

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. 62

MAY - JUNE 1971

NEXT MEETING

Monday, May 3rd at 7.30 p.m. at the "Princess Louis",  
209 High Holborn; Holborn Kingsway tube, turn west, cross  
Kingsway, the "Princess Louis" is less than 50 yards on the left-  
hand side.

FOLLOWING MEETING

Monday, June 7th at 7.30 p.m. at the "Princess Louis",  
High Holborn.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by Bon Dale.

I have two main themes to discuss this month. One, the  
question of Shinsa, which for those not quite sure what this means,  
in simple terms "judging", a question of the authenticity or not of  
a sword blade or sword fittings. The other question is that of  
stolen property; we have quite a crop of this to report this  
month, as will be found within and enclosed with this Programme.

First, Shinsa. Our good Japanese friend and Member, Mr.  
Sayama, has suggested a "shinsa-party" in England this summer.  
He will be coming here either in May or June, and will be  
accompanied by Mr. Terumine who is a local member of the N.B.T.H.K.  
Shinsa panel, the panel in Japan responsible for awarding varying  
degrees of excellence to sword blades and fittings.

It must be fairly stated, I think, that "papers" have  
become more and more important to Western collectors. To have a  
"paper" for a sword means that you have an opinion by five Japanese  
experts that your sword or whatever, is a genuine work. I think it  
goes without saying that this opinion must be nearer the truth  
than any opinion formed by yourself, or any one else outside Japan.  
Balanced against this you may be prepared to accept any signature  
on a sword blade, or if it is unsigned you may not care who made it.  
But from experience I'm sure that most collectors desire to know  
exactly what they have. Personally it adds greatly to my pleasure in  
a sword blade to know that I have taken every step to determine  
that it is what it purports to be, so far as this can be ascertained,  
several hundred years perhaps, later.

Mr.Sayama's suggestion is that we hire a room for two days at a convenient place in London. Here Mr.Terumine will conduct a Shinsa session, and will give his personal opinion whether or not a blade or fitting is genuine, if signed; if unsigned, his opinion on what it may be. He will also give his opinion whether the work may obtain a white paper or a green "Tokubetsu-kicho" paper, that is "especially valuable" rating, at a regular N.B.T.H.K. Shinsa in Japan. It is stressed naturally that this is his personal opinion, which may be altered by the opinion of five other men in Japan.

Nevertheless, the obvious advantage of this proposed judging session is, that it would be a "pre-judging" session. Members wanting to have a blade repolished would have a reliable opinion whether or not the blade was worth the expense of a round trip to Japan. A charge of two pounds sterling would be made for each opinion, in the form of Mr.Terumine's written certificate. Therefore, a member either adds £2 to the £50 or so required for a repolish, or saves himself £48. It seems to me to make a lot of sense; consider the poor soul who has five poor blades he would like to see looking beautiful, for £10 he saves himself £240.

Date, place and time have not yet been decided, but when they are clarified, we will immediately send out a special Notice to all members. I hope all European members will take advantage of this unique opportunity. Blades, etc. can of course be submitted in person to the Shinsa, or I see no reason why articles for judging should not be sent to London. Probably to our hard-working and conscientious Dave Parker, but we will set out all details of this when the special notice is published.

Before going to press, it nows appears Mr.Sayama will send out a notice of the Shinsa as soon as he has fixed his dates, so if you want to send a blade for Shinsa, mail it to Dave Parker please, marked SHINSA.

Stolen Property Department. This is not a facetious remark. I am very serious. It suddenly seems that Japanese swords and indeed, antique weapons in general have become part of the Art racket. With the ever-increasing value of such weapons obviously there is money to be made by the sneak thief. In actual fact, this stealing is not new, it has been gradually on the increase; what suddenly brings it home is the theft within the last month of a significant number of good Japanese swords. Details of the thefts from Sotheby's, from Elliott & Snowdon's, and from Joe Bott, member of the Southern Californian Sword Club, will be found within this Programme. Personally, I also have my problems and I am publishing details of two swords which at this moment I must describe as being "lost or mislaid". Finally, there are details of Burmese dirks belonging to the late Dr.Robert Mills which are also in this category.

The one small point of which it seems our thief or thieves are unaware is that it is impossible to sell or stolen Japanese sword blade. Assuming that all collectors are honest men and there is no reason why we should assume otherwise, any stolen blade is immediately recognizable. Japanese swords are unique, no two are alike, and if details of stolen blades are circulated amongst all collectors and dealers, the whereabouts of any stolen sword must be discovered; to this end copies of the enclosed details will receive a world wide distribution.

