

# Japanese Sword Society of the United States, Inc.



## NEWSLETTER

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Volume 11 No. 3

May - June • 1979

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### TTK '79 A SUCCESS!

The festivities of Token Taikai '79 officially began the morning of May 23rd and to those in attendance it was soon obvious that participation was as hoped for and that the event was to be a success. By closing time Sunday afternoon the mood of those still present was one of exhaustion, but better yet, that satisfying feeling that it was a good and worthwhile event, prevailed.

A full report on TTK'79 will not be included in this issue of the Newsletter but will be presented in the July-August issue after reports and tabulations are completed. One thing has been determined and that is that the event was financially successful. Both the Token Study Group and the JSS/US have been reimbursed up-front money and expenses and when final totals are in, profits will be divided equally between the groups. A substantial amount will be realized. Many long hours of hard work were needed to make this event a good event and due thanks will be given in our next Newsletter report. We should be most grateful to the key man behind TTK'79, Mr. Bob Lewert who headed the entire affair. Without Bob's untiring work and driving force Token Taikai '79 would never have taken place.

### THE CATALOGUE: MEIBUTSU

One of the finest aspects of Token Taikai '79 was the excellent presentation of the Meibutsu Room and accompanying catalogue. This impressive catalogue is now available for ordering. It is 8½ x 11 inches in size with heavy paper cover and contains 68 pages of oshigata and descriptions including research on the many schools and swordsmiths. Also included in the catalogue are three fold-out pages of full length oshigata plus a 15 page typed supplement on kodogu. Copies can be ordered direct from the JSS/US Price is: \$11.00 U.S./Canada and \$12.00 all others (surface postage included). Please send payment in U.S. Dollars only (International Bank Checks are easily obtainable).

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## TSUKA EXHIBITION PHOTOGRAPHS PLACED IN LIBRARY -

One of the many interesting and educational exhibits presented during Token Taikai '79 was an exhibit of over 50 different styles of tsuka wrapping. The exhibit was set up by one of Mr. Yoshikawa's group and brought over from Japan for our interest. The exhibit surprised everyone with it's varied styles of wrapping, more varied than most of us ever dreamed of.

Slides were taken of each individual tsuka along with it's name and usage description. Mr. Bob Lewert did this photography and then presented both the JSS/US and the Token Study Group with a set of these slides along with prints of each slide, to be used by each club as they see fit. It was suggested that our set be placed in our Society library and be made available for loan by our members.

These slides and pictures will be place in the JSS/US library sometime within the next couple weeks. They will be available for loan about the middle of August, upon written request to the Society Librarian. Please hold off your request until mid-August until we have a chance to place these pictures in some type of folder so as to protect them during mailing. Requests should be mailed direct to the Society Librarian:

JSS/US Librarian  
Mr. Howard Sloan

This is a significant addition to our Library and we are most grateful to Bob Lewert and Token Taikai '79 for the presentation of this addition for our teaching enjoyment.

## JSS/US LIBRARY POLICY -

Brief mention should be made at this time as to policy for borrowing books from our Library. Some confusion seems to have taken place recently with regards to the Library. Books in the Library are not for sale. Several people have asked about buying these books in recent months. Books are available for loan only, to JSS/US members only. Written requests must be sent to the Society Librarian with orders being filled on a first come, first served basis. Cost of mailing/insurance is to be borne by the requestor, both ways. The length of time the item can be borrowed and the cost of postage/insurance will be stated by the Librarian upon the mailing of the article. Number of items loaned out at any one time to one individual may be restricted to some reasonable number. For further information contact your Society Librarian.

# ANNOUNCING

## NIHONTO NEWSLETTER

by

**ALBERT YAMANAKA**

The well known "Nihonto Newsletter", originally published by Mr. Albert Yamanaka as a monthly periodical from 1968 through 1972, has been reprinted and is being offered now as a complete set. This publication is the most complete and thorough study of the Japanese sword ever to produced in english. The demand for additional copies of this fine works has grown in recent years with the growth of collecting the sword. This limited edition will give a number of serious collectors the opportunity to own this publication and to benefit from it as a significant additon to their sword-study library.

The author, Mr. Albert Yamanaka, is well known for his knowledge of the sword. He is an honorary member of our Society and was instrumental in promoting the collecting and study of Nihontō in the U.S. through his lectures and many articles during the early days of appreciation of the sword outside of Japan. The original publication of "Nihonto Newsletter" was described by Albert as "a labor of love" and this devotion is reflected throughout the text of this publication.

