Japanese Sword Society of the United States, Inc.

NEWSLETTER

Volume 12 No. 3 MAY-JUNE · 1980

DALLAS JAPANESE CULTURAL EXCHANGE -

The month-long Japanese cultural event took place on schedule during April, in Dallas, Texas. It was a wonderful time and a real learning experience for those fortunate enough to attend. A brief report will be presented at this time for the benefit of those unable to be there. An extensive report is planned and will be presented in a future issue of "Bushido" magazine.

Primary reasons for attending (speaking for myself) was to see the swordsmith Yoshihara Yoshindo and the other craftsmen work, and to see and study the items exhibited in the Meibutsu Room. Unfortunately, time was too short and the weather turned bad during my visit and this did curtail some activities that weekend. Aside from this, it was possible to see the crafts work to some degree. The forge was set up in a courtyard on the University of Dallas campus. One could watch as the men worked. It was most impressive to watch the shirazaya man creat a fine saya, and particularly impressive to watch the talent of the habaki artist as he finished a beautiful double habaki. One comes to better appreciate the talents of these people when able to actually see what handwork and abilities go in to the making of our basic needs as sword collectors. The polisher was set up in yet another building and the blood, sweat, and tears plus the talents of the man which when put together produced the ultimate polish too was impressive.

Although I personally did not get to see "forging", it was possible to see two blades tempered late one evening after dark. People crowded around the forge as master swordsmith Yoshihara prepared his fire. Tension grew as the sword took on a red color, and then almost a white hot color, amid sparks and fire. Finally at the right time, in total darkness, the temperature was right and the sword put into water. All of this was done

The Official Bi-Monthly Publication of the Japanese Sword Society of the U.S./ Inc.

as Mr. Morihiro Ogawa narrated, explaining what was taking place. Two things impressed me, or rather, surprised me during tempering. First was the thinness of the clay coating (which had been applied that morning and allowed to dry thoroughly). Then, during heating of the blade, I was surprised at how brightly the hamon showed. Being of a hotter temperature it glowed almost white hot and one could see it clearly. After tempering, a second heating and some correcting by the smith, the blade was then given to the polisher who gave the blade a fast initial polish so that the smith could examine the blade. This would tell him if the tempering was a success or not. Mr. Yoshihara showed us "utsuri" on one of these blades, which was very clear and evident even at this initial stage of polish. Utsuri is one of Mr. Yoshihara's specialties. A wakizashi and a katana was tempered that evening and it was truly an evening to remember for us who had never seen this done before.

The Meibutsu Room was a room of treasures, although not as many blades were brought from NBTHK as expected. Many items came from private collections in the U.S., with all in full polish and of first rate quality. A total of 20 blades were exhibited plus four cases of kodogu. As one entered the room you saw first a beautiful gold covered mounting for a wakizashi of Goto work dating from the Momoyama period. Then the names of the swords read: wakizashi by Shinkai (1673); Ken tanto by Bizen Osafune Moritsugu (1394); Naganata (made into a wakizashi) of Hojoji school ca. 14th century; Daito attributed to Hasebe school (Nambokucho); Nodachi by Bitchu Tsugunao (1347); Tanto by Rai Kunimitsu (late 13th/early 14th century); Wakizashi by Soshu Hiromitsu (1362) done in his famous hitatsura style; Tanto by Etchu Hiroshige showing his "pine tree bark" hada; Naganata by Masatsune (late 16th century); Yari by Kunihiro student Tokikuni (ca 17th century); Tachi by Kunitoki, Enju school (early 14th century); Katana by Izumi (no) Kami Kunisada (mid 17th century); Nagasone Okisato katana (Kotetsu); Katana by Yosazaemon Sukesada (1540) in beautiful koshirae; Tachi by Oei Bizen Iyesuke (1412); Tanto by Kagemitsu, Bizen Osafune (1332); Kodachi by Nagamitsu, Osafune school (late 13th century); Tachi by Norimune (late 12th/early 13th century), founder of the Bizen Fukuoka Ichimonji school; Tachi by Masasane, ko-Bizen (late Heien); and last a ko-Bizen tachi by Tomonari (late 10th/early 11th century). All of these swords were "textbook" swords which, if one took the time, had a wealth of teaching to give. The cases of kodogu included such treasures as fine Goto works, a true Nobuiye tsuba, beautiful Harata work (including a fabulous koshira), and many other wonderful things. Needless to say, much time was spent in this treasure room!

An official NBTHK shinsa was yet another highlight of this event. From what has been heard since is that everyone seems to be very satisfied with the judging. There were reports of gimei blades being issued papers which stated that the mei was wrong but papers issued on an attribution. If so, this is very surprising although many U.S. collectors often wondered why this could not be done. Perhaps we will hear more on this from someone who knows about this later on. The only complaints heard

pertained to the usual shinsa delays. As always several people submitted several hundred blades at one time (so the story goes) and this caused a backlog for blade shinsa. Kodogu shinsa went quickly as fewer pieces of kodogu were submitted as compared to blades.

