

THE TO-KEN SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN
for the Study and Preservation of Japanese Swords and Fittings

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PROGRAMME

NEXT MEETING Monday, June 2nd 1969 at the Masons Arms, Maddox Street, London W.1. at 7.30 p.m.

FOLLOWING MEETING Monday, July 7th, 1969 at the Masons Arms, Maddox Street, London W.1. at 7.30 p.m.

SUBJECTS

For the June meeting we decided some time ago to have a meeting devoted to a "Freak Show". One could say we have one of these every month, but this one is intended to be a show of unusual arms and fittings. Mole Benn's giant wakizashi for example fits into this category and I for one, would like to see that again. So this meeting bring anything odd of any kind.

For the July meeting a blade session has been proposed by several members, confined to Shin-Shinto blades only. At this stage, this is only a proposal and may be altered if anyone has a better idea.

LAST MEETINGS

I feel I should have started this Programme with something like "Here we are again at last!" As was announced in the brief offering a couple of weeks ago, there has been some re-organization here. This, and my personal business-overwork synchrone have been the cause of the delay in publication. As I've often said, I too have a crust to earn, and anyone who would like to have this acting unpaid job is welcome - applications accepted at any time. A resumé of the meetings which have happened since the issue of the last Programme.

The March gathering was devoted to "Men in Armour". As was anticipated John Anderson was well able to provide an exhibit for this subject. In fact it must have been difficult for John to make a choice from his superb collection. He chose a fine Saotome helmet the style of which was based on a European Spanish morion. This was an actual Japanese copy of a morion, not, as John told us is not uncommon, a morion adapted to Japanese use. This helmet is by Saotome Iyetada, circa 1600, and is illustrated in John's book "Japanese Armour" which is as members will know, currently on sale and well worth the price.

Len Holtaway produced a shakudo tsuba, unsigned, showing warriors partly clad in armour, an interesting variation on the usual fully geared up gentlemen one usually finds on sword fittings. Tudor Williams had a fine iron tsuba which he has retained against all comers for many years, depicting a warrior on a horse by the shore of a silver sea. Malcolm Hutchinson brought a Soten tsuba and a series of Japanese prints, all of which ably covered the subject. Member Stride brought an excellent katana, fine unsigned early blade, which had a kabuto kashira with arrows and a bow on the fuchi.

Member Baxter brought a wakizashi with menuki of men in full armour. The rest of the mounts were han-dachi style - and, sadly, it would seem the katana to this sword is in the British Museum Lloyd collection. David Parker had an armour piercing Yoroi-doshi of quality, with Higo mounts, and a pair of mogami-sode, shoulder guards.

Sid Divers brought along a very recent acquisition, a fine wakizashi, ex Gaskell collection, illustrated in Christie's Catalogue of March 3rd. An ancient blade, now gone to Japan for re polish, vaguely bearing the characters SA-YASU on the venerable four hole tang. It is a sobering thought that this sword was exhibited in the Victoria & Albert Museum from 1920-1934. It is still in its original untouched state, due to the care of the previous owner, something to be grateful for in these days of mount swapping and changing.

At this meeting, Mr.Stride, recently returned from the United States, gave us his impressions of the American sword scene. In particular, on the Japanese Sword Clubs of New York, who have a sword expert running regular study sessions. Something we lack here. He said America was an exciting place to collect swords and that generally the prices there were cheaper than in England; there the sources were further apart - here the market is much more crowded.

Before the April meeting we had the film show at the Holborn Library, where we screened "The Throne of Blood" and a colour film on Khabuki, loaned by the Japanese Embassy. This was a success because we made a profit of three shillings! This was a narrow margin and thanks for the show not being well out of pocket are entirely due to the members of the Nenriki Kendo Doji, and in particular to Mr.Fujii Okimitsu for publicising the event so well. Thank you again to all who attended.

April 14th meeting was "Fakes and Forgeries". There were not many exhibits at this meeting! This, I can only say, must be due to members having angelic trusting minds, or to a certain reticence and reluctance to expose the goods whilst there is still a chance to work it on to someone else.

However, your Honest Chairman exhibited a fine katana blade in military mounts. This blade is apparently an excellent example of Tsuta Sukehiro's work, but the signature and date are not very good examples of his calligraphy. This is the usual situation in reverse, where a good forged signature is often exposed as a fake by the lack of excellence in the blade. Here the blade is superb, the signature is not. This is a puzzle which will take time to unravel; there are many possibilities, including it perhaps being a blade by Suke-nao with his name removed and replaced by Sukehiro. There are slight variations between the calligraphic style of the signature and the date which lead me to this line of investigation.

Honest John Anderson brought along a Dolmen helmet, a Shokakufu, which he said was a fine copy and a fake. Which led us to the old question of when is a fake not a fake, or rather when is a copy a fake? When a copy is made as a replica in every respect including patination and ancient rust incrustation, does this become a fake? Perhaps only if it is sold for the real thing. Shokakufu of this type John said, were fairly often copied in Japan but seldom antiquated as this one was. This one exposed itself to be an "antiqued" copy because when it was cleaned the condition of the metal was far too good. An original would be 7th century, this one could be anything from 16th to 19th century.

Honest Malcolm Hutchinson also produced a Tsuta Sukehiro, wazosashi this time. Certainly a 17th century Osaka blade and a good one. But the signature not very convincing, particularly when dissected stroke by stroke by Han Bing Siong of the Netherlands, to whom I am indebted for his analysis of this signature and that of my own Tsuta Sukehiro.

We occasionally get some absolute gems of conversation at To Ken meetings. The top award for this one goes to Peter Cottis. To a deathly hush he said, with great sincerity "I want someone to read this signature for me, but whatever it is I don't believe it!"