The growing need for a reprinting of "Nihonto Newsletter" was recently heard by long-time JSS/US member Mr. Joe Naemura. Joe was kind enough to offer his time and financial backing for the reprinting and distributing of "Nihonto Newsletter". The offer was presented to us on one condition, that all profits realized be directed to Mr. Yamanaka. This condition will certainly be honored. We, as collector-students of the sword, are most grateful to Joe for making this reprinted edition possible.

Fifty copies of "Nihonto Newsletter" have been printed and bound into two hardbound volumes (of the kind used by libraries for the binding of periodicals). The two bound volumes contain a complete set of the original five volume set, almost 2,000 pages of sword study. To avoid speculation, sales will be limited to one copy per order (per customer) and will be handled on a first come, first served basis.

.....  
PRICE: \$100.00 per set (surface postage paid)

Order direct from: Mr. Joe Naemura,

(Please pay in U.S. dollars only - International bank checks are easily obtained in U.S. dollars for this purpose.)

.....  
INDEX - a workable cross-index to "Nihonto Newsletter" is available from the JSS/US for \$6.00 postpaid. Order indexes direct from your Society.

NEXT SWORD SHOW SCHEDULED -

The Southeast Token Kai summer sword show will again be held at the Airport Ramada Inn, Birmingham, Alabama. Dates are the weekend of: AUGUST 31 thru SEPTEMBER 2, 1979.

Display or sale table are available at \$20/weekend. Registration for non-table holders will be \$10.

The show will begin at 1:00PM Friday and will run thru Sunday until 6:00PM. For further info, contact: Paul Couch

Early table reservation is recommended to avoid any problems due to a sell-out show.

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SWORD THEFT "HOT LINE" OFFERED -

We are all aware of the many sword thefts which have taken place around the country this past year. These thefts have drawn the interest of the F.B.I. here in the states and also the interest of authorities in Japan. The Newsletter was recently contacted by an agent of the F.B.I. with regards to our establishment of a "Sword Hot-Line" of sort, through which the F.B.I. could be informed of suspected "hot" swords being offered for sale, etc. An anonymous donor has offered a toll free phone number for this service. Information phoned in to this toll free number will immediately be passed on to an agent of the F.B.I. and appropriate investigation will follow. All inquiries will be in strictest confidence.

The F.B.I. is interested in stopping such sword (and other artful) thefts but they need our help and assistance. If you are in the least suspicious of an offer "too good to be true" or if rumor is heard of any such thefts, please come forward and offer this information. Nobody will be hassled and if we can contribute even a little effort to the elimination of future thefts, we have done a most worthy thing!

Information should be telephoned direct to:

(800) 435-5119, extention 700

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SWORD THEFT -

A hirazukuri tanto, 24.7cm in length, mounted in shirazaya, has been stolen. Signature reads: Yokoyama Kaga (no) Suke Sukenaga, and is dated December of 1839.

Anyone having information on this sword should contact the "Hot Line" number above or Richard Mantegani. A reward is offered for the recovery of this tanto.

NEW MEMBERS -

We would like to welcome the following new members into the Society.

Les Detamore  
Edward A. Brown  
Robert J. Baker  
Lewis J. Wandasiewicz  
Michael T. Koth  
George Icke  
John C. Borden  
Dale R. Johnston  
Bruce K. Beebe  
Jon L. Bowhay  
C. Veen  
Vincent J. Ward  
Daniel Liptak  
Paul Kameoka  
Jack H. Kempnich  
George M. Rinsland  
Tsuguyasu Wada  
Gene C. Stevenson  
Robert E. Corbett  
  
C. T. Mukpo  
Victoria Gardiner  
N. Moore  
Jeff Givens  
Joseph V. Florest  
Kenneth Yonemoto  
Steven Winkley  
Noel Rice  
Richard B. Buckley

## **DUES PAID??**

About 38 members are still unpaid for 1979 Society Dues. All late payers were notified individually about May 1st. Please check your memory and send in your dues if you are one of the procrastinators. We do not want to drop anyone because of an oversight but because of postage and printing costs obviously we must have dues paid up when due. Your immediate attention in this matter would certainly be appreciated (and would save your treasurer some headaches).