Finally, we make some attempt this time to start a Beginners Section, for want of a better name, we are all beginners in various stages. This section cannot be a success unless we hear from you, and what your problems are. Please write to Fred Stride, and we will find answers for you in the next issue.

#### SUBJECTS: MAY

Andy Ford will discuss Kaen boshi. Bon Dale will bring some photographic examples and illustrations from "Juyo" - perhaps some relationship will emerge. Please bring blades with this type of boshi.

#### JUNE

Alan Bale will talk about judging age in iron tsuba. Please bring examples of what you consider may be early tsuba, we want lots of tsuba.

#### STOLEN PROPERTY

In addition to the details of swords stolen or missing enclosed on separate sheets with this Programme, below are details of two other thefts, received too late to print separately.

Received from W.M.Hawley details of swords stolen from Joe Bott, member of the Southern Californian To-Ken Kai, as follows:

1. Hizen Masahiro
2. Tadahiro
3. 3rd Tadayoshi
4. Itomaki No Tachi, Sukesada, nanako, gold mons
5. Same mounts, Kanemitsu
6. Yamato Kanekiyo, bare blade
7. Kato Tsunetoshi
8. Gassan Sadakazu in shingunto mounts
9. Bungo Tsunekage in shirasaya
10. Bungo Morinao, bare blade
11. Horikawa Masakage, new polish
12. Naminohira Yuki - last character cut, probably Yukiyasu
13. Koshirae (set of mounts) with wooden blade; Red mottled lacquer, iron han-dachi fittings
14. Koshirae, wood blade, black lacquer, shibuichi with gold inlay. Goto school.

Stolen from Elliott & Snowdon Auction Rooms, March 1971.

- Lot 80. A good Officers Flintlock 3rd Model Brown Bess by S. Brunn, Charing Cross, London with Tower proofs; the escutcheon engraved PL. Complete with triangular socket bayonet and in excellent working order and condition. Pre 1820 as this is when Brunn went out of business. (81 in catalogue illustration).
- " 87. Another fine Brass Barrelled Flintlock Blunderbuss: the barrel part round, part octagonal, ringed and with more pronounced flair at the muzzle; full stocked with lightly engraved brass mounts and chequered grip; the lock with sliding safety and roller on the frizzen. By Ward and Steele with Tower proofs. Very good working order and condition. See illustration.
- " 92. Another good Brass Barrelled Flintlock Blunderbuss with Top Spring Bayonet: the ringed barrel part round, part octagonal with pronounced flair at the muzzle; full stocked with chequered grip, engraved brass mounts and horn tipped ramrod. By Beckwith with London proofs. Very good working order and condition. See illustration.
- " 93. Another Similar Blunderbuss by Beckwith. Very good working order and condition. See illustration.
- " 96. A fine Brass Barrelled and Brass Locked Flintlock Blunderbuss with Top Spring Bayonet: the walnut fullstock with combed butt and engraved brass mounts and complete with its horn tipped ramrod. By I. Rea with London private proofs. Very good working order and condition. See illustration.

Both Hawley and Elliott & Snowdon will supply further details and photographs if requested. Elliott & Snowdon are offering £100 reward.

#### LAST MEETINGS

February. Out of town visitors to the Club were Wilf Dodds from Durham and John Radford, a friend of Mr. Takaouchi. Bon Dale was in the Chair and he was pleased to open the meeting with a special presentation of the set of Tsuba maker's chisels to Malcolm Kesson. Apparently the special art name to be given to Malcolm has not yet been decided upon, but he must be almost unique in the West to have such an honour bestowed. Bon then raised the subject of the sword polishing facility but he will cover this elsewhere (in last Programme). The change of venue was next on the agenda.

Bill Baxter had found the management of the Princess Louis rather difficult to pin down concerning a permanent date. However, he had booked their room for 7.0 o'clock on March 8th

for a trial run. The address is 209 High Holborn - come out of Holborn Underground Station, turn left and the Pub is 50 yards along on the left-hand side. A little milestone in the Club's history also has occurred. Martin Lorber has arranged Sotheby's next sale to be on April 5th to coincide with our monthly meeting. The Club must enjoy a good reputation as potential buyers for Sotheby's to take such a kindly action. Another major item was the lack of the Programme, which you'll realise was held up by that postal strike.