To briefly round off this report of the last three meetings, the May meeting was "Helmets". Anderson had a superb helmet circa 1750 with a bowl in the 12th century style, lavishly mounted in shakudo and gilt. Cottis a Jingaza in fine lacquered leather with the Mon of the Hitotsu-yanagi family, 1st half of the 19th century, of the quality worn by a man of considerable rank. Hutchinson, a helmet by Saotome Moriye, two men of this name, working early 17th and early 18th centuries. This helmet was almost certainly by the 2nd of the name; but with an earlier Momoyama period kanamono, on the helmet bowl, which was in Miochin Yoshii style.

GENERAL BUSINESS

A number of projects have been started since my last report,

one of great interest to all blade collectors was that a number of us, eight members in fact, decided at the March meeting to "volunteer" to send a blade each to Japan for repolish using Mr. Sayama as our agent, as was proposed might happen in the December 1968 Programme. This has all taken time to arrange and so that we can have some idea of costs and snags before throwing this scheme open to all members, and being flooded with blades, eight of us have become the pilot guinea pigs. All goes well so far, the blades are now in Japan. More news on this as we proceed.

Another scheme, also I think of great importance, is that we have decided to organize a block subscription to Albert Yamanaka's Nihon News Letter. The idea is merely to simplify the procedure for members to receive copies of the Newsletter. All members need now do, is to send a cheque for the yearly subscription to our Society Headquarters payable to To Ken Society of Great Britain, and the Secretary will arrange a joint bankers order and all the other complications for payment of all subscriptions in Japan. And, the Nihon Newsletter will arrive on your doorstep without further delay.

Now, for new members, read the monthly plug at the end of this Programme to find out what it is all about. For all members read the article on Nioi, which is published here by permission of the Nihon Newsletter. When you've read it, if you knew all that about nioi - you don't have to bother - if you didn't know, as I didn't, its about time you got in on the act. Albert Yamanaka has as much to say as that about every aspect of Japanese swords, and a lot more besides on individual sword-smiths and historical matters.

If you want to know about Japanese swords, not just collect them, then this is for you. It costs, only the price of one very crummy sword by present day prices, just twenty U.S. dollars. Do not buy that next crummy sword! Subscribe to the Newsletter instead, because then you will know when that next sword is a poor thing - but more important you will know when the next sword is a good sword. This is the important point, invest in the Newsletter and don't waste money on buying useless swords. All good swords are not sold in Sotheby's or Christies, they can still be found cheaply, but you have got to be able to recognize them. What is more, all swords sold in the above mentioned places are not good. Because someone pays several hundred pounds for a sword that does not make it good. You have still got to buy with your eyes, and not your ears, whatever the words of a catalogue sing to you.

Finally, I receive no cut from Mr. A. Yamanaka, not even a free subscription. I'm cutting my own throat as a collector by urging members to read his publication, by increasing the number of knowledgeable members around. But when we started this thing five years ago I swore to educate the masses, and I'm still trying! Once more, join now, send your cheque for twenty dollars (£.....) to the Secretary here.

NIHON TO NEWSLETTER

The last article we published from the above was for beginners, the article below published by permission of Albert Yamanaka is for collectors of experience and for those new to Japanese swords. For the last, I quote Hawley Vol.II. "NIOI . Crystals like nie but much finer and darker." To which I would add that nioi is that thin white line which appears to define the edge of the hamon and runs the full length of the hamon. It MUST be there, unbroken, if it is not there, then the blade is useless, has lost its tempering, and whatever hamon it may appear to have is fake, probably etched on with acid. Now read on and really learn about nioi:

SWORD TERMINOLOGY - NIOI

If one were to look at NIOI and NIE STEEL crystals through a microscope one will find that they are about the same, the only differences being that the NIE pebbles or crystals are much larger than those of the NIOI. NIE can readily be seen with the naked eye whereas NIOI being very small, the individual pebbles are not visible to the naked eye.

NIOI, like NIE, comes in all forms, some are made very deep, some are made not so deep. The term "deep NIOI" refers to the width of the NIOI being wide and shallow or not very deep refers to the NIOI being made very narrow. Those made in Omidare or Choji Midare are usually made very deep, the width of the NIOI being made wide. If the NIOI width is made wide and in Ochoji Midare, various colours within the NIOI can be seen, then that blade will be, without a doubt, a good one.

The swordsmiths who made their blades in NIOI are the smiths from Bizen Province, Fukuoka Ichimonji smiths, Mitsutada and Nagamitsu of Osafune, Morie of Hatakeda, all have this vast changes within the NIOI.

In the works of smiths from provinces other than Bizen, there are Sanjo Yoshiie and Gojo Kuninaga or Yamashiro Province, as well as Ayanokoji Sadatoshi, Rai Kuniyuki, Niji Kunitoshi, who all made their Hamon in the Bizen style, such as Ochoji Midare, Kochoji Midare or Suguha Choji Midare and all with very deep NIOI. Especially NIE will be clustered around the NIOI to form various "workings" such as Kinsuji and Inazuma.

However, even though the Hamon may be made in O Midare, if the NIOI is narrow or shallow, then there will be a certain amount of "hard" Hamon. This is not very well thought of, as those found on such blades as the late Seki blades.

NIOI is found at the edge of the Hamon. Some works, the Yakiba having crumbled, still will have NIOI and in some cases, the NIOI will be very deep, however, this deep NIOI is of the type of NIOI which is called Tsukare NIOI or NIOI Shimi and can be included in NIOI which are not considered to be good. As for NIOI Shimi, if one should carefully look at the steel in the

immediate area, one will notice that that part of the steel has an indentation which means that that part of the steel has been ground off in excess as compared to the other part of the blade and consequently NIOI Shimi will be found in such areas.