BUY-SELL-TRADE COLUMN -

This section of the Newsletter is offered to the membership at no charge as an opportunity to advertise for specific needs. Please keep ads brief and also limited to specific areas of your collecting. Send ads direct to the Newsletter Editor.

- WANTED: (2) tassels for army officer's sword, also military tsuba and spare seppa for military mounting. Please contact: Sune Ekeskär
  
- WANTED: Wakizashi by HOKI HIROYOSHI (HI-427). Contact: Hank McGonagle
  
- WANTED: Info/oshigata of blades by KUNISADA (KU-481), signed IZUMI (no) KAMI KUNISADA. For study. Contact:
  
- SALE/TRADE: Juyo Token: Vol.I, plates and translation; Vol.II, translation only; Vol's. IV,V,IX,X,XIII-XXI. Best Offer. Contact: Arnold Frenzel
  
- FOR TRADE: Tanto-shirazaya, mei NAGAIHIRO (NA-8); Wakizashi-plain mts, mei YOSHISHIE (YO-533); Wakizashi-Avg. mts., mei TOMOSHIGE (TO-171); Will trade for YOSHIMICHI, KANEMICHI, KINMICHI swords. Contact: Andres Rodriguez

TSUBA EXHIBIT BY MASAYUKI SASANO -

The following report was sent in by JSS/US member Vincent Spirito and is in regards to the recent Sasano Tsuba Exhibit in New York.

The east coast has finally had an excellent showing of fine tsuba. The Brooklyn Museum in New York City has recently had an exhibit of tsuba owned by Mr.Masayuki Sasano, author of "Sukashi Tsuba".

The open-work tsuba included early Muromachi, ko-Tosho, Umbrella in the rain design, very thin and beautiful metal; A tsuba by Mata-shichi of crests. The metal was purplish in color and the crests were beautifully done; and the famous tsuba, Sea Cucumbers, by Miyamoto Musashi. Also makers such as Hoan, Nobuiye, Myochin, Yagyu, Umetada, were also exhibited. My personal favorite tsuba was the Bell-ring insects, by Masatora of Akasaka school. This piece held my attention because it looked like the insects were moving and the metal was moist looking. Over one hundred tsuba and menuki were exhibited.

Only disappointment was that the lighting made it difficult to really study the exhibit. All in all it was a great exhibit and I hope that other members were able to see this fine display.

SURVIVER or VICTIM  
by Wes Walker

I'm sure many of us have heard the line spoken by the collector of fine guns. "If only this old Winchester could talk". Yes indeed if it could only talk. To the collector of Japanese swords, if he will only look and listen, his sword will talk to him. For this article I have selected two swords from BIZEN province. SUKESADA and KIYOMITSU schools were both working at OSAFUNE at the Yoshii river on the southern part of Honshu island. OSAFUNE was a swordmaking center with favorable conditions such as plentiful supplies of fine grade iron sand, water, charcoal, the proper clay for the tempering process and above all a demand for their products.

Near the end of the koto period a great flood ravaged the area around OSAFUNE. The year was 1591 and the village with many of it's residents were washed away. HIROBUJO SUKESADA was the only smith of any merit to survive the flood. The KIYOMITSU lineage ends here but the SUKESADA lineage continued on into the shinto and shin-shinto periods. The two blades illustrated are from the late koto period just before the flood. It can be said with some certainty the two smiths knew each other and were perhaps neighbors.

SUKESADA

NAKAGO- Shortened, signed BIZEN (no) KUNI JU OSAFUNE SUKE... sada has been cut off. The tang has a total of 3 mekugi-ana, yasurime (file marks) are yokoyasuri style.

JIHADA- itame.

HAMON- Suguha with floating sand lines.

BOSHI- slight turn back.

LENGTH- 62.5 cm., 24 5/8 inch..

TYPE & SHAPE- koto period (1580) katana of shinogi-zukura form.

KIYOMITSU

NAKAGO- Ubu, signed BIZEN (no) KUNI JU OSAFUNE KIYOMITSU. Yasurime are katesagari.

