



PAUL MARTIN

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Welcome to December issue of our newsletter

Hello and welcome to the December edition of The Japanese Sword monthly newsletter. My big task this month is how to follow a massive action-packed newsletter like last month's?

While some of our readers live in very cold places, we have turned the corner here in Tokyo from autumn, to decidedly cold start of winter. Christmas decorations and music has been filling my eyes and ears since the day after Halloween. It feels like they start earlier every year. We were tentatively looking to have our traditional sword world first Christmas and new year's get togethers after the two-year break, but it looks like Omicron may put a stop to that in the next coming weeks. Japan put a stop on foreign visitors this week, since only reopening their doors a few weeks ago. At the moment, only foreign residents can enter Japan, and anyone coming in from Omicron effected countries has to self-isolate for ten days.

At the time of writing this newsletter, our domestic Shin-Gobankaji Project campaign target amount (not the real amount we need) has reached 59%. We were featured in the national newspaper, *Sankei Shinbun*, and within hours of it going on sale, we received a donation of approximately 10,000 USD. You can see the link for the article below, but it is in Japanese. We are working on getting our Paypal buttons and the English site up. It is not easy decisions to reach how to achieve this as we are also thinking longer term, in order to achieve success for not only the whole project this time, but future generation Gobankaji too. From the next sword onwards, we are also going to revise our return gifts. So, watch this space.



<https://www.sankei.com/article/20211124-F6K5DEVUTVOLZNFQSS36QMLA/>

What with the winter months, Covid in its various forms lurking at the door making year end events very quiet, not a lot is happening. I am in the midst of writing a book, that will hopefully be published in time for next Christmas. So, between being busy trying to make the Shin-Gobankaji project a success, book writing procrastination, and daily life, time passes very quickly.

NHK World

NHK World has said that they intend to air a three-minute segment on the plight of Japanese sword crafts and the significance of the Shin-Gobankaji project the start of this month, to be followed with a nine-minute segment at the start of next year. At this time, I am of the understanding that they will be aired on Newsroom Tokyo for those of you who have NHK World in your subscription packages. However, even though they take them down rather quickly you can usually watch NHK World online for free here:

<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/>



Interview with Arab News Japan

I was luckily enough to be interviewed by Arab News Japan. Really, I was hoping to promote the Shin-Gobankaji project more, but nevertheless it was a great honor to be recognized

and featured in such a publication.

You can read the article in English here: https://www.arabnews.jp/en/arts-culture/article_60237/

Or in Japanese here: https://www.arabnews.jp/article/arts-culture/article_55310/

The Lost Sword of Kondo Isami



One of the things that I enjoy about making YouTube videos is actually going to visit the locations. I posted a picture a while ago of a very tired but satisfied looking me holding two of Kondo Isami's swords in Kyoto Station while waiting for the Shinkansen bullet train to go back to Tokyo.

I have been making a 'video', but it is turning into an hour-long episode about Kondo Isami and the discovery of a sword thought to have belonged to him, and that it could possibly be the root of the rumor that he had a gimei (fake signature) Kotetsu sword.

Part of that program has been making the back story of Kondo's history, his friends, and the origins of the Shinsengumi. My friends and I have travelled over much of

Japan filming, inside Tokyo, Kyoto, Fukushima, Chiba, etc. I recently travelled to Hino City in Tokyo to film some of the locations associated with the Shinsengumi. Kondo's teacher's Tennen Rishin-Ryu dojo was in his hometown (Chofu), but he also visited other dojo under his auspices. One of these was the dojo in Hino where he met his great friend and ally, Hijikata Toshizo, as well as other people who would join the Roshigumi, that eventually became the Shinsengumi.



Kondo Isami 1834-1868

Hino is a small town on the edge of Tokyo going towards Mt. Takao and Hachioji where the Shitahara school of swordsmiths were active. There is a Shrine in the center of the town that Kondo and his (adoptive) father performed ceremonial Tennen Rishin-Ryu demonstrations. The shrine still houses two bokuto wooden practice swords that were devoted by the Tennen Rishin-Ryu swordsmanship school. The names of the dojo members were all recorded on a plaque/sword stand that includes many famous members of the Shinsengumi.