The buy-sell-trade room (which was at the motel whereas the other activities took place at the University) was a good one, with a good crowd attending and a reasonable amount of floor action. Aside from the usual floor activities, Mike Quigley set up a fine exhibit of Echizen Masanori blades and of Jakushi school fittings for all to enjoy. One bit of unplanned excitement took place when a man walked in and attempted to steal a wallet which was left on a table. The wallet was recovered in the following pursuit but the incident did make everyone just a little more security concious. As one person said, "just another reason for closed shows".

There were many other activities but this report can only cover the ones attended personally. It was a very enjoyable trip and speaking for myself, I feel my knowledge was increased by my attending this meeting. The general mood was one of friendship and of sharing common interests. The organizers of this event, R. B. Caldwell, Dr. Compton, Mike Quigley, Bill Trevino, and others plus the NBTHK representatives and others involved from Japan should feel very proud of a successful event.

As was mentioned at the start of this article, a complete pictorial report will be presented in a future issue of "Bushido" magazine. We shall all look forward to seeing this additional material.

Swordsmith Yoshihara (sportshirt) and some of his fellow craftsmen sporting new "Texas" hats.

Sword Prices: Some Economic Observations

By K. A. Frenzel

I read with interest the remarks of A. Z. Freeman on sword prices in the January-February, 1980 Newsletter, and then the March-April 1980 continuation with comments by Messers Freeman, Bleed, Bowhay and Hartmann. As an economist and having been mentioned as such in the first article, I feel more or less obliged to enter the fray. My aim is not to criticize any writer, indeed they have all made worthwhile and not necessarily contradictory points; rather I would like to try to shed light and not heat by putting the issue into a framework for analysis.

The controversey is implicitly dealing with what we call dynamics, that is, the path and timing with which a market moves from disequilibrium to a market clearing equilibrium with a uniform price net of transportation costs. The economics of such situations, in contrast to the analysis of equilibrium positions, called comparative statics, are actually quite complex and not well understood. Were such dynamic processes better understood, not only would the Japanese sword market present fewer "gee whiz" type surprises, but the world around you would suffer from fewer market disequilibria such as the distortions of inflation, the energy "crisis", unemployment and the like.

While everyone can get into this controversey, I would advise crawling before walking. For the rudiments of price determination and a discussion of the economic rationality of investing in any stock of storeable, tangible, and, for practical purposes, non-reproducible assets, read my "On Investing in Japanese Swords" in Caldwell, R.B., ed., The Book of the Sword. (Dallas, 1972). While that analysis presents arguments, both theoretical and practical, against investing in art as a rational investment activity, it did not rule out speculation, which necessarily involves conjecture without full information about the future. Of course one can "guess right" and speculatively buy any asset. If the distribution of outcomes are "normal," winning and losing positions should off-set each other in unhedged and well ordered speculative (futures) markets. The market for Japanese swords is most definitely not well ordered in that sense, but it is a market that has attracted investors, speculators, and those with the purest motive of fondness for the sword. As a consequence of many demand and supply determinants over the last decade, it is indeed true that prices of Japanese swords have risen on average, and many collectors have inadvertently become modestly wealthy as a consequence. While inflations tend to make people overestimate the real gains they have enjoyed, I still have no doubt that not only in money terms but also in real terms, prices have risen.

What is at issue here, and in the earlier Newsletter material is the extent to which the process of the market moving towards equilibrium disadvantages sellers outside Japan. Needless to say there would also be a reciprocal transitory benefit for non-Japanese buyers. If I read Freeman's original article correctly, he takes Japanese market price as a given and implicitly argues that with a better distribution of market information, somehow the selling power of persons outside Japan would rise and price would tend to approach an international price for comparable pieces. In his 2nd installment he usefully advances his argument by introducing qualitative and other considerations that can explain a differential between Japanese and other prices. Bleed argues along the lines of improving the clearing role of the market through more open selling under auction conditions (an advantage for the non-Japanese buyer?), and he also raises practical qualms about the validity and reliability of Japanese prices. Bowhay relates information of sword movement to Japan and seems to

condemn that or at least at current rates of loss. I wonder just how accurate is the sword flow data? If I understand it correctly, all swords going into Japan are "imported" but some, perhaps many of those swords are sent there for various services like polishing, shinsa, and display, and that number would not necessarily be subtracted from gross import data. Obviously what is needed is for someone to investigate both the export and import data with U.S., British, and Japanese Customs. Finally Hartmann provides some interesting anecdote about conflicting opinions, lanquid non-dealer buyers, etc.

