

羅府合氣道学院古屋道場



AIKIDO CENTER OF LOS ANGELES NEWSLETTER

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Volume XV. Number 2.

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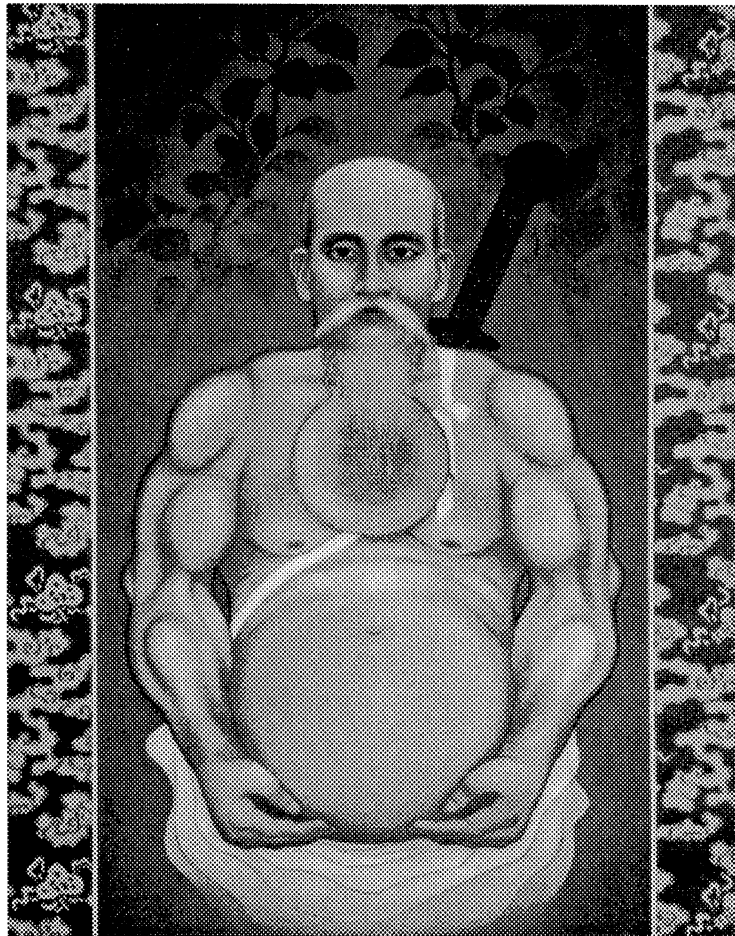
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The Founder of Aikido Morihei Ueshiba O'Sensei

Listening

Tom McIntyre, 2nd Dan
Sheridan, Wyoming

In late November my mother-in-law, June Kanase, died after fighting cancer for over two years. In the end she died peacefully at home with her husband beside her, her end eased, I believe, by the prayers of many, including those of Furuya Sensei.

After the funeral, my father-in-law, Tak, handed me a small wooden box that he said June had wanted me to have. Inside, wrapped in a pale-green silk cloth, was a

tsuba. The gold on the iron disk depicted a Chinese landscape and sky, including a moon the size of a pinhead shining through thin clouds, the silent image somehow very moving to me. Papers accompanied the tsuba, but my father-in-law was unable to translate the Japanese. I sent copies of the papers to Sensei, and he was kind enough to read them and tell me that the sword guard was the work of Kawamura Jakushi, made in probably the mid-1700's in what is now Nagasaki.

Sword & Budo Study Class

Our discussion group will resume again from March 11th, Tuesday, from 7:30pm. Discussion topic: Stories Behind the Stories in KODO. Please bring your copy and a notebook and pen. Everyone is welcome to attend. The discussion group will on the 3rd Tuesday of every month if this schedule is convenient for everyone.

Listening continued:

June, my mother-in-law, had been born Kiyō Tanaka in Tokyo, where her father had been able to retire early and to begin collecting antiques in pre-war Japan. He apparently collected widely and eclectically, specializing in no particular types of antiques, letting his fancy take him where it would. Most of what he collected, though, was destroyed in the fire-bombings of Tokyo, and the tsuba I was given was one of the few objects to survive.

I learned this part of my mother-in-law's history only after he death. June would talk about herself only when asked, and though I would talk with my father-in-law and listen to his stories of growing up on a farm near Fresno and his service in the 442nd during World War II (once when leaving on a business trip to Europe, I told Tak I would be flying into Frankfurt, Germany; and he recalled that the 1st time he'd been in Frankfurt he'd helped blow it up), I never thought to ask June about her past. No doubt this was a "male" thing—a reluctance to make more than small talk with one's mother-in-law, perhaps in the belief that there were probably few shared interests between us. Nevertheless, I had missed an opportunity that I could never have again: To ask June about her life in Japan before the war and about her father and his collecting. I had lost an opportunity to listen.

Listening is something we do not do very well anymore. I suspect that before the invention of radio and television (neither of which we honestly listen to, but mostly use and abuse, either to fill up what little silence there may be left around us or to drown out the outside noises that threaten to madden us), and even more so that of the written word, we all knew how to listen very much better. Whether it was to the story teller or to the elder's advice or to the sounds of nature around us, listening well undoubtedly mattered a great deal, to the extent that our lives might depend on it. (In fact, it still matters; we only deceive ourselves by pretending that it does not.)

Not listening is both risky and confusing. Hearing

Aikido Demonstration

Beverly Hills Multi-Cultural Concert Series

Sponsored by the
Mayor's Committee for Culture & the Arts

February 2nd.

Beverly Hills Civic Center

what they want to hear, and not what is actually being said, is a universal trait of stupid, often belligerent people. Listening carefully before speaking, or acting, has never harmed anyone. It may not seem that listening is vital to Aikido practice, because long lectures and explanations are generally not a part of the demonstration of a technique. But listening is a learned skill, another aspect of the heightened sense of alertness that Aikido teaches us. It may even be *more* important in Aikido because so little *is* said: The few words an instructor may speak always have a purpose, and as students we are obliged to keep ourselves alert at all times to hear and understand what is spoken the first time it *is* spoken.

Listening badly or not at all also makes our lives poorer. It is certainly not true that there is no one in this world who isn't worth listening to. (It almost always seems to be the case that those with the least to say are the ones doing most of the talking.)

IMPORTANT DATES:

Feb. 2nd. Aikido Demonstration at the Beverly Hills Civic Center. Multi-Cultural Concert Series.

Feb. 8th. Iaido Intensive Seminar.
6:30am. Breakfast-Meeting follows.

Feb. 17th. Washington-Lincoln's Birthday Holiday. Dojo closed.

Feb. 22nd. Instructor's Seminar. 6:30-8:30am. Breakfast Meeting follows.

March 11th. Budo & Sword Study Class. 7:30-8:30pm.

April 26th. Founder of Aikido, O'Sensei's Annual Memorial Service from 5:00-6:00pm. Reception: 6:30pm.
\$25.00 person.

May 3rd. Children's Day Asian Martial Arts Festival at the Japanese American Cultural & Community Center Plaza.