Though this is not the case with all the swordsmiths.

Bizen Kunimune made two types of swords, one in narrow Suguha Kochoji Komidare with Ashi and the other in the typical Bizen style of wide Choji Midare in which case the NIOI Shimi is found in areas, but in Kunimune's case the NIOI Shimi is not the result of steel having been overly ground off and it is the result of a defect in tempering, so NIOI Shimi is not the same in all cases. The width of the NIOI in Bizen blades such as Ichimonji or Osafune Mitsutada or other smith have very deep and wide NIOI at the edge of the Hamon, however in the case of such works as the Aoe blades and Ugai blades where the Hamon is made in Suguha fashion, the width of the Yakiba being narrow, the NIOI is also made narrow and therefore such NIOI cannot be generally compared with the type of wide Ochoji Midare.

The NIOI as seen on blades of Kanesada and Kanefusa of Mino Province whose Hamon are worked in Gunome Choji are made in what is called "NIOI guchi shimaru" meaning that the NIOI is made very tightly and not in the loose and flowing Ichmonji style.

The NIOI in such cases are made according to and in comparison with the Hamon, that is the type of NIOI found on Ichimonji would not be right on a Gunome of Kanesada.

TOGARI NIOI

In this case, the Yakiba is not pointed, but the NIOI is pointed. Pointed NIOI is quite often mistaken for a pointed Yakiba. The two are worlds apart and different.

A pointed NIOI from the Midare Hamon is the characteristics of Bizen blades. A pointed Hamon is a characteristic of Mino blades.

Such smiths as Sakon Shogen Nagamitsu (Nagamitsu 2nd) has this pointed NIOI from the peaks of the Kochoji Midare from which the peaks of the pointed NIOI enters into the Ji area, this is also found on the works of Oei Bizen Yasumitsu.

The comparison of the width of the NIOI in the valley of the Midare and on the peaks of the Midare is that the width at the peak is much wider than that of the valley.

NIOI is generally found on the top of the Yakiba or in the form of Ashi and it forms a sort of profile of the Yakiba. HOWEVER, one, at times, encounters a blade with a NIOI in which the whole of the Hamon seems to be made up of NIOI and it is just that, the whole of the Hamon is filled with NIOI. This type of NIOI is what is termed as "Shimaranai NIOI". Shimaranai meaning not closed. NIOI in such cases are very flat and there is no life in it. The Habuchi does not have the vigour one expects of a NIOI edge.

This type of NIOI is usually found on blades of smiths who worked in the Bizen Province during the Shin Shinto Period.

In the Shinto Period, some of the smiths of the Suishinshi School did copies of the works of Ichimonji, Nagamitsu, Kagemitsu or Kanemitsu, and if one is not careful they are often mistaken for the earlier works they copied. However, in closer inspection of the Hamon and the NIOI, they are vastly different and will not compare with the early works. Also in a place or two, there will appear "hard" hamon. Of course, the steel will be the all telling point in identifying these blades.

ASHI....is the form of a NIOI which clings together and enters from the Hamon edge into towards the cutting edge.

Some works will have NIE clustered together on the NIOI and in such cases the combination of the two form beautiful "workings" and these are only found on the works of the smiths of first calibre. It is found on the kind of a blade that one looks at for hours on end and never tire of it....

NIOI KUZUREOn the blades of the smiths who worked in the Bizen Tradition from about the end of the Yoshino Period and into Muromachi Period and on into the Sengoku Period, inside the Hamon, there will appear an area independent of the Hamon, a temper in various circular formations. This is what is called NIOI Kuzure and it is not a NIOI Ashi.

The simplest explanation of this type of Hamon can be visualized from the works of such smiths like Yozozemon no Jo Sukesada, Kiyomitsu or Katsumitsu. They are even found on works which are made in Suguha.

YASUCHIKA DRAWINGS

The sale of Japanese prints and drawings at Sotheby's on March 4th 1969, contained a lot of great interest to collectors of tsuba and fittings. I give the catalogue description first and then will give a little more general details:

"LOT 204. TSUBA DRAWINGS. Seventeen small mounted drawings of tsuba designs, ink on paper, in some instances with the position of certain metals indicated by name; all unsigned except for one which bears the name Yasuchika; and one drawing of a kashira ink touched with gold".

This was followed by an explanatory note by Jack Hillier, the cataloguer. "It is practically impossible to decide whether these are in fact metal workers designs for tsuba, or collectors' and connoisseur's drawings from tsuba, but there are some features which point to the former, e.g. the sketchiness with which the actual tsuba shape and apertures are drawn, in some cases the design running over the tang, kodzuka or kogai openings; the fact that there are two drawings almost identical but where slight changes seem to have been made in the design to improve it.

Working drawings must have been made by metal workers or have been made for them, but such drawings are excessively rare."

There is no great need to add much to this description, except to say that in discussion with Hillier at a later date, we agreed that the drawings must almost certainly be by Yasuchika himself. That they are working drawings for tsuba and not drawings from tsuba there is really no question. As a practising artist these are the sort of drawings with which I am familiar. The alterations, and drawing of things not seen from one point of view, i.e. the drawing of details going over the edge of the tsuba to continue on the reverse - but drawn of course in a flat plane, so that the details appear to stick out from the edge of the tsuba. In some cases a drawing has been cut or torn across and a new piece of paper added to it. So that a careful passage of drawing is not lost by a mistake or alteration of magnitude elsewhere, a new piece of paper is added and the drawing continued. These techniques and others apparent here are all part of producing a carefully worked out working design. A finished drawing of an existing tsuba or thing, is a completely different matter and is not produced by the same techniques.