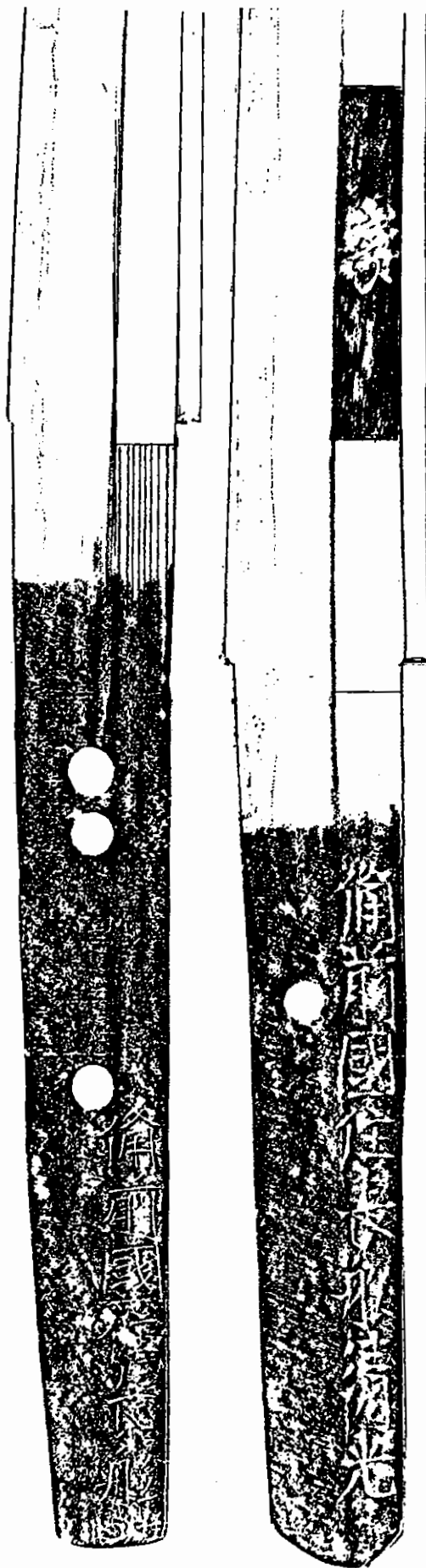
JIHADA- Small itame.

HAMON- Large suguha with a few places of very small komidare.

BOSHI- Large round turn back.

LENGTH- 55 cm., 21 5/8 inch..

TYPE & SHAPE- koto period (1580) wakizashi of shinogi-zukura form.



## A LECTURE ON TSUBA -

John Yumoto has recently "cleaned his desk out" and has come up with some miscellaneous material for our Newsletter. The following is a lecture on tsuba dated early 1960 and although we are lacking the plates which it refers to, it is still a worthy paper for our study. This paper, for our study, is as follows:

The tsuba is, as we all know, a part of the sword. There are many aspects and many fields which we have to study in the future. To begin today, I would like to talk about the nomenclature of the tsuba and it's various shapes. The reason for knowing these names is important because we cannot talk about tsuba unless we are talking about the same thing. Another thing is that by connecting these shapes with the different schools, we may find a shortcut in appraising tsuba.

The first illustration is a basic picture of the tsuba. Basically, tsuba are divided into two categories; by their use and how they were used. One form is the tachi tsuba and the other is the more common tsuba used with the katana. Ninety-nine percent of the tsuba we see belong to this second group. The first group or tachi tsuba is something like this.

You do not see too many of the old ones like this. You may see many reproductions which were produced within the last 200 years, but not true tachi tsuba. The blade fits in the center hole. The correct name for this tsuba is Bundo Tsuba. (lit. weight or weight piece for a scale because this is similar in shape).

Another type of tsuba used on the tachi is this one (plate missing). This is called an Aoye or Aoi tsuba. There are quite a few later reproductions of this form.

This leaves us with the ordinary or common tsuba. Getting back to the nomenclature, whether it is a square or any other shape, the rim is called the "mimi" or "ear". Inside where the blade passes through the tsuba is called the nakago ana (hole for the nakago). That is the minimum for any kind of a tsuba. You have to have a mimi and a nakago-ana to be a tsuba. However, most tsuba have this little raised area around the hitsu-ana (holes for kogai/kodzuka). This is the seppa-dai, the place where the seppa (washers) rest. Usually, a tsuba with seppa-dai on one side has it on both, but there are exceptions.

Often you will find two holes (hitsu-ana) on either side of the nakago-ana. The one on the inside (towards body when the sword is worn) is called kodzuka-ana and the outside one is called kogai-ana.

