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

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PROGRAMME No. 60.

DECEMBER 1970 - JANUARY 1971

T'is Christmas - reflect awhile on last year's delights!

NEXT MEETING: Monday, 7th December 1970, at the Mason's Arms, Maddox Street, London, W.1. at 7.30 p.m.

FOLLOWING MEETING: Monday 4th January, 1971 at the Mason's Arms, 7.30 p.m.

SUBJECTS - DECEMBER

Bon Dale was to talk on some aspects of SHINTO but unfortunately he will be officiating at a 'Private View' of an exhibition which he has organized etc. and so will not be able to attend the meeting until later in the evening. He apologises to members for this unavoidable duplication of events, and he will "do" a study session on Shinto in the New Year, probably at the February meeting. John Anderson will be in the Chair at the December meeting, we will have a relaxed evening of Christmas cheer, bring along your latest acquisition or current swop.

JANUARY

Roald Knutsen, the emminent Kendoka and author of "Japanese Polearms" will give a talk on So-jutsu - Spears and Spearsmanship.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT: by Bon Dale.

Because of the system Fred Stride and I have on this Programme I get a pre-view before it goes to press. In fact I add my bits and take it to the press. So I have a chance to fire a shot in return at some of the shots which are fired at me. However I shall adopt a lofty indifference to certain mortal blows aimed in my direction by certain bigoted individuals in this particular issue, and a Merry Christmas to all!

Nevertheless, I must say something on what I gather has been possibly said about discussion on Heian and Ko-Bizen blades being "academic". This opinion then being followed by the suggestion that we should discuss more "ordinary" blades, likely to be found by "ordinary" collectors. On first examination this suggestion seems to have common sense in it, but I

submit on a pause for reflection it will be seen to be nonsense. In fact I'll put it more strongly, it's rubbish!

To find out why one must go back to the formation of this Society and it's purpose, "to study and preserve" Japanese sword blades etc. In simple terms there are two kinds of collector, those who collect Japanese swords because they are Japanese swords and all Japanese swords are marvellous. Full stop. The other kind collects Japanese swords, because Japanese swords can be the most beautiful weapons ever made by man. But, this collector recognizes that some Japanese swords are good, and that some are bad. To find out which is good and which is bad required study. The first collector is happy with his "Japanese Swords", and the best of luck to him, but he does not need the ToKen Society. The second collector needs the To-Ken Society because he sees the need to study. I am not saying one is better than the other, it is a matter of personal choice.

Given the need to study, how can we achieve this? To find out what one is looking for in a blade, to find out what makes a blade "good", one must study "good" blades. One cannot study "ordinary" blades. To know a blade is ordinary one must be able to recognize a good blade, it follows that the ordinary blade will have something lacking. And it will depend on how much one knows is lacking whether the particular blade is a collectable item or not. You can take this argument right back to square one, if you know nothing then no blade will ever lack anything, and all Japanese swords are marvellous!

The best Japanese swords were made in the Heian and Kamakura periods. If you want to know what the real perfection was, then you have to go back those seven hundred and more years. Speaking in the broad sense of the Society when we know what constitutes good Koto we can concentrate on what constitutes good Shinto, if we have learnt our lesson well we may even be able to appreciate that something is lacking even in the best Shinto.

When all this is achieved then we will have something with which to compare our hypothetical "ordinary" blade, and do not be mislead into thinking ordinary means Shinto or Shin-Shinto, it might be ordinary Heian! Because it is 13th century it does not mean it is good, but the chances are that if a blade has survived that long it will have something.

So far I've only been able to have a small dig at Heian and Ko-Bizen, I'm only one voice in the dark, if someone else would also like to make a start on Shinto I'd be more than happy. Volunteers to Fred please.

Repolishing Blades

I have also been asked to say something as a guide to members who may wish to send a blade to Japan for a repolish, but find it difficult to decide if the blade is worthy or not. It is an expensive business, but well worth the effort in the case of a blade worth restoring.

How to reach some conclusions about this? The only way to tackle the problem is that of condition. There are two kinds of inter-related condition. One is the condition of the surface, the other is the condition of the inner metal of the blade, the actual blade itself not its outward appearance.

Surface Condition

This is the easiest problem to solve and in the first instance depends on rust. If the blade is completely covered in red rust, it can be repolished. This may seem surprising. If your blade happens to be in such a condition the first thing to do is to completely remove this active rust. Any mild abrasive will do, followed by a metal polish, anything which will remove rust, but will NOT scratch the surface unduly. Do not use rust remover acids.

It is unlikely that a blade will be in the above condition. But the same action applies to any areas of active red rust, remove them immediately and try not to scratch the blade too much - but get that red rust OUT. After all the blade will be "scratched" when it is repolished, it must lose some depth of surface metal. So here lies the number one question - how deep is the rust? Your decision?

Rust Spiders

These are the worst features of surface rust. Exactly what the description suggests, small spider shaped patches of rust with "legs". Unfortunately these can appear on an otherwise perfectly polished blade. If red and active clean these out with a pin, you may find that they are very deep indeed. Too deep in fact to ever polish out without reshaping the blade by removing too much metal.

Old Rust

So far I've talked about red "active" rust. Many blades have old black rust marks or pits. No longer likely to spread, but again leaving the same decision - will they polish out?

Scratches and Chips

Exactly the same judgment is required here, how deep are those surface scratches which some misbegotten son of a ----- made when he used emery cloth on your blade! Answer, probably not too deep to worry about, will easily disappear when repolished. But, look out for those isolated scratches from other causes, you may be left with those if very deep. Chips, most probably in the hamon or boshi need careful consideration. There is no doubt that any chip in the edge of a blade can be removed, within reason, even sometimes where the blade has an edge like a saw. But what you must carefully consider is the depth of the hamon at the point

where the chip lies. Because a chip can only be removed by reshaping the blade and REMOVING metal. If this means that the hamon will also be removed - the blade is beyond restoration.

All the above are a question of degree. If rust scratches or chips are not too bad, you will eventually have a perfect blade. If any one of these may still leave something behind to mar the otherwise perfect surface or shape, you must decide if you can bear to live with it. Finally if the blade is bent, forget it, Japanese sword blades should not be bent.

Actual Condition of the Blade

Now we are talking not about the outward appearances, but about the blade itself and this is very difficult. I propose to say very little on this subject. All I need to say is study it carefully. First, has it got a complete hamon and boshi? Whatever the surface condition is you have got to see through it somehow and establish this most important fact. Is the tempering complete and whole? If it isn't then repolishing will not put it back, it can only "fake it up" and you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. Study on Yasu Kizu's list of defects in the last Programme is the only answer , and find out if your proposed candidate for a repolish has any of these horrible things. Because if it has it will still have them when it comes back! Some of course are allowable, tiredness for example, depending on the age of the blade. But tiredness will not improve with a repolish - it will return more tired - so how tired is it? In the final analysis it is not the state of scratches and chips or stains and discolouration or even reasonable rust that decides if a blade is worthy of a repolish, it is what the blade IS that should decide if you send it or not.

Signatures and Inscriptions

I almost forgot to mention these. Of no importance, if the blade is good these may be good too. If the blade is signed MASAMUNE and is lousey, throw it away and save your money to polish something else. Never send a signature for a repolish. In conclusion if you send a stained, rusty and chipped good blade for repolish you will be delighted with the result. If you send a stained, rustyand chipped crummy blade for a repolish, you will receive back a beautifully polished crummy blade.

LAST MEETINGS

OCTOBER: Bon Dale was back in the chair and after raising various club matters, we lit the fuel of the episcope. The possibility of changing our venue and time of meeting had been discussed. Our Mole B. suggested a new possible could be when U-NO-HOO couldn't make it. We're all the best of friends here! Bon got cracking shewing Ko-Bizen blades of the Mid-Heian period through to Early Kamakura. Although there were some difficulties with screen size, the beauty and elegance of these early blades was very evident. Anyway, I'll leave Bon to describe these blades in his own write-up later in this issue.

Bon also produced some photos from his correspondence. Dean Hartley had sent a photo of the Masamune blade with a fine horimono which was fig. 2 in the last programme. Han Bin Siong had sent a picture of his latest acquisition. Apparently, he went all the way to Indonesia to get it. It was a lovely TACHI with solid solver mounts, very similar to a tachi sold at Wallis and Wallis recently, but in superb condition. This sword was the personal property of no less than the late President Sukarno of Indonesia. Your honourable editor at once sent begging letters to Chairman Mao but didn't even get a little red book. Han Bin Siong clearly shows the Society members that a good imagination and perseverance can lead to treasures in apparently the most unlikely places. Willis Hawley has sent a newspaper cutting of a street scene with hundreds of bodies strewn in all directions. He had added the caption "Instant Samurai Tests - RAI KUNITOSHI" which brought the rejoinder from Alan Bale "TOSHIRO MIFUNE was here". The truth of the matter was that the incident was part of a mock atomic bomb test, but it certainly seemed to be in the best traditions of Japanese cinema battles. The other item of interest was a Xerox copy of the Parke Bernet catalogue shewing the illustrated Gendai - To Tsuba, lot 68 and the modified (?) tsuba for use as a bottle opener. Mole Benn wondered whether Coco-Cola had a factory in the Kamakura period. Malcolm Hutchinson mentioned that the arms and armour at the Bethnal Green Museum were now nicely arranged and recommended that members should pay a visit. Your Programme Secretary rushed over during lunch hour shortly afterwards and spent a very pleasant hour there. My only criticism is that the lighting is too poor to see the details of the blades on view in some of the cases, but this is a tricky problem to solve.