August 9-10th. Nisei Week Japanese Festival.

In Appreciation

Many thanks to my students for the many cards, greetings and presents for Christmas. I would especially like to thank you for your continued support and loyalty to the Dojo for 1997. Please keep up your practice.

Reverend Kensho Furuya

Listening continued:

But there are many, often the least apparently likely ones, who have a great deal worth listening to if we will only shut up long enough to let them speak. Unfortunately, we often learn this about them only when their voices are no longer here for us to hear.

Listening is an art that takes long practice to master. Where I live now is great country for practicing listening, whether to the calls of Hungarian partridges across the canyon or a warm chinook blowing through the night to lick the snow off the ground or some old cowhand drinking coffee in the Silver Spur on a gray day, saying how it's been "rainin' pitchforks and dynamite" over by Belle Fourche. It's good country for listening because there is so much native silence in it, and the people respect that silence by saying no more than they need to--unless it's something that counts.

Any country is good listening country, though, if we will only work to learn how. We can never decide which voices, young and old, are worth listening to without first listening. And if we don't listen to them now, there will, I guarantee, come a time when we will not be able. And we will always wonder what we have lost.

Someone was listening to the prayers for June and allowed her to go easily. I wish I was smart enough to listen to her when I had the chance. Now, though, I do have this elegant tsuba; and at times in the silence I can hold it in my hand; and by listening well I can sometimes hear what even it has to say. Because as essential as voices may be, listening truly is not just about speech; at times it isn't even about sound. After all, if we never listen, how can we ever know when it may have at last grown quiet?

Editor's Note: Tom is an old student of Sensei's who moved to Wyoming several years ago. He is a veteran editor of Sports Afield and the author of several books on the philosophy of hunting. He is also internationally reknown as a big-game hunter. This article reminds Sensei of Aldous Huxley's classic, "The Art of Seeing."

I Call To You. A Blessing for the Journey

By Wendy Egyoku Nakao
Yonkers, New York

Let us vow
to remember
the causes of suffering and
to practice an end to suffering.
I shall accept all
that I cannot change, and
let my heart be broken.
May we be gentle
for all our days,
here, there and everywhere.

Let us vow
to bear witness
to the wholeness of life,
realizing the completeness
of each and everything.
Embracing our differences,
I shall know myself as you,
and you as myself.
May we serve each other
for all our days,
here, there and everywhere.

Let us vow
to open ourselves
to the abundance of life.
Freely giving and receiving,
I shall care for you,
for the trees and stars,
as treasures of my very own.
May we be grateful
for all our days,
here, there and everywhere.

Let us vow

to forgive all hurt,
caused by ourselves and others,
and to never condone hurtful ways.
Being responsible for my actions,
I shall free myself and you.
Will you free me, too?
May we be kind
for all our days,
here, there, and everywhere.

Let us vow
to remember that
all that appears will disappear.
In the midst of uncertainty,
I shall sow love.
Here! Now! I call to you:
Let us together live
The Great Peace that we are.
May we give no fear
for all our days,
here, there, and everywhere.

Editor's Note: Rev. Wendy Egyoku Nakao formerly resided and studied at the Zen Center of Los Angeles and met Sensei at Zenshuji. She recently transferred to the White Plum Sangha in New York where she is currently continuing her studies and doing work for Zen Buddhism.

Our Sincerest Condolences to Our Members & Friends

On the passing of Andy Kissel's father on
January 6, 1997.

On the passing of Tom McIntyre's mother-in-
law, June Kanase, in November.

On the passing of Rev. Shin-etsu Fukushima's
mother-in-law. Saitama, Japan.

More of Our Christmas Party



Top Toppers for 1996

Year Totals:

1. Kenny Furuya	309 Hours
2. Ken Watanabe	299 "
3. Larry Armstrong	246 "
4. David Ito	199 "
5. Richard Eloriagga	182 "
6. Nikolic Vladimir	179 "
7. Maria Murakawa	167 "
8. Cheryl Lew	148 "
9. James Doi	146 "
10. Curtis Westfall	122 "

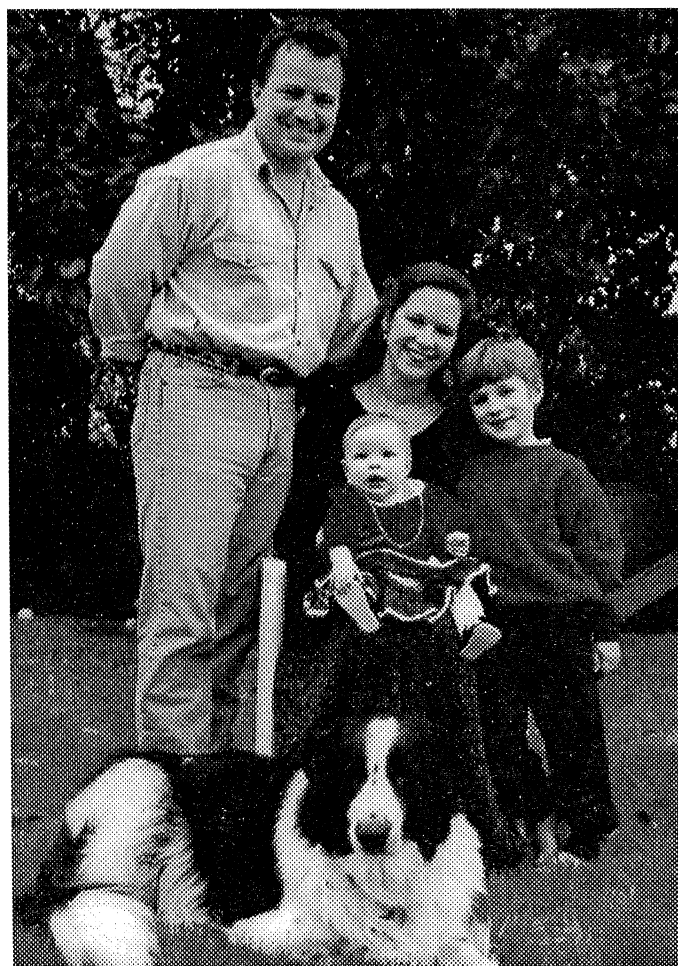
November 1996

1. Ken Watanabe	36 Hours
2. Kenny Furuya	36 "
3. Maria Murakawa	21 "
4. David Ito	19 "
5. James Doi	17 "
6. Larry Armstrong	16 "
7. Cheryl Lew	14 "
8. Kristine San Luis	13 "
9. Wayne O'Sick	13 "
10. Ricky Ishitani	9 "