I should have mentioned this before but I'm sure you had the question in mind, which is the "front" and which is the "backside" of the tsuba. In the majority of cases you can tell. In the ordinary tsuba the angle for the edge of the blade should be in the

upward position and all of the design can be appreciated from this position. The front side generally has more decoration than the back side. The reason for this can be seen if you imagine a samurai wearing a sword with the cutting edge upward and the sword thrust in his sash. The front side from this explanation can then be viewed by anyone facing the samurai. (The tsuba is often referred to as the "eye of the samurai" because this is the first thing one sees when approaching the samurai). This side is called the omote or front side of the tsuba. Usually the artisan who signed his work, signed this side of the tsuba. However, some schools such as kinai school are known for signing on the reverse side.

Now this hole with the outside edge like a "three" is the kogai-hitsu and the half-circle one is the kodzuka-hitsu. Often you will see where the edges or ends of the nakago-hitsu has pads of soft metal of copper and sometimes even gold or silver. These are shims to adjust the tsuba to fit tightly around the tang of the sword. Most tsuba are not custom made for the tang of a particular sword even when the design is custom made. They usually ordered one tsuba for a long sword, design such and such, but they do not usually give the exact measurement of the height and width of the nakago where the tsuba fits on. Many tsuba were later used for other blades too. This shim is called "seki-gane" or sometimes "beni-guchi" or "umegane". You also find similar fittings on kodzuka and kogai-ana. This is sometimes to adjust size but most often to protect the kogai and kodzuka from being scratched by the iron tsuba. A word of caution, when you examine a sword with full mounting, please remove the kodzuka and kogai carefully from their pockets before you draw the blade, to avoid scratching the backsides of the kodzuka and kogai. These seki-gane or nakago-ana fillers are intended to adjust for size, however some schools made these when the tsuba was first made, such as the Suruga school of Inaba, which later moved to Bizen. Another is the Toriyusai school of Edo. They are known to have custom made seki-gane.

Sometimes you will find one or two holes on the lower part of the tsuba which are called "udenuki-ana". These were handed down from the early tachi where they had a cord tied through them and around the wrist of the carrier to prevent the loss of the sword in battle.

If the tsuba is square, the corner is called "sumi". This term is important because many later terms used sumi as one part of the term referring to the corner.

These are the primary names for the parts of the tsuba. Sometimes the hitsu for the kodzuka and kogai may not follow the above rules, but both may have kogai-hitsu or both may have kodzuka-hitsu. Sometimes these holes may be plugged with metal, called "umegane", usually of some softer metal such as copper, silver, etc. It was considered in the olden days, having a tsuba with kodzuka hitsu or kogai-hitsu and not having a pocket on the saya, fashionable to have these holes plugged. However, the number of so called filled or plugged hitsu became so numerous, you might say modern, toward the

## TSUBA (cont'd.)

end of the Tokugawa era artizans began making the tsuba with umegane already in place and you could remove it if you didn't want it without obstructing the design. In other words, they considered the holes and the possible use of the holes when they designed the tsuba.

The measurement of the tsuba has been in the Japanese sun and bu that was used with the sword, and they are measured from top to bottom. So when you see a reference to a tsuba of 3.7 sun this automatically refers to the height of the tsuba. Sometimes the haba or width is also measured (if it is different than the height).

As a note, I would like to add that the classification of the tsuba by the makers (when I say makers, I do not refer to the school but to the former or regular trade of the makers) is quite common. Now swordsmiths made tsuba. Prior to the Muromachi Period, it is believed that when the smith presented the owner with the new blade, they usually presented one tsuba with the blade which the smith made for that particular blade. Therefore the first class of makers should be the swordsmith tsuba or Tōsho tsuba. Even as recent smiths as the Suishinshi made tsuba and there are quite a few of this class.

The next category is katchushi tsuba or armormaker tsuba. A well known family in this group is the Myochin family. A great many descendants of this school carried on the family tradition of armormaking as well as making tsuba.

The next group is the kagamishi tsuba or mirror maker tsuba. The significance of the mirror maker as tsuba maker arises in the early Muromachi is that they started the use of the soft metals in tsuba instead of steel and iron.

