obvious with the mokume tsuba being surface treated and grains displayed over the entire surface, with bones appearing in a somewhat subtle manner.

Other characteristics one should note on tsuba include the shape, the type of rim treatment, thickness, and above all, the quality of material and it's surface treatment. Mr. Masayuki Sasano goes into particular detail in his excellently illustrated book, "Early Japanese Sword Guards; Sukashi Tsuba", pointing out the quality of material and the artful treatment of surface. The understanding of these qualities could be elaborated on at length at this time but frankly, the best "teacher" in learning these very important characteristics is in-hand examination. This brings us back to the earlier suggestion of searching out good examples and studying them. It is felt that there is no substitution for in-hand examination when it comes to material and surface treatment! If anyone has ever come close to teaching these points via a book, it is Mr. Sasano. His descriptions are not only thorough, but border on the poetic.

The point intended by the above is not so much stressing what is characteristic of a specific tsuba school or other such specifics, but rather to point out what should be noted by those examining tsuba and to generally point out some "good points" when judging tsuba. Remember that there are always exceptions (there are some excellent small tantō tsuba, etc.) and there is much more than just recognizing a few characteristics if one is to understand tsuba, but learning to recognize is at least a first step towards appreciation. A more formal study on tsuba appreciation was outlined in an article by Arnold Frenzel and published in our Newsletter. Copies of this article will be made available (pending location of that issue of the Newsletter in which it appeared).

As to swords, a discussion on the basics of sword appreciation will not be gone into at this time. The material on this subject is lengthy and too involved to be "touched upon" in an article such as this. On the other hand, the area which is felt to be of utmost importance when studying swords, and often neglected, will be briefly discussed and that is the hamon and yakiba.

First of all, let us define "hamon" as the "pattern" of the tempered edge with the "yakiba" being the very edge of the hamon.

Textbooks on swords typically picture the hamon of the various schools. Most novice collectors look for these hamon when studying their new finds, often to be frustrated by trying to understand a complex hamon which displays a variety of characteristics. After being exposed to both good and poor examples of hamon over the years, it soon becomes evident that average (common) hamon display more of the "textbook hamon" one sees in books whereas truly fine swords will display a much more complex hamon, incorporating a number of characteristics and activities basically outlined in the books. The difference being that the average smith probably "copies" the typical hamon whereas the master smith "artfully creates" a hamon following the "basic tradition of the school" with his own "touch of mastery". Therefore, it tends to be that a hamon "too perfect" proves to be done by a lesser smith whereas the more "complex" hamon could be the works of a master. This can be readily seen by studying the oshigata in

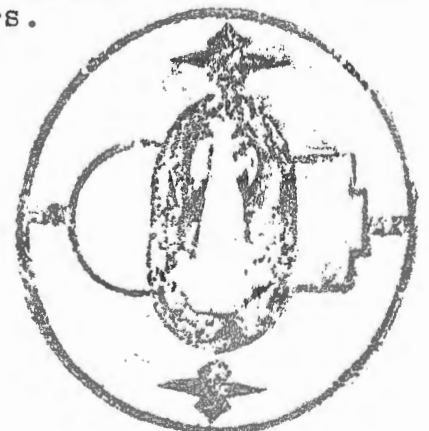
fine sword books or in publications such as Token Bijutsu of the NBTHK. Perhaps the exception here is the suguha, but expect to see an "alive" suguha when done by a master rather than one which you will put down and not really wish to see again.

Along with recognizing a good hamon, one must learn to know a good yakiba. This means to learn what is good nioi and nie. Perhaps the best way to explain good nioi and nie is to call it "crisp and clear". Poor nie (the larger crystal) will appear rough and drab in appearance whereas the nie of high quality will appear clear and bright as "stars in a night sky" and nioi will look fresh and crisp with distinct crystals not unlike a "cloud backlighted by the sun". Albert Yamanaka has written that his sensei, Honami Koson, often used such comparisons to explain these characteristics. Next time you see a line of billowing clouds, backlighted by the sun against a darkened sky, see if it doesn't remind you of a brilliant Osaka hamon! Clear and crisp nioi and nie. If one learns to see these jewels when present he will have taken a step towards knowing a good hamon and yakiba over the average one.