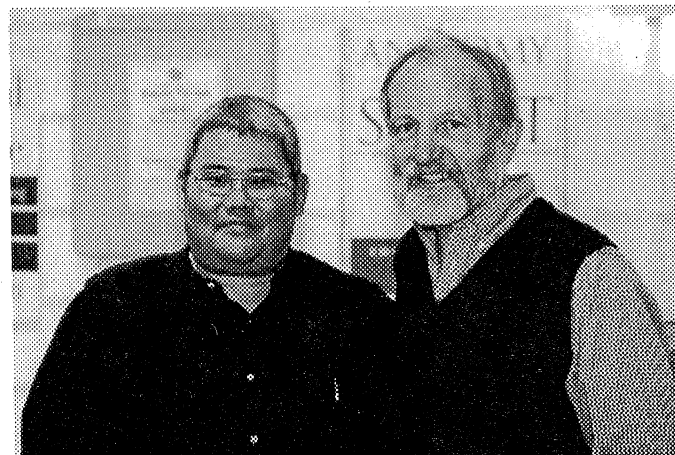
December 1996

1. Ken Watanabe	35 Hours
2. Kenny Furuya	33 "
3. James Doi	17 "
4. Cheryl Lew	14 "
5. Valerie Nerres	13 "
6. David Ito	12 "
7. Maria Murakawa	12 "
8. Larry Armstrong	12 "
9. Kristine San Luis	12 "
10. Norman Lew	11 "

Keep Up the Good Work!



Curtis Westfall, 2nd Dan, & Family



Sensei with Stan Madsen, Co-owner of Bodhitree Books, at recent Kodo Book Signing Party.

Submit your Newsletter articles early for publication. We also welcome clear photos of students and members. Articles dealing with your practice of Aikido are especially welcome.

Good News Here & There:

December 19, 1996

Sensei was interviewed by the A&E cable TV series, "Ancient Mysteries" series for a special feature on the Samurai. The Program is tentatively scheduled to air sometime in April, 1997.

January 5, 1997

(From the Bodhi Tree Bookstore in reponse to our recent Book Signing Event.)

... Good News. We have installed your photo. It is directly next to the martial arts bookcase and the Zen bookcase in the east wing of our building. We are honored to have your pictorial presence with us.

Stan Madson.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is a very great honor for Sensei and the Dojo. All members should visit the Bodhi Tree Bookstore and see Sensei's picture! The Bodhi Tree is located at 8989 Melrose Ave., in West Hollywood, several blocks west of La Cienega Blvd. on Melrose. They are open 7 days a week until 11pm.

January 7, 1997

The Dojo was honored by a visit with Ms. Yukiko Katagiri Sensei who teaches at the Cornell University Aikido Club in New York.

CONGRATULATIONS! KODO will soon be going into its fourth printing. - Fourth Printing!!! KODO is doing very well and the Dojo receives telephone calls and letters of congratulations from all over the world about the book. Many thanks for everyone's support.

Travels: Recently, Andy Kissel visited Oregon and San Francisco. Ken Watanabe took a weekend off to go to Las Vegas. Valerie Nerres has gone to San Francisco and Berkeley to attend seminars. Eric Nagamatsu spent several months in the summer with his family in Bangkok. Peo Lopansri visited his parents in Illinois over the Christmas season as well as Eric Scott who spent Christmas with his parents in Seattle.

DONATIONS: Ten copies of KODO were donated to the Zenshuji Building Fund. Three copies to the Krashodav Aikido Club in Russia.



Sensei with Mr. Kengo Iwami who recently visited Los Angeles. Kengo is the future son-in-law of Isamu Ichizuka Sensei of the Omiya Dojo in Japan. At IIPastaio in Old Town Pasadena.



With Kengo's friend and David Ito at Olvera Street in Downtown Los Angeles, in the rain. Photos courtesy of Kengo Iwami.

Making Good Practice IV

Develop Yourself Positively

One of the most important yet one of the most difficult aspects of training is to continue to develop yourself positively. Indeed, one must keep himself physically fit and free of injuries. This means a good, clean lifestyle and a rigorous yet safe practice program. We are never free of disease or unforeseen accidents, yet, many times, it could be something we can avoid if we are careful. Planning, awareness, intelligence and common sense determines these factors.

The more difficult and subtle obstacles lie Con't.

within our own minds. Some beginners discourage easily because their expectations may be too high or they lack adequate self-esteem to pursue something seriously and with commitment.

As students advance, they are in danger of developing an incorrect sense of self-confidence. It is not a real sense of self-confidence in one's own ability, level of skill, and his potential for further development but, in another sense, a self-confidence born out of a sense of superiority over others, a desire to show oneself as better than others or a desire to dominate others. This, as most of us know, can only lead to disaster in one's own Aikido practice.

At this time, a sense of the Beginner's Mind (*Shoshin*), which we have discussed before on numerous occasions, is very important to re-consider and think about seriously in regards to one's own practice.

Finally, when one reach's the Black Belt level, he must keep in mind that this is only the Beginning and not an End to his training. This is where most Aikidoists fail and should be something that one must watch very, very carefully in one's own situation. It is discouraging to think that there is so much against us in our practice but this is not so. It is why the ancient masters always talked about *DO* or the "Way" of one's practice. This "Way" of practice will eventually become our "Way" of Life - the way of our Greater Lives.

We Are the Same and We are Different

We are same in that we all share the same rules and regulations and demands of practice in the Dojo and the same standards for practice. Yet, at the same time, we must also understand that all of us are different from each other so we must adjust our practice with each classmate we train with to hard or soft, fast or slow, advanced or beginning level, etc.

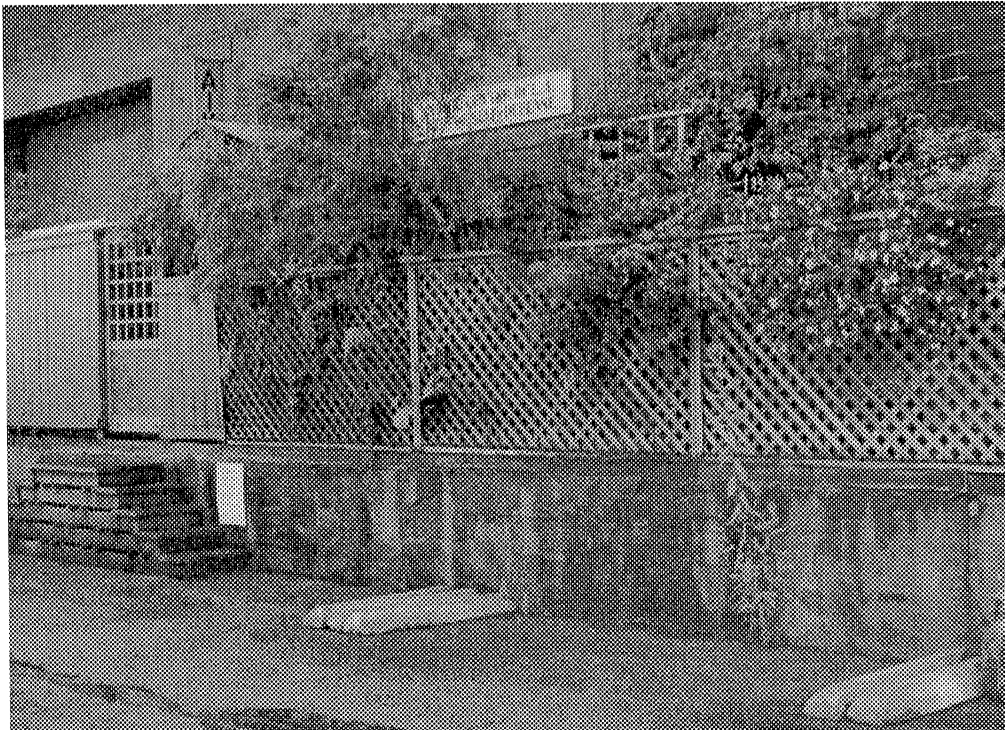
In our own practice and with our practice with oth-