Naturally every seller wants to realize a price for any asset as close as possible to the market clearing price. Normally market clearing forces, including the dissemination of information, tends to produce a single price within any market, yet I have also observed the difference between Japanese and typical show and auction prices. That is not necessarily bad, because non-Japanese and non-dealers also buy, however, in that the thrust of the Newsletter submissions emphasize the "too low" rather than "too high" aspects of the market disequilibrium. Let me propose three hypotheses that, taken together, explain most of the observations about the market place in my judgement:

1. The quality of swords, authenticity of signature, condition, and representativeness account for part of the difference between Japanese and non-Japanese prices.

Freeman, and to a lesser degree, Bleed, have addressed this issue usefully. I have nothing to add other than the personal observation that I believe that many of us very seriously err in missing many negative features in blades and that we examine, and we compound our tendency to overestimate the value of blades by failing to apply a sufficient discount on the shortcomings we do recognize. I cannot help but notice the way many collectors, particularly but not exclusively the newer ones, fail to distinguish between a mediocre and a good blade, and the distortion is reinforced by collectors being willing to keep mediocre blades. It is only natural for such blades to form, at least partially, a benchmark standard for considering what should further come into the collection, and accordingly dubious material "looks good" and gets acquired and kept. Hopefully the problem of insufficient discrimination will tend to diminish with time as the stock of sword knowledge grows. Seeing blades, attending shinsa, reading and comparative study is the only road to progress. Beyond that, I often think of a goal once expressed by Keith Evans: Fewer and Better Blades.

2. The multi-layered Japanese wholesale and retail system explains part of the difference between Japanese and non-Japanese prices.

Earlier Newsletter comments fail to distinguish between observed "retail" prices and what are really "wholesale" prices that tend to be paid by dealers and to a lesser extent at auctions. In practice all markets make a distinction between buy and sell because the maker of the market confures value that must be compensated and "wholesale" prices are lower than "retail". Obviously the retailer cannot pay a retail price to a seller, however I think the thrust of the comments, particularly those of Freeman, is that the differential is greater than called for, allowing a fair price to the retailer. Under most market situations where there is a net of transportation cost differential for a given commodity between two or more geographic places, economic theory and observation tell us that those spot price differentials will be minimized through a process known as arbitrage. In other words, if a given sword fetches less in say the U.S. or West Germany than in Japan, then someone can make a gain by buying where it is cheap and selling where it is dear. I have no doubt that what Japanese buyers are doing is indeed arbitraging the market, and Freeman correctly recognizes that when he writes about the market equalizing. Such equalizing can occur at both the "wholesale" and "retail" levels.

Even if there was no problem of arbitrage at either the "wholesale" or "retail" level, the issue of how large a differential is reasonable between those two types of markets would still remain to be answered. The Japanese economy is notorious as one with a complex selling system that yields very substantial mark-ups between wholesale and retail, particularly when those goods are foreign made, or in the case of swords, acquired abroad. As a practical matter it is almost impossible to penetrate the Japanese retail system, particularly from abroad. Thus, selling swords in Japan at retail prices is effectively precluded. That is not because of tariffs, but rather because of a welter on non-tariff institutional barriers like language, contacts, marketing methods and the like. Not the least of problems would be to convince a Japanese buyer that you, the seller, really know what you have and what it is worth. These sorts of problems are hardly unique to our concerns. Listen to U.S. automobile firms moan about Japanese car sales in the U.S. It is a fact that there are no tariff barriers on U.S. cars exported to Japan; selling them in the Japanese distributional system is the problem.

3. Buyers at shows and auctions may conspire to restrict competition among themselves and that may explain part of the difference between Japanese and non-Japanese prices.

Such behavior may occur, and it would not necessarily be unique to Japanese buyers, however, I believe such practices are not widespread or substantially successful. To believe otherwise could be an easy consequence of failing to understand the workings of the two preceeding hypotheses. Naturally to the extent to which there are conspiracies, they are always unethical, frequently in flagrant violation of the law, but practically difficult to remedy. The more buyers there are and the more open are markets, the less successful any conspiratorial attempts would be. An auction sale run by a collector group, which I believe was first mentioned in my 1972 article, would be a step towards more open markets, though this is not at all to criticize the useful and informative sales held regularly by leading auction houses. It would be nice, however, for the sword clubs to be able to use some of the proceeds for educational purposes.