Finally, a Kendoka present - was it Sydney? - announced that on the 20th February, the British Kendo Association were organizing Kyu Grade contests to be known as the Charles Lidstone Memorial Taikai. It took place at 3.0 o'clock at the Nenriki Dojo Trinity House School, Elephant and Castle. The original subject for the evening was forgotten, even by your programme sec., but it gave Bon an opportunity to give forth on something close to his heart - the problems of new members and teaching beginners. It has been, we fear, possible for a new member to come to a meeting with his sword - see all those faces yapping away, be ignored, and go away for ever. We really must do something to welcome guests and newcomers. Before Bon became a sword collector, he was a member of the British Astronomical Society. London smog finally defeated nightly viewing so he sold his telescope and bought a Japanese sword.

Nevertheless, the B.A.S. had some very good ideas. At each meeting, new member's names were read out by the Chairman. Those present stood up, walked to the rostrum and were officially welcomed and presented to the meeting. Bon thought we could adopt this system quite usefully. Peter Cottis said that the idea should be extended to non-members and other first-timers who might join later. Bon asked if Clive Jackson of Northumberland was present - a new member. Apparently not - it was too far to walk home. But it did illustrate that this new member could have been present and not known by the regulars. Members looked around the meeting for undiscovered guests.

Syd Divers introduced George Durac who owns the Phoenix Gallery at 108 Crawford Street. He has oriental art and invited members to drop in. Sam Sameya brought Shigei Takaouchi along. Brian Carver was asked who his guest was. He developed a very surprised expression- that's not a guest it's my girl friend - Janet Batchelor. Bon changed to the subject of teaching beginners.

He had made some notes and as he read them a little voice kept reading ahead over his shoulder. Bon suitably silenced John Anderson and continued. Bon doesn't like the word 'experts'. In Europe, we are all beginners, the only true experts are Japanese and even they don't always agree. However, some people

have been interested in swords for a long time and have acquired greater experience in looking at swords. Bon said that many years ago he took a sword to the V. & A. to show B.W. Robinson. Bon asked B.W.R. "Can you tell me what nie is?" The reply B.W.R. gave was "I am not sure myself". Whereupon he brought out a sword and deduced what nie was there and then. Even our President had to start his knowledge of the technical aspects of the sword somewhere. This point was brought home to Bon at the last meeting when someone asked to be shown nie. There is no point in bandying words like Nijuba, Inazuma etc. when there are many who cannot tell the difference between nie and nioi. We must try and cater for beginners far more than at present. One thing of benefit to present-day collectors, there are books available which were unobtainable when the older generation of collectors were starting. David Butler, Brian Turner, Alan Bale and John Anderson are going to start a series of articles for beginners which may help to give a clear picture of the why's and wherefores. They would welcome questions from members to give some idea where problems occur. Bon then asked the meeting for questions.

Someone asked what was the function of grooves on a blade. Greater strength and improving the balance of the blade seemed to be the accepted opinion. Fred Stride wondered whether in Koto times when the steels had to be hand smelted, that the grooves could have been forged in, thus getting more blade for a given weight of metal. Everyone said the grooves were chiselled in, so that this idea could not hold. The next question was the one which covers years of experience and study. "How do you tell a good blade from a bad one?" A great number of points were dealt with in the last programme, but experience in seeing good blades is absolutely essential. Signatures and inscriptions should be of lesser importance, although the presence of a fake signature can mar a fine blade - see the December meeting for the Japanese view. If the blade is completely rusty and nothing can be seen, the quality of metal should be still apparent but this is usually difficult for the average collector to discern.

Mr. Darac asked does the 'Fightability!!!' of a blade have any significance. Can a kendoka tell whether a blade is a fine one by its handling qualities. Mention was made that kendoka practise with a straight bamboo (shinai) whereas the sword particularly in Koto times was highly curved. Your Programme Sec. has heard arguments from kendoka on their ability to tell the quality of a blade from its feel but still remains to be convinced especially where shortening has occurred. However, consensus of opinion was for the judgment of the Kendo master.

The next question asked how one can tell the hardness of a blade. Bon said that the forging and particularly the activity of the temper line and the colour of the hardened edge revealed all to an expert eye. It was rumoured that Alan Bale used a hammer

to give the edge a tap as a test of hardness! This gross defamation lead to the topic of testing the rust patina. Japanese experts sometimes test the rust patination in the bottoms of strokes of characters by a delicate touch with a steel needle - you sure live and learn!