ers, it is important to bring out their good points as well as our own. Not an easy process at all. Recently, two senior students left the Dojo. One student suffered too much self-confidence and pride and another student from of lack of self-esteem and self-confidence. Al-

though outwardly these problems look very much the same, they were in actuality in deep contrast to each other. I think this clearly points out the dangers lurking in the back of our minds as we practice. Yet to deal with these problems too are an important - indeed vital - part of our training. Because it is here, where even the mightiest and best among us can fail.

Keeping the Faith

Most matters in our practice cannot be easily explained or reasoned out or justified. Many times it just seems to be a convoluted mass of injustice, contradiction, lack of reason and out-datedness which is just hopeless. I know this very well because I have experienced it many times. Many times, it is only to keep our faith in ourselves.



Turning The Page In Taiwan: Beginning A New Chapter in Taiwan's Kung Fu History

By Master Adam Hsu,
Taipei, Republic of China

Over the last year, I've had the opportunity to chat with a number of people over here (strangely enough, lots of them are American) about modern Taiwanese society. Everyone-missionaries, military personnel, businessmen, American embassy staff, and sometimes even ex-CIA--agrees that Taiwan has really changed a lot. Pointing to blocks of high rise buildings in Taipei, they'll say "That used to be a rice field!" Some of them lived in houses built by Japanese during the occupation-homes with Japanese-style architecture and tatamis. They reminisce about *san lun che* (man-powered, three-wheeled peddled vehicles, somewhat like rickshaws)-the non-polluting, un-rapid transit of bygone years. Indeed, it's very different today and if anything, the changes are accelerating.

Some things, like rice fields, can't be totally destroyed. After all, what will we eat? As a matter of fact, in south Taiwan and the countryside-not in Taipei-they still grow lots of good rice both for domestic consumption and export. Rice is a daily necessity.

Some old things are no longer needed and their passing is no great loss. We may value Confucius, wish to study his philosophy, and respect his way of living. However, this doesn't mean we should junk our automobiles and ride around in carts pulled by horses, cattle and donkeys just because he did.

San lun che used to be common but today they're nowhere to be seen. They were slow and not even safe as automobiles. Certainly there weren't as convenient. Replacing them was improvement and progress.

Kung fu, I think, is like the rice field. Yes, I do

understand that in terms of modern combat, it's more like the *san lun che*. Take a look at the Sino-Japanese War, China could not fight successfully because Japan had superior firearms and better trained troops. Even a streetfighter can't defeat guns and rifles with bare fist, saber or spear. You'll lose everything-life, property, country, honor.

Kung fu is still needed in our century-and the next! It offers us health, fitness, personal growth and exposure to Chinese culture and philosophy. I very deeply feel it is truly valuable for all of us.

When I look at Taiwan as it is now and think of what we had in the past, it really bothers me. Taiwan used to be a poor country. My family moved here in 1949, one family among thousands who were forced out of mainland China by Mao Tse-Tung's communist troops. When I was young, we didn't have money to spare for shiny Kung fu uniforms or even proper Kung fu pants. My classmates and I wore just any old pants that could cover our butts-and I do mean *old*, not new. The shoes we wore to practice were already well worn. Our sabers were wood, our swords bamboo. We always so envied adults who had enough money to purchase a metal weapon. To own a real sword-that was my dream!

If you watched our classes, what would you have seen? Typically, the teachers were middle-aged sifus who spoke Mandarin with the heavy accents and strange vocabularies that signify local dialects from the different provinces of China. And us students? The sifu would be yelling "*yi, er, san, si*" to a bunch of energetic young juvenile delinquents, who were poor, hyperactive, and crazy about Kung fu. Our classes were held in Taipei's New Park, the Botanical Gardens, in the poor districts of town, or sometimes in front of temples as long as it had front, side, or back yard that we could use.

All northern Kung fu styles were taught by sifus who had come over to Taiwan with the wave of refugees from the mainland. All southern styles were taught by native Taiwanese. Northern or southern, everyone was equally poor.

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In those days, the government was totally preoccupied with providing basic necessities for Taiwan's suddenly-enlarged population. At the top of the list was national security. Resources had to be funneled into protecting the tiny island from communist China's formidable troops. That was tough enough. Secondly, it had to find a way to grow more rice to fill empty stomachs and to regulate the economy just so people would have sufficient clothing, hospitals, and schools for the children. Taiwan was also under a great deal of political and economic pressure from the rest of the world. In the beginning, American cut all support. Britain and France followed suit, terminating official relationships with Taiwan and connecting with the mainland. Understandably, the government had no resources to allocate to the arts-fine arts or martial arts.

Though Taiwan's economy today is one of the richest in the entire world, this habit continues. And within the population, awareness and sincere appreciation for traditional arts has declined. In the old days, Kung fu in Taiwan was always passed down by old sifus, unsubsidized and supported only by their beliefs. They taught a small number of students and among them perhaps only one or two were able to pass down the art. So only a tiny percentage of the population practices real Kung fu.

The great retreat from mainland China took place about forty years ago. The first generation of sifu in Taiwan who were middle-aged at the time would now be in their eighties or older and many of them have already passed away. I can pretty much say that *all* of the first generation are now gone.

The biggest problem facing us today is the second generation-me, my Kung fu brothers, my own Kung fu generation. Our level is far below the older masters. I'd say we're not even up to ten percent of their level. If we assign the number one hundred to the first generation (not even considering whether each individual sifu's ability was high or low), then my generation should be given ten or less. In both quality and quantity, the level of art we achieved is low. Moreover, the second generation has difficulty to

to make the art stronger, develop, and promote it.

This is a dangerous situation for Kung fu. So I'm trying my best to share my art-everything I know, even if it's just a little-with others of the second generation. I will help anyone I know in my generation if they have good art, know a good style, or have achieved a certain level with a weapon. I will cooperate with them, teach more, and pass on the art. It's my highest priority right now.

Of course one person has very little power. But if even ten people cooperate, help each other, and work together, their power will leap far beyond ten. Perhaps one hundred is too much to hope for, but how about seventy-five? This is what I believe.

Let's recalculate. If there were one million good martial artists in Taiwan but no one did anything, then one million times zero still equals zero. However one million multiplied by the lowly number one equals one million! So each must start with himself. This is my encouragement to people.

