

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



HON. PRESIDENT. B.W. ROBINSON, M.A., B.LITT.

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PROGRAMME NO. 55

June-July, 1970

NEXT MEETING: Monday, 1st June 1970 at The Mason's Arms,
Maddox Street, London, W.1. at 7.30 p.m.

FOLLOWING MEETING: Monday, 6th July 1970 at The Mason's Arms,
7.30 p.m.

SUBJECTS: June - Sword appraisal evening. 5 blades will
be on display. Members present will have the opportunity
to assess each blade and fill in form with comments. The
overall judgement of the group will be discussed. Bring a
pencil! Swords for study - Shinto - Osaka Tamba.

July - Bon Dale will conduct a study session on
Heian blades using "Juyo Token nado Zufu" illustrations and
the newly acquired episcopo, guaranteed to melt a tsuba or
re-temper any blade. Swords for study, Heian or early Kamakura,
there are some around, and who was the chap with that
YASUTSUNA about three meetings ago? Bring him, somebody please,
and the blade!

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Without putting on the usual apologetic note and
writing such phrases as "it is with great regret", I will state
simply that this Society has been in existence for six years,
the cost of producing this Programme has naturally risen,
postage has, and we are beginning to run at a loss. Therefore
we must "put up the dues" to use our American friends expression.
In future, membership will be £3.10.0., corresponding membership
£2.-.-. A raise of ten shillings a head. We do, however,
hope also to offer an improvement in the Programme, namely
illustrations. I hope the first will be in this issue - this
is in the lap of the Printer. He has promised delivery in time
for inclusion with the text, if it's not here, all I can say
is it will be next time! This is going to be fairly costly
and at the moment needs planning well in advance. If the
method we have in mind is successful, I would expect we can
afford two or three illustrations in each issue. There are
several articles of interest in hand which really require
illustrations to give them their full worth. Also, I think
it is worthwhile if we start a traditional "Sword Quiz" each

issue. Not so difficult as the usual Japanese ones! As I've said, I hope you will find the first elsewhere in this issue. No prizes, just write in and say if you object or approve.

On Programmes. Our good friend and member Willis Hawley would like to know how many Programmes we have produced, and just what the number of this one should be? So would I! I haven't a copy of every Programme since No.1. I appeal to any member who has a copy of every one we have produced since 6th January 1965, - which I think was the first - to write in to me, the Secretary, or Fred Stride and solve this problem. In short, I think we've got the right number on this one, Willis does not - has anyone the answer please?

Through the good help of Mr. Sayama we have increased our services to members by being able to offer sword repairs - see the next item below.

SWORD REPAIRS

Scabbard Repairs. The Society can now undertake scabbard repairs and re-lacquers. These will take about six weeks. Katana size about £5, in any colour lacquer and any special designations a little extra. Wakizashi and tanto scabbards, the cost will be less. Will members kindly note that real lacquer will not be used, the finish will be KASHU lacquered; the cost of real lacquer for a Katana scabbard will be approx. £20 to £30 and seemingly there is little difference in quality between real lacquer and KASHU lacquer.

Mount Fittings These also can be made; prices are understood to be reasonable but must be left to the makers discretion if these parts can be made.

Hilt Binding Ordinary bindings in silk and in any colours required - time about 5 weeks.

Katana Hilt £5-£6

Wakizashi Hilt £4-£5

Tanto hilt £3-£4

Samé can also be replaced for about £5. If a better type of hilt binding is required, this will increase the price somewhat.

Contact David Parker, 17 Strickland Row, Wandsworth, London S.W.18 for further details if required. When sending objects for repair, about 50% deposit on estimated costs would help Society accounts. As usual no charge or profit by the Society.

BARON LOOF LIRPA

I had intended this issue to write an amendment to the List of Members, to include the Baron's name in the list. However, I was delighted to find the following short article in

the "Art & Antiques" weekly published on May 9th, 1970. I don't know who was responsible for this news item in that excellent and useful publication, but thanks and congratulations to him. I think it about wraps up the Saga of Loof Lirpa.

LOOF LIRPA GETS LOTS OF RICE.

The Japanese government has offered Baron Loof Lirpa a Swedish member of the Nihon To-Ken Society, the traditional payment of five million koku of rice for three very important Japanese swords the Swede found while cleaning out an old storeroom in his family's castle. Or so a news item said in * the April journal of the Nihon To-Ken, a British society of Japanese sword enthusiasts.

The item continued: "The swords bear the seals of 13 consecutive Emperors to whom the treasure was entrusted". In addition to being in mint condition and signed, the weapons bear such fascinating inscriptions as "Divine Wind Barbarian Slayer of the Honourable Gods" and "Offending Hand Remover".

The swords were described as a gift to the Baron's great grand-father from an obscure Zen Buddhist sect. Considering the importance of these swords, and the interest they are arousing, the Baron has gone into hiding until they have been disposed of, but there is a major dispute, because, according to the journal, the Swedish government strictly regulates the import of cereal and any infringement might adversely affect Britain's chances of joining the Common Market.

But there will be no diplomatic or economic crises—because the whole news item was an elaborate April Fool hoax by the scholarly and respected journal.

LAST MEETINGS

April. AIKUCHI and TANTO evening. This evening suffered the drawbacks, to me at least, that there were so many fine and interesting things present that one just could not spend enough time enjoying each item. Hardly a valid criticism, however: it is just that I could have spent hours on each piece and the evening just isn't that long. Seven dirks were placed on the table for viewing. Alan Bale showed a very tastefully mounted AIKUCHI with mounts by Yoshitsugu 1860-1880. The saya was lacquer imitating broken wood with gold pegs inlaid for an imitation repair, complete with Warikogai, in immaculate condition. The blade was hirazukuri and signed by Tadayoshi I. Alan thinks the signature to be correct, the blade was typically Hizen with Chu-Sugu Ha Hamon, but showed signs of tiredness.

