

Rinkya Keeps Alive the Spirit of the Japanese Samurai: The Forever Knights

Tempe, AZ and Tokyo, Japan- April 14,2008. The warrior class in medieval society has always been identified with the knight in armor. While the European knight was constrained in a small niche of history, in Japan the armored knight, known as a Samurai, transcended the medieval period. This has created a large and wonderful class of collectibles in Samurai armor and weapons.

The rise of the Samurai, as a class within Japanese society began in the Heian Period (794-1185), and continued through the effective end of feudalism in Japan in the late nineteenth century. Armor and weapons of different periods and motifs have been treasured by families and collected by avid collectors for almost thirteen hundred years.

The evolution of Samurai armor and especially the Samurai swords is an interesting study in and of itself. The legend is that the archetypal Samurai sword was crafted by Amakuni and his son, Amakura, sword smiths in the Yamato Province about 700. Almost a millennia of refinements are to be found in the modern versions of the long sword called a katana, the short sword or sidearm known as the wakizashi and the dagger named tantō. Developed over various periods of history the finest refinements of the Japanese sword, or nihontō have been characterized as the finest bladed weapons ever developed. Collectors often build a series of these weapons, tracing their development. Even a modern replica, forged by one of the few hundred Japanese sword smiths who specialize in them can cost nearly a thousand dollars.

Samurai armor, like samurai swords saw a long and evolutionary development. Samurai armor embodies over a thousand years of history and developed as an art form as well as a practical protection in battle. Various motifs and artistic touches give Samurai armor a range and character that make it a truly artistic expression. According to Heather Russell, CEO of the largest Japanese shopping service, Rinkya, authentic Samurai armor is a truly high end collectible.

“We have seen suits of Samurai armor, notably one in the sea cucumber motif, sell for more than ten thousand dollars through Rinkya,” she says. “And pieces of Samurai armor, especially helmets and face masks also bring premium prices in the Japanese antique, collectible market.”

The spirit of the Samurai, the forever knight, is still a vital and important part of the antique market worldwide. The weapons and armor of a Samurai are often considered the ultimate refinement of both edged weaponry and personal armor available. This has created many collectors throughout the world who lovingly piece together the bits and pieces of the tradition where the code of chivalry is known as bushido, and the tradition of the forever knight still lives.

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USA Contact:

Elaine Gross,

Rinkya Inc.,

elaine@rinkya.com

(866) 970-4485; Fax (480)-970-4486