Finally, if I could conclude on a personal note, I would urge us all not to let economic considerations overwhelm our sensitivities to the beauty of Japanese swords, tsuba and the like. Market considerations are roughly separable from the aesthetic and it is the latter considerations that represent the contribution of the Japanese sword to mankind's cultural history. Do we really want to bemoan the flow of some, even substantial numbers, of these beautiful objects back to their ancestral home? There will always be Japanese swords outside Japan in private collections and public institutions. Frankly we all gain when a booty of war that has languished in neglect in some damp celler for 35 years is returned to Japan for restoration and appreciation. By all means, if we are equally prepared to preserve, to protect, and to value, then let the restored swords return here and remain. However, we cannot help but notice that swords outside Japan all too often lack the care and appreciation they deserve. It matters less who ownes the sword than that it receive proper treatment. We should not forget our own individually short custodial role and responsibility in the entire historical process.

MASAHIDE OSHIGATA CONTROVERSY -

The following letter was sent in to the "Newsletter" along with the suggestion that it be included in the next issue to be published. The writer, Mr. Bob Benson, is known to most collectors as a sword polisher and dealer of many years experience. Unfortunately, this material may prove embarrassing to a degree but as Bob put it, it will simply present his opinions and let the true judging be up to the membership readers. Bob is questioning the authenticity of the Masahide blade which appeared in the March-April "Newsletter". The article not only points out the responsibility of the Society, but is also a very fine "lesson" in analyzing a signature in general. His letter reads as follows:

I was concerned about one sword that was shown in the March-April (1980) JSS/US "Newsletter" and think that you should give some thought to some of the following in fact possibly publishing what I have to say in the next issue.

Several years ago when the JSS/US was not as large as it is now, it was only a few that submitted oshigata of swords (for publication). At those times the blades were probably gone over very well by the owner and some even had papers so the question of their being genuine was never questioned. With the increased membership I feel that if we are to publish oshigata that we should have some sort of review to ensure they are genuine blades before putting them in the "Newsletter". What brings this about is the Suishinshi Masahide wakizashi illustrated on page 12 of the past "Newsletter". (Bob mentioned that the name "Suisenshi" should be "Suishinshi").

In the past 15 years I have polished at least four Suishinshi Masahide blades, owned six genuine blades, handled at least 10 genuine blades and probably looked at, bought, and sold, twenty five gimei Masahides. My first thought was that it was a gimei as something about the signature didn't look right. Now I am convinced that it is an out and out gimei. My prime reason for being concerned is that now that the sword has been illustrated by the JSS/US it now has credibility. To someone that is not experienced enough to decide for himself this validity would give the person confidence enough to buy with out due caution and get stuck with a gimei. Upon finding out such a blade was not genuine it would create hard feelings toward the JSS/US. This is not to say that anyone would send in a gimei oshigata actually knowing it, but as all collectors know we are always eager to show off our latest find or in the case of Mr. Bowhay, he was genuinly interested in sharing his latest accomplishment of polishing a Suishinshi Masahide. For this reason I feel we have to have some means of authenticating the swords prior to printing. If the swords have ninteisho (authentication) then the owner can so state such as Koshu Tokubetsu Kicho number such-and-such, etc., This will eliminate a lot of trouble but for those without papers some sort of review should be done to protect the Society and collectors from possibly buying gimei swords.

FURTHER COMMENTS ON SWORD PRICES

By Andrew Quirt

I have been following Mr. Freeman's articles on pricing with some interest, and I am in basic agreement about the prices paid being low and that the one-way flow of quality merchandise to Japan is regretable. I also firmly believe that his proposals are unworkable.

First of all there is too much merchandise chasing, too few dollars to permit swords in this country to command anything approaching Japanese wholesale prices in the near future. Assuming that funds are available, why should anyone pay a large sum of money for a blade, when we all know that careful shopping and beating the bushes will produce any number of swords at an inexpensive price.

Next is the problem of ego! There is no area that I can think of in which a pretense of knowledge is so important. Everyone is afraid to be caught making a mistake, so private one-on-one auctions are held in the rooms at the shows. Swords are sold secretely, and if the seller has let a jutō go for $500 no one is the wiser. I hate to think how many important swords have been sold this way. We have all seen these folks walking around the shows saying things like, "I already sold all my swords, I got a really good price for them....one guy bought them all". Yet these same people would not dream of selling a house or a car without exhaustive research, the help of experts, and an <u>open offering in the public market.</u>

All of which brings us to a very basic and sensitive problem, and that is that American collectors/dealers don't know a hell of a lot about swords! Not even what is good! I know, you're the exception; after sixteen years I know that I am not. I have bought signed shinto katana during the past year, that turned out to be aged gendaitō. Let's admit it, the King isn't wearing any clothes! We do not understand quality!

How many can even read Japanese? Few! That means that most people can't even use the texts. In Japan the student not only can read the materials, has access to collections and museum displays, but also has a sensei to consult about purchases. An unsatisfied Japanese customer can return a sword; not like American show ethics.