Mike Webb had a superb Aikuchi, ex-Aylward collection complete with brocade bag and travelling box. The saya was black lacquer with Matsudaira Mons. The blade signed Jumyo, the patina on the tang had been removed with a wire brush — an idiosyncrasy of Mr. Aylward apparently. I have an ex-Aylward

tanto suffering from the same trick. Bill Baxter showed a Shin-Shinto blade by Naganobu dated 1868. This very thick blade was almost an armour piercer. Naganobu was a member of the Tsunatoshi school of Musashi and died in 1875. He was a student of Takahashi Nobuhide, himself a student of Gwassan Sadayoshi.

Capt. Johns who seems always to be able to produce something to delight the senses, showed a tanto with plain black lacquer saya and tsuka of fine quality. The metal work was delightful, polished shakudo with swifts in flight. The tiny kodzuka had an interesting blade with a rat engraved. There were also split kogai. The blade was signed simply Umetada and had a fine polish. It had an unusual horimono of Fudo's rope and a bonji of Fudo and Kwojin. The blade showed signs of age, the edge being incurved through much polishing - a delightful piece.

Fred Stride had a Hamidashi with black ebi-saya, kodzuka of iron with gold inlay of tendrils and kiri mons. The tsuka is bound in "Elephants Hair". The mounts were russeted iron with touches of gold edging. The blade was ribbed but of fine shape and signed Hizen Tadayoshi - this signature did not fit any of the eminent Tadayoshi apparently and the comparison of the two Hizen blades raised some interesting and controversial discussion. Fred thought the mounts were court mounts but most members thought this was not so.

Graham Curtis had just bought a shin-shinto Bizen Aikuchi blade in mint condition, unsigned in shirasaya. Mole Benn showed a breathtaking blade in shirasaya with o-hada itame and midare hamon. There was a su Ken Horimono and Bonji. The signature was Nobukuni and Mole had received an orikami confirming this when it had been polished. Mole mentioned that he had to pay £7 to Alan E. to buy this blade. Ah - the good old days!

Study pieces for the evening turned up in profusion. Mole Benn had another blade, for which I would swop my mother-in-law. This was a truly impressive blade by Umetada Mioju with a very fine engraving of a dragon and tama mounted as a Yefu-no-Tachi. Mole let it be known that in the days before he knew better he had conducted a tamoshigiri upon an apple tree with this piece! In so doing, he had cut an electric cable which had left a burn mark in the steel not removed by polishing. This blade, also the Nobukuni, was exhibited at the Ashmolean and will doubtless be remembered by all those members fortunate enough to visit. Incidentally, Mole had to pay 50/- at auction for this tachi. Not content with producing the Nobukuni and the Umetada Mioju, Mole also produced a Yamashiro blade of first rank with the signature carefully covered over. Mole challenged anyone to attribute the blade to either smith or school. No one accepted which started a lively

discussion on how one can learn about swords without a Sensai on hand.

Ben Holtaway brought his Ryokai blade along. What beautiful form these Yamashiro blades take - almost a pleasure to be cut down by one. This blade was O-Hada Itame and Ho-Sugu Ha Hamon.

Amongst other blades present Bryan Turner had a tachi with early mounts and an exciting blade possibly attributable to Bungo Yukihira. The hamon comes off the blade an inch or two before the hamachi. The tragic thing about this blade was a fresh breakage at the point which seemed almost too great to salvage. Bon Dale produced a catalogue dated 1913 of the firm of Yamanaka which was in business in Bond Street until 1945 or so. There were a number of dirks illustrated along with some long swords which nowadays have hallowed places in museums and the more expensive collections. All you had to do was step inside and buy in those days.

May - The evening was opened by our Chairman with news of a Committee Meeting and some discussion ensued. The new episcopes were paraded and everyone was eager for a try out. Our good friend Syd Divers was fresh back from his visit to Japan where he was honoured and entertained royally by Nihon To enthusiasts and Mr.K.Sayama, in particular to whom he expressed much thanks. He gave us a vivid talk on the visit, a short synopsis is reproduced elsewhere in this issue, and it is hoped Syd will give us a detailed article for a later issue. It is quite extraordinary to hear how expensive even mediocre swords are in Japan and also of the disagreement between Japanese experts. It's not quite so bad here! By the time Syd had answered many questions, the evening was well advanced when Alan Bale commenced his talk. As everyone wanted to see the episcopes in action Bon and other dab hands at electronics fiddled around with flex and plugs and at the flick of a switch, the thing lit up. However, either there was teething troubles or something was not working properly, as clouds of smoke issued forth. Nothing daunted, Alan pressed on and showed various iron tsuba and explained some of the finer points. Each tsuba was fully annealed when taken from the episcopes. If the machine continues to run so warm, temper lines might be formed or removed as you watch if a sword was displayed. Some tsuba were too hot to handle after a few minutes in the episcopes. It certainly would be excellent for a round of toast. But for all its present faults and hilarious start, the advantages of the beast were immediately obvious and it should be a tremendous asset for the future.

There were plenty of iron tsuba present; the evening could have well been named "Any old....." Mole Benn brought about $\frac{1}{2}$ a cwt. on a string; nevertheless there were some rather nice pieces amongst them.