Moreover, these drawings are so exactly Yasuchika's style, not only in subject matter but more important in caligraphic style. The brush strokes are exactly the same as if he had picked up his chisel and cut katakiri strokes in metal. A man of Yasuchika's skill as a metal worker obviously and without question was an artist and draughtsman with a brush as well. No metal worker of his skill copied designs made for him by someone else, this shows in the spontaneity of his work. The one signature is the man himself writing his name, where he intends it to be as part of the design and balance of the tsuba.

That these drawings are a rare and precious thing there is little doubt. I have not seen the like before, although I have seen wood block drawings of tsuba and other fittings occasionally. On the day of the sale these small drawings made £200 (Dale, for a member) who the underbidder was, who also appreciated the quality and rarity of these things, I don't know. He came seconds before the Lot and left immediately afterwards, perhaps he was the ghost of Yasuchika.

(The drawings were ex the Collections of Gavel, Tikotin & Kaempner)

ARTICLE

Our anonymous expert and writer on sword furniture cannot be with us in this issue, he too has to earn his crust. I hope we will have more from him in the next Programme. Instead, I have great pleasure in publishing an article from another 48 hour a day man, Tony Griffith, which is based on the talk he recently gave at the Northern To Ken branch. (I think its fabulous!)

Why I Collect Small Fittings - by Tony Griffith

'Just write an article on why you collect small fittings' said Bon, settling his rear end in the best chair and drawing on a particularly foul Dutch cigar which I had just handed to him in a fit of astounding generosity. (I loathe Dutch cigars!)

Well, why anybody collects anything is a very simple or a very complex question, depending upon how one interprets it. One might simply say 'because I like them!' and refuse further comment as being superfluous. Alternatively, a study of the deep Freudian motivations behind our collecting impulses, might prove a chastening experience for many of us. Such self-psychoanalysis as I have undertaken indicates that I have a subliminal desire to collect big-busted blondes in black Wellington boots. This startling revelation causes me to drop self psychoanalysis and to concentrate on the collecting and study of small fittings...which are undoubtedly a substitution syndrome.

This article, therefore, should really be entitled 'Why I think I collect small fittings'. Let's proceed on that basis.

My prime motivation is a profound admiration for fine craftsmanship together with a strong distaste for the mass produced and banal. We live in an age where nearly everything is either made down to a price, designed for batch production processes or to some sordid marketing hypothesis as to what the consumer wants. What I call 'Boy Eating Cherries' products.... do you remember when half the front parlour windows in the land boasted a pot rendering of this inane subject. Now, I believe it is a print of an ethereal negress, who looks as though she has never had it and wouldn't care for it very much if she got it, which is splashed across the Regency striped walls of half the up-to-the-minute Jones's in the land. Possibly it is her lack of commitment which they find appealing. No apologies to any To Ken member who may sport this particular piece.

Never having been tempted towards such objects I have at various times formed collections of old pistols, early English water-colours, Okimono and antique furniture. It seems inevitable in retrospect, that a search for the ultimate in craftsmanship should have led to Japanese Metal Fittings. They are in my opinion, not only the apogee of the metal workers art but also of craftsmanship itself. Where European craftsmanship approaches this standard, as for instance in the work of Carl Fabergé, it is prohibitively expensive. In other words only Japanese small metal fittings offer me the standards of craftsmanship I can accept, at prices which I can afford to pay.

Quite recently I called at Spinks to see Douglas Wright, who was unfortunately out. I spoke to his assistant and ten minutes later walked out with a superb Kanemono, signed Noriyuki, and quite exquisite. Who else, but a collector of Japanese

Metalwork, could walk out of one of the swishest art dealers in the world with a signed work of art having written out a cheque for....£8. Not that that sort of thing happens very frequently these days and acceptable pieces are usually in hundreds of pounds but at least, not in thousands...not yet, that is!

I find other forms of Japanese art have immense appeal also, and would collect blades were it not for the fact that I accept the opinion of B.W.Robinson, who I hope will forgive me for quoting from the preface of the Arts of the Japanese Sword in which he says, "there are many thousands of Japanese swords in Europe, the vast majority of them are comparatively late blades of no more than middling quality". He goes on to say that the difficulty of finding good examples, even in museums, prevents the collector from exposing himself to quality...and such exposure is an essential part of acquiring judgement and knowledge in any form of collecting. I think the truth is they just did not let good blades out.

A sobering comparison can be made with regard to fittings where some of the best artists were overlooked by the Japanese and many examples of their work was exported to Europe. A typical example is the work of Sugiura Joi, there being one tsuba by him in Japan which is accepted as genuine. In a recent article in the Antique Collector, Mr.W.W.Winkworth lays claim to six such genuine examples in his own collection...and if he says they are right, that's good enough for me! With over four thousand artists recorded as having been concerned with the decoration and design of tsuba and horimono I also think it is possible to find a 'Huggins' or two, artists whose work is well above average but who have been so easily under-estimated amongst the vast number of artists involved. I think that Ishiguro Masayoshi and Otsurioken Miboku are two such...although I note that at a recent Sotheby sale Mr.John Harding out-bid me for an example by the latter. Maybe things are looking up for old Otsurioken after all. Any comment, John?