As in tsuba, another piece of good advice is that a good hamon and yakiba will bring you back for continuous study whereas an average works will have your attention only for a brief time.

One last recommendation for the study of the hamon. If one really wishes to "see" his sword, it is highly recommended that a full oshigata be made of the entire sword. After making a rubbing of the entire sword (outline of the sword including shinogi and yokote) lay the sword above the oshigata and draw in the entire hamon. Drawing the hamon, inch by inch, you are forced to "see" what is really there. In doing this the collector will be most surprised at how much more he has discovered in the hamon of his sword. The new-found "understanding" will be most rewarding! A complete oshigata and record sheet of your sword will complete your "knowing" your sword, at least visually. Albert Yamanaka has asked in the past, how many collectors can really describe their sword with the sword put away. Think of this. It is a point well made.

Pot-pourri, hodgepodge, ramblings-on.....be what it may, there are some worthy bits of knowledge in the above material. Weed out what is useful and disregard the useless. Perhaps another collector or so will have findings brought to mind and will share them with the membership. Learning comes from research and sharing of this learning spreads the appreciation and preservation of the sword and it's fittings. Share your findings with others.



KANEWAKA WAKIZASHI

Oshigata by Wes Walker

NAKAGO - Signed KASHU JU TSUJIMURA SHIROEMON (no) JO KANEWAKA. Kateagari with full dress style file marks and good coloring makes this an attractive tang. The tang has 3 mekugi-ana.

JIHADA - Very small grain itame.

HAMON - Mimigata, a fairly straight temper line broken by large ear shaped patterns. Boshi has a deep turn-back. Both boshi and hamon are typical KANEWAKA school.

LENGTH - 1 shaku 8 sun. 21½ inch. 54.7cm.

TYPE & SHAPE - Shinto period (1688) wakizashi of shinogi-zukura form. A meaty blade from Kaga.

COMMENTS - This blade was polished in Japan in the summer of 1976 by a polisher named Nagai. It was submitted to NBTHK shinsa Aug. 28, 1976 at Kumagaya City, Japan and given green papers. It is interesting to note that before the last polish, the blade had been signed by the previous polisher.

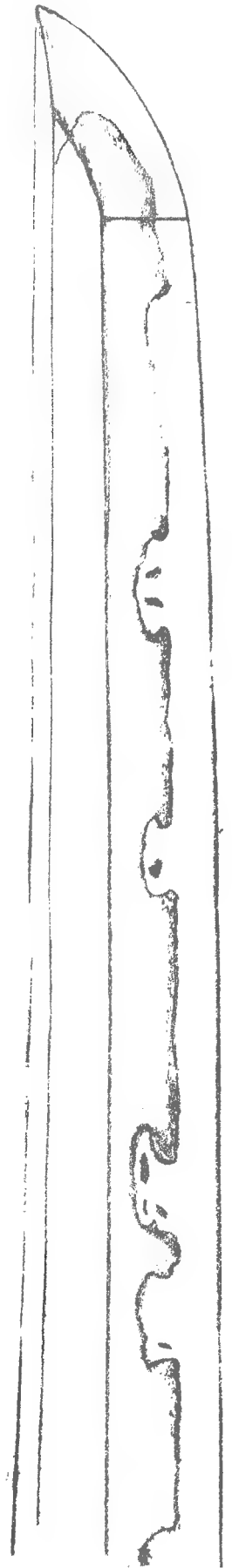
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Can anyone identify this polisher as to period?