What would I propose? Forget ego and open the shows. If you have some money, perhaps from selling your goods, compete for what is at the tables. Don't stuff the cash in your pocket and take it home, recirculate the money.....there are good deals to be had. The bulk of the swords will still return to Japan, most Americans can not compete with a JAL bag full of cash, but opening the market to competition has to increase the prices realized for goods.

CONTROVERSY cont'd.

My feeling is that the sword is gimei and I offer the following so that the readers can decide for themselves. In Suishinshi Masahide names, spacing is very important and the variation in the spacing between the kanji is moderate to none. The Bowhay blade has no spacing to a considerable amount. See illustration #2. This much of a difference is not displayed on actual authentic swords (of Suishinshi Masahide). On authentic works the "Masa" character is always done so that the middle horizontal stroke is exactly in the middle with almost the same space above and below. In the Bowhay Masahide (see illustration #1) the middle stroke is close to the bottom. Look at all of the "Masa" kanji of the oshigata in illustration #2. Are they like the Bowhay "Masa"?

If we examine the Kansei nengo (date) on the ura (illustration #1) we see that this kanji is no where like genuine Masahide cutting of this Kansei kanji. I examined over 30 different oshigata of Masahide blades with Kansei dates and none of them look like the cutting on the Bowhay blade. I tried to prove the sword genuine but the more I looked the more I became convinced it was gimei. Masahide cut his Kansei kanji in such a way that there are small curled circles in the kanji. One in "Kan" character and generally two in the "Sei" character. The Bowhay sword has none. In illustration #1 I have marked the areas where these circles should be. If you will examine the eight examples of genuine Kansei dates in illustration #1 you can see the difference. I have shown two swords dated 1 year before the Bowhay sword and two the exact same year and one the year after. If you make a comparison you can make your own decision as to what the sword is, genuine or gimei. I think this is an area that could get out of hand and we need to do something to protect the Society before it does. (Bob Benson)