Amongst the swords present, Bill Baxter had a tanto which would make any collector cry. The scabbard was of shakudo sheet with inlaid gold signatures, silver and pewter inlaid seals dotted all over. The kurikata was also unusual, set on top of the scabbard and nicely gold inlaid. There was some conjecture as to whether the tsuba was pure gold but eventually it was decided that it was gilt. The blade was narrow and ribbed. Some nasty little man had used the sword as a hammer and there were the impressions of nail heads all over the shakudo scabbard. An expert metal worker might be able to repair the damage but it would be a tremendous job, and the colouring of the shakudo surface would still be difficult. It was a real collectors item and no one present had seen such decoration motif before.

Len Holtaway had brought his Soshu Den blade along to illustrate this tradition. It is a typical Soshu blade with the large kissaki. The hada is tight itame and the hamon is suguha with much activity. This blade has red lacquered grooves, a practice not particularly admired these days. It would be interesting to know when and if this fashion occurred or is just a cover up for some tremendous flaw? The blade was nicely mounted in black lacquer saya with sunk relief line patterns. The tsuba is a Shingen centipede wire type.

Mr. Brian Turner showed a very early blade of Heian or early Kamakura form - remarkably slender, the nakago shortened. There was much rust and rubbing and it was difficult to see the details of the blade. Brian also showed a Soshu den tanto. A good broad hirazukuri shape, unsigned and possibly the tang shortened. The hamon was Hitatsura. I am afraid that there were other blades which I did not have time to examine.

NEWS FROM THE NORTH by Andrew Ford.

Next Meeting 19th May at the Seven Oaks Hotel, Nicholas Street, Manchester at 7.30 p.m. The evening will be taken up by a blade appraisal session.

Last Meeting Andrew Ford gave a talk on Mino-den covering the main schools in that Province. There followed afterwards a general discussion on the methods of obtaining various yakibas and grain patterns. Ian Bottomley pointed out that by using coloured plasticine and indenting it with a punch it is possible to reproduce all the known yakibas. Which leads us to the conclusion that the laying of clay on the blade purely gave a graded tempering effect but in no way decided the actual temper pattern. We are going to go into this further at a later meeting and will be expounding on same. No doubt we will have many critics who will not accept our views; but it seems to me that too little research has been done in this matter, and some of the sacred words written over fifty years ago should be updated by intelligent thought and research.

EDITORIAL

One of our leading members asked me at our last meeting not to mention his name so much. Suspecting that he might be afraid of burglars since my own brother-in-law had his valuable collection of china and pictures stolen a week after an article by him appeared in our local newspaper, I, at first, agreed. Talking further, it became apparent that he was worried that I should give the impression that he was part of a clique which believes it owns all the good swords and anyone else's is either no good or a fake. This is the last impression I intended and if corresponding members have gained this idea, I had better correct it now. However, there is no doubt the same names appear time after time. These people are the backbone of the Club, although they might deny it through modesty. Rain or shine, they come along to meetings, not to lord it over others, but to enjoy an evening's company amongst those of similar interests. Our club is unusual, I believe, in the mutual friendship and respect amongst members of widely differing social backgrounds. Nippon-Do to them is not a craze for a few months but a deep-rooted lifetime's interest. Some have been collecting for many years and have accumulated a vast fund of experience. It is usually these people to whom I turn, time after time to give us a lecture for our monthly meetings. Even the shortest talk involves quite an effort, particularly if like most of us, they willingly admit how much they don't know, and have little experience of talking before a friendly though critical audience. Despite this, these chaps invariably step forward to teach and entertain us with some of their hard won store of knowledge. Believe me, they would certainly like to sit at the feet of an eminent Sensai and just listen. If I asked you, reader Fosdyke, to give us a talk, what would your answer be? So you see, the reasons for reading the same old names become clear, and there is nothing snobbish or clique-ish about it. Similarly, the same members are the ones who willingly bring their treasures to the meeting for us to examine. I might add that I would think twice before so doing as the standard of sword handling at times leaves a lot to be desired. Only a few months ago, I was horrified to see my most treasured wakizashi blade stood on its point and rotated a few times by a newish member! Some of the swords are incredibly valuable and to freely allow fellow members to handle them requires a darned kindly and trusting nature. The correct handling of a sword has been much publicised and any new member must ask if he is uncertain in these matters. It really is only a question of common-sense - at times a rare commodity. Again, in my writing up I certainly do not mention all the swords present at each meeting. This is not to spite anyone but an effort to make each report entertaining as well as informative and not like reading an auction catalogue. In the time available, I

cannot examine every blade and when I do, I cannot necessarily see the points which the owner thinks interesting. Members could help me by jotting down details on a piece of paper beforehand. Not much to ask but it would make my job that much easier. It is usually the regular members who describe their swords to me fairly quickly and concisely hence their regular appearances in our columns. Nothing would please the regular members more than to have new people and ideas coming to the fore - however, in point of actually making a contribution, very few are willing to shoulder the burden.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTE - Well done Fred! See any Programme pre-Fred back to the year dot! You will find the same message, only I was usually less polite, and said "When are you lot going to get off your fat hakama!"

SWORDS FOR STUDY

There is some confusion about this section of the evening. The idea is that willing members could bring swords of the nominated school to the meeting so that interested members can examine the various characteristics. There does not necessarily have to be any formal discussion by the meeting. The main thing is that the blades are there to see. After a slow start, the idea seems to be useful, but two groups of study pieces at each meeting are too much. In future, the Koto and Shinto blades will be alternated from meeting to meeting. Of course, if you have any queries regarding the various schools etc. raise the points by all means during or after the formal part of the evening. We can all learn something. If there is a particular school you have a strong interest in let me know and we will choose it for a study session with episcopes as soon as possible.