The next is tsubashi tsuba which is the tsuba made by the professional specialist in the making of tsuba. This group began around the end of the Muromachi and ran to the end of the Tokugawa. Basically they made tsuba of steel, however toward the end they started using the softer metals.

The next group is the kinko tsuba or metal worker tsuba. They started making tsuba about the beginning of the Tokugawa era. The difference of their work from most others is that their main profession is the making of the other articles of sword furniture such as fuchi, kashira, menuki, etc. Most of their tsuba are of soft metal.

The next group is very peculiar and is not always considered as a special group, is the shiroto tsuba or amateur tsuba. Amateurs made many tsuba and during the Tokugawa era, one could go to a store and buy a semi-finished tsuba and tools to finish it. This allowed you to custom design your own tsuba. Most of them are crude of course, but there are quite a few superb ones in this class.

I want to add one word which I forgot to mention. These tsuba used for the uchigatana are often called "ita" tsuba. Ita is sheet metal and so these are flat ones.

## TSUBA (cont'd.)

Next I would like to talk about the shapes of the tsuba. First they should be divided by size into the daito tsuba, wakizashi tsuba, and the tanto tsuba. Shapes for the tanto tsuba can be the miniature of the daito however these are three common ones (pictures shown). You notice kodzuka hitsu is not perforated as a hole but because of the small size of the tsuba one side is simply left open. Similarly on this one (another is shown). Here is a slightly different shape that is commonly called the "bundo" tsuba. This is confusing because the tachi tsuba should correctly be called the bundo tsuba, but this smaller scale tanto tsuba is called this too.

To memorize the various shapes of the tsuba, we will group them into four or five groups. The first group will be the round or roundish type which is very old and has been used throughout the history of the tsuba. This is called "shin no maru" or true round form. Then tsuba became oval in shape and is called "naga maru gata". Naga is long so this translates as long round shape. The round shape with notches in it is called "kiku gata" or chrysanthemum shape. You often find these in various numbers of notches such as 16, 20, 24, with some going high as 64 petals. I would consider these as basically a round shape.

The square forms are called "kaku gata". We must realize here that the sides of the square may run parallel to the sides of the nakago-ana or may be turned 45 degrees from that position. The form where the sides of the tsuba are parallel to the nakago or blade is called "hira kaku gata". The form that stands on it's corners so to speak is called "tate kaku" tsuba. Tate is vertical so this translates to vertical square tsuba.

As I mentioned before, the corners of a kaku tsuba are called sumi. Quite a few modifications have been made from the sharp corner and this has given rise to several other modifying terms. The long square or rectangle form is called "naga hira kaku" tsuba, or long hira kaku. When the corner is cut off straight like a chamfer it is called "sumi kiri (to cut) hira kaku" tsuba. This cutting off of the corner could happen on a tate kaku tsuba too. When the corners are cut further you get an eight cornered tsuba. Also you may find six cornered or "rokaku gata". The square tsuba can also be rounded off on the corner which is called the nade so this one is then called the "nade hira kaku". If tate kaku is rounded off on the corner then it would be a "nade tatekaku" tsuba.

Take this nade hira kaku (picture shown), if this keeps on going it becomes very much like tate marugata which is round but long or oval. Thus it is easy to define the basic forms, but when you come to the area between two types, it becomes very ambiguous. One way of differentiating these two types is when you can find at least two sides straight without curvature, then this belongs to the kaku tsuba group.

This is a quite irregular one, but it also is derived from the square tsuba. It is called "ahori" or "aori" tsuba and has a little wider base. The term aori is derived from part of the fixture from the horse.

TSUBA (cont'd.)

The third group is called "mokko", which is a very common form. These are typical. We are not sure of the origin of the term mokko, however most people agree that it is derived from a melon. If you see a cross section of a melon you will see this shape. It is probably more common here to see this shape in cross section of a cucumber. This shape of mokko has quite a few modifications. The first one is this with a little point on the side between the notches. This is called "kawari mokko". This term kawari means irregular and is used widely in terms. Here is one that is twisted 45 degrees which is also kawari mokko, but a rarer form. Here you find "juji mokko" or cross mokko. Then you may find six lobes and then eight or ten and gradually you go to the crysanthemum style. The dividing line here is not very clear but we treat the sixteen petal or more as the crysanthemum or "kiku gata".