Bon's discourse left little time for looking around but I did see Alan Bale with some nice Tsuba. One signed KUNINAGA of fine mokume iron, another a KO-NARA piece of iron plate with a silver butterfly and flowers with gold splashes all over. A third one was by Edo KUNIHIRO and the subject was silver waves and a gold carp on a thick iron plate. Members bring to the Society many good swords but occasionally one sees a sword which is really outstanding. Such a sword was that recently acquired by Ted Newman. The saya was good black polished lacquer; the mounts were rich and the Kashira was horn. A darn nice katana at first glance. When you looked at the blade, things got really exciting. How I like elegant blades and this certainly fitted that description. Unsigned it looked Soshu-den with ken horimono and bonji. The hada was very emphasised mixed steels in curious swirls. It reminded me of similar work I had seen in a photo of a Nori-shige tanto. The hamon was a form of notare with good activity. My description may be far from perfect as there was a queue of people trying to view, but it left a dazzling impression.

NOVEMBER: The meeting enjoyed the very welcome presence of our President, B. W. Robinson: Neil Davey, well known to all doyen of Sotheby's and a founder member of the To-Ken had brought Martin Lorber of Parke Bernet along. Martin is on loan to Sotheby's at the moment. On his return to New York he will set about reorganising the Japanese Section of Parke Bernet.

Also visiting the Society for the first time was Derek Hills, a B.J.A. Judoka and anxious to see and learn about Nihon-To. Bon was out of town so John Anderson took the chair. Some pressing club business had to be enacted in a legal and consitutional manner. The present committee was re-elected in its entirity after being proposed by B.W.R. and seconded by Andy Ford. There were no objections. Some time was spent manoeuvering Mole Benn into a position whereby we could get the benefit of his talents on the committee. Alan Bale proposed, seconded by David Butler and voted Mole B. unanimously into the ranks of unpaid executives. Dave Parker mentioned that members had not yet settled their accounts for the recently polished swords. In fact only wealthy Mole Benn had paid up. Any members with accounts outstanding could help the club's finances considerably by settling up rapidly. Mole raised the question of new premises - our present venue being somewhat overcrowded at times. Mole has been investigating the Princess Louise - not in the way you think, its a pub. It is larger but it would necessitat a change in meeting dates. Further information is forthcoming later. Finally the meeting reached its highlight; the talk on Castles by Peter Cottis. There were colour slides a plenty provided by Peter Turnbull. Thoroughly enjoyable - Peter has written his own precis. The whole business of castle construction and history was put over in a fascinating manner which made for a very entertaining meeting. We even got into long discourses on the merits of long bows versus cross bows for castle defence. Some of the more mystifying aspects of the Japanese character were brought out. How could such clever military minds not invent siege machines or make use of large mortars when their capabilities must have been known?

There were plenty of swords around, too many to even glance at, unfortunately, but members not tied to train timetables doubtless enjoyed them. I saw a very attractive slender blade of wakizashi length belonging to Stephen Yorke. He had polished it - even better than his last effort. He seems to be on the point of developing the proper Japanese finish. The blade shewed good itame grain and San-bon sugu - ha hamon with much activity. Certainly a blade of the KANEMOTO school and a nice one. Andy Ford had what he termed another of his oddities. This was a blade forged by Toshide in 1927; he was also the President of the Murotan Iron Mills. The hamon was sugu-ha and the hada was very curious. Andy said it was A-yasugi hada but it gave me the impression of being doubly tempered and giving the appearance of A-yasugi. Better light would resolve the question. Swords of this quality deserve better consideration than they get. In any period, it would be a fine piece. Bill Baxter had acquired "the saddest sight of the year" - the second time he has won this award. A long Mino blade in good mounts, the saya having polished lacquer dragon flies in sunk relief on an ishime surface. The blade had sugu-ha hamon but also had three enormous cracks, each half an inch long, from the cutting edge of the blade and grouped in the centre of the sori within the space of a few inches. The curve had increased so much that the blade would no longer fit the scabbard. Whether the cracks were caused by a mighty blow or by tempering stresses, it is difficult to say. Collectable as a perfect example of HAGIRI.

Vic Saville had a HANDACHI in dark red lacquer saya with leather Tsuka-ito. The unsigned blade had hamon of a form of Sudare with many forging faults. Yoshimichi school one murmurs knowingly! Don Bayney had a late Soshu den AIKUCHI blade with hints of large itame shewing through the very rubbed surface. Hiromitsu was the signature but maybe not The Hiromitsu. Lastly, Dave Parker brought along latest find, a very good Shin-Shinto blade of nice shape and very well tempered in deep nioi and nie with a very nice example of YAKIDASHI.

EXIT PROGRAMME SECRETARY RAPIDLY STAGE LEFT

H&m ..... thinks "imagination and perseverance" he said ..... I wonder if the Salvation Army might have any? H'm .....

EDITORIAL

It was interesting to hear at the last meeting, some members requesting some topics for future meetings. In particular, what had happened to the study sessions I used to advertise and why couldn't the lantern lectures be on every day swords, the sort members are likely to come across. Well, a number of reasons led to a fade out of the study sessions. The Mason's is a fairly small room and to run a little meeting in a corner would prove very difficult. If we go into new and larger premises this could be feasible. It would allow people to circulate if they wish or get down to studying a particular blade. The other difficulty is to obtain blades which are known to be authentic and typical of either schools or smiths. Lastly, it is very hard for anyone to speak to you authoritatively. We just do not have anyone available with the necessary knowledge of Shinto and Shin-Shinto times where variety of technique seems to be infinite. So you have some idea of the problems. Bon's lantern lectures, which we call study sessions, may seem a little academic to some but I'm sure most members present are ent usiastic. These early period swords represent peaks in the are and their study hardly needs justification. These lectures can be of real practical value. We do get early blades brought in by members from time to time. I think the comparison of the recently found Yasu +tsuna blade with those exhibited by Bon from Juyo, left no doubt in the mind as to its origin. We have a cross section of ranges of interest and enthusiasm at the Society meetings. It is very difficult to achieve the correct balance of subject matter and harder still to implement it. I think the idea of a beginners section in the programme might be worth asking your opinions. Why not let us know?

Happy Christmas to all, especially our overseas colleagues.

KO-BIZEN BLADES ILLUSTRATED IN JUYO TO-KEN NADO ZUFU: by Bon Dale.

This study session again uses "Juyo" as a basis from which to work. It is not a talk about all Ko-Bizen smiths but about those whose work is illustrated in "Juyo To-Ken Nado Zufu". This, for new members, is a publication by the N.B.T.H.K. panel of experts in Tokyo. It is published now once a year and contains plates of blades to which the rating "Juyo To-Ken" has been awarded during the past year by the N.B.T.H.K. This is an important award and all blades are judged to be genuine examples of the work of the swordsmith to whom they are attributed.

Ko-Bizen, means "Old Bizen", therefore this talk covers swordsmiths who were working in the Heian Period (794-1185 A.D.) with a few late Ko-Bizen 'smiths from the early years of the Kamakura Period (1185-1333 A.D.) Because of this many of the swordsmiths here were included in my talk on Heian blades, but where possible I have used illustrations different from those we saw before. And whereas that talk was on general characteristics of Heian blades this is on Ko-Bizen in particular, so we should be able to see a general pattern.

I think this pattern emerges clearly too, even more so examining the complete set of Juyo in which there are sometimes several illustrations of blades by one man, so that there are perhaps sixty or seventy Ko-Bizen blades in Juyo, not just the twenty-six swordsmiths we are discussing here. These include a number which are attributed to Ko-Bizen School only, half a dozen of which I have brought along as extras to this talk. This pattern shows most clearly in the gradually increasing complexity of the hamon. The work of the last two of these swordsmiths show very definite Ichimonji charact ristics. In fact the Japanese text gives the last man, Nobufusa as being Ko-Bizen and Ko-Ichimo ji; and as is generally agreed I think, the Ichimonji schools of the 13th century produced the most complex hamon of all time. And incidently the most beautiful, one never grows tired of looking at an Ichimonji blade, there is always something new to see. Not my words, a quote, we are not likely to grow tired here, there are so few to see.