NEW VENTURE

Members of the Club will be pleased to hear that Douglas Wright has opened a new gallery at 34 Curzon Street, W.1 and will wish him every success. Members visiting London should make certain of visiting his showroom where if the past is anything to go by, many items of interest used to be available at reasonable prices.

THE TO KEN SOCIETY VISIT TO JAPAN

As mentioned earlier, Syd Divers gave this short synopsis of his visit:

There were two flights to Japan, one by Japanese Airlines direct polar route and one by Aeroflot via Russia. Mr. Chapman, Dr. Mills and myself went by the Russian route and were lucky in being on the inaugural flight from Moscow to Tokyo with caviar, champagne and even a band and T.V. to meet us at Tokyo on arrival. We all had a fantastic time in Japan.

As the To Ken Society are only interested in our experiences of swords, I will summarise these as follows:

Murakami Kosuke

Tony Chapman, Vic Harris and I made our first call to see this honoured gentleman and outside of loading us with gifts including masses of sword books he showed us some of the fabulous swords of which he is custodian. There were over a hundred famous swords of which we had time only to view twenty-six. Our minds literally boggled at what we saw. This was not a question of viewing blades through glass but actually handling each blade in turn. There are only 3 known signed Masamune and he had one. The earliest Amakuni (from a temple), fabulous Heian blades, Yasutsunas, anything you can think of we have seen!

Murakami is one of the top appraisers in Japan and in our opinion the very best man. He is also Chief Editor of the Japanese Sword Journal "To En". We spent a fabulous time at his house.

The Inamis, Hakusui and Tomihiko

The next day Tony Chapman and I visited the Inamis who showed us blades from their personal collections. Here we had the opportunity of examining a long Masamune in some detail. After that they took us to an enormous Japanese lunch and insisted on putting a car and chauffeur at our disposal. The first visit we wanted to make was to go to the Sen Kakuji and to pay our respects to those very brave 47 men. Inami accompanied us. There is a feeling of great peace at the cemetery and a mystical atmosphere felt by those of us who are sensitive to these things. The 47 rounin were very brave men indeed and so young. In the evening Inami gave us a fine feast near the Asakusa temple.

Mr. Sayama

We based ourselves at Kobe, so as to be near Expo 70, Kyoto and Osaka. Mr. Sayama gave us a very warm welcome. Nothing was too much trouble for him. He placed his office and car at our disposal and kept in continuous touch with us to make sure we were fully occupied in seeing the sights. His friend, Mr. Mishima brought some very fine blades to show me including a Go Yoshihiro.

The Japanese say to see a Go Yoshihiro is to see a ghost as they are so rare. We were told there are only six in existence. I was very impressed by this blade.

The N.B.T.H.K. Shinsa of sword judging was held in Kobe during our stay. No one, not even a Japanese, is allowed into the room where the 5 appraisers work but as a great honour to us they allowed us in. At this particular shinsa the appraisers were:-

1. Honami Nishu	4. Tanno Yataro
2. Ikeda Shematsu	5. Namba Saburo
3. Teramine Isao	

The first two travel around Japan and the other three are resident appraisers for Hyogo Prefecture.

I was pleased to take a green paper on the sword fittings I had especially brought from England to this shinsa.

Mr. Sayama 'phoned me at my hotel on the morning of the shinsa to say Cottis had arrived at his office! So the shinsa was seen by Cottis, Chapman and myself with Sayama (God bless him) doing all the introductions. Cottis had come via the J.A.L. flight and as it was our first contact between the two To Ken flights to Japan we swapped stories. Inami had a sword exhibition at the Sogo department store, which we had already visited the day before, so we took Cottis along to see this.

We showed him around all the fine blades on display. Here we could make the comparison between Kiyomaro and the other Shinshinto smiths. Believe me, when you see these together there is no comparison. Kiyomaro is miles ahead of all the rest put together. (Yamanaka confirms this).

Cottis told us of an armour exhibition at a department store in Osaka, so we left Cottis at the Sogo Exhibition and dashed off to Osaka to see this.

Sayama went to great trouble to look after us in Kobe and I am most grateful to him for making our stay so pleasant and interesting.

Albert Yamanaka

I had been trying to contact him for over a week and he called on us on the last night we had in Japan. There were so many questions to be answered. One of the interesting answers he gave to my query on shinsa was concerning very good blades.

He was of the opinion that no one in the West could get a paper on say a Masamune as not one of the appraisers would risk his reputation in giving a paper. Shinsa judges are O.K. on the medium stuff but when a blade is very good indeed then it should have its own papers to support it. Any blade of quality showing up without papers will be "unqualified". This confirmed my own view, i.e. they will not admit in Japan that top blades exist anywhere else.

Yamanaka discussed everything at length with us. The "Naotane fakes" produced the interesting comment:- "Tsugihira produced more fakes than Naotane; also the Gassan boys were great fakers". We learnt a lot from Yamanaka. Incidentally both he and Murakami were taught by the same teacher, Honami Koson.

This is by necessity only a very brief summary of our Japanese trip. Vic Harris, one time To Ken member, is resident in Japan and so is Van der Schyff, who I accidentally bumped into at the British Pavilion at Expo 70 where he is acting as an interpreter. The other To Ken members who went on these two flights have their own experiences. Dr. Mills I believe spent some time with John Harding. Cottis appears to have seen all the Japanese Gardens in existence! As to the others, possibly they will send in their reports?