Even more, I believe the second and third generations have to work together. The younger generation must respect its elders. In turn, my generation must understand all hope rests on the next generation. They're the ones who will keep the art alive, and spread it to more and more people: from here to there, across the borders to far away lands, and eventually throughout the whole world. So I'm trying to recruit third generation students here in Taiwan-in other words younger people-to participate and join us. It's not easy.

This generation can roughly be divided into three general categories. The first group doesn't really know much about Kung fu. They need to be educated and inspired to study the art. A more difficult task lies with the second group: those who have some training but lack high level technique and knowledge. These practitioners don't know enough to realize how limited their levels are. Moreover, some of them have won trophies and national championships. They are enjoying pride and satisfaction

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at their achievements, but at the same time their motivation to practice hard has dropped.

The situation is even worse with the third group-those who inherited wrong techniques, movements, and ideas from their teachers. Most of them learned from members of the second generation but a few had the opportunity to learn from the first generation. Unfortunately, there's no guarantee that any teacher-no matter what generation-possessed a good art or passed it on correctly and completely.

Sadly, masters often withhold training from their students-a deplorable tradition in Chinese martial arts that has no useful purpose in modern times and is greatly responsible for bringing the art to the edge of extinction. Sometimes teachers pass along errors through their own ignorance. Those who know better mislead students by not correcting their mistakes, sometimes even by encouraging their mistakes, and by imparting incomplete or watered down training. It's almost impossible to talk with their students, not because they have bad manners-some of them are still humble and very respectful but because they feel very strongly they have learned a great art form from a great master. They simply will not believe you and even resist if you try to point out what they learned is wrong.

Within Kung fu circles there are too many misunderstandings and too much religion. People worship a teacher and believe in a style as if it were a religion. A religious belief is not open to discussion. There's no room for doubt. This type of unscientific attitude, perpetuated by both second and third generations, has damaged martial arts a whole lot already.

Outside martial art circles, there's not much interest in or support for Chinese martial arts. The government and society need to be awakened and educated to Kung fu's value as a native cultural treasure and they need to understand how it can benefit people today. There's plenty of money around. Some of the non-profit organizations here are looking for projects to fund but tend to throw their support to

other arts, not martial arts. And government-sponsored Kung fu activities desperately need to broaden their focus beyond sporty competitions, to develop and implement programs that will accomplish long-term development.

We're working to get things going in lots of different fields. There's a great deal of work ahead, but my plans have neither altered nor faltered. We will march forward full speed with full power, no holding back, and do a good, honest job.

Right now, I'm trying to establish some type of network with the second generation-nothing tight, heavy, or formal like a club or structured organization-but the type of connection that will provide some contact, foster friendly cooperation, and help us encourage each other to teach.

For the third generation, I must be more open, teach these students what is true and what is untrue. I want them to treat Kung fu first in an objective, scientific manner. Later on, when students reach a certain level, then maybe they can treat Kung fu as an art form. Thirdly, the need to believe in something is human nature. I'm not really against religion-that is to say, not against people having their own beliefs. But if you try worshipping the martial arts from the very beginning, then your minds and hearts will be closed, your ability to learn and make progress limited, and you'll only want to convert others. Having faith in your martial arts is not quite the same thing as faith in a deity and afterlife. Belief in your style and master, no matter how intense, can't guarantee your martial arts has authenticity, depth and power.

Well, we're moving forward one step at a time. Large or tiny, what matters is that the steps go in the correct direction. As we progress down this road, joined by more and more supporters who are willing to contribute resources, intelligence, time, and energy to our cause, I'm hoping that the accumulation of all our tiny steps will reach the critical mass needed to launch authentic, traditional Chinese martial arts into a twenty-first century renaissance: a gift for

the coming generations world-wide, and a rebirth for this endangered cultural treasure.

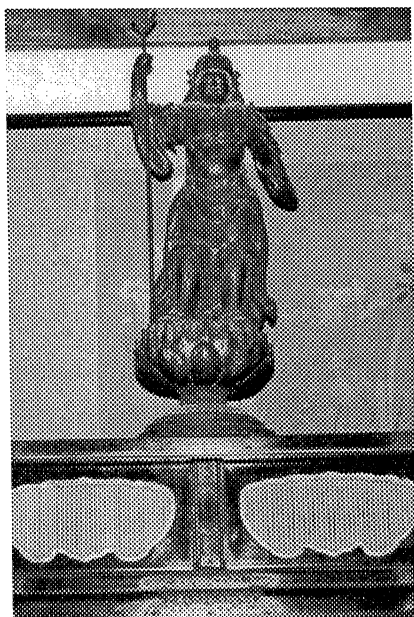
By Master Adam Hsu

Kindly Reprinted from Autumn Hues, Journal of the Traditional Wushu Association. Volume 5. No. 3. November 30, 1996.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

I have known Master Hsu for the last twenty years ever since he first relocated to the Bay area from Taipei, Taiwan and began teaching in this country. When I first saw his Kung Fu, I was so greatly impressed and ever since that first day, he has only impressed me more and more with every opportunity I can meet him. I consider him one of the great martial artists in this world today, in this century. I have reprinted several of his articles and will continue because of their great importance to the martial arts world. The points he makes in the above article relates to the same conditions and circumstances currently going on in martial arts in Japan, in the United States and in the world. I hope you will read his article very carefully.

About Our Dojo:



Bishamonten
Wood Carving
Circa mid-15th C.

Bishamonten on the 1st floor of our Dojo is often called the "God of War" and is one of the gods of the well-known "7 Gods of Good Luck"

Bishamonten was worshipped by Samurai warriors from very ancient times before battle and often his image was engraved on swords.

He carries a spear which symbolizes his great power as a warrior but in his left hand he also carries a magical pagoda which gives back life, cures all diseases and chases away all evil spirits. He protects our Dojo.

Correspondence:

December 20, 1996

I recently read your book "Kodo Ancient Ways" and wanted to express my appreciation. Your book has helped me in the following ways:

1. It gave me a meaningful definition of happiness in a culture that has only words to offer. Thanks!!
2. It helped me see the real reason for practicing martial arts. You did an excellent job describing the modern martial arts climate and how it will not support us. I will always remember you as I practice my art.
3. It reinforced my belief that a simply (sic), holy life is best. You provide a good role model for all who will listen and watch.
4. It reinforced universal values and morals. This is rare in our society.
5. It gave me a better concept of success and warned of a "TV mentality" in all areas of life.

After reading about the tea ceremony, it will be hard to drink tea and not think of your positive contribution to so many areas in life. Like the true master, you are giving yourself away until there will be nothing left. . . . Thank you very much and keep writing.

