

Japanese Sword Society of the United States, Inc.



NEWSLETTER

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ST. LOUIS JSS/US SWORD SHOW REPORT -

The long awaited JSS/US event took place as planned the weekend of June 5th in conjunction with the MACA 1st Annual Gun Show. From all indications it was a well attended and successful show and a full detailed report is enclosed in this issue of the NEWSLETTER.

Our thanks to all the people who made this event a good one, with special thanks to Clarence Siman and Neil Keen upon who most of the planning and work fell. The welcoming party which everyone enjoyed so very much was their good gesture and was a highlight of the weekend.

Although it is stressed in the following report - PLEASE TAKE A FEW MINUTES OF YOUR TIME - and send your comments on the show to either Clarence Siman, or the Newsletter. Express your feelings on this type of show (held with a gun show or held privately in a motel). It is of utmost importance that we hear your comments if we are to plan a good show again next year. The idea of another gun/sword show seemed to be most popular amongst those attending this year. We will plan to give the membership whatever kind of show is desired.

NEW MEMBERS -

Our membership has taken another leap forward with (17) new names added to our roster. Since these people are listed on the enclosed membership up-date, they will only be welcomed by name and area at this point. Welcome into the JSS/US!

Help us make your JSS/US membership a worthwhile one by being an active member. It is through the assistance and suggestions of our members by which we develop our value as a society.



JSS/US SHOW REPORT '76

The first JSS/US show is now over and from the reports we've heard the show was a great success. We sold 30 tables, which means that our treasury is \$60 richer from the \$2 rebate given for each table sold to our members. About 20% of the total membership attended from diverse parts of the country and this gave us a well rounded representation.

The society did well in the awards area too, as John Hamilton and John Ryan won show awards for their fine displays of blades and related Samurai items. Congratulations to both for their fine displays.

Neil Keen, our on-the-scene trouble shooter, assisted in every way possible but proved his worth by directing several members to a local restaurant where they enjoyed Northern Chinese cuisine and came back raving about the food and the service.

Neil and myself interviewed everyone we could and think we covered the entire group. From the comments we have heard, the show was well received, both by the members that took tables and those that came to sight-see. Our members voiced a great satisfaction in the table arrangements, interacting with the MACA and the items that were bought, traded, and sold. Everyone said they would return next year if the show were held here again.

For those that did not attend, The Show Center is a building put up originally for use as a large discount/grocery store. The JSS/US tables were positioned in four rows, off to the corner of the entire table lay-out, just to the side of the front door. This seemed to be the ideal location as it provided immediate access to our tables, yet kept us out of the way of the main entrance and non-interested people coming in.

Our members started arriving early Friday afternoon and by that evening 85% of our group was there and ready to go. The arrangements were such that none of our members had to wait more than a few minutes to receive their badges or be directed to their tables.

The MACA provided individual 8 foot tables and this came to be a surprise for some, and, as one of our members remarked "Its been a long time since a group provided full 8 foot tables for a show". It should be noted that some shows butt tables end-to-end, then mark 6 foot intervals, which causes someone to have to lay his swords where two tables join. This of course is not desirable for anyone.

Some of the suggestions that Neil and I heard, as well as the criticisms, was that the lighting was not the best in which to look at swords, that the society should put on a display of ultra-fine blades and fittings, that there were not enough good things to be purchased and that possibly the society might arrange lectures for both the novice and advanced collectors.

The lighting seemed to be standard and slightly above what we find at most motel shows; the society must be willing to rent the necessary display cases to protect valuables; with time we hope to draw more good things to the show, although many, many of our members did well; and the lectures could possibly have been done, as there were many notables in the sword world attending, however, with this being the first show and with many of these people contributing to the anxiously awaited shinsa, we felt that to ask would be to impose.

Neil and I attended the post-show meeting of the MACA and were pleased to hear the compliments extended to our society. Our members provided fundamental and educational information as well as providing a ready market for those among the general attendance that brought blades to sell.

Several Directors of the MACA complimented the JSS/US on the integrity and manner in which our group conducted itself while dealing on the open floor and within our own section. They have asked me to extend to you a warm thanks for helping to make this, their first show, a successful event.

They have further extended an invitation to the JSS/US to take part in one of their 1977 shows. The MACA is currently planning two shows for the coming year, one possibly in April and the other around the first part of October. Because we added to our treasury without cost, sold off most of our supplies and everyone seemed to have a good show, we might consider this invitation further.