Sydney Divers.

KATANA & WAKIZASHI

Our welcome visitor Mr. Sumeya received a letter from his father with some notes on katana and wakizashi after hearing about our Daisho evening.

A katana is a sword over 2 shaku in length and were worn by the Samurai. A wakizashi is about 1 shaku 3 sun to 1 shaku 8 sun in length and was carried or worn by gamblers, craftsmen and merchants but not apparently by Samurai. I am not quite clear whether swords we describe as wakizashi are called Shoto when worn as a daisho by Samurai or that Mr. Sumeya means that they really were never worn. Mr. Sumeya indicates the price of the short sword in the daisho should be dependent upon the price of the Daito. For instance, if the Daito price is about ¥ 500,000 (approx. \$600) then the Shoto should be between 150,000 - 200,000 Yen., and a tanto should be between 100,000 and 150,000 Yen. However, if the owner of the shoto is a very famous man or there are horimono on the blade, or ura-mei-iri which means production dates or special order inscriptions, then the price of the shoto will be raised. Mr. Sumeya also translated a diabolical oshigata. This translated reads: "Minamoto tenshu made this in accordance with Suzuki Shounshi's requirements". Minamoto Tenshu whose other name is Suishinshi Masahide was a subject of the Akimoto family of North East Japan and of course, is one of the great Shin-Shinto masters. Someone is a lucky man! Many thanks Mr. Sumeya.

ERRATA TO JOURNAL 4

Peter Cottis has asked for the following corrections to his article "Japanese Firearms" to be published.

The correction I want to make to the Journal is on p.89, line 3. Instead of "but it, almost certainly, is not Japanese" read "but it is almost certainly Japanese".

I refer in note 16 to "the three-barrelled snaphaunce in the Museo Militar in Mexico" as though it were a fact. I was recently in Mexico City, where I found that there no longer was a Museo Military, let alone a three-barrelled Japanese snaphaunce. My experience of Mexicans also leads me to wonder whether the chap who originally described it could distinguish in English between a matchlock and a snap-haunce (which is a sort of flintlock more or less). This is a pity, because if it had been a snaphaunce it would have been the only Japanese flintlock type gun in captivity.

P.87, line 9. The maximum weight of a gun depends on the firer, not the finger.

P.89, Note on the Hideyoshi gun. The barrel is almost certainly Japanese.

P.89. Note 16. "three barrelled snaphaunce in the Museo Militar in Mexico" must be regarded as dubious; I was in Mexico recently and failed to find the Museo Militar let alone the gun.

SWORD QUIZ

Opposite oshigata of two blades by the same swordsmith, can you decide who made these blades? Answer in next issue with oshigata of his signature.

JAPANESE CINEMA - by W.L.Baxter

My reactions to a recent season of films by Akira Kurosawa put on by the British Film Institute at the National Film Theatre may be of interest to those unable to attend and assist in drawing attention to titles that should not be missed if they become the subject of local screenings.

Seven Samurai

Pride of place is given to Kurosawa's masterpiece; made in 1954 nothing he has done before or since has quite measured up to its greatness. Set at the time of the St. Batholomew's Day Massacre in France the story is told of a small village, beset by marauding brigands, hiring seven samurai to defend them. Takashi Shimura gives a superlative performance as the leader of the band recruited at the nearby town; Toshiro Mifune as the peasant cum Samurai confirmed the great expectations of his ability that everyone anticipated after his performance in "Rashomon" (of which more later), but the man who is most remembered is Seiji Miyaguchi in the part of a Samurai who's whole life is dedicated to perfection of swordmanship - his quiet, withdrawn performance, completely removed from the other interests going on in the story unfolding about him, truly crystallizes the Western ideal of all that is good in that intangible something that is "Samurai". One final point to look for in this film, in which there is simply nothing to criticise, is when Minoru Chiaki, another of the happy band, is chopping forewood to earn his board and lodging; each clean blow with the axe is accompanied by the appropriate cry but the fact that he is holding this potentially lethal weapon is not his first thought when he is joined by a stranger - it is his long sword, lain to one side during the other activity, that is carefully picked up and transferred to a more available spot on the other side of the woodpile, all without a single word being uttered or interruption of the business in hand.

Rashomon

The film that really drew not only the attention of professional critics to Kurosawa's potentialities, but suddenly introduced the whole Japanese film industry to an unsuspecting world when in 1951 (although made in 1950) it won the premier award at the Venice Festival. Set in the Heian period the story is of the meeting of a Samurai, (Masayuki Mori) his bride (Machiko Kyo) and a bandit (Toshiro Mifune) in a wood. The girl is violated, the lord killed and the act witnessed by a wood-cutter (Takashi Shimura). The film's plot consists of separate

versions of the story each as told by the four principal characters - that of the dead samurai being given by his ghost through the lips of a seer. In one version the girl is raped against her will; in another she lures the bandit and makes him kill her husband. The repeated sword fights perhaps more truly than in most films, give a very clear representation of the fear in the hearts of fight participants with wild unscientific blows and a conspicuous lack of the heroism that we have learnt to expect in the usual portrayals of such scenes. A fine opening sequence where the camera advances (in the person of the woodcutter) through the undergrowth to the steady throb of a drum with the overhead sun shining into the lens between the leaves and the boughs gives good warning that something unusual is in store, and what follows is a film that most certainly must have been extremely advanced for its original audience of twenty years ago, leaving as it does the onlooker to make the final verdict, yet it nevertheless proved the 4th largest Box Office grosser of the year.

