

Japanese Sword Society of the United States, Inc.



NEWSLETTER

VOLUME IV NO. 3

MAY - JUNE · 1972

On behalf of the membership, welcome into our society. The society resume' has been sent to these gentlemen, explaining our functions and goals.

POLISHING PROGRAM REPORT:

The anticipated announcement pertaining to the status of our polishing program has finally arrived. As was feared, no new contract has been signed between the society and Mr. Nakajima. This means that as of March 15, 1972, our polishing program has been terminated. Mr. Nakajima will however, continue to polish swords in the states, but as an independent polisher. Hopefully, with the help of Mr. Nakajima's friends in the society, some arrangement can be made whereby he could possibly act as an advisor to the society - someone we can go to for opinions on blades and fittings, as was done in the past.

Needless to say, this loss to the society is a significant one. For this reason, an alternative program must be established as soon as possible. Society Chairman, Dean Hartley, is continuing his investigation into an alternative program. The membership will be promptly advised of any progress towards a new program - perhaps a new polisher brought over under contract by the society, or the contracting of an agent in Japan who would handle sword polishing for us, or whatever. Anyone who has constructive suggestions or who is able to assist in the chore of building such a new program, should contact Dean Hartley.

Information pertaining to independant polishers located in the states (addresses, who to contact, etc.) will be included in a future Newsletter. Anyone who has such info should feel free to send it to the Newsletter editor.



GENERAL INFORMATION:

Recently, JSS/US member Mr. Arnold Frenzel of Waterloo Lutheran University, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, invited Mr. Morihiro Ogawa to Canada for a sword filled visit. Mr. Frenzel was kind enough to supply us with a very interesting resume' of this visit, noting some of the collections visited and blades enjoyed. It is as follows:

"Morihiro Ogawa flew into Toronto on March 30 where I met him at the airport and took him to Kitchener (about 60 miles west) where he stayed as my guest until April 2nd. While in Canada he studied my collection as well as those of Mr. Charles Whitney and Mr. David Pepper in Toronto. Between those three collections I was able to show him about 80 swords and 120 tsuba and other fittings. We also spent a day at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. Their collection, which has been neglected for many years and very possibly never studied before, contains about 80 blades, 25 yari and arrow heads, and about 200 tsuba. This was about the 15th museum visited by Mr. Ogawa since arriving from Japan, and his other visits took him to museums in the Chicago and Boston areas, the Metropolitan in NYC, the Tower of London, Victoria and Albert, the British Museum, and to Paris, Hamburg, Copenhagen and Stockholm. Mr. Ogawa commented subsequently that the best museum collection outside Japan is that of the Boston Museum. The Royal Ontario Museum has fewer than a dozen swords on display, and of those a number are "wrong". The best sword he saw there was a blade signed Hizen no Kuni ju Harima Daijo Fujiwara Tadakuni. This is Hawley TA39, it is on display, carries a two body cutting test, and it is the same man (but not the same blade) as that illustrated in John Yumoto's book. At the museum, about 100 tsuba and other fittings are on display. It also has several suits of armor and would be worth a visit for students who might be visiting the greater Toronto area. The R.O.M. has other objects of Japanese art on display, and it also has a large and very important collection of Chinese art and it is in this field which they specialize. Mr. Ogawa has offered to prepare a detailed catalogue of their collection for them and one can only hope that they will take advantage of the opportunity. While I cannot speak for the other collectors mentioned above, I would be pleased to have any society member visit me when in the area. A little advanced notice would be appreciated. Finally we spent a morning at Niagra Falls which Mr. Ogawa relates is very famous in Japan. It was certainly a pleasure to have Mr. Ogawa pay a visit and I look forward to an opportunity to show him additional collections on his next visit."

Arnold Frenzel

The above report is indeed a very interesting one. Perhaps a letter to the Royal Ontario Museum, expressing an interest in both their collection of Japanese arms and in the preparation of such a detailed catalogue would be worthwhile to all.

INFORMATION POOL -

Members are encouraged to submit their questions and findings to the Newsletter for inclusion in this column, for the benefit of the membership.