I might add that since this was the first time I had ever promoted a show, I learned many things, and hopefully will learn many more from your suggestions, comments and criticisms that might prove useful in future JSS/US events.

One of the things I learned was that people will take the time to talk but not the time to write, as I had asked for written comments on the bottom of the show flyer provided with every table. Therefore, may I use this space to sincerely request that any member with an idea, suggestion, comment or criticism, whether or not you attended this particular show, take time to write to me and let me know how a better show can be put together in the future.

One highlight of the weekend was the hospitality hour or three that was put on as a welcoming gesture, by some of the St. Louis members. If "dead soldiers" are any indication of how the battle is won, then I would have to say the bar, er...the field was swept clean.

Actually, the MACA provided the hospitality room and since Saturday night at a show usually leaves everyone the task of finding their own amusement, the idea was conceived to try and promote the opportunity for our members to get together, away from the hustle and bustle of the show, to renew old friendships, make new ones and enjoy themselves in a relaxed atmosphere.

With 99% of our members attending for an hour, and 98% for a little longer, we feel the idea was well worthwhile. Many interesting conversations were heard, some people brought oshigata and these were discussed, while at the same time non-sword topics were interwoven in conversations throughout the room.

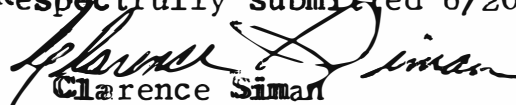
It seemed that a refreshing attitude was mingled with the refreshments, and a new comradery was established among our members. In a manner of speaking, the relaxed atmosphere and friendship that prevailed helped in making the show the success that it was.

In closing, let me say that a show of this type seemed to help everyone, while at the same time promoted the image of our society.

Again I ask for your suggestions, comments and criticisms.

THANK YOU FOR MAKING OUR SHOW A SUCCESSFUL EVENT

Respectfully submitted 6/20/76


Clarence Siman

YAMASHIRO DAIJO KUNITSUGU

oshigata by Ron Hartmann

SHAPE: O-wakizashi in rare KAMMURI OTOSHI form (see oshigata for details of hi and shape). Medium torii-zori. The pronounced thickening of the blade at the kissaki, raised shinogi, and rather wide and slight taper shape, gives this blade a very stout feeling until actually held, then one finds a gracefully balanced blade of classic proportions.

HAMON: The hamon is a gentle notare chu-suguha mixed with ko-midare resulting in abundant ko-ashi and ko-yo (observed when the blade is examined against a light-source as when looking at the nioi line). The hamon is done in very clear and crisp abundant ko-nie all along the yakiba and resulting in ji-nie. The boshi is beautifully done in a very full yakizume with sweeping hakikaki. There is also a form of kinsugi in the hamon, in ko-nie not unlike Satsuma type kinsugi.

JIHADA: The blade has been forged in a very tight itame with some running itame appearing.

NAKAGO: The nakago is ubu with slanting left yasurimei and sharply cut. Nakago-mune is flat and full dressed yasurimei. Two mekugi-ana exist but the large one in the end is probably simply a whim of the smith.

SIGNITURE: (ura) BINGO KUNI FUKUYAMA JU NIN
(omote) YAMASHIRO DAIJO MINAMOTO KUNITSUGU
with "ICHI" and two-body cutting test
done in gold inlay.

DIMENSIONS: 55.0cm (1.82 Shaku) cutting edge and 15.5cm (5.12 Sun)
nakago.