One of the sad things about collecting Japanese fittings, as indeed with all forms of Japanese art collecting, is the obsession of fellow collectors with 'names'. One thing that collecting pictures taught me was, to beware of signatures. The bigger the name, the bigger the chance of a fake, and even if genuine, 'big names' do not always offer high standards of craftsmanship. Judgement of works of art by the name of the artist rather than quality of the work has made an undignified mockery of the art market in paintings. Whilst the prices paid for paintings by Monet spiral ever upwards, Joaquin Mir who was every bit his equal, remains almost unknown outside Spain. There are endless similar examples...the pre-Raphaelites are bringing high prices again but their work is as banal now as it was when they sold for a few quid, not many years ago. The reason is simple, collectors judgement is a minimal factor these days in this branch of collecting and collectors buy, not paintings, but names. Names dictated to them by the dealers who stock up on a

particular artist before 'discovering' him for a gullible public.

One of the few fields of collecting which is free of this particular disease, is Chinese porcelain because fortunately it was only marked with a period mark, and rarely if ever with an artists signature; would that the Japanese had done likewise, for the judgement of Chinese porcelain collectors is remarkably unclouded by such considerations and much more valid in consequence.

A man for whose opinion I have the greatest respect once warned me that if I used quality of craftsmanship as my criteria I would end up with a lot of fakes because the fakes are often better than the genuine article. If this is true, and I have my doubts, then I will collect fakes and be happy, since I am a collector of fine examples of craftsmanship...not fine names!

I am making rather a lot of this matter of names but it seems to me to be right at the heart of the whole matter of judgement and ones collecting principles. There are far too many people about who being told a statue is by Michelangelo will stop and make all the right 'Oohing' noises; told that the statue was by Joe Bloggs they would pass it by without a glance. I will say nothing more provocative than that this is not only true of statues.

"Three things of this world are deplorable" wrote the Sung Poet, Li Chih Lai "to spoil a child by bad education; to waste tea unceremoniously, to degrade a fine painting by vulgar admiration". This is not only true of fine paintings and to judge any work of art on the strength of the signature is to be guilty of vulgar admiration...guilty also is he, who upon being shown a fine piece immediately enquires "Who is it by?".

To take such a purist approach to the subject should not necessarily lead to a diletante attitude, one wishes to study the artists, the various schools and so forth and I have started my own index of fitting makers which should be quite comprehensive by the time I am 92, it is just a matter of relying on one's own judgement, regarding what is good and what is not.

I cannot end this article without making reference to the infinite variety of materials and techniques used in small fittings which makes them unique in this respect, and is a great part of their attraction. Apart from the endless variety of subjects and materials; consider the variations in surface treatment alone: Nanako, and in especially fine work double or even treble Nanako; Ishime, a roughened surface tooled with a punch or blunt chisel: Tsuchime, an Ishime surface produced with the pane of a hammer; Yasurime, file marks as used when imitating rain etc; Amida Yasurime or Amida Tagane, radiating lines made with a file or chisel; Neko-gaki (cat scratches) chisel marks in which the burr is left in place and flattened with a hammer. One could go on through Mokume, Guri-bori and so forth, an endless variety of fascinating techniques. To parody Marlowe one might say of small fittings:

'Age shall not diminish them,
 Nor the years confine their infinite variety,
 Other subjects cloy the appetites they feed;
 But they make hungry, where most they satisfy.'

Sorry about the quotations but I cannot resist this one which really says it all. "Warm still with the life of forgotten men who made them" said D.H.Lawrence of "things men have made with wakened hands". He seemed to understand, maybe he collected small fittings; who knows!

COMMENT

Tony states my everlasting message so well that I feel I should not make this comment, but I must. It follows on from what I said regarding Yamanaka's Newsletter - learn to use your eyes, ignore your ears and the Big Names. News for newish collectors; probably 99.9% of big name sword blades bear fake signatures, and probably 50% of lesser blades have fake or altered signatures. The only good sword about which there is no doubt of it being genuine is unsigned, to spot this one you need educated eyes.

LETTER

Overdue by a long time, from Member G.Curtis, I quote a short passage:

"As a relatively new student of swords I am puzzled by the numbering system of smiths that is common in your Journal, e.g. Masahiro-MA.116. Where can I find this list? How useful are Hawley's lists of smiths?"

COMMENT

The numbers MASAHIRO-MA.116 etc. refer to the reference system adopted by W.M.Hawley in his two volume work: "Japanese Swordsmiths" which lists details of no less than 17,500 swordsmiths. This gives an easy cross reference to collectors who, thanks to Hawley, can now discuss from afar a sword with another collector and be sure they are both talking about the same man. These two books are an essential to new collectors, containing a wealth of other information on swords apart from the seventeen and a half thousand swordsmiths. Don't worry! These are still included in the price you are likely to pay for that crummy sword, and much more important if you want to know what it's all about. It's a complicated subject, not just a lot of sharp knives. Elsewhere in this Programme details of Hawley and his books.

LETTER

Again a little late for publication, from member G.R. Rolland in Glasgow, but it contains at least one point which worries new collectors. I quote:

"As a very amateurish collector, the prices realised at

the Sales mentioned in the Newsletter somewhat surprised me. I have been paying less -very considerably less, for any articles I have purchased. It is my sincere hope therefore, that the Society caters for interested parties at all levels - that it is prepared to tolerate the wild enthusiast without much money to spend on his collection, as well as to give authoritative advice to those who are fortunate enough to be able to buy anything which takes their fancy.

Can you give me any further information on sword polishing? In the newsletter it was mentioned that members blades which required polishing had been collected, and had been sent to Japan. Does the Society offer a service whereby numbers of blades are sent off every so often for restoration? Will you also give me an idea of the cost of such a procedure, and if possible, let me know how far deteriorated has a blade to be before it is not considered worth repolishing?!!

