

Japanese Sword Society of the United States, Inc.



NEWSLETTER

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NEW MEMBERS -

Six new members to announce this issue. On behalf of the society, a most sincere welcome!

Ted Hatfield
Ben Ostrander
Rod Searles
Norman R. Sölberg
D. Shank Louis Chappellear

TOKEN TAIKAI 1976 -

The event-of-the-year has come and gone and from all preliminary reports, it was a wonderful and rewarding happening! The shinsa was "explanations" for swords failing shinsa were given (to everyone's learning delight). Some twelve JUTŌ papers were issued and we hope to receive oshigata and reports on these fine blades for future comment. The lectures were also excellent and the printed book of these lectures is a very worthwhile purchase for all. (apparently a good supply of these books are available from Roger Dunn for \$10.00 - contact Roger on this @ this book is a must for your library!).

No further comment will be made at this time as full reports and articles are expected, covering this most excellent event. These will be presented in the next couple NEWSLETTERS. No further comment..... well perhaps one.....the lecture/article by Mr. Tom Buttweiler entitled, THE HISTORY OF PRE-EDO MENUKI, is so important and excellently presented that it must be mentioned as an example of the significance of this book of lectures! This is the first truly complete study ever printed in english on this subject and will probably become the basis for all future articles. (The importance of menuki-study was stressed by Mr. Yumoto during the 1976 Birmingham lectures, and now we have something to work from!). This is just one of a number of such articles.

We all owe a great debt of thanks to Roger Dunn, John Yumoto, and all of the men and women, the Northern California Club, who all worked hand-in-hand in promoting and presenting this achievement! Thank you all from the JSS/US membership!



UNDERSTANDING NIE AND NIOI

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

Editor's comments - Several letters have come in since the last NL stating that as relatively new members, it was very confusing to understand much of the terminology of the paper. With this in mind (and we often neglect this fact that many of our members are just starting out) a bit more clarification will be included in these articles - the drawings perhaps a bit poorly done, but hopefully an aid to understanding.

RCH

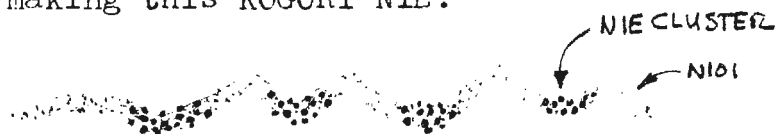
KOGORI NIE -

Kogori Nie are found on blades with the Hamon (tempered edge) worked in Nioi and the Nie clustered within the Nioi.

Kogori Nie is not to be confused with Kazunoko Nie which we will cover later. The Kogori Nie has the Nie clustered together and the individual "pebbles" of nie are found separate and there is much "life" in it.

It is found on works of such smiths as: O Choji Midare (large irregular clove-cluster pattern) of SANJO YOSHIIE; KoBizen (early Bizen smiths) or any of the early blades of the Heian Period whose works are done in NIOI primarily. This would include: Rai KUNIYUKI of Yamashiro Province, Niji KUNITOSHI; Awataguchi KUNITSUNA of Soshu Province; Ugai smiths of Bizen Province; Osafune MITSUTADA, Junkei NAGAMITSU and KAGEMITSU of Bizen Province; Hatakeda MORIIE of Bizen Province; Ko Aoe of Bitchu Province; Enju KUNIYASU of Higo Province; These smiths were all master of making this KOGORI NIE.

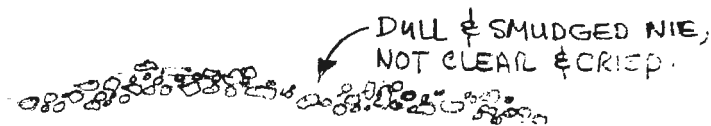
The editor's impression
of what this would be:



MURA NIE -

Mura Nie is a type of Nie which are found only in certain areas and it is completely the opposite of KOGORI NIE. This means that the quality of the nie is very poor, there is no "life" in the Nie and it is found only on the works of poor smiths such as the very late Soshu smiths and the late Mino smiths. It is NEVER found on blades of skillful smiths.