Now these are the three classifications or styles. There are many, many so-called fourth group or irregular ones. I'm sure you have seen tsuba with the profile of a man or the profile of a horse, etc. There are quite a few kawari tsuba or irregular shaped tsuba.

Editor's note - The various shapes and styles of tsuba which John talks about in the above lecture can be studied through pictures of tsuba in any well illustrated book on tsuba. One would do well to read the above while viewing the various characteristics in such a well illustrated book.

SOCIETY SUPPLY LIST ADDITIONS -

A supply of the below mentioned books has been purchased by the Society and are now available through your Newsletter Editor. Please add these items onto your Supply List which was distributed the beginning of this year.

● EARLY JAPANESE SWORD GUARDS; SUKASHI TSUBA - by Masayuki Sasano

This beautifully illustrated with thorough english text will certainly transmit the charm and artfulness of pierced iron tsuba. The book is a must for every collector and is a true bargain at it's price.

\$15.00 plus 50¢ postage  
(\$1 foreign)

● THE SAMURAI SWORD - by John Yumoto

A very fine basic handbook on the sword which will continue to be of use even after one's knowledge advances. Also a must for every collector!

\$8.00 plus 50¢ postage  
(\$1 foreign)

A brief word about our Society supply service. The few supplies which we stock are what can be considered "basic" items which are resold a very minimum profit. They are handled more or less as a benefit to membership in the Society. When ordering, if your order is not delivered within a months time, please inquire as to it's status. All orders are filled within a couple of weeks. If we must back-order an item you will be advised.

SOME PERSONAL THOUGHTS ON POLISHING - by Ron Hartmann

It seems only appropriate in light of the numerous opportunities presented to us today offering polishing services, that something be said about the justification of having a blade polished. The following comments are personal opinions and are intended as a form of personal encouragement to those collectors pondering the investment of a polish. These comments are in no way an indorsement by the JSS/US of any specific polishing firm and only reflect the thoughts of the author.

During my ten or twelve years of obcession with the Nihontō I have, on occassion, invested in having an occassional sword put into polish. As with most novice collectors, cost of polish did play an important part in my choice of polishers. Also, up until this past year or two, the availability of a polisher was rare unless one was familiar with someone who could act as an agent who had some connections with a polishing firm. My first three polishes resulted in a three year wait with only satisfactory results in the end. A second attempt resulted in quick service but also quick marketing of the resulting "bright" untasteful results. A third, fourth, and fifth contract at yet another source of polishing brought most satisfactory results at respectable prices although delays in return of the finished product did cause some concern. The results of these three polishes, specifically the last which was a masterful tachi by Hizen Yukihiro, first generation, certainly encouraged my continued program of polishing my best blades. My pride in the results of this work was obvious I'm sure as the blade was exhibited in the Meibutsu Room during the Token Taikai '79 event.

Perhaps my greatest satisfaction was realized upon viewing my latest contracted items for polish, a daitō by Hizen Masahiro I, a daitō (suriage) by Bizen Morimitsu c.1420, and a kowakizashi by Uda Kunitsugu. The total bill for these three blades, for polishing, shirazaya, habaki, shinsa plus Juyo shinsa, came to a total of the somewhat alarming figure of \$3500. I was prepared for the cost but the thought did remain in my mind.....is it really worth this? The answer to this question became obvious upon my viewing these restored treasures. Melodramatic? Perhaps, but I was honestly humbled and thrilled upon seeing the results of my dollar-investment. My rusted, scratched, pitted and abused blades once again spoke out in all their due glory! It was money well spent. John Yumoto has often said that it was his wish to see every collector to own at least one good blade in full polish.....this thought was fully understood by me in Chicago!

I am still a novice when it comes to polishing investments, but I do believe that some of my learning is worthy of passing along. First thing to understand is that polishing is truly an investment. One must pick a polisher who will follow through with results which are worth the cost of contracting for them. The best way to make a choice on polishers is to ask around. One will quickly realize who he should go to and who he should avoid. Secondly, since contracting for a polish constitutes a substantial investment and dollar outlay, be prepared and bank the cost of your polish before you contract for it, thus avoiding panic selling or borrowing when the bill comes due.

## POLISHING (cont'd.)

Pick the type of polish you wish to own. This can become a big problem to anyone unfamiliar with types of polishes, but again ask around. Personally, and in the opinion of most polishers if you ask, the sashikomi polish is the only way. A personal opinion but again, ask around and gather some impressions.