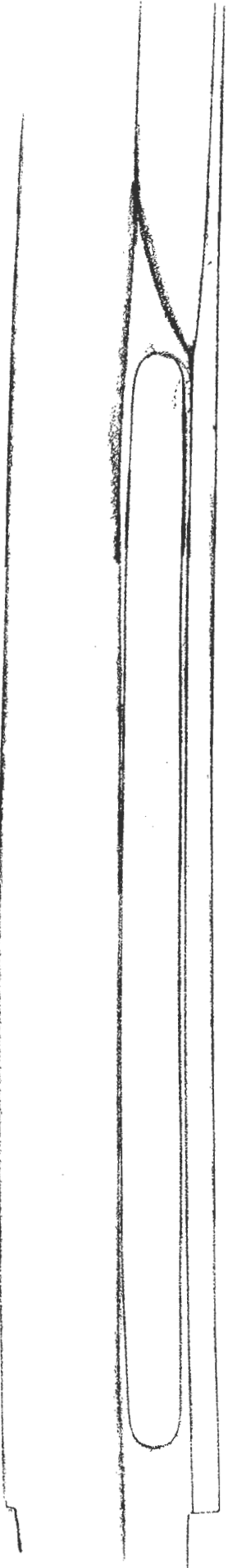
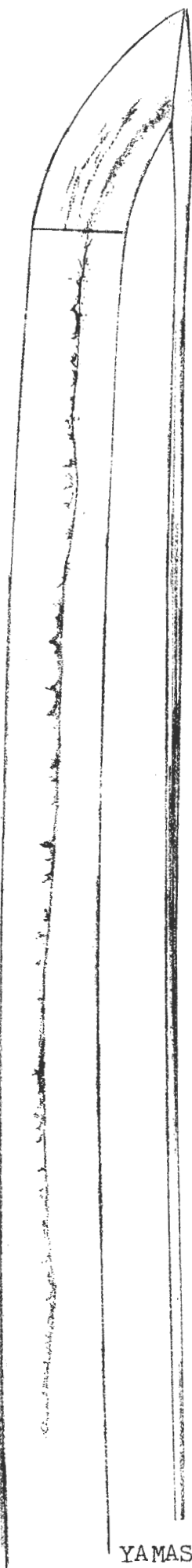
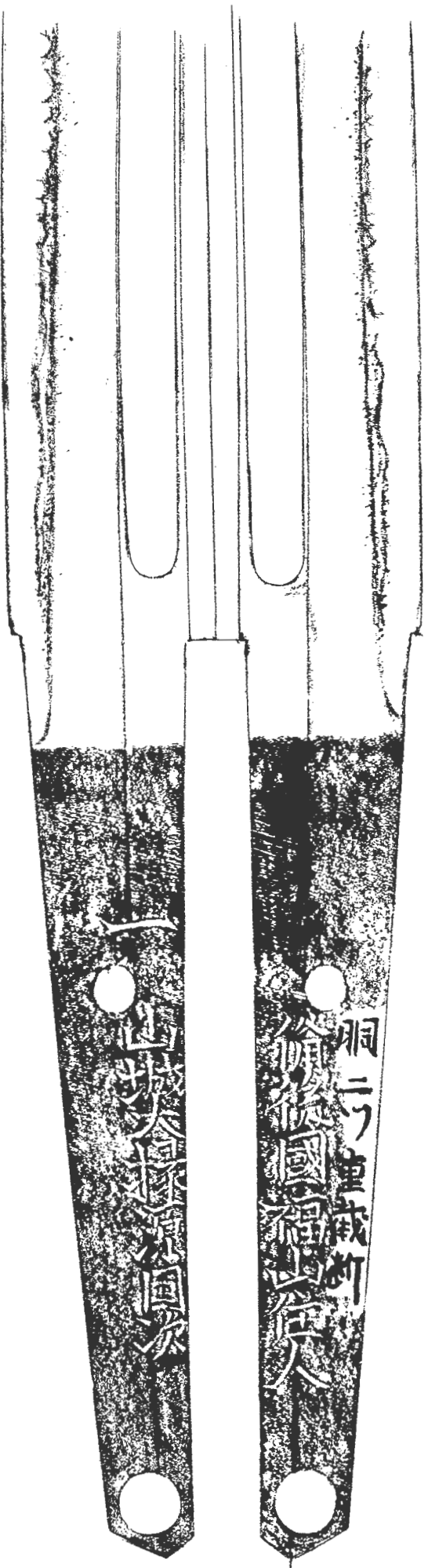
REMARKS:

Although a beautiful example of this rare form plus the most excellent example of the swordsmith's art, little information can be found on this man. Obviously he was from the town of FUKUYAMA in BINGO PROVINCE and worked around 1670 period, but this is all the information uncovered during my research. This is Hawley #KU-745.

During the Token Study Group shinsa which was held in October of 1975, this blade was awarded the SHŪSAKU (Excellent-plus 74-70) by Mr. Yoshikawa of Nihon Token Hozon Kai.

The koshirae of this sword is also of noteworthy excellence but has not been researched enough to comment on at this time. It is of excellent quality and probably of a prominent personage. More will be said of this koshirae at a later date.

