

Japanese Sword Society of the United States, Inc.



NEWSLETTER

VOLUME V NO.1

JANUARY - FEBRUARY · 1973

ELECTION RESULTS -

Officers for 1973 and 1974

Chairman.....Alan Harvie
Executive Vice Chairman..Jim Mitchell
1st Vice Chairman.....Peter Bleed
2nd Vice Chairman.....Arnold Frenzel
Secretary.....Mel Oka
Treasurer.....Ron Hartmann

Congratulations are extended to the newly elected officers. It is felt that the society has a good roster of officers again this term and that much will be accomplished for the club during their term of office.

A word of thanks is also directed to the gentlemen who served in these positions last term. Particular thanks to Ira Duncan who has served as our treasurer for many years and has given many hours of labor and bookkeeping during the peak activity years of the society. The society thanks Ira for all of his efforts.

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IMPORTANT DUES NOTICE -

The bulk of the membership's 1973 dues are payable as of the first of this year. Check your membership card and due date today. **IMPORTANT** - Send your dues check or money order directly to the new Treasurer : Ron Hartmann

Make checks payable to Japanese Sword Society of the United States or to Ron Hartmann. The treasurer will advise the secretary of all dues received and he will in turn mail your up-dated membership card to you post-haste. The society depends on your dues in order to perform our functions. Your prompt payment of dues will be greatly appreciated so that budgeting of funds can proceed.

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NEW MEMBER -

Mr. John Clark

The JSS/US welcomes John as a new member and we hope that his membership will be most rewarding. John has expressed a desire to be an active member and it is felt that he will be an asset to the group.

SOCIETY OUTLOOK 1973 -

In looking ahead, the outlook appears pretty good for our sword group. As always, much of this success hinges on the cooperation and contributions of the membership. The pair of active workers, Rick Mantegani and Henrick Olsgaard, have been very busy of late trying to set up some activities for the group for this year. Both of these men are very much interested in seeing our society grow and move forward. They are taking steps to get some local sword meetings organized. The possibility of making several field trips to see museum collections and perhaps a visit to a local swordsmiths forge...if things work out. Steps are also being taken to see about a west coast sword show through the full cooperation of the major clubs out on the coast. This would be a great event for all the west coast collectors! Most of these ideas are being investigated and planed by Rick and Henrick and also by Jim Mitchell. Perhaps a few words of encouragement would help to stimulate these guys and give them some much needed backing. A nice letter of praise sure feels good once in awhile!

The society publications will continue as in 1972, with a regular bi-monthly Newsletter and at least one good Bulletin. The format of the NL will be much as last years, with oshigata of blades and occassional articles. Some good blades will be presented and possibly some good fitting rubbings or photographs. As was said many times before, send in your own rubbings and descriptions of your blades, etc., and these will be a welcomed addition for this years paper.

TOKEN KENKYO KAI BOOK -

Mr. R. B. Caldwell of Dallas advised the NL of the availability of the text, BOOK OF THE SWORD, as was offered for sale during the TKK event last November. These books were being offered for \$10 each through the end of the year, at which time the price was to be increased to \$15 per copy. Unfortunately Mr. Caldwell's letter did not reach us in time for the last NL. Nevertheless, this is a most important works and will not be reprinted in the future. It is felt that it would be a rewarding investment to anyone who buy this book. There are a few copies left and your haste would be advisable. Contact R.B.Caldwell

BOOK REVIEW -

EARLY JAPANESE SWORD GUARDS - SUKASHI TSUBA
by Masayuki Sasano

The Newsletter has received several favorable comments from various members praising the above book which has just recently come out. Mr. Peter Bleed has supplied the following review of this text.

"It is a brand new (November 1972) publication by Japan Publications Trading Company (USA) Inc. At \$15 it is a handsome and useful publication. It opens with a 20 page history of tsuba. As the title suggests, only openwork iron guards are treated in this section and in the 216 black and white and nine color plates that follow. I suppose some could call this a limited scope, but within the limitation, coverage is quite broad. Owari, Akasaka, and Higo Hayashi groups get heavy coverage, among others. Each black and white plate shows a single piece and has a brief description on the same page. Many of the guards shown in SUKASHI TSUBA in the Shibata series also appear in this book. Different plates appear to have been used in the two books, however, so it is interesting to compare illustrations in the two. I find the illustrations in the English edition to be rather dark and stark. Surface texture is thus often hard to pick up and appreciate. Some of the descriptions also seem to be a bit too literary for my tastes. At any rate, I am sure that the membership will be interested in hearing about the book if they have not already."