Swordsmiths were working in Bizen Province in mid Heian times, the Ko-Bizen school is said to have emerged around the mid 10th century, about 947 A.D., over 1,000 years ago. By the end of the Heian period and in the first decades of the Kamakura Period the school appears to have broadened into separate branches and gradually to have become the various Ichimouji schools and the Osafune School. The Bizen Osafune School, had swordsmiths working from this period right through to the Shin-Shinto period, and even has men working in its traditions to the present day. Some 1,000 years of unbroken traditional craftsmanship. I'd like to see a shop here with the sign "Founded 947".

The Ko-Bizen School is said to have been founded by SANEMORI. Unfortunately I haven't an illustration of a blade by SANEMORI, the earliest Ko-Bizen swordsmith given a name in "Juyo" is another NOBUFUSA, whom Hawley dates as working in 985. In the following discussion swordsmiths are listed in order of date. Name first, date next, Hawley's ratings, and Hawley's reference number finally.

ILLUSTRATIONS IN JUYO

1. NOBUFUSA. 985 A.D. 499 N.T. No. 72

This tachi blade is o-suriage and mumei (much shortened and unsigned.) Although obviously it has lost a lot of it's shape due to o-suriage it still retains considerable fumbari, and ends in a Ko-Kissaki typical of this period. The hamon is a combination of O-choji and Ko-Midare, that is, it is wide and active in parts and then suddenly drops to a narrow and more gentle hamon line. Probably surprisingly the upper part of the mono-uchi is narrow. There are detached tobiyaki, and lines of nijuba, the whole hamon is overlaid with lines of sunagashi. And important point, the boshi narrows dramatically and has a very slight return, almost no return.

2. KANEHIRA. 987 A.D. 450 N.T. KA 148.

This swordsmith was one of the great SANPIRA, comprising Kanehira, Takahira and Sukehira, he is said to have left the greatest number of works of the three. This blade has the very graceful tachi shape of the Heian period, with not excessive fumbari, just a little. The nakago which is suriage but is still signed low down retains enough of its shape to show the broad graceful sweep up towards the jiri. The hamon is narrow ko-choji with ko-midare, this will be made in niye, there are strong ashi and as the illustration shows the niye form kinsuji and inazuma. Again the hamon is narrow on the monouchi, even more so on the boshi and again this time it is certainly yakizumi, has no return. Here we have an example of O-Koshiba, the hamon becomes broader and more active towards the tang, although not violently so in this case.

3. SUKEKANE 987 A.D. 80 Juyo SU 83

A much broader blade with very slight fumbari, appearing later than this early date, it is o-suriage so some of the early characteristics may have been lost. The hamon here is very regular strong choji with distinct ashi, and there are indications of strong activity within the hamon. The boshi narrows and becomes straight, but not so dramatically or narrow as the preceding two.

4. TOMONARI. 987 600 N.T. TO 136

The most famous Ko-Bizen smith perhaps, and an illustration which we have seen before, the only one in Juyo (Illust. 2 Prog. No. 58). This blade has the incredible "double boshi". Rather than redescribe this blade I will qucte from Albert Yamanaka's "Nihon-To Newsletter" on the general characteristics of Tononari's hamon, obviously the blade illustrated has all he describes. "The width of the hamon will be narrow in KO CHOJI MIDARE and there will be an abundance of KO NIE, which turns into everything imaginable; the nie and nioi clusters around each other forming ashi. Inazuma and Kinsuji are seen but are not garish. There are works that are worked in nioi in which case the pattern will be suguha choji". In the

case of the Juyo blade there is obviously some combination of both patterns, and the mixture of niye and nioi create great activity on the whole hamon, "everything imaginable" in fact.

5. TOSHITSUNE. 990 A.D. 90 Juyo TO 388

A blade similar in appearance to the foregoing Sukekane, broad with slight fumbari and this time with an almost ubu tang, and a large archaic tachimei two character inscription. The drawing suggest nioi rather than niye work by the nebuly line. The boshi has a slight but distinct kaeri.

6. TAKAKANE. 999 A.D. 80 BKS. 250 TA 199

An interesting blade with a hard and powerful looking hamon in choji-ha, with Kawazunoko choji (tadpole) beginning to appear. This is the first blade we see with utsuri, which becomes such a feature of many Bizen and the Bizen Ichimonji Schools' work later on. The boshi is midare-komi.

7. SUKEHIRA. 1004 A.D. 130 BKS. 250 SU 50

Straight back to classic Heian style, in the Yamashiro tradition, with Bizen overtones. Narrow suguha with ashi, developing towards the tang into ko-choji with mild O-koshiba. Interesting to note the boshi. Certain pundits here would shout "Worn out!" But it isn't, it's still there, and it's a Juyo Token too.

8. MASATSUNE. 1017 A.D. 20 MA 640

A powerful blade with, to me, a very interesting characteristic of early Bizen blades again manifest. A strong hamon, wide, in choji - midare, with the dramatic narrowing at the boshi, which is tight and narrow with slight kaeri, almost yakizumi. I have such a blade, a very good friend says it's Shinto, we will see. I think it's around 1200, O.K. Bob? On the rocks!

9. MASATSUNE. 1028 40 MA 641

Also called TSUNEYASU. Slight fumbari here, but it is o-suriage with a gaku-mei. Hamon is ko-choji-midare, which becomes suguha above the nakago, this is an unusual variation. It is o-suriage so this suguha was either more extensive at one time, or merely a pause in the ko-choji.

10. MASATSUNE 1028 100 MA 642

The third man in Ko-Bizen of this name. The three blades illustrated do show variations of style. This one is similar to MA 640, but is slightly more midare than choji. The Kissaki is rather more towards Ko-Kissaki than the definite Chu-Kissaki of the previous two, the style is more in character for the Heian period.

11. YOSHIKANE 1037 80BKS YO 198

This blade appears to be ubu but mumei, there is no appearance of suriage or reference to it in the text so far as I can see. A good broadish nakago with an upswept jiri. The hamon is best described as chu-suguha; with deep ashi and activity within the hamon, this blade is probably worked in a mixture of nioi and niye. The boshi is also wide almost continuous with the hamon, but a slight dip at the yokote, the kaeri is slight which distinguishes this from a similar Shinto style of boshi.

12. TSUNEMITSU 1040 60BKS 250 TS 208

Yamashiro traditions seem possible on this illustration, the shape has fumbari but not too much. The shinogi is fairly low and the blade has a great feeling of grace and "just rightness". A very narrow classic hamon, but with distinct ashi despite it's narrowness. Ko-Kissaki has a thin boshi with a small rounded return. This blade looks different from most of the others of the Ko-Bizen sections of Juyo.

13. YUKIHIDE 1053 250 YU 10

Big powerful blade, with tremendous tang, cut square but the mei is still high up, above the mekugi just below the nabaki. Chu-suguha-hamon, with slight ashi and slight areas of hijuba. Very reminiscent this of some of the best Osorfune swordsmiths, Sukesadas and Kiyomitsu's of the 16th century - easy to see where they got their ideas from! Boshi still tends to narrow though and look Ko-Bizen.

14. SUKEKANE 1077 95 SU 84

A very slim blade with fumbari and Ko-Kissaki. Rare Su-ken horimono for blades of this period, at least on those in Juyo. Hamon is wide and active choji, with deep ashi and an abundance of sunagashi formations into the hamon across the bottoms of the ashi. The boshi here is also broad and active, kaen at the small kaeri.

15. NARITAKA 1171 Juyo 100 NA 475

This blade has a superb example of O-Koshiba. Narrow suguha, ko-choji hamon. As seems typical on these blades with a narrow active hamon, the ashi descend almost to the cutting edge. The slight namachi shows there has been much repolishing, which is to be expected. Very narrow boshi, yakizumi. So, at the opposite end is the O-Koshiba, nearly half the width of the ji surface and violently active. Very distinctive this, I'm looking for one, in company with a lot of other people.

16. IYETADA. 1180 IY 160a

A nicely proportioned tachi blade, fumbari with almost ikubi kissaki. Ko and modium-choji mixed with deep ashi, much inside hamon activity overlaid with inazuma and kinsuji. Here the monouchi is more active, with less activity and almost suguha at the hamachi. Narrow boshi, yakizumi.

17. CHIKAKANE. 1184 65 CH 30

Here we have a blade which again foreshadows Ichimonji. A broad strong blade, large kissaki. Wide choji hamon, deep ashi, widest on the mono-uchi. This has the second example we have seen of utsuri, very much "reflecting" the line of the hamon, high up under the shinogi ridge, and continuing onto the boshi, which is straight.

18. CHIKANOBU 1184 18 CH 61

Back to the Heian style, except the blade is broad with little fumbari, suriage but still retaining the mei low on the nakago. The hamon is modium to narrow midare, with the old sudden change to narrow yakizume boshi.

