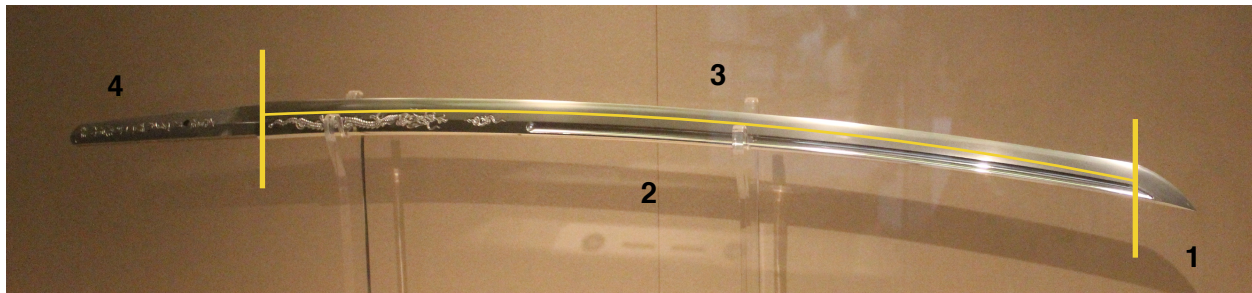


Balance, Power & Beauty

A Formal Analysis Essay

Artist: Gassan Sadatoshi & Gassan Ichirō
Title: Blade for a Sword (Katana)
Date: May 16, 2004
Medium: Steel



[Figure 1]

Razor sharp and highly lethal this Katana crafted by Gassan Sadatoshi and his son Gassan Ichirō in 2004 is an object of pure beauty. Approximately 3 feet in overall length this Katana was forged using one solid piece of steel and various techniques. The piece can be more easily described if sectioned into 4 parts [refer to figure 1 above].

Section 1 contains the tip of the Katana about 2.5 inches in length and curves at about a 35 degree arc [figure 2]. This section brings the long edge part of the blade in section 3 to a needle like point with the hard edged section 2. This would allow the



[Figure 2]

attacker to have a deadly stabbing ability along with powerful strikes using the long edge of the blade (section 2). Section 1 also marks the end of the balancing engraving along section 2, this section of metal is removed to balance the blade and to reduce the weight. Thus allowing the attacker to be agile and fast when striking not to be held back by the weight of his sword, a very important element in Japanese Samurai fighting.

Section 2 is made up of 3/4 of the balancing engraving and the last quarter nearest the tang (section 4) of the blade consists of a decorative dragon engraving chasing what appears to be an orb wrapped in cloth or depicted flying through the wind with the fabric flowing freely. The depicted dragon is about 6 inches in length and intricately carved with scales, claws and a typical beard of a Japanese dragon [figure 3].

The top of section 2 is also hammered to a pointed but thick and blunt



[Figure 3]

unlike section 3 which is razor sharp. If observed from the end and not the side, section 2 and 3 make a thin prism like shape with a pointed instead of flat top.

Section 3 of the Katana is the most important as it contains the long edge of the blade, sharpened to slice through just about anything with ease. It extends about 2.25 feet in length and emphasizes the curvature of the Katana. After taking a step back from

this Katana and looking at the exhibit at large and the surrounding long blade Katana's, the curvature of this Katana is much less aggressive than that of its predecessors. The curvature of the blade creates a more natural movement when the user is striking and defending than a straight edged sword whilst also increasing its strength and being able to decrease its weight.

Section 4 of the Katana is called the tang, which has rounded end and is usually wrapped by the long handle. It is inscribed with Japanese writing on the wide edge face for the Katana consisting of the names of its makers; as well as the names of the visiting staff members of the arms and armour department at the MET who watched as the father and son duo crafted the blade. Contrasting to the majority of the Katana the steel of the tang is laced and textured rather than polished to allow the base wraps of the handle to grip to the sword instead of slide off [figure 4].

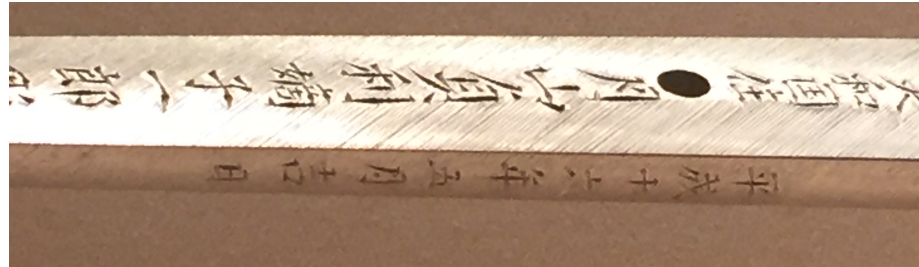
There is also a centered hole about 3/4 of the way up the tang from the base of the sword which the handle is fixated to [figure 5].



[Figure 4]

After observing the object for the hour I noticed something that I didn't notice from the beginning due to the swords positioning in the case. There is additional Japanese writing engraved on the small edge of the tang, which could be additional names or possibly a

Japanese saying its origins are unknown but nonetheless highly intriguing



[Figure 5]

[figure 5].

The steel looks so pure and eternal, reflecting with glimmering shines any light that bounces off of it. The symbolism of the Katana and the Samurai sword date back many millennia to ancient Japan where the original blades were forged. Japanese culture always represents the sword with the highest of honors and the deepest of pride especially at high levels of kingship throughout many dynasties. Often passed down from generation to generation a family sword also represented the heritage and power held by its forefathers as a reminder to its current holder of where their people came from and where their new leader shall take them.

Alternatively, the Samurai (highly trained Japanese warriors) exposed the true nature of the sword; a lethal and highly effective killing weapon. Perfectly balanced and powerfully engineered for fast striking and defensive maneuvers. To the Samurai the sword's symbolism is much darker, as its beauty and meaning are confined in the ever contrasting elements of life and death fought for with every strike of the sword.