This is difficult to 'draw'
but would best be described
as dull and life-less nie,
much like the followin type
called KAZUNOKO NIE:

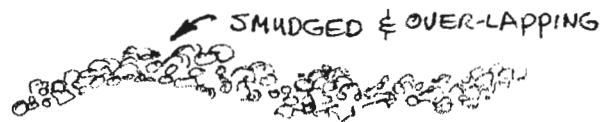


NIE AND NIOI (cont'd.)

KAZUNOKO NIE -

Kazunoko is "fish roe" and the Nie is found in a like pattern. The pebbles are large and rough, often found on top of one another and as in the previous MURA NIE, found only in certain areas of the hamon. It also is found only on blades of poor quality.

This nie is apparently much like Mura Nie except it is more dull and over-lapping one another.



KASU NIE -

Kasu means dregs, grounds or settlings, or less. It refers to the type of Nie which has no life, no luster, no sheen, and will look whitish, never to be found on good blades!

It is found in the works by such smiths such as the poorer Echizen smiths of the Shinto Period, Shimada smiths of the Suruga Province, Shitahara smiths of the Musashi Province and the Uda smiths of Etchu Province.

This is apparently a further deterioration of the MURA and KAZUNOKO form of nie - more dull and lifeless!

YAKINAOSHI (RETEMPER) NIE -

A blade which having lost it's hamon due to fire and having been retempered, will have this particular nie. If the smith who did the retempering was skilled, then the nie will have turned out good, however should the blade be compared to the original nie that was formerly on that blade, then it would be inferior.

The Nie will not have as much "life", no sheen and on the whole will seem as though "something is lacking". If one can learn to understand this then it will be a simple matter to see through blades that have been retempered.

If the blade, originally had exceptionally fine steel and the smith who did the retempering was also skilled, then the retempered hamon will look quite good and in cases it is a little difficult to "see through", but there should be something that is not akin to the original maker of the blade.

NIEJIMI -

Jimi or Shimi. Jimi is a nasalized form of shimi and means to stain. A hamon which has become tired from overpolishing will have some of the remnants of the original nie left and it will look as though it is "stained" from these remnants. Not really nie anymore but the spots or stains remaining as "spots" of discoloration.

ARA NIE -

Reference to Ara Nie is seen often in sword hamon descriptions and simply means that the Nie is a bit course or large sized. This still implies that the Nie is clearly made and "crisp", but simply of a rather large size. Although Ara Nie is not desirable on fine swords (editor's impression) it is so found on Juyo quality blades according to oshigata in the NBTAK magazine and other such publications.

NIE SAKE -

This is found on blades of the smiths who followed the Soshu Tradition. The Nie will seem as though it has split inside the hamon and within this split there will be nie.

Although this has never actually been seen by the editor it is assumed to be as follows:



NIE AND NIOI CLUSTERED TOGETHER TO FORM ASHI -

This is found on the "ashi" of blades made in nioi in which the Nie is clustered around the ashi. It is mostly confined to smiths of the early periods.

Again, since this has never been actually view, the impression of what it should be is as follows:



To clarify "ashi"; this means "rat's feet" or foot prints of a rat. If one ever actually sees such a print, and then compares it with ashi, the comparison is obvious. One can usually see ashi in a blade with a gunome hamon and it will appear at the roots of the gunome. It is best viewed when looking against a light-source as when viewing nioi and will look as wisps of fine nioi down towards the cutting edge.