19. KAGEYASU 1184 250 BKS KA 87

This one is the prototype of many Oyei Bizen blades, by men like Morimitsu around A.D. 1390. Two hundred years earlier and no doubt much better! But the style on the drawing is so similar that it is amazing. Actual examination of a blade from each period would of course show many differences. Here the archaic large tachi-mei signature is the only apparent difference.

20. NORISHIGE 1184 100 Juyo No.524

This blade again forecasts the suguha hamon style of the Osafune school swordsmiths which as I said before can be seen on works by the better 16th century men. The hamon has deep ashi which are linked together by "workings" within the hamon, producing in places a string of box formations below the nioi line. It has bo-hi which are carved well up into the ko-shinogi and is kaki-toshi in the tang. Both features which the later blades do not have, therefore a clue to the early date of this blade.

21. TSUNEKIYO 1184 100 TS 206

An unusual style for Ko-Bizen. The hamon is pure Chu-suguha, with some nijuba, which continues without diminishing straight up into the boshi, ending in a very small ko-maru turnback. If one may be permitted to say so - almost pure Hizon Tadayoshi, on the drawing only, the jitetsu and tempering will be different of course. And there is a good Bizen tang and large archaic signature. The rather low shinogi ridge helps the Tadayoshi illusion.

22. TSUNETO 1184 90 TS 234

Here we have the classic features of fumbari, smallish kissaki, strong choji hamon, Bizen broadish tang and large two-character mei. The point here which is not what we have begun to expect is the very broad o-maru boshi, filling more than half of the kissaki area, so that the kaeri crosses the ko-shinogi. Quite a number of these last illustrations suggest a time of experiment and change foreshadowing things to come and ideas to be developed later, for example this type of boshi is seen on most Shinto blades.

23. YASUNAWA 1184 250 EKS. YA 137

Just to put everyone back in their place this one goes straight back to the Heian period. It has considerable fumbari and the hamon is pure Yasutsuna. Small choji mixed with midare, varying from narrow to fairly wide, and narrowing slightly at the boshi to a thin midare, with kaen markings at the very tip. which has no turn back. The two character signature is high on the curved and tapered tang, which appears to be ubu. Just for good measure the hamon ends yakiotoshi, a feature of some early blades. Perhaps the fact that Yasunawa can be, and is, also read Yasutsuna may have something to do with this apparent return to an earlier style? Far be it from me to suggest someone has made a mistake! It does say Ko-Bizen in the text at the back.

24. YUKIHIDE 1184 YU 11

This is that amazing blade which is also described in the Heian talk. In shape it is of the more robust style which has become apparent in development through these Ko-Bizen illustrations. It is a broad blade, but so broad in fact at the machi that it still has considerable fumbari. The hamon is the striking feature and is like nothing else we have seen. Basically it is a kind of suguha midare, with ashi; narrowing into the boshi, which is kaen. But the full length of the hamon is then topped by incredible elongated tobi-yaki, if such a term can be used, which look like summer clouds blowing across the peaks of a mountain range. What an exciting blade to own. (See illustration)

25. TŌCHIKA. 1190 30 TO 7.

We are now close upon the founding of the FUKUOKA- Ichimonji school, generally credited to Norimune in the Genryaku Era. I think this Tochika is the one who was an Ichidai Kaji, a group associated with the Fukuoka Ichimonji. The style is very apparent in this robust broad blade. The hamon is tight medium sized choji-ha, there is strong utsuri on the wide jigane, this continues onto the boshi, which narrows into a gentle midare.

The whole shape of the blade is typical Ichimouji style. There is something about the curvature on the upper part of the blade before the kissaki which is unmistakable.

26. NOBUFUSA 1207 80 No. 68

Definitely a Ko-Bizen, Ko Ichimonji swordsmith, one of the possible rival claimants to Norimune as founder of the Fukuoka Ichimonji Group. In shape this blade is very similar to the preceding, and it has an exactly similar bo-hi groove, carried high into the ko-shinogi and ending square cut, kaku-dome, about two inches into the tang. The hamon is ko-choji mixed with ko-midare, occasionally bursting upwards into a "tadpole" choji, which sometimes detach into tobi-yaki. Again with strong utsuri which continues into the boshi. The boshi this time is more typical midare komi, almost repeating the hamon, with a slight kaeri. An interesting feature of the nakago is the mei. This tang is suriage and the signature is cut off - except for the four top horizontal strokes of the right hand element of the character NOBU. A very small clue indeed - proving that one should always search carefully before dismissing a blade as mumei, "dismissing" is the wrong word, some of the best blades are mumei.

CONCLUSION

It is not possible to sum up the work of Ko-Bizen in a few words, in fact it is not possible at all to make a sweeping statement which will cover all swordsmiths of this school. There will be variations within certain basic characteristics, as we have seen from the foregoing thirty odd illustrations. Generally the work will tend to resemble that we have discussed of Kanehira, Tononari and someone like Naritaka for example. Very generally again there will be Ko-choji and Ko-midare, narrowing to a thin boshi, which will be either yakizumi or have only slight kaeri. But then the blades of men like Tsunemitsu, Yukihide, Kageyasu and Tsunekiyo must be remembered, which do not fit exactly into this picture - not on these illustrations that is. Other work by the same men may well be different and fit into the general picture. But it must be remembered this picture is "general".

In shape these blades will tend to follow the style of Heian period, indeed many of the 'smiths were working in this period. The shape will therefore usually be elegant and graceful and normally be KOSHIZORI, but of course the elegance and true sori may be lost by o-suriage. Therefore with a much shortened sword one must try to see what was there before shortening took place and judge what the curvature might have been. If there are grooves these will be bo-hi, carved well up to the tip - and carrying on right down through the tang sometimes, kakitoshi; or sometimes ending kakudome.

Quality of steel we have not discussed mainly because there are no indications of this in the oshigata we use for these studies, so we restrict ourselves to what we see in shape and the pure pattern of the hamon. More details of these matters can be found elsewhere, but in very broad terms, in the best works, there will be much activity within the hamon, and there will be niye. In hamon which are worked in nioi primarily there will still be niye, and the two will combine to form deep ashi. There will always be kinsuji and inazuma, due to an abundance of niye. The jitetsu and hada will usually be tight komokume hada, with areas of Ohada, a powerful strong grain. There will often be jiniye, often abundant ji-niye which will result in chikei, sometimes even yubashiri. In some blades as we have seen there may be tobiyaki, and there may sometimes be an "overlay", which is something of the impression one gets, of utsuri. In short, a good Ko-Bizen blade will not be dull, it will stand a lot of looking at. But what it may also have, is tiredness, evidence of retempering, and perhaps one or more serious flaws. In blades of this age and quality one can accept some tiredness, but not accept retempering, and the extent and nature of the flaw is something one must make one's own mind up about. Finally, the problem will not arise too often, because there aren't Ko-Bizen blades around every corner or hanging on trees. But keep looking they ARE around. (Illustrations to this article are of a typical o-suriage mumei blade, attributed to Ko-Bizen, and of blade No. 24 in this list by YUKIHIDE.)

CHRISTMAS CHESTNUT

— I say, I say, I say. Do you know the difference between a Katana scabbard and an elephant's backside?

— No, I do not know the difference between a katana scabbard and an elephant's backside.

— In that case, I had better put the blade back in its scabbard or there might be a very angry elephant!

PETER COTTIS'S TALK ON JAPANESE CASTLES

I. History

The Japanese castle was effectively invented by Oda Nobunaga in 1576, when he built Aizuchi castle. There had been families before Nobunaga who had had more or less defensible residences, notably the Kusunoki, but they seem to have been little more than stockaded homes, strong primarily because they were on top of mountains.

Aizuchi, on the other hand, had all the characteristics of the classic castle - its construction, its complex plan, its magnificent central keep, its function as a base, its rapid construction (it was built in $3\frac{1}{2}$ years), and its equally rapid end (it was burnt down in 1582 by Akechi Mitsuharu, cousin of Nobunaga's assassin).

After Aizuchi, everybody who was anybody was building castles. Of the fifty or so castles whose dates I know, thirty-six were built between 1580 and 1610. Every daimyo seems to have had one, and some had several.

As might be expected, the two finest castles were built by Toyotomi Hideyoshi, at Osaka and Fushimi, alias Momoyama. As might also be expected, Tokugawa Ieyasu did not allow either of them to survive in its original form. At Osaka he left the walls but destroyed all the buildings and replaced them by others on an entirely new plan, and Fushimi he pulled down and distributed among the temples of Kyoto (almost all of which seem to have a bit of Fushimi and a garden wrongly attributed to Kobori Enshu). As a result, many of the residential and ceremonial buildings of Fushimi have survived and constitute one of the greatest glories of Japanese art - most of the surviving Kano school paintings, for example, seem to have come from Fushimi.