COMMENT

On the first point, this is a Society for all levels of collecting. Please remember Mr. Rolland, and anyone else who has this sort of worry, we are all students of the sword; we are all learning, some of us just happen to be older students who have been at it longer. But none of us knows all about Japanese swords, not even the Japanese. As with any knowledge in Art, it is a question of experience, with which should come judgement and then opinion. But it is still only opinion, based on experience. And as I said "even the Japanese" - very few Japanese experts agree with each other on the authenticity of certain blades. So you see, we are all learners, avoid and ignore the Man who Knows ALL about Japanese Swords.

Second point, on repolishing of blades. I have already mentioned our pilot batch of swords in Japan. When this is completed to our satisfaction we will publish details of how this is to be done through the Society. As to knowing if a blade is worth repolishing, I will publish an article on hints about this, and I will if any member wishes, always check a blade for quality before finally despatching it; in other words, I will venture my opinion. After all, it will be a fairly expensive business, and one must have some certainty of a successful result.

LETTER

I quote "Mate, get your finger out and put my address change in the next Programme!" From Roland Gregory. Sorry Roland, and I'm afraid the new Members List went out with the wrong address too! Changed address given in this Programme. Roland also says that his large and varied collection of swords are stored in a "farmhouse loft"; have been there since February and will be there for some time yet. Search parties organized, contact Premier Detective Agency!

LETTER

From Dan Erling, Wisconsin, U.S.A. which contains around fifty questions and seventy-four oshigata. A reply coming your way Dan, don't despair! I quote part of this letter which raises an old vexed question which we have never really dealt with:

"All the books I have read on Japanese Swords refer to Uchiko powder as Limestone. Last Fall, I obtained a small sample of this powder from one of the Kits which are currently on the market in this country. (They contain a red silk Uchiko, oil of clove, rice paper, etc. neatly packaged in a wooden box). I sent the powder to the Royal Ontario Museum to be analyzed with Mineralogical X-ray. The powder turned out to be the mineral Quartz which is a Silicon Dioxide. It is a great deal harder than limestone in any of its forms, and might possibly injure the finish of a blade.

If anyone in the Society has old examples of Uchiko powder, I think it would be interesting to check them out. If I could obtain some old or different Uchiko powder in quantities the size of $\frac{1}{2}$ a dried pea, I would have them X-rayed and the mechanical qualities checked out.

The possibilities seem to be:

1. The powder is the correct powder, and the authors of the books never checked its composition.
2. The powder is not the correct powder, and everyone who is using it is ruining their blades.
3. The powder is not limestone, but its lovely stuff anyway, and is good for everyone's blades.
4. Any other suggestions?

If this is a new finding and not an isolated incident, I think it should be looked into. I also feel that the stones used in polishing should be identified by competent mineralogists or petrologists as soon as possible."

COMMENT

This is a good question, would anyone else like to get in on the act? Either write to me or preferably Mr. Erling direct. I will publish any results. All I know is that members have on occasion remarked that Uchiko does vary greatly in quality - from the scratchy to the beautifully smooth absorbent.

SEVEN FAMOUS MAKERS

Thanks to Brian Carver, who has boldly taken his pen and produced the second list of favourite artists of sword fittings. Really you fittings collectors! you are a lazy lot; this is only the second contribution - more thanks to Brian Carver and originally Tony Griffith.

Seven Best Makers by Brian Carver

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Kanō Natsuo | 5. Ichinomiya Nagatsune |
| 2. Iwamoto Konkwan | 6. Goto Ichijō |
| 3. Shummei Hōgen | 7. Yanagawa Naomasa |
| 4. Sugiura Joi | |

My list is compiled at second hand. I own a few tawdry pieces. I passed through the great collections in London months ago, admiring but uncomprehending because of the profusion. Since then I had the fortune to be able to study at leisure the extremely fine illustrations in Joly's catalogue of the Naunton collection, fine enough to show ito zukashi and the finest nanako clearly. My list is based solely on examples from this book and thus I cannot judge on Sōmin and Toshinaga and other famous artists who are poorly or completely unrepresented.

First Natsuo, two examples in particular, one a shibuichi tsuba of Jo and the tortoise, his passive haunting face has the depth of a Rembrandt, the other a twisting carp on an iron mokko tsuba, yet not iron but live flesh and moving water. Nothing reaches this art in the whole book.

Second Iwamoto Konkwan, solely for a shibuichi kodzuka of a monkey, far surpassing his other work, competent as it often is. The body and face have such an intense liveliness and realism that finally decided me in favour of it over --

Third, Shummei Hōgen who gets in for a fine shibuichi kodzuka of a fox changing into a woman, mirrored in a river. Impeccable technique, fine elegant lines conveying life and movement, all and more, are there.

SALES ROOM

Several sales have taken place since the last Programme; the two most important were those of March 3rd at Christies and of April 1st at Sotheby's.

The swords at Christies were the usual mixed bag of mostly indifferent blades mounted in showy or just indifferent fittings. One comes to expect and accept this sort of thing: the mass of the Lots present a greyness and lack of interest -- just with the occasional gem shining in the work. Also, I'm convinced these gems are not always pearls of price, they just appear to be so by contrast. The catalogue of course, presents a different picture.

Nevertheless, the prices fetched on the whole reflected this greyness. In the early lots, very little stands out in my memory. Katana went for 32 gns. and wakizashi for as low as 25 gns. Lot 106, quite a fine katana with a blade signed Gassan Sadayoshi made 90 gns. Lot 109, a wakizashi signed Echizen Yasutsugu, said to be probably 4th generation, 110 gns. Lot 122, was quite a well mounted tachi, nice sword, but in my opinion with a doubtful signature of Tachibana Tameyasu; I thought this a pleasant buy at around 100 gns; it fetched 260 gns - too much.