Bon said that he bought at a prominent London room a sword which had nice tang patina and good signature at his original inspection. When he looked at the tang after having bought it, some vandal had scratched right across the tang with a sharp needle. Proving that people of little knowledge should leave such tests alone. One, the tang patination was ruined, two it proved nothing to the fool who did it anyway.

On the same topic of awful use of tools, Mole was said to examine blisters with the point of a penknife. However, it was a very special penknife he confided.

Of the swords present, Malcolm Hutchinson had a very attractive katana. It had a saya of polished brick red lacquer with butterflies and praying mantis in gold lacquer, and black foliage. The mounts were excellent, the fuchi kashira was showing herons wading and in flight. The menuki were foliage and the tsuba an iron plate with gold foliage of fine quality. The blade was very elegant, slender tori-zori. The hada was mokume with deep nie and nioi in suguha, with large turn-back at the boshi. Brian Carver had a good tanto, unsigned blade nashiji-hada with midare hamon. The blade was a late one but with a very good strong shape. The fuchi kashira were of key fret design in nanako. The iron tsuba was not original but rather nice - Daruma with a gold eye - it might be quite early.

Tony Chapman had a katana in a worn Aogai lacquer scabbard. The mounts were Goto, peonies on the f.k. and shishi menuki and a kozuka with five shishi. The tsuba was brass rimmed with foliage on nanako and openwork. The blade was signed Yoshinori, the hamon choji and the hada of large itame. Brian Turner had some interesting pieces. A very small shobu Tsukuri tanto blade with two tang holes. It was signed Bishu "Osafune no ju Kiyomitsu saku" and dated Genki 2nd Year 1572. Although badly rusted, I found it a very attractive blade. He also had a very late massive "meat axe" signed "Kanda Kofu no ju Minamoto Masatomo". The hamon was a bit of everything, best described as choji midare, and open forging. It had a tsuba in keeping with its proportions being 5-6 inches diameter with a pierced mon. The scabbard was originally vermilion lacquer but some villian had painted it black. Brian is now trying to remove this, hopefully obtaining a beautiful scabbard again.

### MARCH MEETING

Well here we are at the Princess Louis. 23 members arrived despite our postal troubles. Some out of town members even managed

to find out about the meeting. Bon Dale was in the chair and asked whether any new members were present. Mr.C.J.Smith had arrived from Paris on a letter delivery spree. Mr.Federico Luciano had brought a Japanese lady visitor, Miss Yoshiko Gyoto. I wondered whether she might be a member of the metal worker family but never managed to find out. She was later monopolized by Bon who would like to gratefully record his thanks for the help she gave him with "To-ken Yoran".

Mr.Laing and early To Ken member Tim Tyrer, made a welcome appearance. Opening the meeting, Bon asked how we liked the new abode. Everyone seemed in favour save two - Syd Divers and Fred Stride. Later Sydney asked for a vote and three people voted against the new premises - the above two and C.J.Smith. Bon asked the reasons for objecting and Fred S. said that he just was very conservative. Although he realized that a change was necessary, he just liked the cosy atmosphere of the Mason's. Anyway, nearly everyone likes the new place, certainly there is far less chance now of accidental tameshigiri.

Bill mentioned that there was still something odd about the booking. Although the management had said the first Monday was booked up, Bill said that no meeting had occurred and the room was empty. However, it was pointed out that the postal strike might have caused a cancellation. Incidentally, the Princess Louis is now booked for meetings until the end of this year.

Bon mentioned that this evening would be a general meeting, but that the next meeting would be a Dirk evening. Sir Frank Bowden had mentioned that he was particularly interested in dirks and would bring a couple of dozen of his own along. Highly exciting stuff! Bon had to turn to a sad note announcing that two members, Dr.Bob Mills and Stan Kirby had both passed away during the previous month. Malcolm Kesson had now received his set of chisels. They were sent by Mr. Kogegushi, brought over by John Harding and delivered by Mole Benn. These chisels do not have handles, but are used with a hammer. They looked very delicate and Malcolm reported that they were extremely nice to work with. The wrapping appeared interesting - it turned out to be an advert for ladies kimono material at 20,000 Yen! This item gave C.J. Smith the opportunity to recount the take of the lady who was given an unusual necklace by her ever-loving. The necklace consisted of a silver chain with a colourful plaque attached which was covered in Chinese script. Wearing this necklace to an important diplomatic function, the husband chanced to fall into conversation with the Chinese ambassador. The husband praised the necklace as a treasure from the Royal Palace in Peking and pressed the ambassador for a translation of the poem. After some hesitancy, the honourable gent translated it as 'City of Shanghai, No.451 Licensed Prostitute!' Exit husband and wife in state of confusion!