Sincerely, Rickey Cox
Harrisburg, Illinois

MEITO-Famous Named Swords. By Gary Myers

There is one topic we hope that most of you will find interesting and that is the subject of *meito*, which literally means swords with names. Meito, like named tea bowls, represent the finest examples of swords that can be found. Meito have a further qualifier, which is they have to be well known since the time of their origin. In other words they have to have a history. This history can be in the form of a famous swordsmith i.e. founder of a particular sword making tradition, a famous owner, or an event associated with the blade, or a combination thereof. Then and only then can they be designated as meito. We would like to discuss a few meito and how they got their names.

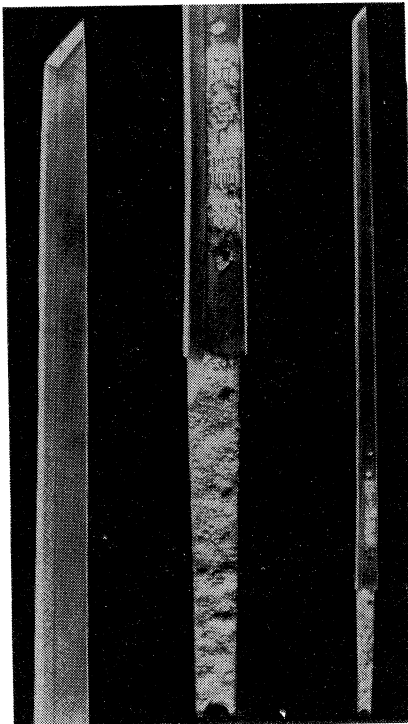
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Meito in the Age of the Gods

Both the Nihongi and the Kojiki, the mythical and historical texts written in the 8th century, state that the early Japanese deities had named blades. Prince Izanagi no Mikoto, the original progenitor of the islands of Japan, had a sword called Totsuka-no-tsurugi, the Ten Hands Breadth Sword which refers to the length of the sword. The wayward brother of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu Omikami, Susanoo-no-Omikoto who with his sword named Orochi-no-aramasa, slew the eight headed and tailed dragon Yahata-no-Orochi. He released the sacred sword called Ame-no-Murakumo-no-Tsurugi, Heavenly Precious Sword of the Gathering Clouds from the dragon. The sword was presented to Amaterasu Omikami. The sacred sword was handed down through the Imperial lineage. It was under the ownership of Prince Yamato-dake that the sword was used to save the life of the prince by allowing him to cut his way out of burning grasses, set by his enemies whom he later slew. The sword was then renamed Kusanagi-no-Tsurugi, the Grass Mowing Sword. It became one of the Three Imperial Regalia, along with the Mirror and the Jewels. In the 9th century replicas were made of the Imperial Regalia. Tradition states that they must be where the Emperor resides. The actual sword is said to be in the Atsuta Shrine. The original duplicate was thrown in the sea at the Battle of Dannoura when the Minamoto thoroughly defeated the Taira in 1185. Another duplicate was made shortly thereafter.

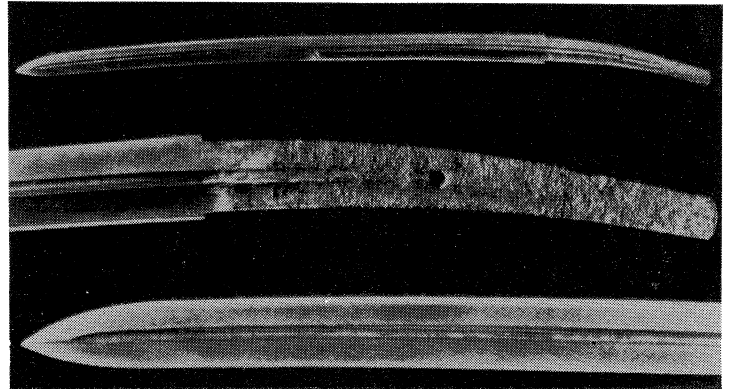
There is another story about the Kusanagi sword in which a Chinese priest by the name of Dogyo tries to steal the sword from the Atsuta Shrine. The first two times it flew back to the shrine on its own. The third time Dogyo wrapped his *kesa*, shoulder wrap, around the sword nine times which prevented the sword from returning to the shrine. He was eventually caught and the sword was returned. All these stories demonstrate that named swords are deeply embedded in the psyche and mythology as far back as history records.

There is one 6th century blade that is believed to be one that Prince Shotoku wore.



Prince Shotoku was the defender of the Buddhist religion and founder of Horyuji, the temple with the oldest wooden structures in the world, located outside of Nara. The sword is called "Heishi Shorin" because of the four characters carved into the blade near the tang. The blade is a kiriha-zukuri type, single edge and straight blade. The meaning of the characters is not precisely known. It is kept in the Tennoji, a temple in Osaka, along with another named blade, the unusual and famous sword named "Seven Star Sword." The Seven Star Sword is so named because of its unusual shape, besides the tip point it has six prongs, three on each side. This sword has an inscription which states that it was made in 369 AD. It is probably not a Japanese sword but was given as a gift by one of the Korean kingdoms.

Kogarasu-maru



This sword from the 8th century is believed to have been made by Amakuni although it is not signed. Amakuni is considered the ancestor of all traditional swordsmiths. He was employed by the Emperor to make swords for his warriors. There is a legendary story that Amakuni was viewing the Emperor's returning troops and saw that half the swords the soldiers carried were broken. As the Emperor passed by Amakuni he snubbed him, which upset Amakuni greatly. Inspired by the Emperor's obvious displeasure, he and his son set about creating swords that could be used for cutting that would not break so easily. They worked on swords for months and months trying to improve them. The following battle Amakuni viewed the returning troops and this time each sword was in perfect condition. The Emperor stopped and told Amakuni that he was an excellent sword maker, which of course made Amakuni extremely happy. It is believed he was from the Uda region.

The Kogarasu-maru sword represents a transition into what we consider to be the Japanese sword with its classic curvature. It also marks a change from the straight swords that were used to thrust versus this sword which is used for cutting. The name means Little Crow which comes from the shape of the tip and the double edged nature of the blade. It is believed to have been presented to Emperor Kammu by a princess of the Grand Ise Shrine. It was presented to Taira Sadamori

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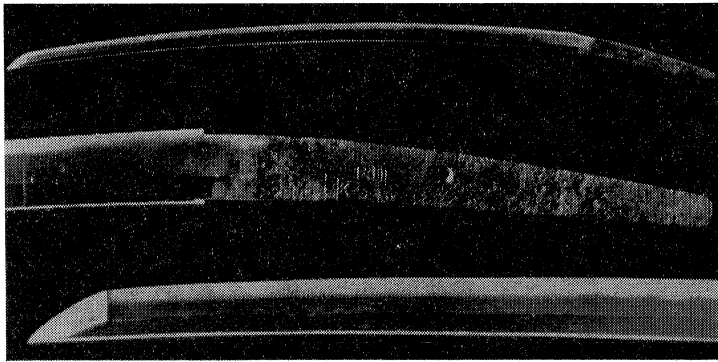
for conquering Fujiwara Sumitomo in 941. It was a family heirloom of the Taira family until it was presented to the Imperial family and is now part of the Imperial Household Collection.