一田



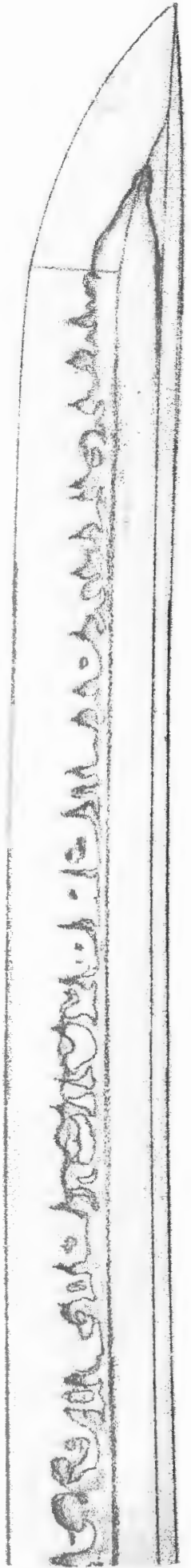
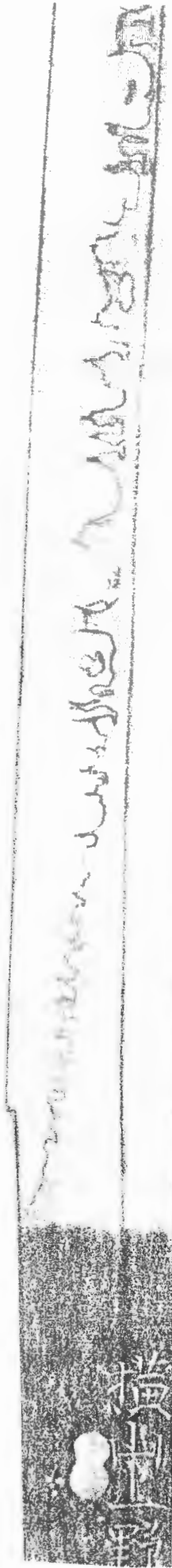
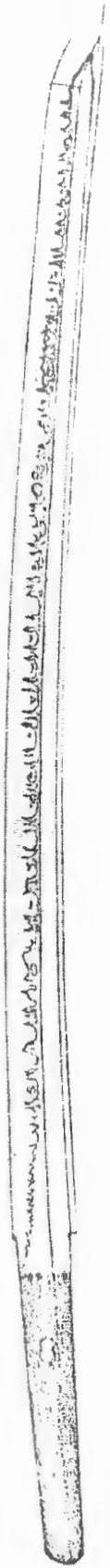
KAGA SANZAWA



KODZUKE DAIJO SUKESADA

cutigata by  
Ron Hartmann

- SHAPE** - The blade is a katana of shinogi-zukuri (ridged) form. The sori (curvature) is medium deep koshi-zori (deepest part of curve towards nakago end, straightening out as it goes into the kissaki). Degree of taper is slight and kissaki is slightly large. Shinogi is slightly raised. The shape is typically of Kammon Period (1661-1672) being rather shallow curvature and a very stout construction. Mune (back of blade) is shore form (two sided), set low down.
- EDGE** - The hamon (pattern) is a very wide and complex form of choji (clove form), resulting in abundant ashi with yo (clusters of nie) within the peaks and splashes of the choji. Nioi is medium wide and there is abundant ko nie (very fine and small, bright nie), within all of this activity. Boshi (kissaki pattern) is almost full temper turning back in a komaru form (small rounded) to a medium deep kaeri.
- JI HADA** - A very active tight itame (wood grained) with some mokume (burls) and running itame. A better polish promises to show other activities within this.
- NAKAGO** - Nakago is typically Bizen, not much taper and rather stout, with ha-agari end (leaning into ha). Yasuri (file marks) are kiri (straight across), slightly up on left side. (probably more correct to call them greatly slanting left...almost kiri). Nakago-mune is almost flat with yasuri to left. Traces of yasuri on end of nakago. There are two nekugi-ana (holes) but nakago appears abu (unshortened).
- SIGNATURE** - Bishu Osafune ju (ura side) and Yokoyama Kodzuke Daijo Fujiwara Sukesada (omote side).
- LENGTHS** - Blade: 63.2cm (2 09 Shaku) Nakago: 17.3cm
- REMARKS:** This blade is made by Kodzuke Daijo Sukesada, commonly referred to as Shinto Sukesada II. Originally called Heibei, he received the title Kodzuke Daijo in 1664 when he became "head" of the family. Sukesada II became the outstanding Sukesada of all Shinto Sukesada and whenever Yokoyama Sukesada is mentioned, it refers to him.
- Judging from the Higo koshirae and double-mon menuki, this blade was owned by a member of the Hosokawa clan of Higo.
- References: JSS/US 1977/78 Bulletin p.56, Sukesada Lineage.  
Nihonto Newsletter, A.Yamanaka, Vol.4 No.11.