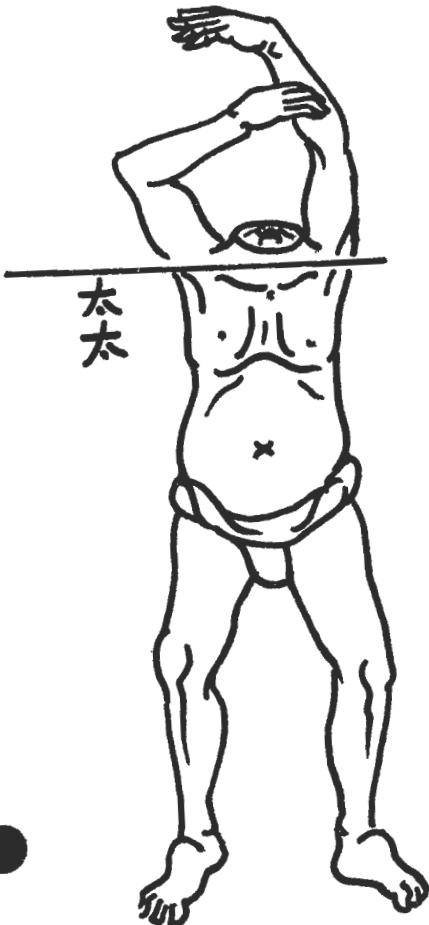
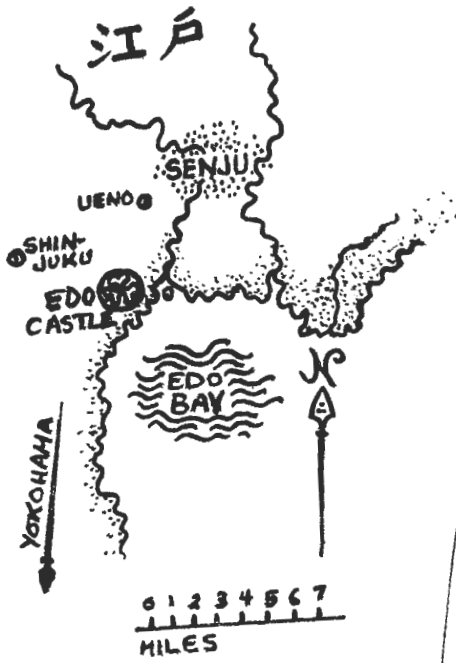
GUNOME HAMON



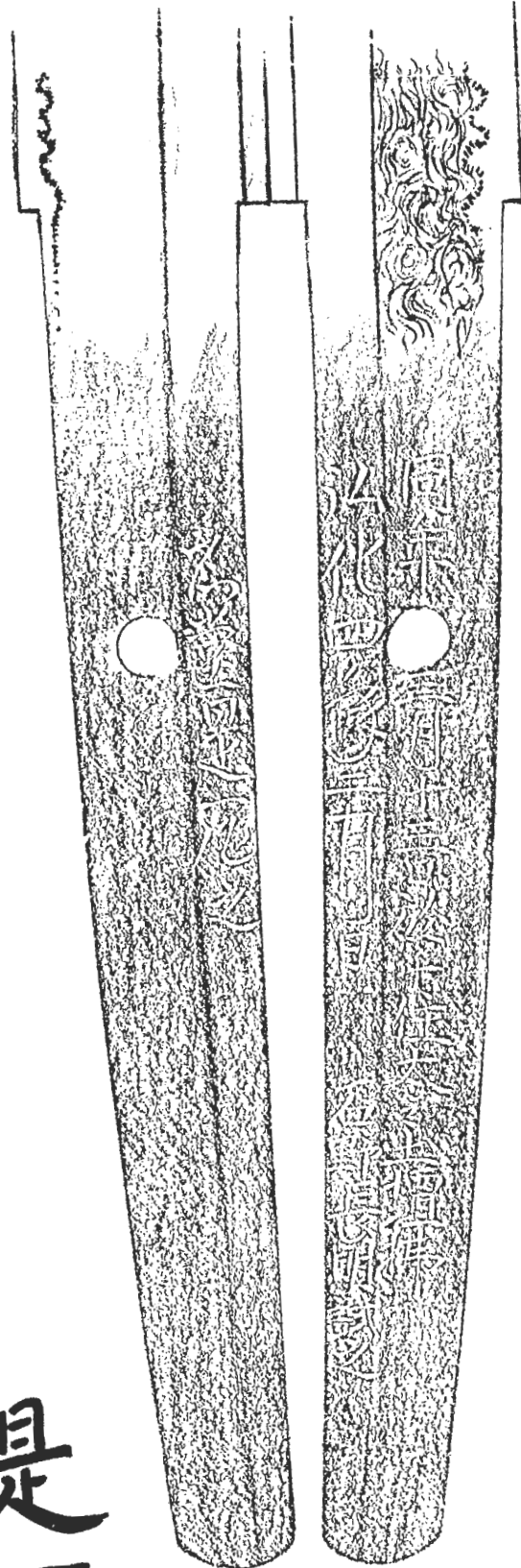
NIE AND WHERE TO LOOK FOR IT AND HOW IT SHOULD BE -

Simply, Nie is found on all parts of the blade. The quality of the blade whether it is good or bad is directly connected with the condition of the Nie, how it occurs and how it is made.