Throne of Blood

Made in 1957, starring Toshiro Mifune as the equivalent to Macbeth in an interesting adaptation of Shakespeare's tragedy. Very slow moving, (indeed this is something with which one must become accustomed before being able to fully appreciate the majority of Japanese films), the tension is cleverly built up to a climatic scene where Macbeth's own troops finally turn on their Lord and riddle him with volleys of arrows until his staggering body is brought to a sudden jolting halt by the impact of a shaft clean through the throat. A memorable performance by Isuzu Yamada as Lady Macbeth, and sterling support work by Minoru Chiaki as Mifune's right-hand man. The photography is superb with extended sequences of swirling mists and forests oozing and dripping with doom-laden moisture.

The Hidden Fortress

A beautiful Princess striding about in kneeboots and shorts fending off would be admirers with a switch, a devoted General as her guardian, two comic characters held in fealty by the lure of gold and just about the best yari fight you are likely to see on the screen, add up to a first rate Japanese "Western" of high entertainment value. The fight between the loyal retainer (Toshiro Mifune, who else?) and Susumu Fujita is a classic and in the space of about seven minutes you have two superbly matched men now prowling around each other awaiting sign of a chink in the others armour, next slashing wildly at the intervening screens for a clear view, and finally locked together immovably for the outcome only to be realized by one stamping on and breaking the haft of the others yari. Made in 1958 with very clear cut ethics - defeat is shameful, peasants are cowards, loyalty to one's own side, etc. etc.

Yojimbo

The title translates as "Bodyguard" and this is the job that a wandering warrior (Toshiro Mifune) takes on in a town rent

by strife between two opposing factions, working on one side at one time and then on the other, all with a view to bringing sanity back to the town with both parties completing the destruction of each other. At one stage you are alone in a hut with a fluttering leaf blown about by stray gusts of wind. Suddenly a knife flashes and the leaf is pinned to the floor - this symbolism of the wandering, restless Samurai coming to his sudden violent end is in this instance very appropriate for it is the hero practising for his eventual disarming of the villain (Tatsuya Nakadai) who's ascendancy over all comers is brought about by the use of a firearm, something most untypical in Japanese costume dramas.

Sanjuro

Following on the success in 1961 of "Yojimbo" this sequel was made in 1962. The same wandering character arrives out of the blue to be drawn into a conflict between, on this occasion, the forces of good (very much an ineffectual minority) and evil led by, again - Tatsuya Nakadai. The whole film is dealt with in a delightful, light-hearted atmosphere despite the many scenes of violence, at one stage for instance, the plot dictates that the hero decimates single-handed a complete garrison of 30 or 40 men, this he does in a glorious burst of activity condensed into less than five-minutes screen time. At this juncture some members may recall that during a Society meeting some time ago we were informed by Roald Knutsen that Toshiro Mifune is in private life an accomplished swordsman (4th Dan, I believe) and being insistent on realism finds that it is only possible to have one "take" of fight scenes as the wear and tear on the involved participants is so great even with blunted weapons. In the scene just mentioned one man as he attempts to escape through a door gets a full-blooded blow down his back that must have left him black and blue for weeks. In the final scene the two principal adversaries stand motionless face to face for what seems an eternity until suddenly there is a swirl of movement and the villain falls with half drawn sword amidst a great geyser of blood resulting from what appears to be a Ryo Kuruma cut.

Even with all the usual assistance from long focus camera lens, etc. there is still a regular toll of fatal accidents amongst the highly skilled professional swordsmen/actors forming the backbone of the "Samurai" films - they are a tight little community and the same faces can be recognised time after time.

For obvious reasons I have concentrated on "sword" films but two excellent, present-day suspense films are worth noting: "The Bad Sleep Well" (1960) and "High and Low" (1963). Of the two transposed Russian Classics I found Gorki's "Lower Depths" (1957) ten times more acceptable than the earlier attempt at Dostoevsky's "The Idiot" (1951); Mifune also gave a great performance in "Red Beard" (1965) a film with a 19th century medical setting. Yuzo Kayama's portrayal as the young hero

showing a satisfactory progression since his role as the leader of the young Samurai in "Sanjuro". Several other Kurosawa films completed this season, mostly modern dress productions showing clearly that Japan is as ugly a place as anywhere else in the world far removed from the cherry blossoms, silks and exquisite formal customs we all like to associate with that article most revered by our Society. However, it is not out of place to give acknowledgement to Susumu Fujita (yari fight - "Hidden Fortress") for he was the young star back in 1943 in "Judo Saga", a story of the conflict between traditional Jujitsu and the more modern Judo. He also gave a fine cameo performance as the swordmaster on one of the sides in "Yojimbo" who decides that discretion is the better part of valour and waves a cheerful goodbye to Mifune as he disappears over the back fence when the time approaches for the confrontation. Likewise, people with long memories may remember that he had an important role as an official at the gate which was the scene of most of the action in "Walkers on Tiger's Tails" (1954), that rather unusual telling of a Japanese classic that was one of the first Samurai films to reach England.

As a final note, attention is drawn to the gradual replacement over the years of Toshiro Mifune by Tatsuya Nakadai as the big drawing power of Japanese audiences. Born 1932 in Tokyo, he has in addition to the films mentioned above, also appeared with Mifune in "High and Low" (1963) and "Rebellion" (1967), and in 1969 a film in which he was the undisputed star - "Vengeance of the Samurai" was accorded the honour of being selected by the Japanese Embassy for showing to an invited audience in London.