After the death of Tokugawa Ieyasu, castle building virtually stopped until about 1950, when the second great era of Japanese castle building began. Mostly it has taken the form of restoring old keeps which had been burnt down between 1630 and 1945, but one or two castles which originally lacked keeps have recently been equipped with them.

II. Construction

There are six main elements in the construction of a Japanese castle - the walls, the gates, the towers, the halls, the keep and the plan.

1. The Walls

These represent the main strength of a Japanese castle. They consist of massive stone-faced embankments up to 80 feet high with clay or wood walls about five feet high, fitted with loopholes for guns or bows, at the top. The soldiers of course stood behind the clay walls and on top of the embankments. The technique probably originated in the medieval castles on mountains, where all that was necessary was to scarp the sides of the hill and put a stockade on top. When castles began to be built on plains, artificial mountain sides were created. Great care was taken with these embankments. Their slope was carefully adjusted to conform to the weight they would have to carry - the bits under a wall are much steeper than the bits under a tower. Their stones were not cut square, but fitted together like a jigsaw puzzle and the outer face smoothed. Some of the stones were enormous - one at Osaka is 18 ft. by 34 ft. - apparently to emphasise the power and importance of the builder, because there is no structural point in it. The walls above the embankments were relatively feeble, though they were just about bullet-proof. The clay walls had the advantage that they wouldn't burn, but they were rather easier to knock over. To prevent this they were sometimes reinforced with wooden 'flying buttresses'.

Walls were often moated where geography permitted. For example, the sea is used at Takamatsu and the river round one side of Himeji.

2. The Gates

Gates are an important part of all Japanese architecture, for example the magnificent gates of the Zen temples in Kyoto, and the gates of a Japanese castle are important both militarily and politically, both to keep out the enemy and to display the lord's glory to permitted entrants. The most notable military type was the 'masugata-mon', which consisted of a rectangular walled area with two gates in adjacent sides. The merits of this were that an enemy breaking through the first gate would find himself trapped in a small 'killing ground' with defenders on four sides of him, and that troops could be assembled for a sally without any risk that as they went out the enemy would come in. Very often a gate would stand at the foot of a tower - 'watariya-gura' with a sort of corridor over the gate itself to act as a fighting-gallery, sometimes with stone-throwing doors in the face of the tower, though not to my knowledge holes in the floor for boiling lead, European style. The gates themselves were sometimes covered with iron for protection against fire-arrows, and were often low to make life even more difficult for attackers. Drawbridges are very rare (if they exist at all) and so far as I know portcullises or dropdown gates non-existent. Some of the internal gates in castles, to judge from the Nijo-jo and the relics of Fushimi, were primarily decorative, with splendid carving but not much attempt at defence.

3. Towers.

Beside gate towers, a Japanese castle might have watch-towers at strategic corners and 'tamon' towers along the walls. These, like the gates and the keep, would be heavily built of wood, sometimes with a clay covering, and large and impressive tiled roofs. The final refinement was to use layer upon layer of clay to make the place fireproof - Nurigome-zukuri (lacquer-walling), and at Himeiji this was even applied to the projecting eaves. Watch-towers would generally be three or five storeys high (four was unlucky); tamon towers, which were really buildings whose outer wall was part of the castle, rarely more than two. Watch-towers were used not only as lookouts but also to give more than one fighting level at corners; some castles used an expanded watch-tower instead of a keep, as in the West. Tamon towers were originally used as storehouses, but were later used for kitchens and even to live in - the outer wall of the West Bailey at Himeiji, which is one long tamon tower, form the apartments of the famous Sen-no-Hime, who was a great beauty and Ieyasu's granddaughter, and who married the son of Ikeda Terumasa the man responsible for Himeiji as we now see it. Towers were often fitted not only with gun- and arrow-slits, but also with 'stone-throwing windows', which are the Japanese equivalent of machicolation. In the eighteenth century a few towers were built for less warlike purposes, like the famous one at Maizuru for moon-viewing.

4. Halls

Despite Sen-no-Hime, the Japanese did not generally regard the fortified parts of castles as places to live in, and one of the middle baileys would normally contain a range of residential buildings, of an appropriate splendour. The only ones which are known to me to survive are those in the Nijo-jo in Kyoto, but these are the most magnificent of all Japanese secular buildings. (It is possible, though not certain, that they originally came from Fushimi. It is also possible, though unlikely, that there is something even finer in Edo Castle, but nobody knows about that.) The main buildings in the Nijo-jo are five square single-storied halls, set in a diagonal line and linked at the corners, with huge swooping roofs. The more important the visitor, the farther into the buildings he got; the fifth hall was reserved for the Shogun and his household. All of them were decorated by eminent painters of the Kano school, except the unlit rooms in the centre of each block which were for guards and such. Other castles must have had similar buildings, though perhaps of lower quality.

5. Keeps

The keep is the heart of the castle and the most impressive looking part of it. It is constructed like the rest of the castle - solid, stone-faced plinth; massive timber framing, wooden walls, sometimes but not always covered with clay. It generally has five storeys, reducing in size and furiously gabled, and the roof of the topmost storey will be crowned with a dolphin at each end of the ridge. The dolphins are normally of the same blue clay as the tiles, though at Nagoya they are gilded.

Originally, the keep was a sort of multi-storied hall with a watch-tower on top, not meant for serious fighting. Aizuchi had seven storeys, with many windows, splendid paintings, and the top floor gilt inside and out. Later keeps were more designed for defence, though the top storey, which the lord would occupy if the castle was attacked, generally had bigger windows and more elaborate fittings, One of the problems of building structures of this height was to stop them falling down in earthquakes. This was most successfully done by putting one or two massive central columns up the middle of the building, but while all this improved the building's chances of survival in earthquakes it did no good against fire. External fire-arrows might be dealt with by careful nigurome-zukuri, but carelessly placed braziers or carefully placed bombs between them did for most of the Japanese keeps.

6. Plan

It may seem a little odd to include the plan of a castle among its physical elements, but the plan of a castle (its nawabri) was a matter to which its builders devoted great attention. Castles were classified according to their location, into mountain castles (yama jiro), plain

castles (hira jiro), and (surprise!) mountain-plain castles (hirayama jiro), in which the inner fortifications were on a hillock, while the outer walls spread out into the plain. This last was probably the most common kind, since it to some degree combined the defensibility of the mountain with the social advantages of the plain. A daimyo's castle was the administrative centre of his territory, and so needed to be complemented by a town occupied by the lower orders - the craftsmen who served the lord and his retainers and the merchants who might provide both cash and exotic luxuries like firearms. Such people were hard to attract to the top of a mountain.

In any case, wherever the castle was, a great deal of ingenuity was devoted to seeing that the attacker had to surmount as many obstacles as possible. At Himeiji the shortest possible route to the main keep leads through four gates, and the official route through seven, most of the route under fire from two or even three sides. The route is also full of twists and doubles, and an attacker who was not perfectly briefed was very likely to find himself charging into a dead end or even towards the outside of the castle.

The reason for this complexity is generally said to be that the weakness of the wooden construction impelled the builders to go for quantity instead of quality. In fact there is not much evidence that Japanese castles were inadequate against Japanese sieges, and it seems to me that another reason may simply have been that the builders could afford it. A castle was, after all, a status symbol, and a status symbol must by its nature be as highly developed as possible.

III. Fighting History

There is surprisingly little of this. The only castles which I know were besieged were Shimabaram Takamatsu and Osaka. Shimabara was occupied by the Christian rebels, and I think was captured largely through the aid of a number of Dutch gunners who had no objection at all to killing Catholics - even Japanese ones. Takamatsu was captured by Hideyoshi who used the splendidly simple method of building a large embankment round it, running a river in, and waiting for the rainy season. The siege of Osaka was really a failure. Ieyasu's forces made very little impression on the walls, and Hideyori was only finally defeated when he came out and fought.

There are a number of possible reasons for this lack of sieges - the Japanese preference for fighting in the open; the small prospects of a successful attack; and, to my mind the most important, the facts of history. The great days of the bad baron ended when Nobunaga came to power, and from then on battles were few and large, and the castle ceased to be relevant. Nevertheless, its brief flowering has given the world some of its most glamorous, if least effective, specimens of military architecture.

I would like to express my thanks for help in preparing this article, and even more the lecture, to Mr. Stephen Turnbull, who lent me some of his superb collection of colour slides to illustrate the lecture, and whose comments in correspondence have been most valuable.