In blades by the Awataguchi smiths of Yamashiro Province, the Nie on the lower part of the blade is made small and fine, then as one moves towards the kissaki (tip) the Nie becomes larger and rougher. This is the characteristic of this school. The Nie on blades by Rai Kunitsugu has the Nie on the Omote made very hanayaka (alive), and on the Ura rather drab and not as much as the other side. There is no "work" or aliveness in Nie on this side and in some works the Nie is made like a Niejimi.



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ISHIDŌ KOREKAZU VII

ISHIDŌ KOREKAZU VII

Oshigata and notes by David Pepper

THE BLADE (From a Private Collection):

Length: 2 shaku, 2 sun, 7 bu

Sori: 7 su

Hamon: Runs from narrow ko-chōji midare at the hamachi to wide ō-chōji at the mono-uchi. Includes juka-chōji and many ashi along the length. The hamon is in nioi with faintly perceptible nie.

Jihada: Extremely fine-textured but very active ko-mokume hada. There are dark areas reminiscent of utsuri in the ji.

Shape: This blade is based upon the shape and style of a Bizen blade of the Nambokuchō Period (ca. 1337 - 1392). During the Bakumatsu era, the last few years of Tokugawa rule, many samurai favoured the heavy Nambokuchō blades with their long kissaki, and swordsmiths began producing to meet this demand. However the blades they copied had in almost every case been shortened, so that these "revival" blades are usually heavy and less graceful than the originals would have been when ubu. Korekazu was particularly famous for making blades in the Bizen style.

THE MOUNTINGS: Shirazaya

INSCRIPTION (MEI):

Omote: ISHIDO KOREKAZU TSUKURU KORE (Ishido Korekazu made this).

Ura: (upper left) KŌKWA YONNEN NI GATSU HI (One day in the second month, fourth year of Kōkwa (1847). This is reckoned by the old lunar calendar and would be about April by our system.
(upper right, probably written by a different hand)
DŌNEN SAN GATSU JŪ-SAN NICHI (same year, third month, thirteenth day) SENJŪ (NI) OITE (at Senjū) TAI TAI DŌDAN BARAI (cut clean through ((a body)) at the Tai Tai position and into the supporting mound.)
(lower left) ISHINO NAGAAKI (or CHŌMEI) TAMESU KORE -
Ishino Nagaaki tested this.

NOTES:

ISHIDŌ KOREKAZU (UNJŪ : KO-35 in Hawley) was the second son of Chōunsai Tsunatoshi of Edo and the adopted son of the 6th generation Korekazu. He was born in 1815, making him 32 years old when he forged this blade. After a long and productive life, he passed away in 1889 recognized as the best of all eight generations of his line.

KOREKAZU OSHIGATA

NOTES (cont'd.) -

Korekazu worked in Edo, Musashi Province, and it is probably that he at least occasionally worked for the Shōgunate. I have seen a magnificent naginata, made for use in the Daimyō Gyōretsu (feudal processions) and richly decorated in gold nashiji lacquer embellished with the Tokugawa mon on all fittings. The blade was by Korekazu, as I recall made later than the blade now under discussion. The comments on the cutting-test below may further bolster my assumption.

SAIDAN (TAMESHIGIRI) MEI:

Since the two dates are at least two weeks apart, and the writing is in a different style, it appears probable that this inscription was cut by the tester himself or by some other person than Korekazu.

Senjū, although now a part of Metropolitan Tokyo, was in the days of the Edo Bakufu an isolated and lonely area in the country, chiefly known for its execution yard and as a place where corpses were abandoned. It was also one of the best known Tameshiba, or testing-grounds. (see map).