NEWSPAPER CUTTINGS from Ron Gregory

Ron kindly sent a number of English edition newspaper cuttings published in Japan during the inter-war years. They prove interesting reading. We publish two here and will publish a further selection next time.

"Kanemitsu the bean-cutter" and "Kanemitsu the rifle-cutter"

Kanemitsu was a swordsmith who lived in the province of Bizen in the thirteenth century. A farmer, who wore one made by him, carried a bag of red Indian beans on his back. The bag had a small hole, through which the beans dropped as he walked on. So sharp was the sword that every bean that touched the blade while falling was cut in two. Hence the sword was called "Kanemitsu the bean-cutter". A retainer of Kenshin Uyesugi demanded the sword of the farmer and it was later presented to Uyesugi.

Uyesugi had another sword also made by Kanemitsu. During the battle of Kawanaka-jima, which was fought between Kenshin Uyesugi and Shingen Takeda in 1547-1561 Uyesugi rode in the enemy's camp and killed with a single blow a gunner who happened to level his rifle at him. It was discovered, to the great surprise of the Kai clan belonging to Shingen Takeda, that

Uyesugi struck the gunner's head off, cutting the barrel of his rifle half through to boot. His sword, which was made by Kanemitsu, the swordsmith, was on this account called "Kanemitsu the rifle-cutter".

"Rosary-hanger"

Priest Nichiren, the founder of the Nichiren sect of Japan's Buddhism, went to the province of Kai on his way to Mt. Minobu, in the fifth month (May) 1274. He had a devoted admirer in Sanenaga Hakii, who presented the priest with a sword, 2 ft. 7.7 in. long, made by Tsunetsugu Aoye. Generally speaking, no Buddhist priests wore a sword, but Priest Nichiren was so pleased with this sword, that he carried it, under his black robe of Buddhism, on his pilgrimages, his favourite rosary often hanging from its hilt.

Upon his death, which took place at Ikegami, Tokyo in 1282, the sword was kept as a treasure of the Kuonji Temple on Mt. Minobu. During the era of Kanei (1624-1643), it is said Lord Yorinobu Tokugawa of Kii province, sent a swordsmith over to the temple once a year, to grind the sword lest it should become rusty. A few years ago the sword "Rosary-hanger" was specified by the Japanese Government as a national treasure.

ARTICLE

We are grateful to W.M.Hawley for allowing us to publish the following interesting article for the benefit of our members, and also to the Sword Club of Southern California where it first appeared:

THE APPLICATION OF GOLD ON SWORD FITTINGS IN JAPAN by W.M.Hawley.

In very early times the Chinese gilded various art objects made of metal, wood and other materials. Buddhist figures of wood or clay were covered with gold leaf and bronze objects were coated with gold by amalgum plating. All of these processes spread to Japan.

Gold leaf called kimpaku, or cut pieces of leaf called kirikane were applied with lacquer. Later, gold dust called kindei was brushed on to non-metallic objects such as sword scabbards. On metal objects, a method called token consisted of mixing gold dust with mercury - suigin, forming an amalgum the same way silver is prepared for filling teeth. This is called keshi-mekki and the mercury carries the gold into the pores of the metal.

The reduction of the gold to powder was accomplished by beating it thin but not as thin as leaf, then cutting it into small pieces with scissors. The pieces were then put in a crucible containing mercury. The top of the crucible was covered with paper. The crucible was heated to cause the gold and mercury to combine. The paper retained the mercury while permitting the vapour to pass through. This amalgum was then

poured into a paper which was twisted to expel excess mercury.

The work was prepared by honing with a whetstone, cleaning with an acid made from pickled plums, umeboshi. The amalgam was then applied and rubbed well into the surface which had to be a soft metal or alloy as it will not work on iron. Next, the object was heated lightly to drive off the mercury. Too much heat would drive the gold deeper into the metal and cause spottiness.

This procedure was repeated 5 or 6 times until a sufficient amount of gold covered the surface. Then the surface was burnished with a metal tool called migaki-hera or migaki-bō. As the mercury fumes were very poisonous, a mask of some kind was worn while working. While very laborious, this method gave a thicker and more durable coat of gold than is usually done by electro-plating.

In gilding on alloys, the higher percentage of copper in the alloy, the better the gold adheres. In cases where very fine lines of gold are desired on shakudo or other soft metal surfaces, a slot is cut as for inlay but the gold amalgam is rubbed into the lines instead of inserting wires or shaped pieces.

In another method, the surface was painted with a mixture of mercury and polishing powder, tonoko. The mercury amalgamated with the copper in the surface and thick gold leaf was applied which then amalgamated with the copper surface. It was then heated. This was then repeated until satisfactory. This process is called suigin hakuoshi. This process is not as good as the first as the gold does not adhere as well.

A third but unsatisfactory method, was urushu-haku in which the metal was lacquered and gold leaf applied once. As this cannot be polished it is not as brilliant but it can also be applied to iron.

The application of gold to an iron surface involved entirely different techniques.

True inlay consists of cutting recesses in a surface and fitting pieces of gold or other metal into them, crimping the edges of the surface metal to hold the insert in place. This can be done either to have the inlay even with the surface or mostly above the finished surface as a bas-relief.

Multiple inlay was commonly employed by the better craftsmen, in which, for instance, gold was used for the pattern on a shakudo kimono which in turn was inlaid in iron or other metal. The Goto masters were famous for this, using different coloured metals as a painter would use oils. In later times, gold or gilded ornaments were soldered onto a surface in cheap work. They had a tendency to fall off after a time, especially from an iron surface. Perhaps rust penetrated under the solder.