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Making satisfactory oshigata is a difficult task for all of us and some ingenious short cuts and "tricks" have been devised to make it easier. In this note I would like to pass on yet another "trick" which I find very helpful. It is not original but I've never seen it in use in this country. The primary problem in making oshigata is of course holding the paper in place while the rubbing is being made. The use of a few small magnets can make holding the paper relatively easy and can facilitate the entire process and improve the oshigata remarkably. I use four round flat magnets of the type used on bulletin boards. Fairly small magnets are most handy but don't get them too small or they will not be strong enough to hold the paper against the pull of the ink stone. Place the oshigata paper over the nakago and secure it in place with two of the magnets; one above the machi and the other at the tip of the tang. Use the remaining magnets to hold shorter sections of the rubbing. Place magnet number three a few inches below the machi and complete the upper portion of the rubbing. When it is finished, place the fourth magnet on this completed section and move number three down a few more inches. Rub this area and move magnet four on to it before moving number three once again. Repeat this process down the tang until the rubbing is completed.

It has been suggested that the magnets may introduce to the blade enough of a charge to attract small particles which could mar a fine polish. I have never found this to be a problem, but after finishing a rubbing, I make a habit of tapping the nakago with my knuckle and wiping it off.

Mr. Peter Bleed
Madison, Wisconsin

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QUESTION: (Mr. Bleed asks) I've wondered how long it takes for a real blister to form. I've seen other major kizu on recent blades but blisters seem rare. Perhaps the membership would like to comment on the "youngest" blister that they have found on a blade.

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Editor's note: Perhaps such blisters can only appear on blades made in the old way - a fine "skin" and appear only with many polishes. They may not appear on a new sword made in this way due to lack of many polishes. Lets see what the membership can turn up here.

The question came up the other day, where can one buy cord for rewinding tsukas. The only source which I could pass along at this time was Albert Yamanaka. Along this same line, I had asked one time before, what lengths of cord are required for "standard" handles. The following lengths were given to me:

15 feet for Katana Tsuka
11 feet for Wakizashi
8 feet for Tanto

Good silk TSUKA ITO would cost about 65¢ per foot, to have it sent from Japan. Anyone who knows of a good source for this type of supplies would be doing all of us a favor by passing it along.

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SALE - TRADE - WANTED ITEMS:

Wanted: Blades by Sendai smiths, especially by members of the Kunikane (Ku159-Ku171), Yasutomo (Ya216-Ya224), Kunitsugu (Ku784a, b,c and others), Kanekura (Ka186-Ka192), or Kanetsugu (Ka1208 - 1213) lines. Interested in either buying or trading for these or other Rikuzen blades. I would also like to collect rubbings of swords by these makers.

Peter Bleed

Wanted: HARAS (2) Volume set on fittings from the Hamburg Museum Collection. One book is photos and the other an index, etc.

Richard Mantegani

Sale or Trade:

Katana Shinogi **zukur**i in cane mounting. 2 shaku 1 sun (shortened by 3.5 sun). signed: KANENORI SAKU. This is a very tired, old, blade with a serious chip - but it is a good signature and the blade is interesting. For a more detailed description, contact Ron Hartmann c/o Newsletter. Price \$50 or will trade for an interesting sukashi tsuba.

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SWORD SHOWS -

The Token Study Group held their 4th annual sword show July 3rd and 4th at Des Plaines, Illinois. Mr. Harry Mack reports that the show was again a big success; well attended and some fine swords and fittings displayed. Mr. Morihiro Ogawa was again on hand to answer the many questions of collectors and again as was last year, he contributed very much to the show. Mr. Seikichi Kurokawa, a very fine sword polisher visiting from Japan, was a guest of the group. Mr. Kurokawa presented on of the highlights of the show by polishing some blades in a demonstration, to the enjoyment of all attending. Of some of the fine blades on display were a MURAMASA, KANEMOTO, and a SUKEKANE, plus many other exception blades. (A very brief visit the other evening by Mr. Kurokawa proved most enjoyable. Mr. Kurokawa and some friends were passing through St. Louis and stopped in to say hello and to view some local blades.).