The diagram gives the location of TAI TAI, according to the Yamada school the second most difficult cut. According to other testers, it was the most difficult, but of course these things were variable, depending not only on the tester's strength and skill, but also upon the size and age of the body, the hardness of the bones, etc.

In Tai Tai, the blade would have cut through the collar bones, front and back curves of at least one pair of ribs, the thick vertebra below the neck, both shoulder blades and probably the joints of the upper arm before sinking into the mound of earth which supported the (presumed) corpse - sometimes live prisoners were cut.

I have not been able to pin down the identity of the tester beyond one scrap of possible information; The famous and often-illustrated cutting-test diagram was part of the "secret" lore of the Yamada family. It, along with other diagrams and documents was handed over to Ishino Tamisaburō, an Okoshi-no-mono kata or sword-keeper to the Shōgun. This material was given by Yamada Gengorō (Asaemon IV) in the fourth year of Kwansei (1792) in the time of the Shōgun Ienari.

The Korekazu sword was made some 45 years later, during the rule of Ienari's son, Ieyoshi. If one assumes that the post of sword-keeper to the Tokugawa was hereditary, as many positions of skill were at the time, then Ishino Nagaaki could have been the son or grandson of the Tamisaburō who received the Yamada papers.

It may be unnecessary to state that many cutting tests, like this one, were not inlaid in gold, but simply engraved into the nakago. The fact that a test is not particularly spectacular may add to its chances of being authentic; some test inscriptions may be only one more attempt to impress prospective buyers! In every case, it is wise to judge a blade for what it is, and to regard a saidan-mei as simply an added historical bonus to what is present in the steel itself.

TOKEN STUDY GROUP SHOW -

The annual Token Study Group show will be held the weekend of October 16th and 17th. This fine event will again be presented at the O'Hare Inn as in the past. (toll free reservation number (800)-323-1065). The JSS/US will at least hold a meeting during the show weekend and we also hope to plan some sort of group activity if time permits.

For further information on this excellent affair (it is always well attended and very active), write Ted Wysocky, 1811 N. 73rd St., Wauwatosa, Wisconsin 53213. PLAN TO ATTEND - SEE YOU THERE!

COMPTON COLLECTION CATALOGUE -

A recent check with Japan Society, Inc., confirmed that a good supply of this excellent book is still available. The soft-bound copies are not too plentiful but there are plenty hard-bound left. This book is a must for your library - particularly for the novice collector who is searching for a truly complete explanation of sword terms and characteristics. The photographs and oshigata are great!

IMPORTANT: specify that you are a JSS/US Member when ordering so that you can get the special discounted price listed below.

Soft-bound: \$12.50 / \$1.50 domestic, \$1.85 inter.post.
Hard-bound: \$28.00 / applicable postage
(add 8% sales tax if you are from New York)

Title: "NIPPON-TŌ: ART SWORDS OF JAPAN"

Make checks payable to and send order to: Japan Society, Inc.

PEABODY MUSEUM COLLECTION OF SWORD GUARDS -

A new supply of this excellent catalogue is now in hand and we can once again supply you with copies. This book has been very well received at the last couple years sword shows and usually all available copies will sell out the first day. The book is available from the society (c/o Newsletter) for \$9.00 post paid. (U.S. funds please).

We will continue to stock this book as long as interest remains. A supply will also be available at the TSG show this October.