A very common method that is quite old is to score the surface of iron by scratching or chiseling cross-hatch lines

which raised sharp points all over the surface. Gold, usually in the form of wire, is then hammered onto the surface, which retained it by embedding the tiny points in the gold. The wire flattened out and any size area could be covered to look solid by weaving the wire back and forth. This did not always hold very well and we frequently find more gold missing than remaining.

Many variations were used but these are the basic principles.

The decorative use of gold in the lacquer on scabbards, etc. involve many different techniques which are well covered in English in books on Japanese lacquer, so I won't go into that in detail. The basic ideas were to either mix the gold with the lacquer and apply it, or to lay on the gold design with leaf or powder in wet lacquer and cover it with coats of clear lacquer. Sometimes gold or silver ornaments were incrustated in a lacquer surface very much like inlaying on metal. Many other materials were used in this way to get special effects, such as mother-of-pearl, eggshell, ivory, jade and coloured stones shaped like bugs, flowers, leaves, etc., and these were sometimes touched up with gold lacquer veins or highlights.

Every possible combination of all of the above mentioned techniques seem to have been tried by the versatile Japanese craftsmen, whose products have never been equalled anywhere else in the world.

Glossary of some metal working terms:-

Metals - Gold - Kin; Silver - Gin; Copper - Dō; Iron - Tetsu.

Alloys commonly used for kinko tsubas and fittings:-

Shin-chū	brass - 30% zinc, 70% copper
Kodō	yellow copper - 35% zinc, 65% copper
Shibuichi	(four to one) copper with 6% to 32% silver
Sentoku	bronze which patinates to a chrome yellow colour
Kara-kane	(Chinese metal) bronze containing tin-many formulas
Shakudo	(red copper) 2% to 7% gold - patinated a beautiful black

Gold powders used in lacquers in various grades from coarse to fine:

Yakigane	or yakikin (burnt gold) pure deep yellow gold
Koban	(coin gold) a greenish gold of 74% gold, 26% silver

Types of work:-

Casting	Iru or i-mono
Embossing	Uchidashi or uchiage
Repousse	Tataku or utsu
Turning	Rokuro or saiku
Chasing	Horu or hori-age
Engraving	Horu or kiri-tsuke
Carving	Horu or horimono

Inlaying	Zogan or hon-zogan
Damascene	Nunome zogan
Raised inlay	Taka-zogan
Flat Inlay	Hira-zogan
Hammer marks	Tsuchi-me
Plating	Kin-kise or gin-kise (Not electro-plating)
Colour picture	Iroye-zogan
Enamelling	Shippo

Books on Japanese lacquer processes:-

Industries of Japan by Rein

Ornamental Arts of Japan by Audsley & Bows

ERATA TO LAST PROGRAMME by Bon Dale

In my last Chairman's Report, I announced a gift to the Society of two modern reproduction swords. One was a katana Iaitō for Kendō enthusiasts practice, and the other was a decorative Jin-Tachi, also called Iromaki-no-Tachi. I said details and the prices for these swords would be found elsewhere in the Programme, and then forgot to include the item! I do so below, it must be borne in mind that there will be about a 50% customs charge etc. on top of these prices. Interested overseas members may wish to write direct to Kasuga & Co Ltd., P.O.Box 391, Kobe Port, Kobe, Japan.

Description	Price	
<u>Compound Metal Blade Zintachi</u> (Copy of traditional Japanese Zintachi)		
Whole length - 102 cm		
Golden colour decorated	£26.10. 0d	Curved dragon
Red " "	- do -	Horimono Blade
Black " "	- do -	
Golden colour decorated	25. 4. 0d	Shinogi Blade
Red " "	- do -	
Black " "	- do -	
<u>Compound Metal Blade Iai-To</u> (Copy of Japanese Samurai Sword for the practise and/or decoration)		
Whole length - 104 cm		
Black Ishime scabbard	10. 7. 0d	As per sample
(other mounts up to £17.7.0d)		

1. PRICE: C.I.F. Nett, London, in English pound sterling
2. QUANTITY: Above prices quoted for the orders not less than 20 Pcs. in one lot. Extra charges will be added for the orders less than 20 Pcs. in one lot.
3. SHIPMENT: Within about 5-6 weeks after receipt orders.

OSHIGATA

If you have difficulty in translation, send me a clear rubbing and I will have a go. In event of no success, I will pass the rubbing onto more knowledgeable folks. My address is:

Fred Stride,
Preston Cottage,
North Road,
Preston Park,
Brighton BN1 6SP.

SWORD POLISHING

The Society will arrange for the repolishing of swords in Japan. This will normally take about six months from despatch by our shippers in London to return here from Japan. The cost cannot be estimated exactly, depending on the length and condition of the blade and the services required. Very approximately it will be £40-£50 for a long sword, £25-£30 for a short sword at maximum. The services available are: Repolish; Shirasaya, Wooden Habaki; Tsunagi (wooden blade for mounts); Shinsa (certification of authenticity by N.B.T.H.K. panel of sword experts in Japan). A deposit of £25 is needed for a long sword, £15 for a short sword. There is no limit on the number of blades which can be sent at one time by one member. Each blade must have attached a label giving name and address of owner; swordsmith if signed; services required; repolish, shirasaya, etc. The estimated prices above include transport and customs clearance charges etc. which are divided between all members included in a batch of swords. The Society makes no profit or charge. Blades for repolish and deposits payable to the Society should be sent to K.D.Parker, 17 Strickland Row, Wandsworth, London S.W.18.

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

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

NEW MEMBERS

We have pleasure in welcoming the following new members:

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