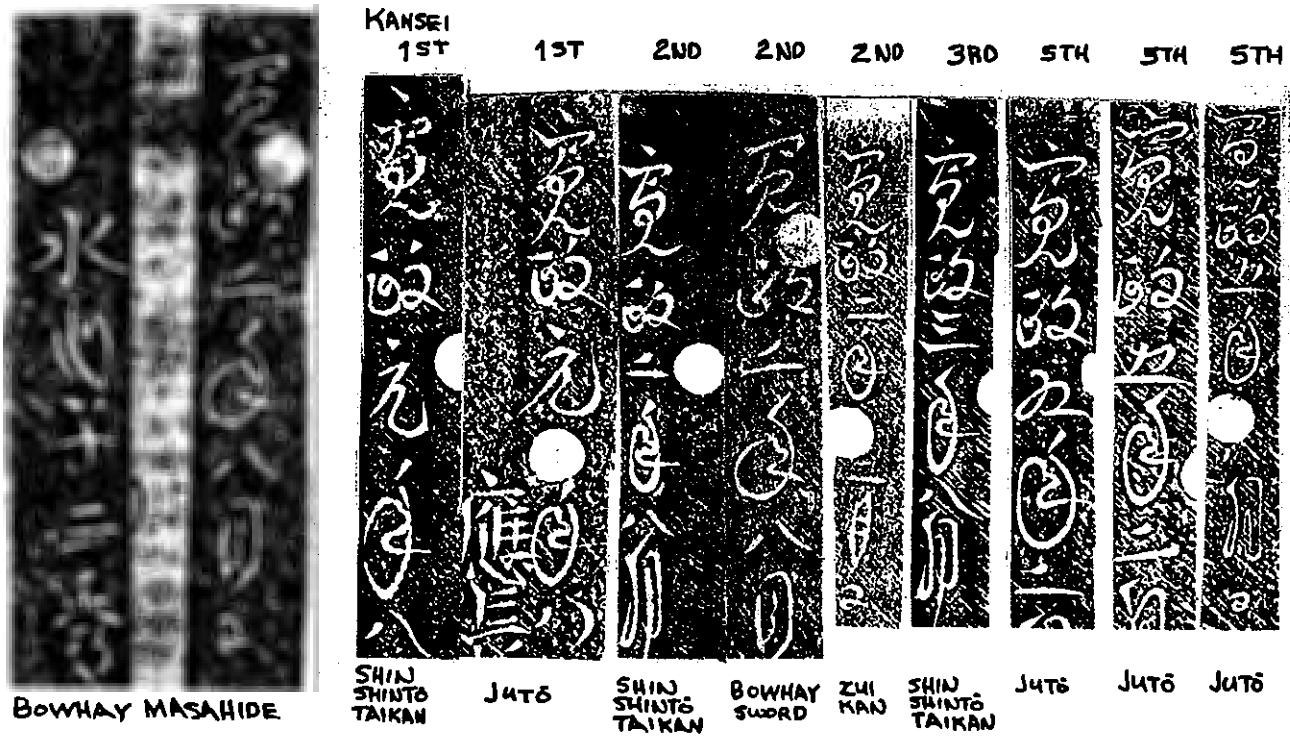
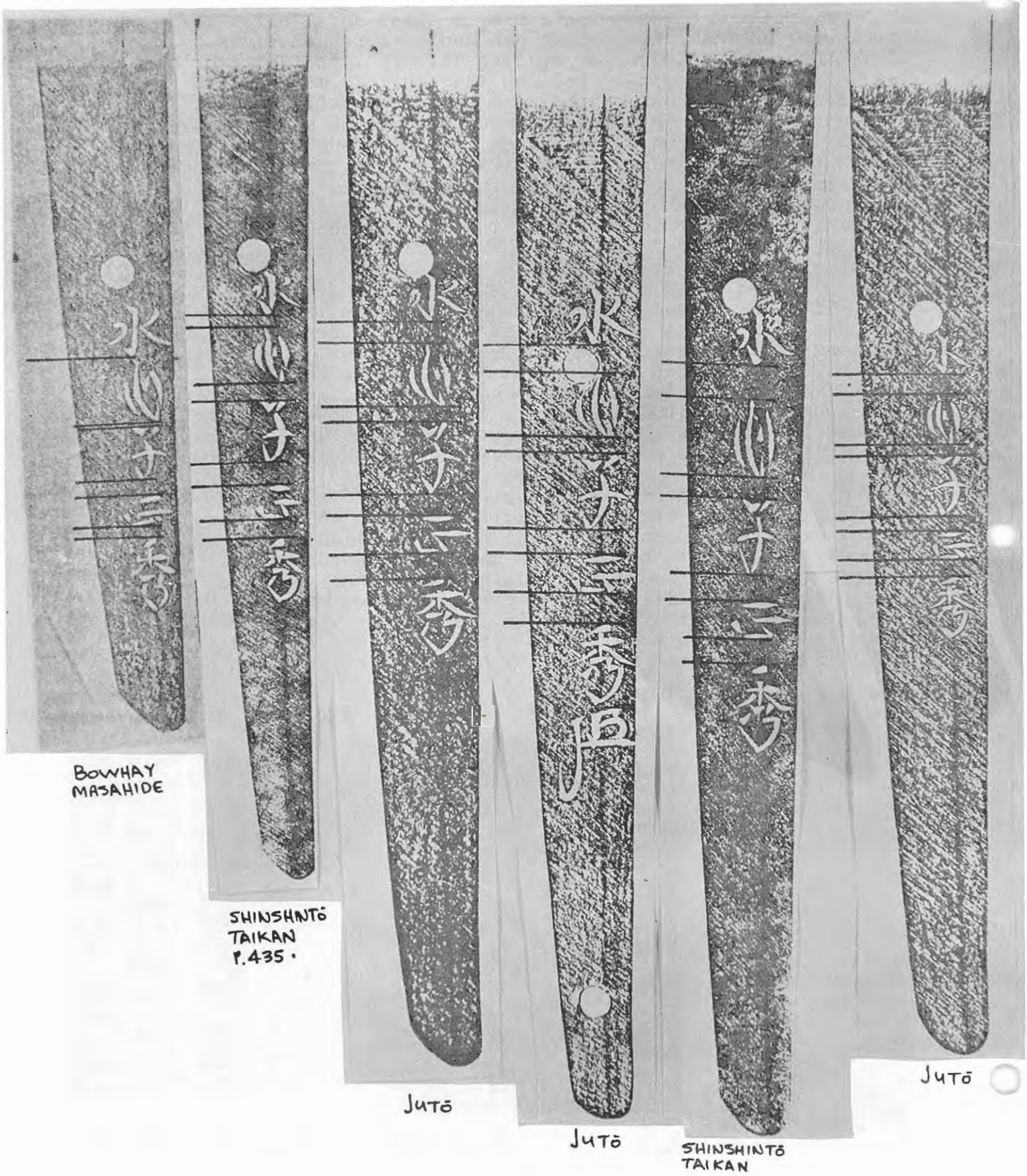


ILLUSTRATION #1

ILLUSTRATION #2



BOWHAY MASAHIDE

SHINSHINTŌ TAIKAN P.435.

JUTŌ

JUTŌ

SHINSHINTŌ TAIKAN

JUTŌ

SUISENSHI MASAHIDE

by Jon Bowhay

SHAPE: Wakizashi (short sword) of shinogi zukuri (ridge down each side) form. Sori (curvature) is 2 bu 2 rin. It has ihore (two sided) mune. Blade length is 1 shaku 6 sun. Kasane (thickness) is heavy.