Lot 123, an "Exceptionally Fine Katana", and the mounts were indeed very good. The blade I had reservations about, it was attributed in the catalogue to "probably Bizen Ichimonji". Said to have pronounced utsuri, it was pronounced, but was it utsuri? Looked more like tiredness to me and several other members of the To Ken. The boshi looked a bit sleepy too. Utsuri is rare on swords; I have recently seen a case of "pronounced utsuri" and that is a very different appearance from what this sword had. I wait to be shot down, but to me good utsuri also has a nioi line, yes or no? Anyway, the above sword made 1,500 gns. Lot 124, an interesting tanto, was probably a very good example of a late copy of a Rai school blade. Lots of haniku and "bamboo shoot" stuff, furisade tang with a nice kunimitsu signature. I have seen two of these recently. This was the second in two weeks. Both had an identical and wrong, horimono. This one was very expensive at 380 gns. Lot 132 an interesting blade with a pierced horimono. The horimono was doubtless atabori to remove heaven knows what flaws from the blade, which still retained many more, including a very skilful patch welded into the blade just below the horimono. Exhibited Victoria and Albert Museum, illustrated in "Japanese Art". A superb example of ear buying and not eye buying, price 200 gns. Lot 136 was a beautifully mounted wakizashi with an old blade mentioned elsewhere in this Programme. This went for 160 gns.(Divers).

Sotheby's - April 1st

An unfortunate date, but the sale commenced at 2.30 p.m. which according to my childhood memory, exempts one from liability. A more rosey picture here with some real gems about for the picking. Wakizashi went for £45, a tanto as low as £20. Quite good katana averaged around £90-£110, nevertheless one wonders if this is not a lot of money for a sword which is only "quite good". The condition of metal fatigue in some of these left a lot to be desired, so often one sees charcoal inclusion pits, tateware and exposure of inner core metal due to age and much polishing.

Lot 188A was an interesting pistol, mounted as a tanto, a bit rudimentary and battered but interesting; it fetched £80. There were some intriguing lots of unmounted blades: these were speculation blades which at what ever one decided was cheap, might have repaid repolishing and putting into shirasaya. There were two in each lot and the price averaged £26 per blade. A little expensive for the condition of most of them which generally were tired and worn. Lot 196, a single blade, was a typical example of one of the best; my catalogue remarks on viewing were: "Has been a superb blade, signed Sukemune (not Norimune) katana-mei; hamon completely polished off for almost one third length; no boshi, what is left is superb, needs polish; has bad pits which probably could not be removed. Forget it." This one fetched £50.

Lot 198 was a magnificent Daisho with unusual and superb mounts, decorated in iroye relief with dragon-flies and insects.

The blades were not good and needed polishing, but outwardly as a decorative object it was the ultimate in taste and interest. This was bought by a dealer (Eskanazi) for £720, and sold the next day for the purpose I've described above.

Lot 201 was the other gem. A superb and untampered with katana with a magnificent blade by Sagami Sukehiro, dated 1479. This broad blade with a long kissaki has all the best characteristics of the Soshu School, a midare yakiba with much inazuma and chikei, scattered niye and a little tobiyaki, which are edged with ara-niye. Nice stylised horimono of dragon and ken with bonji on the reverse. This sword I have known for perhaps twelve years, and know of its history since it left Japan in 1880, only one collection. The bidding was pretty hectic: it made £1,050 (Dale for a member), which is a lot of lolly, but when one considers that a single netsuke has already fetched £1,700 (to Eskanazi in the last Hindson Sale) it does not seem out of proportion at all.

SALE IN PARIS

Alan Bale has promised a report of the Sale of Blades in Paris recently. How about it, Alan?

LECTURE

I have received the following report of a Lecture to the Japan Society of London by Sir Frank Bowden, Bart., given in the Council Chamber of the Law Society on May 7th, 1969.

The subject "The Japanese Sword in Legend and Fact".

The sword held a position in Japanese history and culture unparalleled in any other country. It became much more than just a magnificent and efficient weapon - it was an integral part of the warrior who wielded it; the fate and indeed the character of the warrior and his sword were closely bound together. Thus it was not surprising that all sorts of stories grew up about various famous swords and their owners, some of which were pure legend, some based on fact which became larger than life as they were told and re-told through the centuries, and some which were actual fact.

As a start we should recall that the Imperial House of Japan was founded by a union of the sun-goddess Amaterasu with the sword-god SUSANOO. He already had a famous sword which he had taken from the tail of an eight-headed dragon which he slew after making it drunk on eight jars of Sake - one for each head! Many of the exploits of the 12th century hero Yoshitsune were completely legendary, and he was supposed to have learnt his wonderful sword-fighting technique from the Tengus, who were a sort of goblins, on the summit of Mount Kurama. This helped him to get the best of BENKEI who challenged him to a fight after he had already overcome 999 opponents and taken their swords and hoped to get the 1000th of his collection from Yoshitsune!

(Collectors might note this method!)

The great TAIRA family had many historic swords with strange stories attaching to them, including the blade made by YASUTSUNA in the 10th century with which RAIKO is supposed to have slain the monster SHUTENDOJI, and which accordingly bears the name 'monster-cutter'.

The 14th century smith Masanaga once tried to commit suicide with one of his own blades; but after three attempts was not able even to cut his skin. Yet, when he threw the sword from him in anger, it hit his anvil and cut it in two. It would not, however, harm its own master. As OZAKI says "...the belief in the occult power of the sword was great and it was said that no bad man could keep possession of a fine sword".