Select only a 1st rate blade for polishing. Generally speaking, the better the blade the better the results from the polisher. Some lesser blades probably are worthy of restoration but then perhaps this is the time to make use of cheaper polishes. After seeing the excellent results of my last work as compared with some of the lesser and cheaper works of friends.....I do not believe this thinking..... but there is some room for discussion here.

Personally, I think there is some room for gambling in contracting for polishing restoration. Once one restores the "best" of his collection, priority blades lets say, then one can afford to look into having more risky blades polished. It is my opinion that many of us are overlooking fine old blades simply because of terrible condition and lack of a mei. A good example of this might be my next potential polish choice, an O-suriage daito in absolute terrible abused condition but with promise. Judging from the excellent mountings it came in and the general "feeling" of the bare blade, I myself feel it is worth consideration. I would say one must learn to judge a blade largely by it's feel and shape, particularly when condition hides all the obvious merits. This is learning.....and we all will make mistakes....but again this is learning. What I am saying is that we must all stop and look closely at that junk mumei blade....it may be a worthy treasure under the disguise of condition....there may be a rare Kamakura blade hiding there. This is where the merit of your polisher comes into play. The polisher should be asked to assist you in making this decision. If he is an honest and creditable man he will advise for or against having work done on your blade. The final choice must be yours, but getting reputable advice helps.

Make the choice to have a complete shirazaya and habaki made for your blade. If fine mounting is present, have a proper wooden blade made for the koshirae, put place the newly polished blade in proper shirazaya. Finally, it is advisable, as long as the blade is being properly restored, to have it sent through shinsa and have papers issued on it. Papers are argumentive, so perhaps this again becomes a very personal choice.

Emotions can twist your reasoning when it comes to "pet" blades but one must be realistic when having a blade restored. If this is a difficult task, ask around and be not afraid to accept negative opinions. Judge your opinions on the merit of those offering kantei, but again, the final choice must be yours.

Is it all worth it? My thinking is yes! To see a "dying blade" given a new life is most satisfying. We are all doing our good deed in life by rescuing artful treasures from attic, basement and garage, but to restore the most worthy of these treasures back to their due splendor.....the true satisfaction of this field of appreciation is realized. Melodramatic? Yes.....but true!

## DO YOU OWN THIS SWORD?

This sword was recently sold by one of our members, but the buyer can not be found. The sword has papers of good rating by Token Hozon Kai (Yoshikawa) group but the new owner does not know this. The papers are available upon request from the JSS NL Editor.



This signature is of Hizen YUKIHIRO III and is rarely seen in books showing oshigata of Hizen smiths. It is certainly an oshigata worth adding to your files as reference material. First generation Yukihiro is related to the Tadayoshi lineage in that his father was the adopted son of the first master Tadayoshi (Yoshinobu). The third Yukihiro follows this tradition having worked in the early 1700s. It appears his signature is usually rather large and is centered down the nakago with the "HIRO" character looking like the style of his father, less complicated than the first generation Yukihiro.

## A WORD OF ADVICE TO ALL MEMBERS -

The JSS/US publications come out on a somewhat regular basis, usually being mailed about the first week of every even-numbered month. Exception might occur (as with this issue) in mid-summer and with the last issue of the year. The annual "Bulletin" has been put into phase with last year's issue and should be mailed out around October in the future. Supply orders are also handled on a regular basis as is the library service. Please....with publications, if you receive an issue without receiving the previous issue, or if you miss a mailing for two months time, please inquire about this. The same with supply/library requests. If a month delay is experienced, please inquire. An error may have taken place and a simple inquiry could solve this problem. Remember, all of our "offices" are on a strictly voluntary basis and therefore, due to personal obligations and available time, on occasion, errors do take place. It is better to ask about a matter than to sit quiet and become sour on the Society! Your inquiry on any such matter is most welcomed!

As for membership dues....usually, all new members are signed up as of 1/1 date, and even though they may join in July, they are given all publications to date, but signed up as of the 1/1 date. All members have been put "into phase" with this 1/1 due date at present and nobody is being cheated. Any questions regarding dues billing are heartily welcomed.

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE - The next issue of the Newsletter will come out on schedule, around the first of August. Please have all material intended for this issue into the Editor's hands no later than a week prior to this date.



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