EDGE: Hamon is gunome midare (irregular mounded) made in nie deki (basically made in nie form). It has yakidashi (area of suguha hamon) at the hamachi (or edge notch). The boshi is in gunome komi (continuation of hamon pattern) with komaru (small rounded turnback) kaeri asai (short turn back). The nie guchi (edge of nie) is made up of thick nie.

HADA: Itame susumu (very fine like glass). This is a characteristic of Shinshintō, of course. The glass like appearance of the hada is especially a quality of Suisenshi and his school. There is masa (straight forging) on the shinogi-ji (area between shinogi and mune).

NAKAGO: Mei (signature) is SUISENSHI MASAHIDE. Uramei (date) is Kansei ni nen (2nd year of Kansei period) hachigatsu hi (eigth month) (August 1790). There is one mekugi ana (mekugi hole), sugikai yasurimei (slanting left file marks). Nakago jiri (end) is ha agari kurijiri (uneven rounded leaning into ha or cutting edge). This kurijiri is common among shinshinto blades.

REMARKS:

This is a work done early in Masahide's carrer. You will note that the name is cut in thick strokes. A characteristic of his early years. This period is also characterized by a thick nie guchi (tempered in thick nie along hamon) in the Soshu style. However, the yakidashi and <u>overall</u> appearance gives the impression, somewhat, of a work by Oya Kunisada of the Osaka school. This blade is, overall, in the style of an Osaka shintō. The blade has almost no hira niku ("meat" or roundness into the cutting edge) and is extremely hard. Due to this the blade was difficult to polish and required a great deal of time, skill, and effort for me to bring out the hada. But is was well worth it. I and my customer were both well satisfied with the results.

SWORD REGISTRATION PROJECT -

Mr. Han Bing Siong has advised the Newsletter of the initiation of a sword registration project, to be carried out by the Tōken Society of the Netherlands. Formal registration sheets are being compiled on swords in the Netherlands stating what the swords are and attesting to their genuineness of signature. A copy of the booklet containing the first 35 swords registered has been given to the Newsletter for our information. We hope to hear more on this interesting project as it developes.

BUY-SELL-TRADE COLUMN -

This section of the Newsletter is offered as a free service to the membership, providing an opportunity to advertise specific items for buy-sell-trade. Ads must be short and too the point, and should be mailed direct to the Newsletter ahead of deadline.

- WANTED - Complete suit of armour, or any armour parts. Contact: David LaRocca,

- FOR TRADE - Brass barrel Japanese percussion pistol, good condition, late Edo piece w/katakiri-bori engraving in good condition. Prefer trade for Tanegashima or blades, shintō of SENDAI SCHOOL; Kunikane, Kanekura, Yasutomo, etc. Contact: Peter Bleed,

- WANTED - Wakizashi by Shinshintō Bizen Sukekane (SU-376), building daishō. Contact: Ray Deadman,

- FOR SALE - Wakizashi by Fujiwara Kuniyoshi, good polish, shirazaya, papers (KU-917) Contact: Deadman (same as above).

- WANTED - Katana or wakizashi by Kanenori (KA-266) and Naganobu (NA-197). Cash, or trade for Shigemune (SH-156). Also have some sword books for sale. Contact: Akio Takahashi,

- WANTED - Wakizashi or tantō by Kijū of Yamato Province, ca 1688. Contact: William Kerwin,

- FOR SALE - Revised/improved index in english to NIHONTŌ ZUIKAN. Price: $11.00 including postage. Contact: C. Uhls, 4

ADS cont'd.

●FOR SALE - Uchiko (bulk - enough for at least 30 balls w/ material for making balls); Also 104 back issues of NBTHK magazines (1971-78), offered as a lot $1,000 cash plus surface postage or will consider trade for blade of reasonable quality. Uchiko is of excellent quality made by me (a polisher). Contact: Jon Bowhay,

●FOR SALE - Book: Japanese art series "Japanese Sword", by Dr.Homma, 1948. English. 75pages plus charts. Contact: David Scott,

●FOR SALE - Collection of swords (23 blades) to be sold as lot only. Contact: Phil Davis,

EXHIBITION AND CATALOGUE -

An exhibition of gold and unusual sword fittings from the collection of Raymond Bushell was held in Tokyo during March. The exhibit apparently is still being held during April in Osaka and Nagoya.

The exhibition catalogue is being made available at $20US and can be ordered direct from Mr. Raymond Bushell,

A copy of this catalogue has been purchased and will be placed in the JSS/US library upon its receipt (mid-May perhaps).