Sir Frank told stories of other famous swords, including a number by the half-mad genius MURAMASA, whose blades were supposed to bring bad luck to their owners because of their blood-thirstiness. He told the story of the way KAZUMA, a young samurai, avenged his father, culminating in a sword-fight of five against thirty-six. This whole vendetta began with a quarrel over a sword - by MURAMASA.

Going on from legend and story to basic facts, the first recognised Japanese smith to produce the curved, typical NIPPON-TO was AMAKUNI, in the early tenth century. He also was the first smith to sign his blades, in accordance with a regulation of the 42nd Emperor by which all smiths were required to sign and date their blades. This was still officially in force 300 years later when the great MASAMUNE said - a trifle arrogantly perhaps - that he did not need to sign his blades as nobody would mistake them for anyone else's work.

As to what made the Japanese sword such an outstanding weapon and piece of craftsmanship, the answer lay in the tremendous skill, inventiveness and sheer devotion of the swordsmiths who, after taking over in early days from the Chinese, improved the quality of the blades by more careful refining of the ore and improved methods of forging, altered the shape and balance and so produced a weapon of such perfection that it remained basically almost unaltered through a thousand years.

Sir Frank went on to describe the solemn ritual which accompanied the making of a sword and which started off the laborious work of weeks or even months before a perfect blade was produced, which then went on to the polisher, while equally skilled work was being done by the makers of the smaller metal fittings, Tsuba, fuchi-kashira etc. and all the intricate scabbard-fittings until finally one had the finished whole: the blade and its Koshirae, every part made with an eye to the harmony of the whole ensemble.

Finally, as there was not time to say much of the many famous smiths included in the twelve to fifteen thousand who are known to have worked over a period of a thousand years, a word

about the greatest of them all, Goro Niudo Masamune.

As an example of the value placed on his work, there is a true story of a general who, as a reward for his services, was offered the choice of an increase of 30,000 koku of rice in his yearly income, or the gift of a short sword by Masamune. By modern standards, the increase in income would be something like 100,000 dollars a year, but he chose the sword. After all, there is only one absolute best, and on the premise that the Japanese swordsmiths were the best ever, then Masamune can take the title of the greatest swordsmith the world has ever known.

At the conclusion of the lecture, a demonstration of IAI-JUTSU, the ancient art of drawing the sword, was given by Mr. Roald Knutsen, Secretary of the British Kendo Association and of the European Kendo Renmei after which questions were asked and the audience examined a number of Sir Frank's swords of various types which he had brought to illustrate his lecture.

MEMBERS LIST

Is available, members up to May 1969, write in if you haven't got yours. With it you can correspond with sword swallows around the world.

JAPANESE SWORD BOOKS

Japanese Swordsmiths - Lists 17,500 smiths - Vol.1, \$15.00; Vol.2 \$10.00. Japanese Swords - A nomenclature chart. 17" x 22". .50. 27" x 35" \$1.00. Los Angeles County Museum, Arms & Armour Hall Catalogue. Colour plates. \$5.00. Arms & Armour of Ancient Japan - Exhibition Catalogue 1964. \$3.00. Nihon Tō Koza, 10 vol. revision of pre-war edition. Well illus. \$125.00. Nihon Tō Zenshu, 9 vols. A modern scientific approach. Well illus. \$76.50. Juyo Tōken nado Zufu, Record of Juyo certification. Vols. 13 to 16 available. Nihon Tōko Jiten - Koto vol. \$17.50; Shinto vol. \$16.00. Tangs of 1000 smiths. Write for list of 50 or more titles in Japanese or English. Postage extra. We automatically get every new sword book from Japan. Tsuba boxes \$1.00.

From: W.M.Hawley, 8200 Gould Avenue, Hollywood, California, 90046. U.S.A.

CORRESPONDENCE AND PUBLICATION

Lots of letters to answer again, many others to publish - bear with me!

OSHIGATA

A reminder to new members who may have difficulties in reading tang inscriptions due to inadequate references, that if they care to send a rubbing (oshigata) of the tang, addressed to Bon Dale at the Society's address, I will check it for them and send them all available information I have on the swordsmith or

inscription. Please remember to make a careful rubbing of the whole tang, both sides, not just the inscription.

NIHON TO NEWSLETTER

New members will like to know and others be reminded of a venture started in Japan in January 1968, by Albert Yamanaka and Associates. The Nihon To Newsletter is a bi-monthly publication in English, 30 plus pages, on Japanese swords and its related fields. Packed with information from authoritative Japanese sources, there is no other publication in English which can offer such a wealth of knowledge to the serious student of the sword. Members wishing to subscribe to this non-profit making publication should write to:

NIHON TO NEWSLETTER,
C.P.O.Box 967,
Tokyo, Japan.

Enclose: Name, Address, City, State, etc. and remit Twenty (20) U.S. dollars or equivalent. Bank Cashiers cheque only - NO personal cheques.

AIR MAIL POSTAGE

For overseas members wishing to have their Programmes sent air mail, the subscription rates are increased as follows:

Europe - £3.-.-.
U.S.A. and elsewhere - \$10.00.

NEW MEMBERS

We have pleasure in welcoming the undermentioned new member:

E.Newman,
17 Susannah Street,
Poplar, London, E.14.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

R.Gregory,
3 Church Close,
Milton Ernest,
Bedfordshire.

PLEASE NOTE: S.Divers address is:

Hunters Moon,
Aspley Guise,
Bletchley,
Bucks.

(on Members List the BLETCHLEY has been left out).