EXPERIMENTS IN THE ARTS OF MAKING FITTINGS - by Malcolm Kesson

So much interest was caused by my brief mention of Malcolm's efforts that I asked him to relate some of his techniques and practical problems:

Although the Japanese sword has proved a fascinating topic for investigation my interest has centred on the technical aspects of its manufacture and the superb 'aesthetic balance' of its design. An attempt to make a set of fittings may seem, to some, at least, a futile pursuit but I have found approaching the subject in this way has provided a core around which knowledge may coalesce (I hope) and from which insight may grow. As a peripheral bonus it also provided a challenge to extend my own handicraft skills. The following paragraphs are, I hope, quite logical for they broadly describe the six main problem areas.

Firstly, the chief problem was the complete lack of practical knowledge about Japanese metalworking techniques e.g. inlaying, chiselling, production and casting of copper based alloys etc. The only examples available from which I was able to work were limited to photostats from the Red Cross catalogue and photographs from various sources. The most recent written research I could consult was Capt. Brinkley's 'Japan and China' and Prof. Gowland's 'Metals and Metalworking in Old Japan'. In short the techniques I adopted are not based on actual Japanese practice so much as trial and error and previous European handicraft experience.

From the beginning I wanted to make a set of sword fittings rather than odd items. I experienced great difficulty in choosing the theme for the decoration as well as finalising the details of their treatment. Initially, I attempted to analyse the Japanese treatment of design so that I could adopt and apply their style, needless to say I failed! Instead I synthesised a whole range of small details from various sources - prints and fittings.

Since I particularly wanted to use the two unique Japanese alloys Shibinchi and Shakudo it was necessary to make them myself. For all the casting operations a Battersea crucible and an electric furnace were used, although I did successfully use a gas torch (natural gas) to melt Shibinchi for a 'cuttlefish' casting of a crucifix. In this method of casting two pieces of cuttlefish are wired together to act as a mould or die. Although Shibinchi was quite easy to cast it did not have the true speckled surface when patinated because, as I discovered later, I had not mixed the two metals correctly. Apparently the copper should be added to the molten silver in the form of wire and the resulting alloy cast almost immediately. In this way the alloy is said to be, when cut and patinated,

slightly speckled in the true Japanese style. Personally I doubt whether this technique would work since thermal aggitation during the melt and mechanical mixing caused by casting would ruin any possibility of obtaining a speckled finish on the metal. In any case the Shibinchi I made was thoroughly mixed at 1000°C and given a final 'whirl' prior to casting at 950°C. The moulds for the ingots were charcoal blocks out of which rectangular depressions had been cut. Unlike the Shibinchi I had extraordinary difficulty in casting the Shakudo that I had made. The initial alloy contained 113.25 gms. of copper to which I added 7.45 gms. of 18 ct. yellow gold. After four disasterous attempts and two months work I finally managed to cast two reasonably sound ingots. The alloy was cast at 1100°C into refractory plaster moulds that had been preheated to 700°C for 9 hours and 850°C immediately prior to pouring. The large tsuba ingot was porous but this fault was largely confined to 4 mm layer on the underside of the block. I hammered the block of Shakudo (30 mm. diameter x 20 mm. high) into a disc ('tsuba), frequently annealing the metal and ruthlessly chiselling out any flaws. The resulting tsuba was 10% lighter than the initial ingot.

At first patinating these alloys caused a headache when the 'authentic' old recipe of Tye, and suspect ingredients did not work. The most successful recipe* I used was a super-saturated solution of copper sulphate and copper acetate in a half pint of water. This same mixture has been used many times over the past two years and although quite 'mucky' in appearance gives a good patina on objects immersed overnight (grey - Shibinchi, black - Shakudo, brown - Copper). I found whilo working on the Shakudo a black-violet patina could be formed by raising the temperature of the metal slowly enough with a gas torch to "catch" this oxide. The patina thus formed is, however, easily removed when rubbed with a finger.

Before I started to cut the designs on the fittings I obviously had to make some chisels. Although I didn't discover how the Japanese harden their chisels I simply followed the European practice of hardening and tempering. I used high carbon steel 8 mm. diameter and 80 mm. in length and although they are easy to make I had difficulty in finding the correct sharpening angle. I only used four chisels but one of which must have been employed 90% of the time. Katakini though difficult to chisel is generally easier when deep bold cuts are executed. In Katakiri each part of the design should be cut in one stroke** but on the deeper lines I preferred to make two or more strokes. Whilst decorating the fittings the items were held onto a wooden base by pitch (the soft type used on road works).

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* 'Arts of the Japanese Sword' B.W. Robinson

** refer to Capt. Brinkley, Vol. 7. 'Japan and China'

The first inlaying I attempted was flat inlay, the subject being a full moon. A thin silver disc cut out for the moon also acted as a template to mark the position of the inlay on the ground (base metal). After I had chiselled an undercut groove around the inside of the circle the silver disc and the ground could be compared for irregularities. With the outside accurately chiselled and the inside of the circle recessed the disc was slightly domed and pressed into its new 'home'. Finally the inlay was made fast by burnishing it into the undercut depression with a highly polished scriber. The raised inlay leaves were executed in exactly the same manner except instead of burnishing the inlay into the ground the burr (from cutting into the ground) was pushed around and into the sides of inlay (similar to setting a 'stone'). At first the work proceeded very slowly, on the kashira I worked for 10 hours continually and managed to inlay two stems, two leaves and three buds of a plant. Unlike flat inlay where the ground and inlay are filed smooth the area round raised inlay is levelled with a burnisher. Undoubtedly the most difficult type of inlaying I attempted was raised line inlaying for the plant stems. For example I spent four days practicing before I succeeded in keeping one piece of line inlay in place.

I wonder how many members know how the kashira and fuchi are constructed; where the joints are, Japanese methods of heating the work for soldering (no electric soldering irons or gas torches) and last but not least what flux they used? Well I could not discover the answers so I used soft solder because the joints are the same colour as the base metal.

Finally, perhaps unfairly, I would ask you not to make a value judgment of my work. Fortunately I was not required to justify my reasons for making these fittings, even now I could not give an adequate explanation, except, perhaps, that I just thoroughly enjoyed myself.

CHRISTMAS QUIZ

Try out a few of these questions after your Christmas turkey. They may stop you dozing off.

Beginners

1. The correct way to remove a sword from its scabbard is ?

2. What is the difference between an Aikuchi and a tanto ? Name two other types of dagger mountings.

3. Who founded the Mino tradition ?

4. How old would you normally expect a blade showing Yakidashi to be ?

5. A sword with Koshi sori, choji hamon and a short stubby rounded tang would probably come from what Province ?

For More Advanced Students

6. What Koto school and swordsmith in particular would have sugu-ha hamon which curves off the edge of the blade, two to three inches from the ha-machi ?

7. A tanto with very strong and well worked itame and hako-midare ha belongs to what school ?

8. SANGURI TETSU is a feature of what Shinto school ?

9. What swordsmith is renowned for a sword made for the Emperor Meiji ?

10. A 28 inch blade has the following characteristics:- Shinogi zukuri, koshi sori, hamon of suguha komidare of nie, many kinsuji in the ha-buchi, sunagashi with strong activity in the ha. The jihada is itame mokume with o-hada. The Ji-tetsu is sanguri. The boshi is maru with nijuba. The nakago is suriage. To whom would you attribute this blade ?

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(Answers will be given in next issue. No prizes, but members answering eight or more questions qualify to send their best blades as Christmas presents to the Programme Secretary.)

NEWS FROM THE NORTH

Ian Bottomley has taken over from Andy Ford in supplying us with news. Ian has given a talk on metal working techniques used in sword fittings. Ian mentioned that they must have had the idea of a central oshigata file about the time of Han Bing Siong. They have a system in operation with the oshigata, boshi and first few inches of the blade on a quarto size paper. Details of the blade are also catalogued, also mounts. It is hoped to circulate the file to members when and as required.

A proposed list of forthcoming meetings are given below:-

January 19th 1971

An open meeting in which everyone present will talk for a few minutes on an item from his own collection. If you don't know anything then bring it along anyway and ask questions instead.

March 16th 1971

Will be a learned discourse by Stan Kirby on the art of lacquering sword scabbards. Will anyone knowing anything about this topic please attend since Stan was press-ganged into this claiming ignorance of the subject.

May 18th 1971

A talk, and maybe a demonstration on polishing of blades by Joe Jolley who has recently emerged from his hermit's cell with a polished blade. Welcome back Joe we hope to see more of you.

ARMS AND ARMOUR FAIR AT YORK - by our roving reporter

Japanese weapons of all kinds were on display at five stands at York recently. The Lord Mayor of York and other dignitaries showed great interest in the weapons on show. To-Ken member Stephen Yorke had a stand where he displayed a large number of swords, a naginata, jingasa and some pistols. Prices ranged from £12 to £650 and we understand he was very pleased with the results of the show.

The first To-Ken member to arrive was Mr. McKay from Glasgow who had come by an early train. He appeared pleased with his purchase of an early Katana in army mounts.

In the afternoon a number of Northern Branch To-Ken members could be seen visiting various stands in search of Japanese swords and Stephen Yorke sold a number of blades to them. Tsubas were selling like the proverbial hot cakes.