Goken

From the early Muromachi Period there are five swords which have been designated the *Goken* "Five Great Swords of Japan," of course all these swords are meito. These are the *Dojigiri* of Yasutsuna, the *O-Tenta* of Mitsuyo, the *Ichigo Hitofuri* of Yoshimitsu, the *Juzu-maru Tsunetsugu*, and the *Mikazuki* of Munchika. The *Ichigo Hitofuri* literally means "once in a lifetime" which is an apt description of these magnificent swords. We would like to discuss several of the *Goken* in this article.

Dojigiri

A sword we have had the great fortune to see is the "Dojigiri." It is one of the most graceful tachi (long



sword worn edge down) ever made. It is signed by the swordsmith Yasutsuna and was worn by the famous warrior Minamoto Yorimitsu, who was also called Raiko. Legend has it that the capital was being terrorized by a brigand named *Shutendoji*, who lived in Mt. Oe. It is said *Shutendoji* was a giant who with his men feasted on their prey, in other words, they were cannibals. Yorimitsu was asked by the Emperor to rid the capital of these brigands. Yorimitsu and his men went into Oeyama and with the help of some mountain kami found *Shutendoji's* Palace. He eventually slew *Shutendoji* with his sword. Since that time this sword has been called *Dojigiri*, Demon Cutter. Although part of the story is legend there is enough evidence to believe that some of the story is factual. This sword has been owned by some of the most famous people in Japanese history, in fact the Three Great Unifiers of Japan. It was presented to Oda Nobunaga by the Ashikaga shogun. It became Toyotomi Hideyoshi's after Nobunaga's death and Hideyoshi presented it to Tokugawa Ieyasu. Ieyasu gave it to his son Hidetada, the second Tokugawa shogun. The sword was bestowed to Matsudaira Tadanao but he had to relinquish it to the Tsuyama branch of the Tokugawa after a scandal. It now resides in the Tokyo National Museum as a National Treasure.

O-Tenta

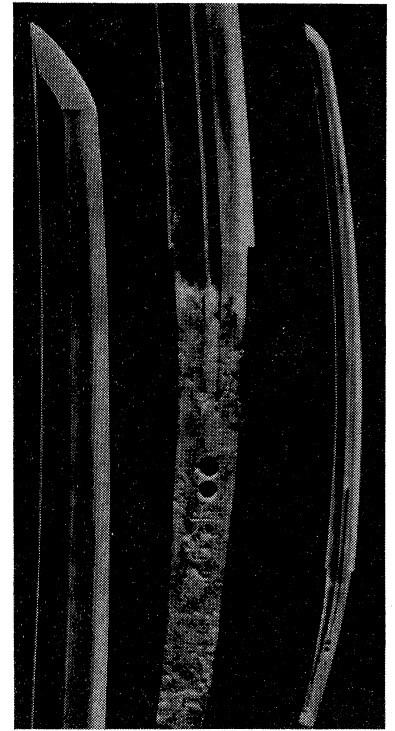
O-Tenta is another of the *Goken*. It was made by Miike Tenta Mitsuyo who lived in the Chikugo

Province of Kyushu during the 11th century. It is a wonderful example of sword making in Kyushu at the time. It was a treasured sword of Ashikaga Takauji, the first Ashikaga shogun. It was later presented to Hideyoshi who gave it to Maeda Toshiie of Kaga. It has been a Maeda heirloom since. The "o" prefix is used a lot in naming swords and usually precedes the swordsmith's name. This sword

was kept in a chest only to be examined by the head of the clan once a year. There is a story that the spirit of the sword is so strong that birds do not light on the roof of the building where the sword is kept.

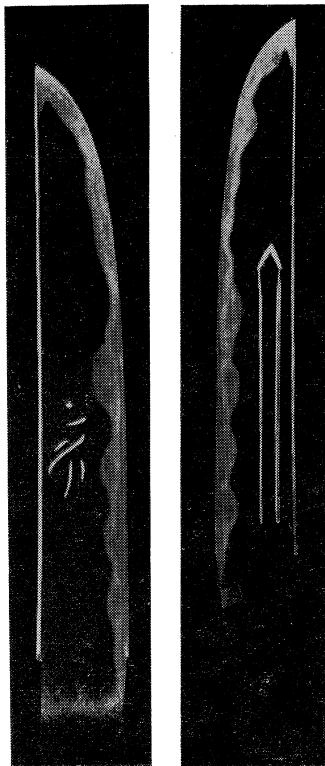
Another Mitsuyo sword, not part of the *Goken*, that has similar characteristics to *O-Tenta* is the "Miike no Tachi" which belonged to Tokugawa Ieyasu. Two days before he died, Ieyasu had one of his vassals body test the sword (the cutting ability of swords was tested on the bodies of already executed criminals). His vassal returned with the sword and reported that it cut extremely well. Ieyasu picked up the sword and stated, " .. with this sword I will guard and protect my descendants for many ages." He ordered that after his death the sword tip should be pointed toward the Kansai area (west) in order to preserve piece. It is still kept in the Kunoya Toshogu Shrine where Ieyasu was temporarily buried.

There are other sword name stories associated with Ieyasu. Once a sword dealer brought some swords for him to look at. Ieyasu picked out a sword which he stated would cut well. He told his retainer Yasunari to buy it from the dealer. Later Yasunari had the sword tested for its cutting ability. He was worried and hoped that the sword would cut as his master Ieyasu had predicted. Yasunari was so concerned that he shut his eyes and prayed that the sword would cut well, which it did. When Ieyasu heard about this he said, " You had better give it the name 'Closed Eyes' then." The sword was made by Hosho Goro Sadayoshi and has been a prized possession of the Tokugawa family since. During the Tensho Era (1573-91), Ieyasu was out hawk hunting when an oil seller acted in a rude manner to



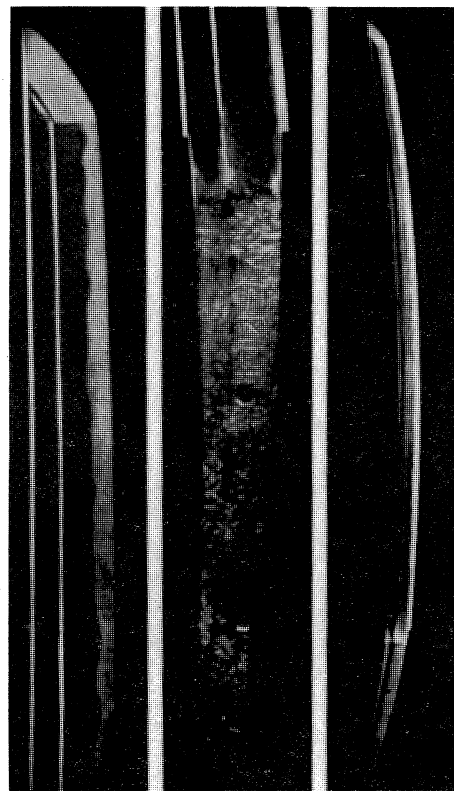
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their party. Handing a sword to one of his retainers, Yoshitsugu, Ieyasu instructed him to cut the peddler down. (In those days samurai had the right of *kirisute gomen*, the immediate execution of any commoner who had offended them). Yoshitsugu did as Ieyasu commanded. The oil seller turned, walked a few steps, then fell divided in two. Ieyasu named the sword "Oil Seller" and later presented it to Yoshitsugu. There is a similar story of the Edo Period, relating to a sword called "Looking Back." It seems that a commoner committed an act of rudeness to a high ranking samurai. The commoner was immediately cut by the samurai, but he kept walking away until he turned to look back at the samurai, then he fell into two halves. Although both stories are somewhat gruesome, they are an indication of the extreme sharpness and cutting ability of these famous swords.

