

JAPANESE SWORD GUARDS

Among the Japanese the sword was held as an object of respect and honor and symbolized the ideals of the race. Unlike the early swords of the Chinese and Europeans, the guards of which were wrought into the blade, the Japanese sword guards were distinct pieces of metal.

These guards, technically known as tsuba, varied in size, composition, and ornamentation, with the historic periods of the nation. The primary object of the sword guard was to protect the hand, but it also came to be an ornament and, in fact, an indication of the wearer's personality. The tsuba was usually made with from one to three holes. The largest for slipping it on over the blade and one of the small one for carrying an auxilliary small blade. This small blade was left sticking in the vanquished foe by the victor, to signify who had done the deed and as a challenge to all who might question his right.

The guards were made of alloys of all metals and were beautifully worked in gold and silver. On each face a favorite legend of the wearer was portrayed. At the present time Dr. Gunsaulus' famous collection of sword guards is on exhibition in the Institute library. The ten illustrated on the opposite page are notable examples of the collection.



"Education begins a gentleman, conversation completes him."