Bon mentioned beginners subjects again and Andy Ford said that he wouldn't mind taking one small point each month and showing members something on the topic. As a starter, he will do Kaen boshi in May. Bon also mentioned that members might like to know that the Wakashu Kabuki was in town performing at The Palace, off Euston Road. Some debate ensued on what Wakashu meant - it was Young Men, apparently. If any member saw it, may be they could tell us about it.

About this time, Martin Lorber entered wearing a fantastic leather hat. One felt that Samurai would have approved. Janet Batchelor must be one of the few lady sword collectors. I know of lady sword-fittings collectors but she is the first lady sword collector I've come across. She has acquired a nice wakizashi. The saya of black lacquer with a gold dragon running down it. The blade is a good unsigned Koto Bizen, of unokobi-Tsukuri. The hamon choji midare with ashi. The forging is very tight mokume which I thought curious in a blade of this period. Brian Turner had a wakizashi blade, bought at a recent sale. Not much was visible but it looked interesting. What attracted Brian to it was a series of characters engraved down the back of the tang. These allegedly were Bonji and Morishiten. Certainly unusual.

#### April Meeting - Dirk Evening

Bon announced that this was to be our last meeting at the Mason's. Apparently the management of the Princess Louis had been sorted out and the room was now booked till Christmas on the first Monday of the month. New members and visitors tonight were Mr. Dick Berry with Syd Divers and Geoff Saville - Vic's bruvver!

Bon mentioned stolen swords, of which more anon. The circular that most members received from John Harding was also discussed. It transpires that Mr. Sayama also is willing to buy from members. It was pointed out that Neil Davey who was present, was most probably thinking "Why not put it in Sotheby's then they can buy there anyway". There was talk of the proposed shinsa party to be held by Mr. Sayama and Mr. Terumine during a forthcoming visit. Syd Divers has met Mr. Terumine and says he is a very good man although specialising in fittings.

It was pointed out that a shinsa session here in England, with a charge of £2 being made for a certificate of genuineness and an opinion of merit for either a white or green paper, would enable members to find out if their sword was worth sending to Japan for a repolish. It would save wasting large quantities of money on polishing poor blades. The state of the blade would not have to be good but if very bad then a definite opinion might be difficult. A post office house magazine was circulated; it came from Barry Thomas of Victoria, Australia. It had a very attractive cover illustrating some of Barry's swords and an article by him. Everyone thought it a great effort and wondered whether Barry

might like to make a contribution to the Programme some time. Syd mentioned that there was an article from Hawley- "Sword Signatures - genuine or fake" which is very good, see this Programme. Also Mr. Yamanaka mentions a fantastic exhibition of swords from the Imperial Collection and others equally well known. Syd circulated a very lavish catalogue - well worth having in its own right. There were some books ex Dr. Bob Mills on sale at reasonable prices, also his kendo armour and Iai sword.

Syd generously bought the armour and sword to present to the Nenriki Dojo. In view of the subject of the meeting, Bon felt it necessary to remind members that correct sword handling should be uppermost in members minds. At the last meeting Brian Turner had a sword chipped through careless handling. We really should be better than that - it is inexcusable. Bill Baxter said that he had had a sword badly rusted through fingering at a Club night. We have written enough on this subject, more should not be needed - but it is.

Sir Frank Bowden introduced the next part of the evening for which we all waited with anticipation. Sir Frank had brought along some dirks with which to start off the dirk evening. Sir Frank mentioned that dirks intrigued him. They were a very old weapon, much older than the wakizashi, for instance. Originally the dirk would complement the tachi and the range of mounts varied from extreme simplicity to fantastic tours de force. He had brought a couple of dozen to illustrate this range of mounts. Bon said that this really was going to be a 'drooling' session. As Sir Frank began to unpack his treasures, interest was so great that everyone crowded closely round the table. I'm afraid that I am going to let you down now as it really is impossible to describe such a collection. Imagine every type of mounted dagger that you wished to own and there it was. A number are described in the Ashmolean Catalogue. A number of them made a lasting impression on me. The little Gwassan blade with the horimono down the mune. The typical Ayosugi hada and the sugu-ha hamon I found particularly beautiful. The Masamune copy was also of great interest. You needed to examine this for hours to really see all that was there. Another beautiful blade was the Kotetsu.