Any addition information available from the membership would be very much appreciated and will be made available in a future NL follow-up.



UNDERSTANDING NIE AND NIOI

(Part one of a series on understanding nie and nioi,
as compiled by Ron Hartmann and other JSS/US members.)

INTRODUCTION -

During the course of each year, inquiries come in to the NEWSLETTER asking for help in gaining a basic understanding of sword appreciation. At these times, basic fundamentals are explained with key points stressed (to the best of my knowledge). Perhaps the single most essential item which is stressed for full understanding is to learn to recognise and understand what is GOOD and what is lacking in BAD workings of NIE and NIOI. This understanding naturally goes into the other workings of a blade related to these two basic characteristics.

This series of articles will no doubt be redundant to many of our members, but hopefully the material will not only serve to educate the novice collectors but also serve as a refresher for the old timers. It is also hoped that some of our advanced people will feel free to elaborate on the subject, relating their own thoughts and findings.

Most of the material in this series will be taken from the very excellent writings of Albert Yamanaka in his out-of-print publication of several year ago, NIHONTO NEWSLETTER.

RCH

In looking at a sword, it goes without saying that the shape is very important, however, the one thing that catches the observer's eye first usually is the HAMON.

The hamon comes in various forms and shapes, but it boils down to the two things which are the basis of the hamon of Japanese swords. That is, they are made in NIE and NIOI, the metallurgical terms given for this in the west are Ferrite, Pearlite, Sorbite, Troostite, Martensite, Austenite and Cementite, the terms applied to different types of steel crystals.

In the study of the Japanese sword, these are divided into the two terms of NIE and NIOI. The nie occurs when the blade is tempered at high heat and the nioi at a slightly lower temperature. Basically, the use of nie and nioi in Japanese swords is as follows:

NIE.....used by smiths who followed	YAMASHIRO TRADITION
"	YAMATO TRADITION
"	SOSHU TRADITION
NIOI....used by smiths who followed	MINO TRADITION
"	BIZEN TRADITION

By "Tradition", we mean the smiths who followed these traditions, so that aside from the above mentioned five traditions (or province names), those from other provinces can be traced to these five.

NIE AND NIOI (cont'd.) -

It is essential for one to know the different nie and how they occur, its qualities both good and bad. The differentiation of the nie, whether good or bad, directly tells whether the blade is good or bad. We list here the names of the various Nie and how they occur.

SUGUHA NIE -

Suguha nie are seen on blades by smiths who tempered the hamon of their blade in Suguha (straight hamon). The nie on Suguha blades are rougher or larger inside the hamon and as one looks towards the HABUCHI, that is the edge of the hamon near the ji, the nie gradually becomes smaller and finer and more delicate, the whole appearance becomes very refined. Although not true on all suguha blades, this is the rule of the smiths who made suguha.

With a blade in suguha and in nie, the first thing or the smiths that come to one's mind are the smiths of the YAMASHIRO TRADITION. This would be the smiths of Yamashiro Province led by the oldest, SANJO MUNECHIKA during the Heian Period, followed by the group of the AWATA-GUCHI, the RAI KUNITOSHI and RYOKAI, though Ryokai's blades do not have as much nie as compared to the former. Of the Awataguchi smiths, KUNIYOSHI was very skilled at this type of hamon though other Awataguchi smiths also made them. KUNIYOSHI was the one who most faithfully followed this type. His suguha is the most gentle of all the Awataguchi smith's suguha.

In the Shintō Period, there is TADAYOSHI of Hizen Province who was the greatest of the smiths of this period in so far as suguha is concerned. Of course, there are a great many others both during the Kotō Period as well as in the Shinto Period who made their blades in suguha but those we listed above made their blades in the type of suguha covered.

MIDARE NIE -

Midare nie are found on the blades in which the hamon is worked in Midare (irregular). It is exactly the opposite from the nie found on the suguha. That is, the nie within the hamon is very small, gentle, and delicate, and the nie at the HABUCHI or the edge of the pattern becomes rough and large. This rough nie goes into the JI and it then comes JINIE in many cases. For this reason, the Habuchi or the hamon edge of the blade pattern is very HANAYAKA, that is very gay and splendid.