Pete Bleed

Mr. R. B. Caldwell has also sent up some praising comments both for this book and particularly on the merits of Mr. Sasano. Twelve of the finest iron tsuba to be found were loaned to Token Kenkyo Kai during the Dallas event last November. These tsuba were THE BEST and are from Mr. Sasano's private collection. It was through Mr. Sasano's kind generosity that allowed us to see such examples of the art.

Mr. Caldwell went on to say that this book is the best he has ever seen in english and it will help all collectors to understand and appreciate the sukashi tsuba. He says that through this fine book he gained a much deeper and true understanding the beauty of sukashi tsuba.

This book is available from the following publisher:

Japan Publications Trading Co., Inc.

This book is on order by me at present. A book list and notice of new texts as they come out was also requested and will be included in a future NL if possible.

SALE - TRADE - WANTED ITEMS

WANTED: A good (but not necessarily great)
suit of armor in good condition.

Write:

Peter Bleed

FOR SALE ITEMS:

The following items are being offered
for sale:

- (1) Wakizashi signed RAI KUNIMITSU SAKU.
A SHINTO blade in fair polish showing
an active hamon and pretty hada. The
Blade is mounted partially. Price \$150.
- (1) Ko-wakizashi signed KANEMITSU. A koto
Mino seki blade. Not top quality but
an interesting blade. Mounted. Polish
is only fair. Price \$100
- (1) Bare mumei blade. Shinto period. Zero
polish. Price \$30 (wakizasni)
- (1) Showa-to katana. Price \$35.

For more info and complete descriptions,
write the Newsletter editor. R.H.

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OSHIGATA -

TADAHIRO WAKIZASHI

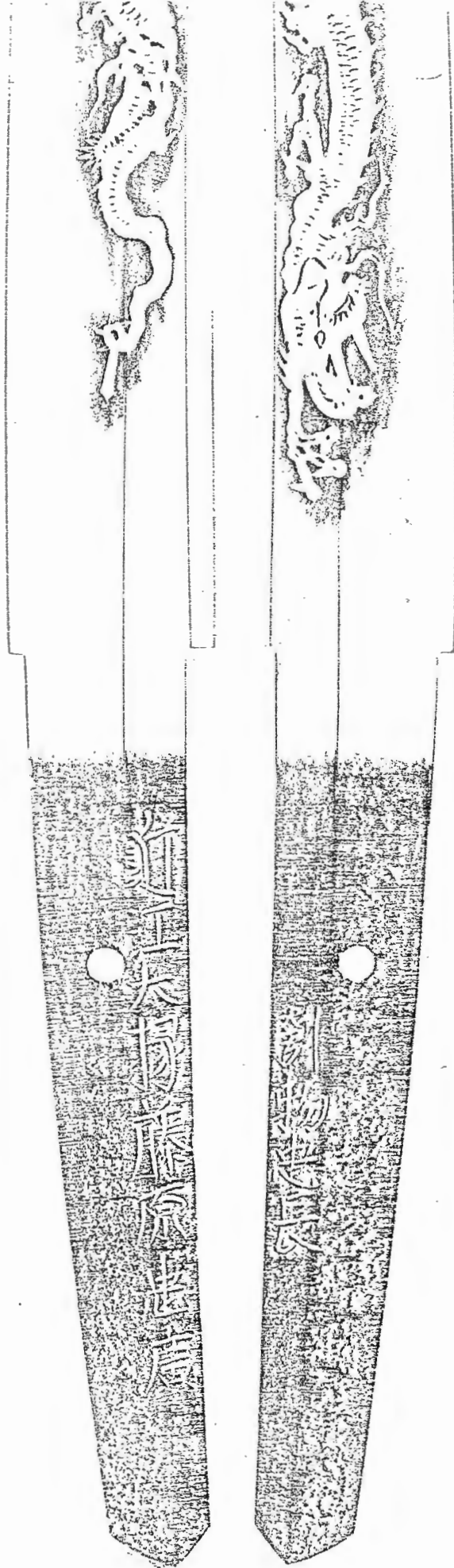
oshigata supplied by
Mr. Reginald Bretnor.