The only Southern To-Ken members doing the rounds were Gordon Hughes of Brighton and Sydney Divers of Bletchley. When asked how he was getting on Syd Divers replied "I'm only here for the beer".

This was a very good market for buying and selling Japanese swords and Southerners who didn't come will no doubt be biting their nails when they hear of the fine swords that were to be had by those who made the effort to come. There were Daishos, a Kabuto of fine quality, and various types of antique sword stands also to be bought. We understand that this fair is going to be a regular annual event. With the great interest aroused in Japanese weapons and dealers from the U.S.A. also exhibiting Japanese swords, we think this could become a most promising future venue for collectors and dealers of Japanese weapons.

COMMENT FROM SYDNEY DIVERS ON CONTENTS OF LAST PROGRAMME

Sometimes I wonder what the heck's the use of making comments or giving advice at all as it is quite apparent that what I say is not understood or misunderstood.

I refer particularly to all this N.B.T.H.K. shinsa and Ninteisho business. I think, looking at the last programme, that either some members are going nuts or I am going nuts !!

Some years ago I brought some swords here which had taken green papers and I gave a talk that green papers were Tokubetsu Kicho (specially valuable

Token) and white papers were Kicho (Valuable Token) and everyone said "yes", "yes". If you look back you will see I kept bringing blades along to show polishes and certificates.

The consensus of opinion expressed by the members present and quoted in the programme at that time was that these certificates weren't worth the paper they were written on! You all remember this! The sour grapes evident was pathetic.

When Bon Dale gave his talk on Heian blades this started with origami. I hate interrupting a speaker and like to ask questions after the talk when the discussion is thrown open to everyone. At the end of his talk everyone seemed to have disappeared getting beer refills and I asked him if he could call the meeting to order so that we could have a discussion but this couldn't be. I was going to tell him that the certificate grades he discussed were incorrect amongst other things I wanted him to discuss on Heian blades. Of course in the talk at the subsequent meeting on papers I referred to Dean Hartley's article in Journal No. 2 and everyone said "yes", "yes". Now we get a long screed from everyone on papers! Oh well! Bon Dale says we have now discovered a great happening! He should speak for himself and listen carefully in future.

Dean Hartley's comment (page 15) on my statement on tiredness in Heian blades is proved by his own comment on his green paper MASAZANE. He said no flaws, etc. SLIGHTLY TIRED. This is the very point I have been trying to make. Some tiredness is an indication of age and, I think, gives you a better chance of genuineness.

In fact one sure indication I use on blades of famous smiths of early koto times is to look for tiredness. If the blade is superb, no tiredness, one tang hole, etc., the chances are it is a forgery.

Incidentally just in case there is another misunderstanding <u>NO</u> tiredness should be tolerated in shinto or shinshinto blades and tangs of these should be Ubu (i.e. unshortened).

Though Bon Dale implies now that Green Papers are wonderful things (I tried to tell people this in 1965) and I have collected a stack of them as you have seen, they are not as specially valuable as they may seem. As I said in a programme after my recent return from Japan, you can get Green Papers for blades of minor smiths if the blades are perfect. Some white papers I think are worth much more than green if the blades are rarer. You can pick up Greens on minor Shinto and Shinshinto smiths like shelling the proverbial peas! To get them on unsigned Koto blades sorts out the men from the boys.

<u>CHAIRMAN'S COMMENT</u>

O.K. Syd, so I'm stupid. But talking of shelling peas, my one green paper, or Tokubetsu Kicho in my new enlightened state, is for an unsigned Koto blade, so perhaps I could be included among the men? Just to confuse the situation, or clarify it, according to your viewpoint, here is a missive from Mr. J. Harding, resident in Tokyo, Japan.

I may be thick, but if what he says is true, why do all "green papers" have the same N.B.T.H.K. experts' seals on them? Personally I'm astounded that there should be all this confusion.

EXTRACT FROM MR. J. HARDING'S LETTER

Having just received your latest Token Journal I thought I would clarify an observation I was supposed to have made; that is the Tokybetsu Kicho is not a Government issued certificate, it is in fact a certificate issued by a Japanese Club, perhaps the same way the Token Society of Great Britain might feel obliged to issue a certificate.

I imagine from reading your article that now you have translated the green paper or Toubetsu Kicho or as it is commonly known here Marutoku. You feel the art objects that accompanied them are much more important than they were before you had it translated. When one surveys the situation and the much talking that has been done in the society about these papers, and the fact that you still have got it wrong and do not fully understand how the judgements are reached, leads one to believe that you do not wish to really understand what happens.

The fact of the matter is each province of Japan has its own panel of experts, and as you can imagine some panels are not expert at all while others are very expert, and it is the practice of dealers to take their swords or tsuba to a panel which is particularly weak and obtain a certificate for something that would not get it if it were presented to a more expert panel, and it does not help matters that all the panels and all certificates are identical when the subject comes up in conversation.

AMENDMENT TO LAST PROGRAMME

Apologies to member L.W. Allen in Ryde, New South Wales. We announced he wanted to acquire a list of books, in fact he only wished to acquire Nos. 1 and 2 on the list. The others he offers for swops! for sword materials, tsukaito sageo etc. Sorry Allen, we get confused over here sometimes in this smoggy atmosphere where you can't see from one end of a sword blade to the other. I have put J. Sassoon on your tail, he hasn't got sageo but he's got cash.

RE. SUBS TO THIS SOCIETY

We would respectfully remind some members, who also become confused when it comes to parting with cash, that we DID put up the 'dues', and some time ago at that. So please don't send in 30/- and say you are not sure if we did or didn't - we did. And we need it, those beautiful and hardworking geishas of the KEN SING TONG Typewriting Den have to eat, and we have to pay 'em for typing this lot. So, digits extracted, the dues are £2 (two pounds) for Corresponding chaps, and £3.10.0 (three pounds ten shillings) for those of us who foregather together for meetings. The

extra thirty bob is not to keep the Committee in a state of permanent intoxication. It helps pay for the hire of meeting place and the rest goes to the geishas of KEN SING TONG and this Programme.

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 Fred Stride at address, he will check the swordsmith or inscription. Please remember to make a careful rubbing of the whole tang, both sides, not just the inscription. (Fred Stride, Preston Cottage, North Road, Preston Park, Brighton, Sussex).

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 Tō 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 cheques 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

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 avilable are:
Repolish: Shirasaya; Woodon 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 charge or profit. Blades for repolish and deposits payable to the Society should be sent to K.D. Parker, 17 Strickland Row, Wandsworth, London, S.W.18.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS

Please make a note of the following:-

J.A. Griffiths,
Bollards End,
Bollards Lane,
Sutton Bonington,
Nr. Loughborough, Leics.

S.D. Cooley,
32930 Chalfonte Dr.,
Warren,
Michigan 48092, U.S.A.

Dick Mecone,
3407 E. Garfield,
Phoenix,
Ariz. 85008
U.S.A.

R.D. St. John,
2362-B Via Mariposa, East.,
Laguna Hills,
Calif. 92653
U.S.A.

NEW MEMBERS

We have much pleasure in welcoming the following new members to the Society:-

R. Comber,
54 Morris House,
Church Street,
N.W.8.

Sam Someya,
161 Sutherland Ave.,
Maida Vale,
W.9.

A.P.W. Wale,
1, Tresillian Gdns.,
Exeter,
Devon.

L.J. Brannon,
1, Burnett Rd.,
Gosport, Hants.

R. Bent,
13, Eastgate St.,
Aberystwyth,
Cardiganshire

J. Laing,
49, Brickmakers Lane,
Hemel Hempstead,
Herts.

C. Wheeler,
3, Tweed Estate,
Park Lane,
Swanley Village,
Swanley, Kent.

A. Parry-Jones, A.
18, Clwyd Walk,
Corby,
Northants.

D.A. Atfield,
17, St.Stephens Lane,
Ipswich,
Suffolk.

J. Coutu, A.R.C.A.
Bramblings,
Quennels Hill,
Wrecclesham,
Farnham, Surrey.

Charles Hay,
795, Roble Ave.,
Menlo Park,
Calif. 94025
U.S.A.

J. Stapleton,
Fayette,
Mo. 65248
U.S.A.

P.L. Jacobs,
Post Box 632,
Manitowoc,
Wisconsin 54220

D. Barc,
26860 Beamer St.,
Mt. Clemens,
Mich. 48043

R.L. Brooks,
357 East 57th St.,
New York,
N.Y. 10022.

Alain Serpette,
98 Rue des Rosiers,
St. Ouen 93
Franco.