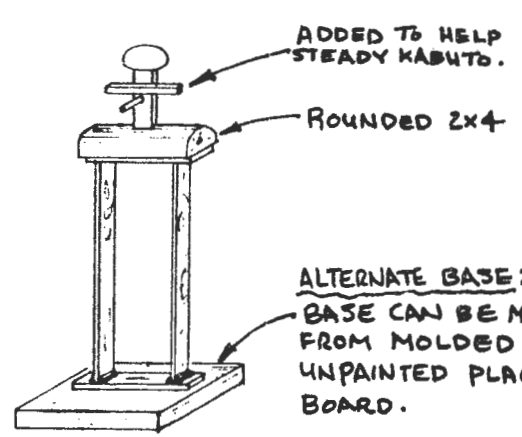
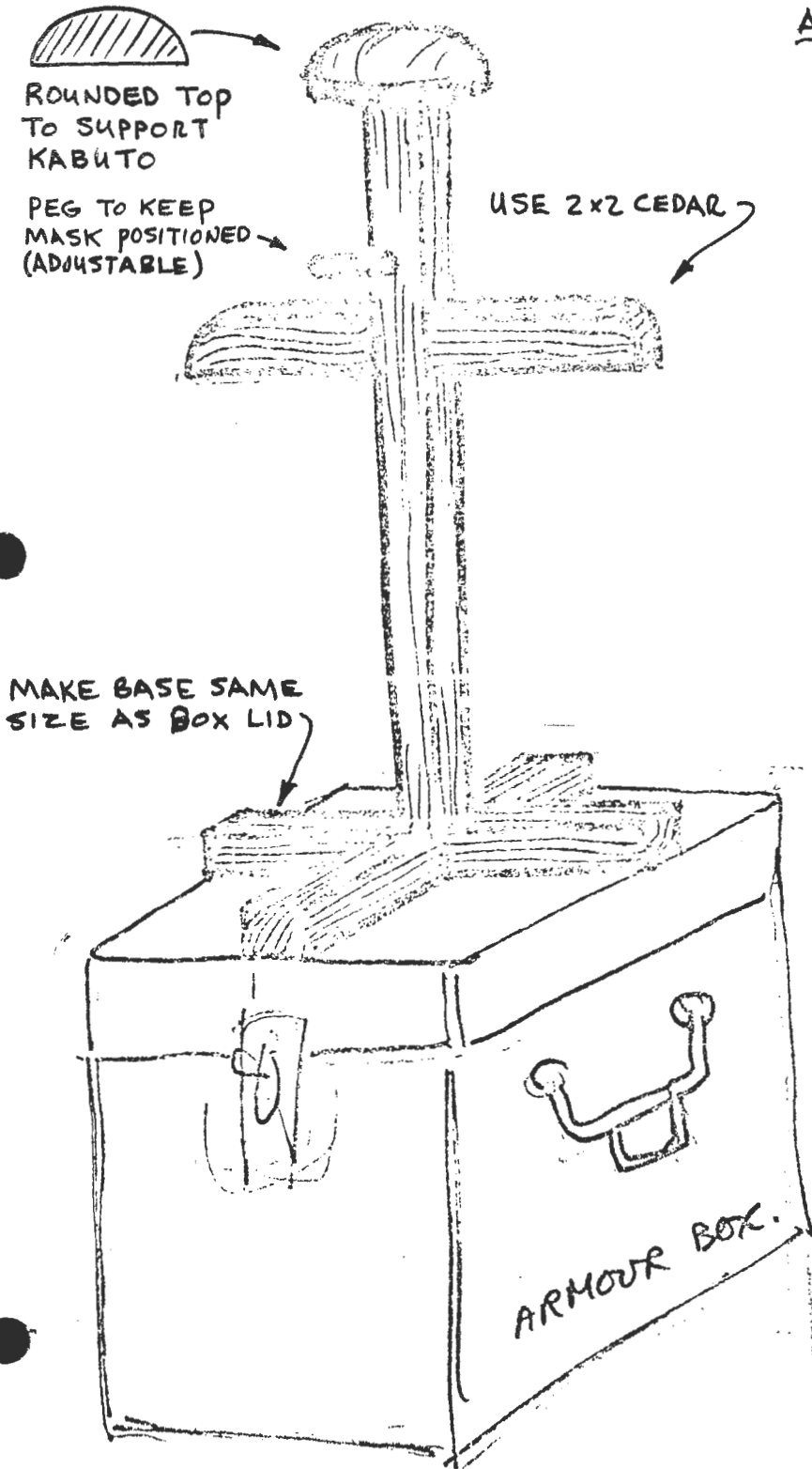
EARLY JAPANESE SWORD GUARDS: SUKASHI TSUBA -

This wonderfully illustrated (and poetic) book by Mr. Masayuki Sasano, is apparently still available to society members at the very good discounted price of \$12.00 - again, mention specifically that you ARE A MEMBER OF JSS/US and that this is a special price. Order from: JAPAN PUBLICATIONS TRADING CO., INC. ,