The following oshigata is a fine example of this smiths work.
The blade is signed: OMI DAIJO FUJIWARA TADAHIRO on the omote, and
(Horimono by) TADANAGA on the ura. This is the son of Tadayoshi of
Hizen Province. Tadahiro is Hawley TA-12 and Tadanaga is TA-87.

Albert Yamanaka covered this smith in his Nihonto Newsletter,
Vol. 5 No. 1 page 18.

Tadanaga was noted for his fine horimono.

Mr. Bretnor has offered to supply the NL with other oshigata
from this line of smiths and we can certainly look forward to that.
He has also suggested that due to the many examples of this smiths
works in various members collections, that perhaps this would be a
prime source of research to be printed in future issues of the NL.



(omote)
OMI DAIJO FUJIWARA TADAHIRO
TA-12

(ura)
TADANAGA (horimono by)
TA-87

PRICING GUIDELINES

By Peter Bleed

I have always been suspect of "price" or "value" formulae since most of them are so full of vague "fudge factors" that they are essentially worthless. Furthermore, values are so poorly established that no standards can really be fixed. In terms of comparing the values of different kinds of swords, I think that most Americans have followed Yumoto's guide that if a katana equals 100%, a wakizashi equals 50% and a tanto 30%. A different and rather precise opinion is presented by Iida in the introduction to his book, NIHONTO, TSUBA, KODOGU KAKAKU JITEN. Iida presents his evaluation of swords and fittings in monetary terms, and like all such guides, his "prices" are simply incredible. The guidelines he gives for the application of his value scale are, however specific enough to be of some interest. I have thus paraphrased them below and will make no apology for a free, though hopefully accurate, translation.

To Iida, the high or standard evaluation of a blade is expressed in three ways:

1. The shape of the blade is not altered from the original, it is UBU, its preservation is assured and it is a sound genuine piece.
2. Standard length of the cutting edge is about 2 shaku 3 sun, it is without KIZU or other flaws and has a perfect polish.
3. It is a product of the height of a makers career.

Four major conditons can change the evaluation of a blade:

1. Middle wakizashi - about 1 shaku 5 sun - are worth about 30% of the STANDARD evaluation. Wakizashi approaching 2 shaku are worth about 70%.
2. Tanto are evaluated at about 50% of the STANDARD.
3. Katana and wakizashi are normally shinogi-zukuri and tanto and smaller wakizashi are normally hira-zukuri. Other styles of blades - yari, naginata, etc., - are rated at about 30% - 40% of the STANDARD.
4. In the works of a single smith, blades made at the begining, middle, and later periods of his career will vary. The best pieces date from the maker's maturity during his middle to later years. There are many instances of deterioration in a man's later years. (cont'd)

PRICING GUIDELINES (cont'd)

Three factors can add to the standard evaluation:

1. Horimono adds 30% to 50% and elaborate engravings may even add 80% to 100%. If the work is signed it augments the value emmensely, however there are cases of engraving added later which is a minus point.
2. Historical pieces or pieces with historical documentation have a real bonus.
3. Pieces with old origami are also increased in value although there are cases where these have no meaning.

Three conditions reduce the standard evaluation. The last two of these have to do with condition and various kinds of flaws. Iida's list is not significantly different from other lists and he does not give any indication of relative "badness" of the flaws, so only his first point seems worth relating.

1. Shortened pieces are reduced in value, although old O-suriage blades are not cheapened. Shinto and shinshinto pieces rate 50% to 70% of the evaluation of uncut blades.

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TKK PAPERS -

A word of interest, Mr. Caldwell has noted to the NL that final paperwork has been completed and sent to Japan, pertaining to the shinsa in Dallas. It is expected that the papers will be sent out to the collectors either in late February or early March.

A REMINDER -

During 1972, the society issued six (6) Newsletter - Volume 4 Numbers 1 thru 6, and one (1) Bulletin, whole number 18. If any member did not receive all of these papers, please notify the NL and the missing copies will be sent to you promptly.

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE -

Next issue of the NL will come out about the 1st of April. All material intended for this issue should be in my hands no later than the third week of March.

Ron Hartmann, Editor