Kodzuke Daijo Sukesada  
(Shinto Sukesada II)

JŪYŌ TŌKEN NADO ZUFU Text, Plate #36

GYOBU NASHIJI SAWAGATA-MON-CHIRASHI ITOMAKI TACHI MOUNTINGS  
AND SOEZASHI MOUNTINGS (A tachi mounting of Itomaki, decorated  
family crests on "Kyobu Nashiji"\* lacquer and  
allied mountings for soezashi.)

MEASUREMENTS: Total length: 3 shaku. Total curvature: 2 sun  
plus. Tsuka: 7.2 sun. Saya: 1.8 shaku.  
Soezashi: Total length: 2.3 shaku. Curvature:  
9 bu. Tsuka: 4.7 sun. Saya: 1.36 shaku.

STYLE: For the Tachi: All small fittings, kogane, fuchi,  
ashikanemono, naga-kojiri: all of shakudo with  
nanakoji ground. All designs: high relief iroe.  
Manuki: three designs in one. Seppa: solid gold.  
Tsuka: black lacquered same. Tape: (late work)  
black tape. Saya: lacquered in "Kyobu Nashiji"  
style. Tsuba: Unsigned, Mokko shape, iron deco-  
rated with chidori-plover. Open-work of family  
crest as well as gold and silver inlay of the  
same.

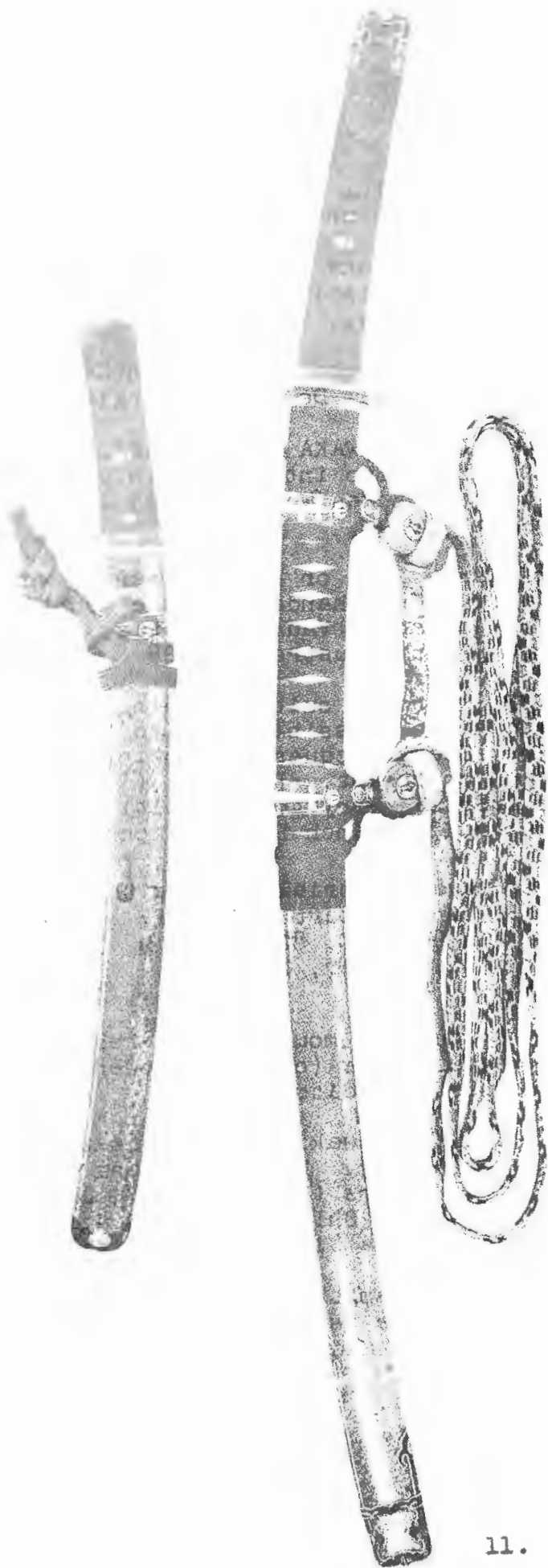
For the accompanying wakizashi: All metal small  
fittings; fuchi-kashira, kurigata, origane and  
kojiri are of shakudo with nanako ground and gold  
rim. Gold and silver family crest. High relief  
and iroe. Kozuka (late work): Shakudo with nanako  
ground, high relief decorations of family crest.  
Tsubas similar to the tachi one. Tsuka: black  
lacquered same. Tape: black tape.

