

# About Japanese Sword

Many of you surely know that Japan is the country of the samurai, and you also surely know about the Japanese swords that those samurai wear at their side.

The Japanese swords in their current shape have been produced for about 1,000 years. Before that, the primary weapon was a straight sword but eventually curving was added and the Japanese sword was born.

When you hear the word “Japanese sword”, many imagine the two kinds of weapons worn by samurai at their side. There are many kinds of Japanese swords for different uses. Tachi, a strongly curved sword, is for cavalry, with an approximately more than 60cm blade. Katana is a longer sword that the samurai wears at his side. They are used with both hands and can both poke and cut. Wakizashi is a shorter sword worn by samurai and it is used with one hand, having a 30cm to 60cm blade. Tanto is for stabbing, which has a blade shorter than 30cm.

Tachi is worn with its blade down. Katana, Wakizashi and Tanto are worn with their blades up.

Blade down (Tachi)



Blade up (Katana, Wakizashi, Tanto)



Japanese swords are displayed with its blade side up and its tip to the right. The reason for this is to show there is no hostile intention. If the tip of the sword is to the left, you can grab it easily with your right hand and get ready for fighting. For the same reason, when you sit on a tatami floor, you always put it on your right side, making it difficult for you to quickly wield your sword.

Japanese swords have three different purposes. One purpose is as a weapon, not to break, not possible to bend and cutting well. Another purpose is as art of metal working. Finally it has the purpose of symbolizing Japanese spirit.

In peace time, we enjoy the beauty of the metal working. In time of war, it becomes the symbol of the samurai spirit and a weapon. That's the true Japanese swords we make.

Japanese Swords are made with a division of labor. Katanakaji, the swordsmith makes blade, Togishi polishes the sword and Sayashi produces the scabbard. In order to become a swordsmith, you need to be an apprentice at a swordsmith. After 5 years of work under the swordsmith, you are entitled to take an exam of Cultural Affairs Agency to become a swordsmith. Training period is generally 5-10 years and there is no salary. The traditional master and pupil system still remains. The exam is held only once a year in June, and last year 12 persons took the exam and only

4 passed. It is very difficult to become a swordsmith.

After you pass the exam, you are finally allowed to make Japanese swords. The Cultural Affairs Agency gives permission to make 24 swords a year.

Dignified figure as a weapon, beauty of iron as art. Not to break, not possible to bend, cutting well and beautiful, that is the Japanese Sword we see.

Most of the people who order Japanese swords include meanings or thoughts into the sword. Those meanings or thoughts vary; it can be for their child or grandchild, for their own memory, for a charm or a ritual. Japanese swords involve traditional spirit continued from the ancient times.

For the swords to exist, there needs to be a swordsmith, someone who orders, someone's willingness to own one and someone to inherit the sword to pass it down to the next generation.

Japanese swords have been compelling not only because of their visual value, but because of the beauty of the invisible spirit they hold.

In the 1,000 years of the Japanese sword history, we thank you for living in the same age.

May 14, 2013

Bizen Osafune Sword Visitor Facility

### **About Swordsmith, Sukesada Ueta**

Born in March, 1947. He studied martial art in high school. He went into business after college, but he decided to become a swordsmith in his early 20s after getting married and having a wife and a child.

After being an independent swordsmith, he spent more than 30 years studying about swords, especially about sand iron, the raw material of swords. Defending the teaching of his master, he in his 60s works even harder than his disciples who are in their 20s.

### **Bizen Osafune Sword Visitor Facility**

Bizen Osafune Sword Visitor Facility promotes and spreads the Japanese culture and tradition. You can see swords through glass window if you visit art museums. You can get a lot of information about Japanese swords if you read books or search on the internet. You cannot however have many other opportunities to see the real process of Japanese sword-making, hearing the sound of striking iron yourself in other places. We therefore decided to open such a place for anyone, free of charge!

What do swordsmiths do?

What kinds of people are they?

How do they make Japanese swords?

Please visit us and learn about the Japanese swords seeing us work. It is our mission to pass on the Japanese sword culture and tradition to the next generation.

Our workplace is open from 9am to 4pm ever Saturday and Sunday. Please feel free to drop in.

Check out our homepage for visitor reservations.

Homepage: <http://www.osahune.com> or search for

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