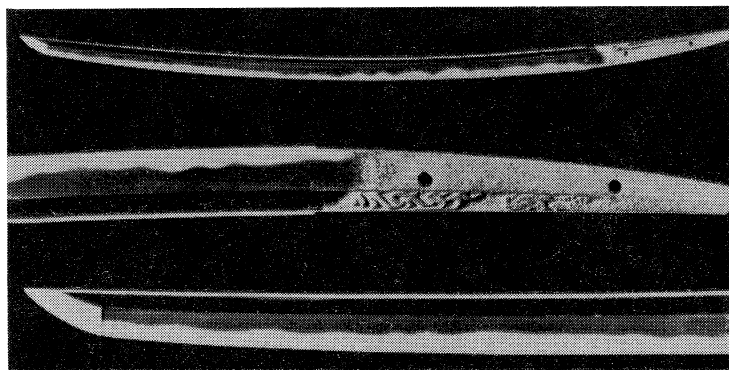


Tokugawa collection. Another Masamune blade called Honjo Masamune was named after one of Uesugi Kenshin's retainers, Honjo Shigenobu, who was forced to sell the blade. Ieyasu purchased the blade. It eventually became the sword that was passed on to the Tokugawa heir when he became shogun. The sword was a symbol of the office, in much the same fashion as the Imperial Regalia Sword.

O-Kanehira
Along with the Dojigiri, O-Kanehira is considered one of the finest of all meito. We were fortunate to see this tachi blade in the Tokyo Museum with Dojigiri. Kanehira was a Ko-Bizen swordsmith during the mid Heian Period. This is truly a magnificent sword. The name reflects that not only is it a masterpiece of the smith but it is also of a great size and length. The blade was owned by the Ikeda family, well known as collectors of fine blades.



Masamune Meito



There are a number of meito by the famous swordsmith Masamune who is considered the greatest of all smiths. There are "Hocho Masamune" tanto, daggers which resemble kitchen knives, *hocho*, hence the name. Another Masamune blade was named "Iris" for its shape and was presented to Ieyasu by a low ranking samurai named Nonaka. This was one of Ieyasu's favorite blades and the one he wore at the Battle of Sekigahara, which he won to become the undisputed leader of Japan. There is also a blade named "Kanze Masamune" that was presented to the Tokugawa family by the Kanze family. It is still part of the

There are two meito by the famous swordsmith Sanjo Munechika that we would like to discuss. Sanjo Munechika was the founder of the Sanjo tradition of sword making in 987. He is the forerunner of the Yamashiro tradition of sword making. One meito is related to the legendary story of Sanjo Munechika forging a blade for the emperor Ichijo. As most swordsmiths do, he went through the ritual cleansing of his spirit and body. He prayed fervently to the god of the Inari Shrine to help him create an excellent blade. The next day a youth appeared to help him forge the blade. As legend states it was the fox spirit that had come in the form of a youth. Sanjo created one of his best blades. It was named "Kogitsune-maru" which means the Little Fox. This story is the basis of the No play *Kokaji*.

Mikazuki Munechika

The other Sanjo blade is another of the Goken. It is called "Mikazuki Munechika", the Crescent Moon Munechika. The signature on the sword says "Sanjo" Its name comes from the beautiful crescent shape not only of the blade itself but also of the hamon (temper line)

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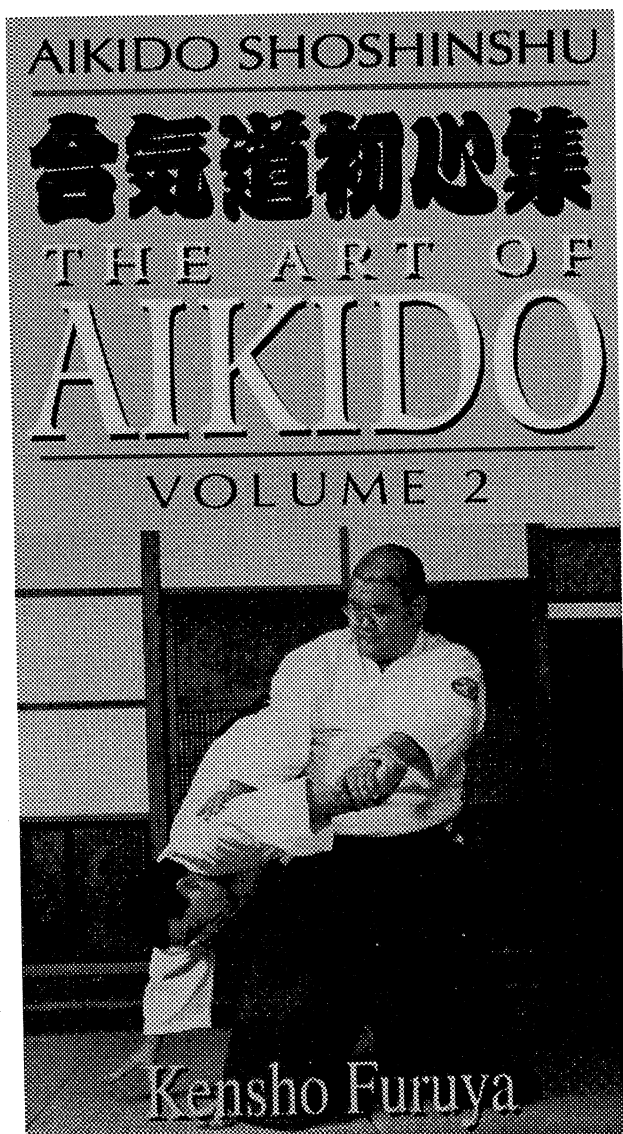
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Monday, Tuesday & Thursday Evenings
7:50pm-8:50pm

Tuesday & Thursday Mornings
7:00am-8:00am

Saturday Mornings
10:15am-11:15am

Sunday Mornings
10:15am-11:15am

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Bring bokken, jo and tanto.

Wednesdays
8:00pm-9:00pm

Saturday Mornings
11:30am-12:30pm

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Saturday Afternoons
12:45pm-1:45pm

Sunday Mornings
9:00am-10:00am

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Every third Saturday of the Month
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Monthly Meeting follows.

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General meeting follows.

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