One of those members was Inoue Genzaburo. His descendants still practice Tennen Rishin-Ryu in Hino and own a small museum dedicated to his memory and the Shinsengumi. Unfortunately, the museum was closed on the day that I was there, but a man sitting in his front garden pruning his trees called out to me. That man was Inoue Masao sensei, a descendant of Inoue family and the current head of that line of Tennen Rishin-Ryu school.

After speaking with him and inviting me back to the museum on a day when it was open. It reminded me that one lifetime just isn't enough for all of the things that I would like try and do. I immediately started wondering if I could juggle my schedules and travel out to Hino at least once a week to practice kenjutsu with him. Then, I thought, who am I kidding, I already cannot get to my regular swordsmanship classes every week, or even complete YouTube videos. Ah~, but to dream...





天然理心流日野道場 門人募集

文久3年(1863)に誕生した新選組は、幕末の京都の治安を守るために組織された集団です。この新選組の主要な隊士の多くは多摩(主に現在の日野、調布)の出身であり、彼らが修練していた剣術が天然理心流です。武術天然理心流創始、近藤内蔵助長裕の「本流儀は、天地人の三理に基づき武術を修め、心は一誠を以て天地の公道を極めるに存す。即ち、忠・孝・仁・智・勇・剛の七道を修るを本領と為す」という教えを受け継ぎ、天然理心流の伝えられている形と技を、忠実に後世に伝承することを目的に設立したのが天然理心流日野道場です。天然理心流日野道場は、日野に根付いた活動を積極的に行っていく所存です。

道場 天然理心流日野道場

場所 天然理心流井上源三郎道場(日野駅下車徒歩5分)

東京都日野市日野本町4-11-12 井上源三郎資料館2階

稽古日 毎月第1・第3土曜日 午後6時から午後9時まで

※稽古日は変更になる場合があります

年齢 中学生以上 古武道に興味のある方

見学 入門体験をご希望の方は下記までご連絡ください

問い合わせ 天然理心流日野道場 事務局

(井上源三郎資料館内 井上雅雄)

〒191-0011

日野市日野本町4-11-12

TEL&FAX:042-581-3957



天然理心流 日野道場

八坂神社天然理心流奉納額

安政5年(1858)、八坂神社に奉納された剣術額には、井上松五郎、井上源三郎、佐藤五郎ら日野宿の剣士たち23名と並び近藤貞時、近藤(頼崎)勇、客分として沖田総司(惣次郎)の名前が連ねられています。縦47センチ、横99センチ、大小2本の木刀が架けられています。



天然理心流日野道場門人募集

「誠を以て天地の公道を極めよ」近藤内蔵助長裕の言葉です。

真に正統な「天然理心流」を、今に伝える新選組子孫と一緒に稽古しましょう。

お問合せ

天然理心流日野道場事務局(井上源三郎新選組資料館内 井上雅雄)

〒191-0011 日野市日野本町4-11-12 ☎・FAX 042-581-3957



You can see the various museums in Hino and get your Hino Shinto Shrine/Shinsengumi memorabilia here (In Japanese at the moment, but I am already thinking about how to change this):

Here is the link to the JAPAN-Forward article on the discovery of the Kondo sword:

<https://japan-forward.com/historical-japanese-sword-kotetsu-katana-of-kondo-isami-discovered/>

Inoue Genzaburo Museum

<http://genzaburou.com>

Hino Shinsengumi Museums and info (Google Translate version)

https://makoto-shinsenhino.com.translate.goog/?x_trsch=http&x_trsl=ja&x_trtl=en&x_trhl=ja

While you are here...

we need your help. This is one of the most audacious projects in recent sword making history. The craft has gone through ebbs and flows in its long history, and currently we are in rather fragile downtrend. Japanese sword making is not only made up of swordsmiths. It is a team of different crafts that depend on one and other. If one of the crafts disappears, or a set of skills, the whole chain becomes perilous. This is not a void that can be filled by amateur craftsmen from abroad or domestically. There are traditions and canon to be followed and passed down from teacher to student. Reverse engineering and rebooting crafts from books are not going to fix the situation unless you have a solid background already in those traditional crafts.