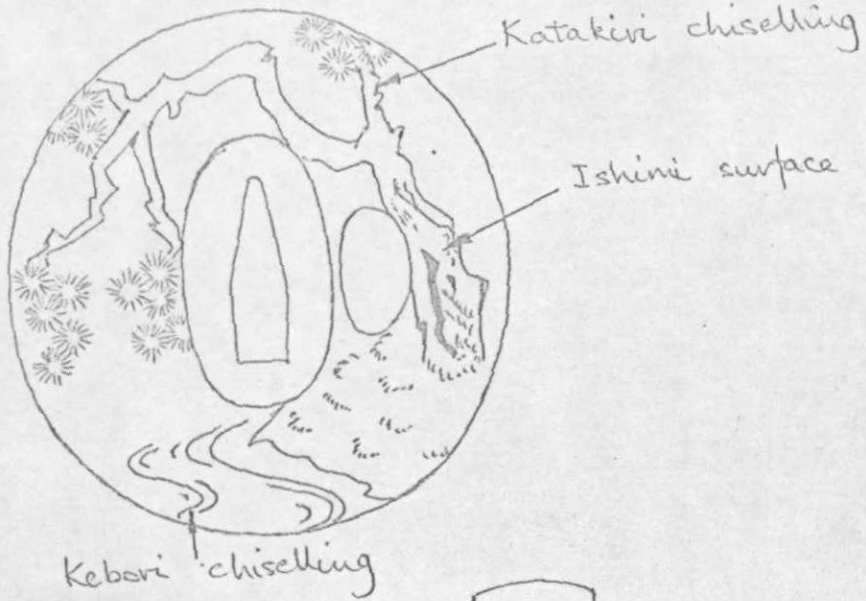
H.L. Visser,
Jagerslaan 2A
Wassenaar,
Holland

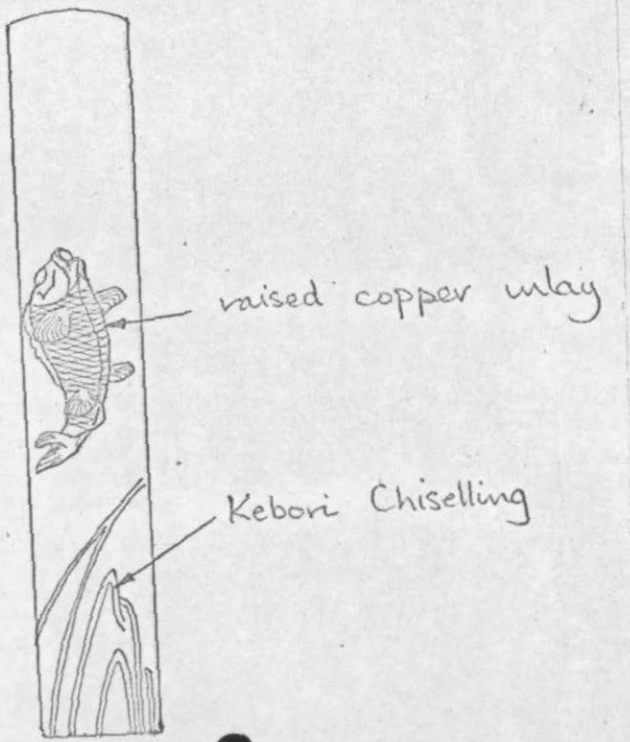
S.C. Stripp,
17, Horniman Drive,
Forest Hill,
London, S.E.23.

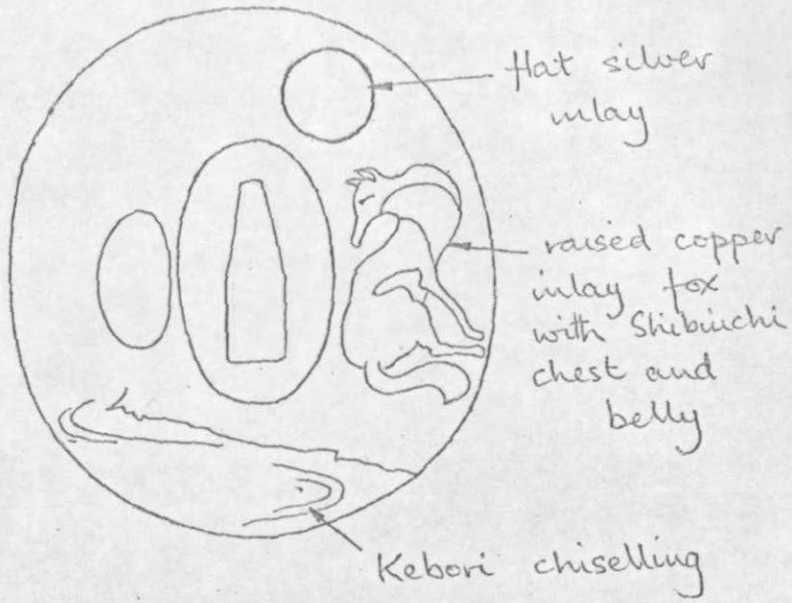
I.C. Gee,
'Jalna'
37 Heaton Moor Road,
Kirkheaton,
Huddersfield,
Yorks

E. Mathers,
Lanchester Hall
Institute of Technology,
Cranfield,
Bedford

Ian Richard Brooks
206 Mountain View Pde.,
Macleod West,
Victoria 3085
Australia





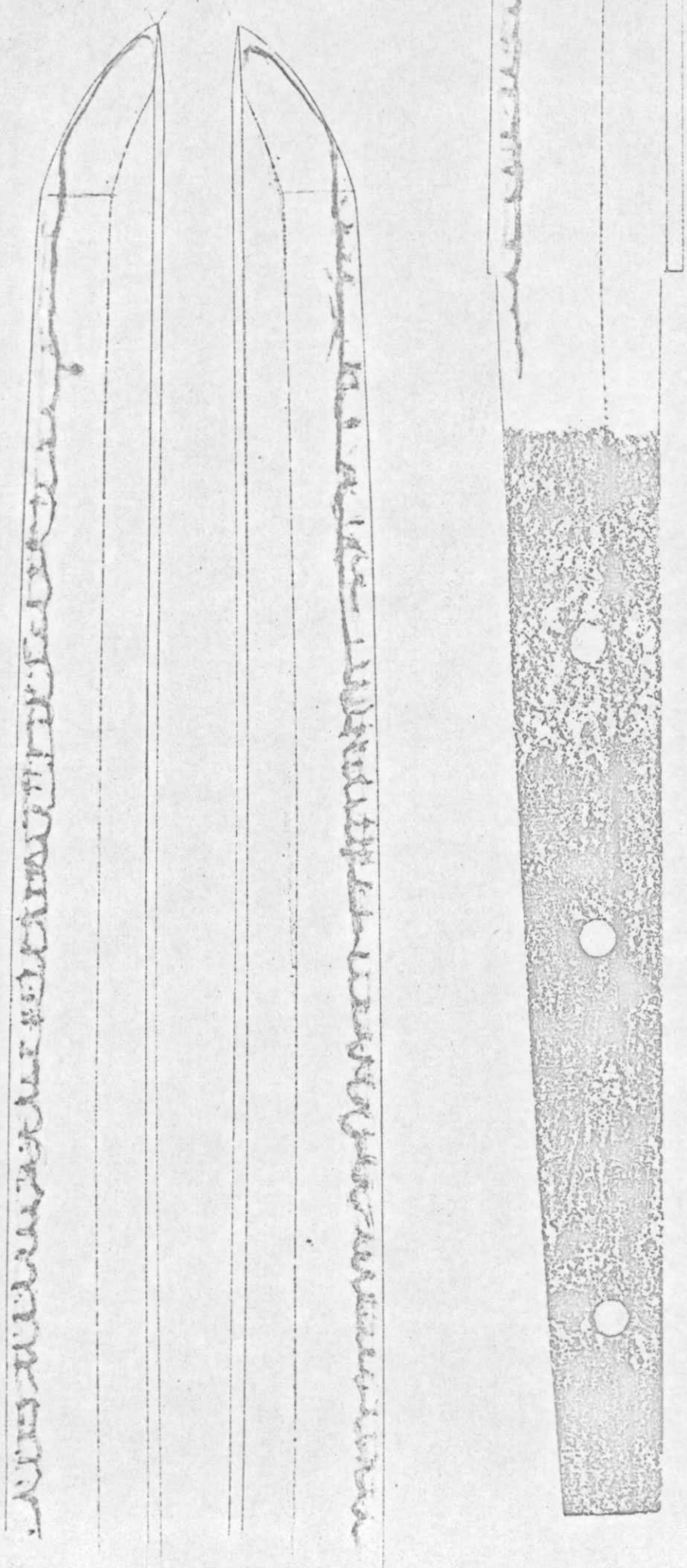


All items except menuki are in Shakudo (95% copper 5% gold)

The Shibuichi inlay on the fox contains equal proportions of silver and copper.

KO BIZEN GRP. 111 116

刀 無銘 古備前



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太刀 行秀