EXPLANATION: Itomaki tachi with accompanying soe-zashi similar  
to this one were found rarely among some of the  
Daimyo in the Momoyama to early Tokugawa period.  
This species is very rare. Since the lacquer of  
this saya is that of Kyobu-nashiji style, it is  
safe to assume that this was manufactured in the  
early mid-Tokugawa Period.

HISTORY: This was handed down in the family of Mōri, the  
former lord of Nagato Province.

Notes: \*Kyobu is a style of Nashiji-nuri lacquer invented by  
Kyobu Taro of Edo in the early Yakugawa Period. For further  
study of this subject see pp. 99 and 645 of "Japanese Lacquer  
Artists" by Mr. Boichi Sawaguchi; Maruzen Publishing Co.,  
Tokyo, Japan. September, 1933.

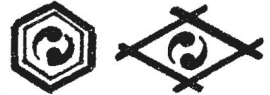
刑部梨子地糸卷太刀及指添



FOR SALE/WANTED/TRADES -

A free advertising column for members in need of locating a specific item or motif, etc., or who have limited items for sale.

- FOR SALE - Sword fittings and blades from my collection. Send SASE for listing. Write: Andres Rodriquez,
- WANTED - Mokume (grained) tsuba forms. Contact: Bill Miller,
- WANTED - Blades by KAGA KANEWAKA or TAKANAKA. Signed or mumei, any condition. Also interested in other good Kaga works. Contact: Wes Walker,
- WANTED - A pair of large iron or shakudo menuki which would look well on an old handachi style mounting. Buy or trade. Contact: Vaughan Cottle,
- SEEKING INFORMATION - Armour suit, Myochin. Eight-plate kabuto and mempo, possibly Nobuiye, 17th master, 1504-1554. Black lacquer. Painting of Ken, with gold dragon on breast. Possibly (?) missing shoulder guards. Very good condition. Please contact: L.N. Bateman,
- WANTED - Kodzuka, shakudo material, having the following mon (double mon) as part of motif.  
\* Contact: Van Heldorf, 8



- WANTED - Examples of complete mountings in respectable condition. Without blade (or with wooden blade desirable). Write: Newsletter Editor.
- FOR SALE - Excellent Shinto wakizashi by Yamato (no) Kami Yasusada (YA-173). New polish and shirazaya. NBThK Koshū papers (High Green). Juyo Polish. Contact: Curtis Uhls,
- WANTED - Tsuba by the swordsmith Satsuma Masayoshi (MA-697), Katana size. Trade tsuba or pay cash. Contact: Curtis Uhls (above address).

\* Anyone care to identify these mon and put together something for the next Newsletter?