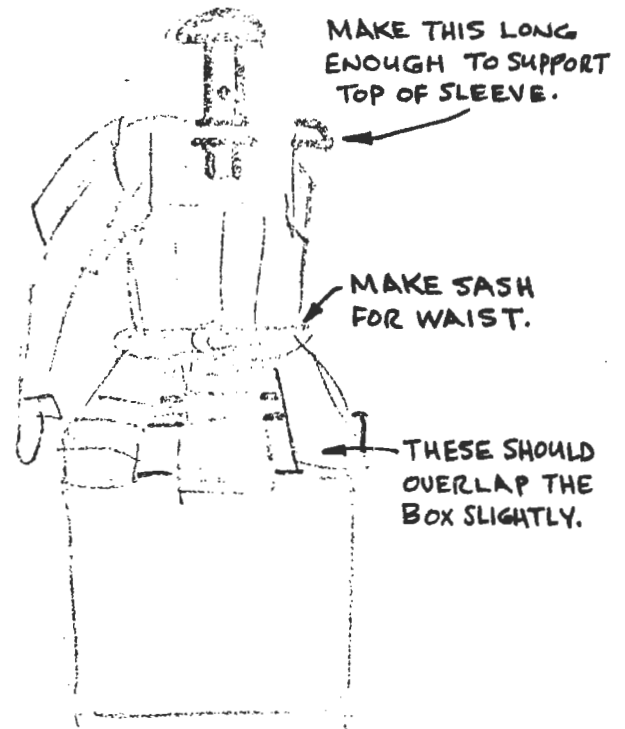
JAPANESE ARMOUR STAND

LACQUERED OR SMOOTH IRON PARTS OF ARMOUR MAY BE TREATED WITH NON-VINYL PASTE WAX, (AEROWAX OR JOHNSONS) TO CLEAN AND PRESERVE THEM.

(THE ROUNDED TOP PIECE & THE SUGGESTED MOLDED PLAQUE BOARD IS AVAILABLE @ LOCAL HARDWARE AND HOBBY STORES.)



ALTERNATE "TWO SUPPORT" STAND RCH.



BUY - SELL - TRADE COLUMN -

This column is presented free to members. Send your ad to the NEWSLETTER for inclusion in the future issues.

WANTED: 1st rate ubu katana of 27 3/4" cutting edge or over. Prefer description and price to:

1st or 2nd generation Echizen MASANORI 1624-1661. Contact:

AVAILABLE: New member Rod Searles (this issue) advises us that he grows rare Japanese maples and pines. Since this may be of interest to our members, it is mentioned here. He says that a "plant list" is available. Contact Rod personally. (8 page list is FREE to members - just enclose 2-13¢ Stamps).

NOTES ON NIHON TŌ TAIKAN. -

The notes compiled by Robert Lewert and Soichiro Miyazaki on the first five volumes of NIHON TŌ TAIKAN, as was mentioned several NL issues ago, has now been printed and is available from the NEWSLETTER for \$10 a copy. This is 49 typed pages and intended for use with this set of books. The notes were given to the society by Bob and the cost is for printing and mailing with a little extra for the treasury. Send your order directly to the NL Editor.

TYPICAL PLAN FOR ARMOUR STAND. -

As an after-thought, the plan for an armour stand has been included in this issue. This plan was originally drawn by David Pepper for a friend's use but since it is something of interest to many of us, it is present here for general information.

As an alternate to David's original drawing, a double-supported stand has been included (taken from several examples in books and one which worked up rather well in haste for a local St. Louis exhibit). As was also noted as an alternate design, Jack Landis of St. Louis also hit upon the idea of using the pre-molded base (rounded top idea is also applicable) which worked into a very nice 'traditional' stand design. Hopefully, this pattern will serve some use for us owning a suit of armour, seeking a reasonably traditional stand. Apologies to David for lack of permission to use this but it worked up well.

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE. -

The next NL deadline is about the end of September in order to make the issue due out about the first of October. Please have all intended material in the hands of the editor by this date.

P.S. Original articles for the annual BULLETIN are again needed. Please put your minds to work and share some of that wealth of learning to work via such material!

RON HARTMANN