MEIBUTSU CATALOGUE CORRECTION -

It should be mentioned that the exhibit #6, Bizen MASAZANE TACHI, illustrated in the TTK'79 MEIBUTSU is actually "Heian" period ca 1055. Please correct your copy.

This came to mind as this blade was exhibited in the Dallas Meibutsu Room this month.

ONE MORE AD OR SO....

●WANTED - 7-volume NIHONTO TAIKAN. Cash or trade swords.

Contact: Paul Kameoka,

●FOR SALE/TRADE - Juyo Token Plates Vols.1,4-5,9-10,12-21. Best offer. Contact: Arnold Frenzel

NEW ENGLAND SWORD SOCIETY -

The New England group is progressing in their sword study with regular meetings and now, a Newsletter. James Stathis has been advising us of when local meetings are held and when this information is in time for our paper we shall pass it on to our membership. It will give members in that locale a chance to get together for their sword studies.

JSS/US SUPPLIES -

Several new items have become available for members, thru our supply service. They are as follows:

BOOK OF THE SWORD: Several copies of this publication, a reprint of the 1972 Dallas publication, have been purchased and are available while the supply lasts. The copies have slight defects on their covers (spot discoloration) but the texts are fine. This is hard bound, 159 pages plus charts. Basically, a book of lectures from the 1972 shinsa/taikai. Price: $10.00pp

"NEVERDULL" POLISHING WADS: This product is a liquid treated cotton sold as a silverware polish, etc., but has been found to be very good for removing stains from blades. As with any polishing material, one must use it with restraint as too much polishing brightens too much, but still it is very good to do some basic "clean up" on stained blades. DO NOT USE ON ANY PATINATED FITTINGS. A supply of 5 oz. tins have been stocked (due to requests) and are available for ordering. Price: $5.00pp

SAGEO: A number of people have asked about the availability of sageo (saya cords). The stock has pretty well been depleted and anyone requesting further orders should do so direct thru some of our advertisers (Nihonto Kemma, Ltd., Omino International, etc.) as they maintain a running stock of these.

SWORD GUARDS; TOKYO NATIONAL MUSEUM PUBLICATION: We did not order a supply of these books as intended and therefore can not offer them thru the Society. Word has it that the supply has been depleted even in Japan and that the book is no longer available readily. If a supply is found available, please let us know and perhaps we could still buy a supply....but until then, we have none. Sorry....its a nice little book.

MEIBUTSU; TOKEN TAIKAI '79 CATALOGUE: A formal advertising flyer for this book has been made up and a copy included in this mailing. All new members will continue to get a copy of this ad. Anyone already having their copy of the catalogue might pass on this advertisement to your local library as they might be most interested in buying a copy from us. THOSE MEMBERS WHO REQUESTED THE NEW FOLD-OUT OSHIGATA WILL FIND THIS IN WITH THIS MAILING.

SOME SIDE BENEFITS OF COLLECTING -

It is always a chore at end-of-year when dues arrive and nightly clerical duties occupy one's time. But then this is also a time when many of our distant members take the time to express their gratitude to the Society for giving them an organization thru which they can associate with other collectors and thru which they are able to gather some learning by way of our publications. Many of us U.S. collectors take our sword shows and local meetings in stride so to speak, but for many members be they in isolated states or in Germany, Australia, New Zealand, or Chile, the JSS/US is their only link with the sword world. When one hears their words of thanks it does make our Society "stand tall" and makes one aware of the importance of our "chores".

It was my pleasure to visit at length last February with one of our most isolated members, Franz Baehr and his lovely wife Alida, of Santiago, Chile. Franz is deeply interested in the sword and during his visit to the states, gathered all the possible information he could find knowing that after he returns home he will again be a collector/student in isolation. The Birmingham sword show was his first sword show; a great experience for him! I believe his greatest thrill was when he was able to purchase the wakizashi used by Mr. Omino in the polishing demonstration. Later we were able to visit in St.Louis briefly during which time much sword talk and enjoyment prevailed. We parted as good friends looking forward to "next time". My point in mentioning this visit is to again say how impressed I am at the importance isolated members such as Franz puts in his membership with the JSS/US. It certainly drives home the message that we have not only a fine organization but also obligations as members to share our experiences and learning thru our Society publications and thru other activities such as teaching exhibits at shows. We all have a responsibility as a JSS/US member and that is...to share.

With the kind words of thanks from our members still on our minds, put aside your sword hunt for a few evening and share your experiences by contributing some material for use in our publications. Whatever is contributed is, I can assure you all, greatly appreciated.

Thanks....in advance.

Ron Hartmann - NL Editor

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE -

The next Newsletter (May-June issue) is due out about the first week of June. Please have all material intended for that issue into the hands of the Editor well in advance of that time. 1979 BULLETIN??? It is finally ready for printing and will be arriving in your mail boxes shortly, at last!