The loss of any of these skills is also going to affect the stability of old swords too. For example, there is currently quite a severe lack of habaki and scabbard makers. These items are also very important for the preservation of swords of antiquity. The problem simply does not lay in changing the law to allow sword makers to produce more swords. The situation is much more complex than that. Even if it was changed, making three or four swords per month while maintaining the artistic integrity and quality control of blades would be quite challenging for most smiths. In my opinion the biggest problem is that nobody seems to be aware of the plight of the craft. I am sure that no one would want to see it in trouble, and by raising awareness the situation may begin to take steps to resolve the current problems.

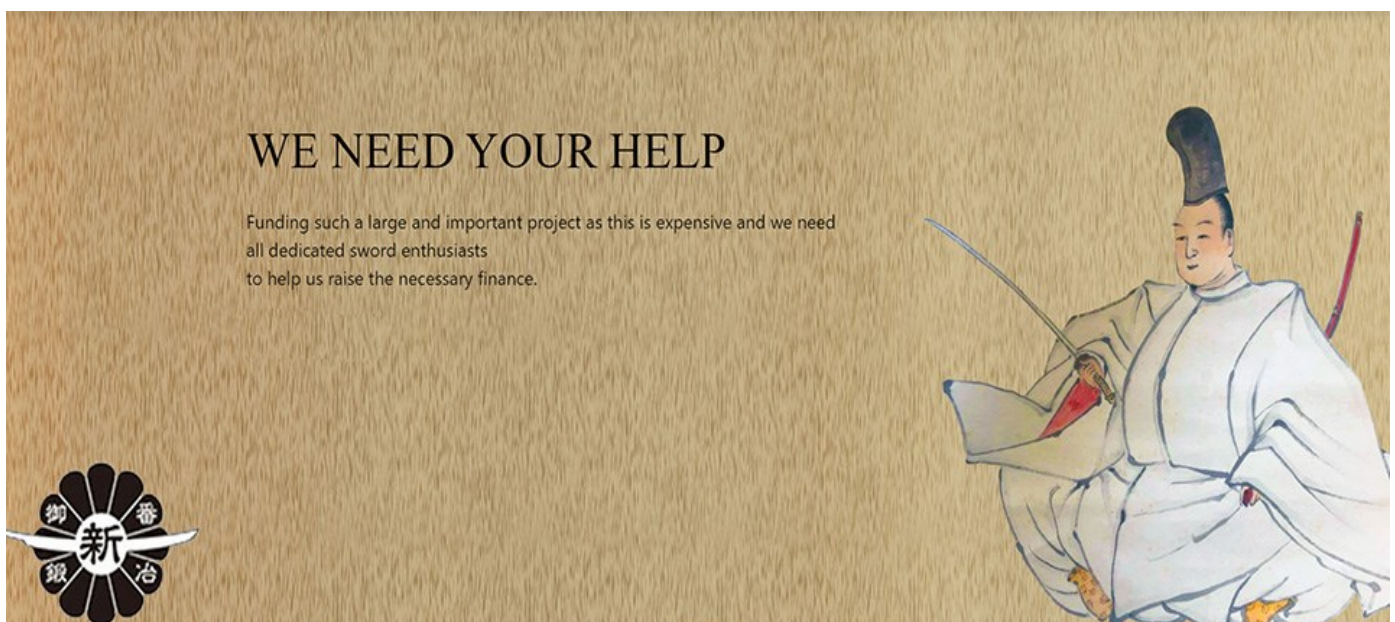
We need your help. We will soon be opening English language pages to allow crowd funding for the Shin-Gobankaji Project internationally. Funds raised will establish the important data of representative works from each successive imperial era onwards, that will possibly become the standard for appraisal of works from the Showa period onwards in the future. As well as, information boards on important sword related sites (starting with Emperor Gotoba) in English for visitors to Japan. As many of you are aware, we are merely the custodians of swords for our generation, and pass them onto the next generation in the best condition possible to try and successfully preserve them as far into the future as possible.