The polisher, in one of the last stages of the polish will apply the "Nugui". The Nugui of the Ji will be made blackish, however since the hamon being made in Midare, he cannot control the entire Ji area and some of it will enter the hamon. He then takes the "Hazuya" to make the hamon look white, and depending on the polisher, the width of the hamon will vary. This means an able polisher will give the hamon the width it should have and finish it up accordingly, whereas an incompetent polisher cannot give the hamon the proper finish that it

NIE AND NIOI (cont'd.) -

should have since he does not know how to control the Nugui.

In Midare nie, this finishing becomes quite difficult for the polisher, that is, since the edge or the border of the hamon and the Ji and the Hazuya must be controlled to its fullest, the skilled polisher will be able to control this. He will keep the all important nie at the Habuchi intact and alive, whereas an imcompetent polisher will kill the nie where it is most important. Therefore, in looking at a newly polished blade, if one looks carefully, this difference is very much in evidence....the black and the white of the polish is intermingled, the white where it should not be and the black where it should not be.

Remarks: The KUNITSUGU blade pictured in this issue of the NEWSLETTER is a good example of this midare nie. At first glance the blade seems to be a simple notare suguha. Upon closer examination one discovers abundant ji nie splashing up from the hamon in small, bright little stars. Then if the blade is held against a light, as when examining the nioi line, one sees a quiet ko-midare which explains the ji nie and also contains other nie/nioi activities.

RCH

WANTED - FOR SALE - TRADE ITEMS -

Wanted: Blades by Bitchu YASUHIRO; Iga KUNIHIRA; Tanto NAOMICHI; Takai Echizen NOBUYOSHI; Takata Bungo KUNİYOSHI; Yamato NOBUTOSHI; Yamashiro KIKUHIRO and NOBUYOSHI.

Will pay cash or trade the following: Tanegashima signed NOBUIYE;
Abumi signed NAGAKUNI
Contact: Andres Rodriguez Fully mtd.wakizashi signed
Fujishima TOMOSHIGE.

* * * * *

Wanted: Swords by KATSUMURA MASAKATSU of Mito, in any condition. Should be signed: Katsumura---Hidachi no Suke---Minamoto Masakatsu. Also looking for information on this smith to aid study of him.

Contact: Richard Mangrum, .

* * * * *

For Sale: Tachi-mie daitō signed HIZEN KUNI TADAYOSHI; 28.2" cutting edge, 80% polish, appears late generation, naval mounts in fair condition. This blade has a large blister under the surface but may be of interest to someone for a study piece??
Price: \$200

Contact: Ron Hartmann,

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SUPPLIES -

The long over due "new" supply list is still up in the air at this time. This is because of our uncertainty as to what we can offer and at what price. Hopefully within the month, this will be firmed up.

UCHIKO KITS our once again in short supply since our shipment, (which we had a problem getting because of postal damage), has been almost completely sold out. A new supply will be ordered and this will be the 1st rate kits we had from years ago.

We must give a word of thanks to Ms. Yuko Ohtsubo of East-West International in Osaka. Ms. Ohtsubo went to great lengths to acquire these kits for us - as a personal favor to our society - the initial order arriving in total destruction. Her very heartwarming letter in which she expressed her sorrow in this misfortune at which time she reordered these (17) damaged kits out of her own pocket. Ms. Ohtsubo presented us with this reorder as a GIFT to our society. A letter of thanks has been sent to her for this kind gesture, expressing our very deeply felt thanks for her consideration. Her letter is a classical example of Japanese thinking....and in 1976!...a good experience for us!

TOKEN TAIKAI '76 -

The 1976 sword seminar and shinsa will be upon us in six weeks! We should have all received the mailings of the event - if not, write Mr. Roger Dunn, for the latest mailing. It promises to be a significant event and we also hope to benefit from it by way of some good material from the displays.

SAMURAI SWORD TOUR '76 -

John Yumoto has sent the NL some info on this important Japan tour, to be held this fall. The departure date is November 1st, and will be the start of two weeks of extensive sword study. Price will hopefully be held down to \$1,700 per person. Anyone interested in this tour should contact:

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

The next issue of the NL is due out about August 1st. Please have all material intended for that issue in the hands of the Editor no later than the last week of July.

The extra at-work hours of the last three months plus half dozen other time consuming personal commitments all coming due at the same time are now over. Hopefully the NL can once again be put back on a more prompt schedule. Articles and oshigata from the membership eases the task of putting out a good paper regularly.....keep this in mind and send in your research material, findings, etc., regularly.

RON HARTMANN