A REMINDER - The TOKEN KENKYU KAI has mailed another announcement which answered many of the questions in the minds of those wishing to attend. As a reminder to those collectors who neglected to answer any of the TKK letters, the following is of interest:

The first two mailings have gone to 300 known, interested parties. To date we have had response from approximately 100 of these individuals or organizations. As these letters and printing are necessarily expensive this, and all future releases, will go only to those who have shown an interest or committed themselves in some way. We are enclosing an extra commitment sheet and in the event you have already filled one out, please pass it on to a friend who has not. Only those who are on our active mailing will receive the letters in the future.

The Newsletter will continue to push towards the success of this most significant event. Again, they need your cooperation, and I am sure the would appreciate to hear from the "other 66%" of the collectors, all it takes is a letter.

EDITORIAL COMMENT -

To repeat a frequently heard plea, THE SOCIETY NEEDS SOME ACTION! It is very difficult to understand the lack of group activity amongst the many society members located in the central California area. It would seem a simple matter to set up a schedule of casual monthly meetings - nothing fancy - just a friendly gathering of mutually interested collectors out for an afternoon of swords. The various Avon, Beer Can, Toothpick Holders, what-have-you collectors manage to have such spirited meetings, why not members of an artistic and culturally significant society such as JSS/US? The benefits of such CALL your local board member and offer your basement, family room or whatever, and lets get something going! **A.C.H.**

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE: Next issue will come out about the 1st of August. All articles, etc., intended for this issue should be in my hands no later than the last week of July. Ron Hartmann - Editor, 5907 Deerwood Drive, St. Louis, Missouri 63123.

KIYOMITSU and SUKESADA Wakizashi

Oshigata provided by Mr. Morihiro Ogawa

SHAPE - Sakizori Hirazukuri form

HAMON - The hamon is medium suguba and ko notare with ko ashi of nie, with sunagashi and tobiyaki. Kiyomitsu usually used this nie hamon and boshi.

JITETSU AND HADA - The forging is mixed itame and masame.

NAKAGO - Katesagari yasurime with one mekugi ana.

SIGNITURES - (omote left) GENBEI no JO SUKESADA SAKU

(omote right) BIZEN KUNI JU OSAFUNE KIYOMITSU SAKU

(ura left) TENSHO YO NEN HATCHI GATSU NI (1576)

(ura right) KAMAYAMATAIZO ZIU DAI TSUKURU KORE

Comments: This blade is a collaboration by both smiths, Kiyomitsu and Sukesada.

Of these smiths A. Yamanaka says (in part)¹ "KIYOMITSU, like SUKESADA, has several swordsmiths by the same name, and also like Sukesada, these are not connected by genealogy."

"It is popularly believed that all the swords produced at this time were mass produced and of poor quality, however we know that there were swordsmiths who concentrated in making blades of exceptional qualities for the time and these we know as CHUMON UCHI meaning "order made blade". Such smiths like SUKESADA and KIYOMITSU have left some very outstanding works with titles of YOZOZAEMON no JO, HIKOBEI no JO, GOROZAEMON no JO, and commonly on these blades there are names of the persons who ordered these blades made."

"...However, of the more outstanding SUKESADA, there is YOZOZAEMON no JO the most outstanding one of all, followed by HIKOBEI and GENBEI with perhaps SHINJURO."

Editor's note: Although the signiture on this reproduced oshigata is rather difficult to see, the hamon has reproduced rather well. From this we can see what a beautiful blade this must be and points out the characteristic hamon of KIYOMITSU. I have taken a few slight liberties....Mr. Ogawa translated the characters (phonetically) on the oshigata. He wrote GENBEI no ZIYO which I believe to be written "JO". The year was written TENSIYO which is written TENSHO. If there is any error in this, please bring it to my attention and I will print the correction. The visible characteristics match well what Mr. Yamanaka explained in his coverage of this smith.