## The Identification of Retempered Blades

A Lecture by John Yumoto

(Reprinted from JSS/US Bulletin, Vol.5 No.1 - 1965)

The number of retempered blades existing in our collections is not generally known. It was quite common for smiths to retemper blades which had not hardened satisfactorily. Generally, this could only be done once. The important thing is to determine whether or not this rehardening was done by the original smith. There is one theory that Yukihiro of Bungo, figured in advance on retempering his blades, but this is not substantiated.

Called SAIJIN, these blades are sometimes difficult to identify. It is dangerous to jump to the conclusion that a blade was retempered. (Actually rehardened. Tempering is the process of withdrawing the hardness.)

During the earthquake of 1925, many famous blades were burned with about the same number of blades being destroyed. Many Collectors are aware that a considerable number of these blades were rehardened. In the Edo period when Edo castle burned (1657), many great swords were destroyed. The ECHIGO YOSHIMITSU DAITO, the only example left, was so treated and is now in the Imperial Household Museum. In the fall of Osaka castle a SAMONJI FUDE KUNIYUKI and a YASUTSUGU III were among those burned and retempered.

Retempering is morally wrong, only if done for monetary gain. Recently I acquired a katana signed YAMASHIRO (NO) KUNI HORIKAWA KUNIHIRO, which was burned at the battle of Aidzu and later had been retempered by a certain smith of Aidzu Province at the end of the Tokugawa period. Retempering was very poor and the shape was bad. It did not give the impression of a Kunihiro. So we asked the swordsmith Miyaguchi Suihiro to retemper the blade and bring the shape back close to the original. At the same time we had his name and the date inscribed on the nakago. So we add one more sword to our collection and it will be used as reference material for the future.

Following are some points to observe (in a retemper):

- a. Shape is bad and the curvature will be unnatural. Usually it becomes strong wazori (very deep?) with sakizori (a more pronounced curve towards the kissaki end).
- b. Jitetsu becomes dry and lacks feeling of oiliness.
- c. Here and there we find a glassy jitetsu, very similar to chikei.
- d. Yakiba and hamon is not characteristic of the smith, i.e., the smith was expert at choji but this is gunome.

- e. Nioi-guchi (edge of nioi line) is very fresh. Sometimes irregular forms and kinsugi appears.
- f. Nioi-guchi is wet or oily, and the hamon often has extreme spots, or unnatural tobiyaki (patches of tempering on blade).
- g. Yakidashi (start of hamon at hamachi) area is very big with white utsuri at about 45° angle (mizu kage or water flash-mark). This occurs because, in order not to lose color, they use a wet rag around the nakago.
- h. Blade is tired, yet tempered area is very wide.
- i. Color of aging on the nakago is very bad and looks burnt. Signature loses sharpness.
- j. Yakhada in the nakago. (When you put a heated blade into water the outside rust flies off and leaves little pits and a blue color.)
- k. Very frequently muneyaki appears (tempered spots along the mune or back of blade.)
- l. Yakiotoshi starts out a little distance from the hamachi, if the smith is known for this. If the hamon starts way down the blade then something is wrong.

The preceding are the key points, but one should not judge by only one or two of these points.

In Kunihiro blades, seven out of ten have mizu kage. Mizukage and muneyaki can be removed by modern swordsmiths. Also boshi is easily lost with very much heat.

We come across blades of the Kamakura period on which everything indicates retempering, so we imagine it was done very early in history. So, even if a blade indicates retempering, but has a nice signature, shape, etc., we should so note this in our files, but also cherish the sword.

#### SUPPLIES HAVE ARRIVED -

We have received a new supply of sword oil, ink stones and pocket mekugi removers. Note new prices: 100cc oil \$6.50; small oil \$3.00; ink stones for making oshigata \$4.00; pocket removers still \$5.00 as before. Note these prices on your supply list.

#### NEWSLETTER DEADLINE -

The next Newsletter will come out around the first of October. Please have all material, intended for that issue, into the Editor at least a week in advance of that time.

RON HARTMANN