

The Yoshimitsu Exhibition

By

Yoshindo Yoshihara

The Japanese sword has evolved into the greatest steel craft in the world today. There are special Japanese sword exhibitions taking place not only in Japan, but also around the world in large museums and galleries in America and England. In addition, there are more and more monthly study and *kantei* groups emerging for people who appreciate the art and spirit of the Japanese sword.

However, among the many types of known swords and knives in the world, why is it only Japanese swords, and furthermore just the blades themselves without fittings, that are valued for their considerably high artistic merit? This is because unlike the Japanese sword, foreign swords do not have a beautiful *hamon* and the results of the wonderful highly skilled polishing process that the Japanese sword undergoes.

In the past, swordsmiths made the swords ordered of them in the steel and shape of that period which was the most suitable for *yaki-ire*. In other words *hamon* production was utmost in their heart. Among these swordsmiths, because of their *yaki-ire* skills, some are called master craftsmen. How did these smiths transfer their aesthetic sensibilities to their blades? The combination of the periods' shape and steel created these original *hamon*. As a result, many of these masters' works can be easily recognised by their rich characteristics with one glance. Ono Yoshimitsu's *hamon* for instance, resembles a summer sky with a prominent high cumulus cloud *midare-ba*, doesn't it? I want to call it *Sekiran*—a smooth rounded *midare*. However, this is Yoshimitsu's own creation from his own character. Through the creation of this *hamon*, Yoshimitsu's work also becomes instantly recognisable. Please take this into account when appreciating Yoshimitsu's original *hamon*.

Yoshihara Yoshindo
Swordsmith