The same applies to the support of the traditional crafts. As individuals, we may not be able to afford to purchase a single sword by a Japanese swordsmith, but we can come together as a collective to make a difference. As the current generation, we naturally bear the responsibility to try to support these crafts so that they can be passed successfully on to future generations. If any of the sword making crafts was to disappear under our watch, it would be a great shame. Your donation counts and will make a difference. If you cannot afford to make-a-donation, then please help by spreading awareness by sharing the flyers, posts, and this newsletter to interested parties. The image below is a link to the funding page.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Best

Paul Martin





EMPEROR GOTOKU SHIN-GOBANKAJI

An Elite Group of Modern Master Swordsmiths

This year is the 800th anniversary of Emperor Gotoku's arrival on the Oki islands. A sword enthusiast, he invited the best swordsmiths in the land to the imperial palace in monthly rotation, and even took part in making and quenching them himself. These smiths became known collectively as the

Gobankaji. The Shin-Gobankaji project aims to recreate a modern Gobankaji with an elite group of swordsmiths who represent the pinnacle of the craft in Japan today. They will create modern masterpieces that will be dedicated to the spirit of Emperor Gotoku in Oki Shrine, Oki Island, Shimane Prefecture, while preserving and passing on these ancient traditions into the future.

Crowd funding

16th Oct - 12th Jan

The project will launch on October 16, 2021 (JST) with a ceremonial sword forging demonstration in front of Oki Shrine by master swordsmith, Sadatoshi Gassan, to be streamed live around the world.

新

A new generation of Gobankaji smiths arise in the sacred lands of Emperor Gotoba and swords...



Emperor Gotoba

Known for his brilliance in all things, the cloistered Emperor Gotoba was especially known for his love of waka poetry and swords. It is thought that his participation in sword making had such an effect on sword making that it is the reason that Japanese swords are so well-known throughout the world today. After the Jokyu Rebellion of 1221 he was exiled to the Oki Islands, Shimane prefecture, where he spent the remainder of his life.

The Shin-Gobankaji Project

This year is the 800th anniversary of Emperor Gotoba's arrival on the Oki islands. In commemoration of this historical event, we are holding several events in the hope to propel Emperor Gotoba's legacy another 800 years into the future. For that reason, we have created the Shin (new) Gobankajiproject to celebrate Emperor Gotoba and his love of Japanese swords. The project hopes to revive the Gobankaji in the form of masterpiece swords made by modern master swordsmiths for dedication to Emperor Gotoba.

SADATOSHI GASSAN

Creation of the First Shin-Gobankaji Sword

Sadatoshi Gassan has won many special awards at national competitions (Prince Takamatsu Award, Agency for Cultural Affairs Chairman's Award, Kanzan Sato Award and more). Designated a master smith at the age of 36, he is the fifth-generation head of the Osaka Gassan school famous for its Ayasugi, or Gassan-hada pattern in the surface steel of the blades. He has made swords for shrines and temples, Yokozuna Sumo wrestlers, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and the New York Metropolitan Museum.

Paul Martin

Japanese Sword Curator

Paul Martin, the founder of the Emperor Gotoba Shin-Gobankaji Project, is a former curator of Japanese arms and armor at the British Museum. He is also a recognized specialist by the Ministry of Land Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT) and a trustee of the Society for the Promotion of Japanese Sword Culture (NBSK).



Further Information

For more information on the Shin-Gobankaji Project and Crowdfunding site and media pages, please follow our official Instagram, Twitter and Facebook pages where we will give daily updates on the status of the project.



Web site



National Line



October 16, 2021 (JST)
Streamed live