Sir Frank and Sir Francis Festing believed it to be genuine. This had a pierced dragon horimono which was apparently one of Kotetsu's characteristics. Everything about the blade was just so, but it did make me realise that appreciation of Shinto blades requires sophisticated judgment. Some of the oddities were intriguing. How great a Noble did you have to be to have your gardener equipped with a silver mounted knife? Maybe that piece could tell an interesting tale. The scribe's utensil kit with the penholder in the wooden blade - never seen anything like it but what a constant source of delight is the variety of Japanese ideas.

The little boys sword with its minute 3 inch blade and exquisite mounts in hanzogan and crushed straw lacquer saya. As for the tour de force dirks, and there were plenty, you could delight the eye with superb silver work, and lacquer of finest inro quality. All too soon were they being packed away again. There were other swords in profusion but they were rather relegated to second place by the evenings main theme.

However, Tim Tyrer had brought a very fine silver mounted aikuchi. It was covered in massive silver dragons on a black rorio saya. The tsuka had "elephant hair" binding. Alan Bale had a very old Bizen blade in gold lacquer mounts. I didn't like the lacquer work - it looked very modern but Alan insisted to me that it was old. The blade was very attractive however - a really broad hiratsukuri with a very narrow sugu ha hamon.

We certainly ended the era of the Mason's with a dazzling display, with many thanks especially to Sir Frank for risking the transport of such a valuable collection.

#### BEGINNERS SECTION

We make our start with short articles by David Butler, Brian Carver, John Anderson and Willis Hawley. This last article comes at a fortuitous moment, and so we immediately include it here, with thanks to the Southern Californian Sword Society and to Willis Hawley.

David Butler. When the Committee first discussed the question of a beginner's section, I fondly imagined myself to be one of those beginners for whom it would be written, not helping to write it myself. It was not clear then and it still is not, to whom the section would be addressed and what sort of information he would want.

From the outset, Dear Beginner, this is up to you. Let us know what you want and we will try to provide otherwise we shall be groping in the dark, explaining just why a katana is not a Burmese dah to men who want discussions of, say forging techniques and styles of hamon, or the other way about. So please write with questions, suggestions and criticism (however abusive).

Meanwhile, the obvious starting point is a look at some of the available reference books. If you are really starting from scratch, you could do worse than read the section on swords in Newman & Ryerson's Japanese Art A Collector's Guide published by Bell. Anything as short as this obviously must be treated with reserve but, it is a start and it has the advantage, apart from Bon Dale's excellent illustrations, of treating, however perfunctorily with other Japanese arts, and not dealing with swords in isolation. This is useful especially since, naturally the makers of tsuba drew on the same sources as other artists for their subject matter.

Of course it will not take you very far in this field but Joly's Legend in Japanese Art (Kegan Paul) will. It is "a description of historical episodes, legendary characters, folk-lore, myths, religious symbolism illustrated in the arts of Old Japan", a dictionary in fact: big, beautiful, thoroughly illustrated and, if tsuba interests you, you should have it and not grudge the £8.75 it costs.

There are three handbooks which set out to provide a basic introduction to the sword: Inami Hakusui's Nippon-Tō, The Japanese Sword published by the Japan Sword Company; John Yumoto's The Samurai Sword (Charles Tuttle) and Basil Robinson's The Arts of the Japanese Sword (Faber & Faber). All three deal with the history of the sword, discuss styles, schools and smiths and in Mr. Robinson's phrase 'nomenclature and expertise'. All are worth reading but, Mr. Inami's book was written soon after the war for allied servicemen in Japan and its scope is not as wide as the other two, moreover the quality of the photographs is inadequate for their purpose. Mr. Yumoto's is shorter although it also tackles the problem of signatures and makes some evaluation of swordsmiths. The best of the three is undoubtedly Mr. Robinson's, of which a new and more extensively illustrated edition has just been published. It is a thorough-going, scholarly and workmanlike handbook covering both blades and mounts, with extremely useful appendices and worth having for the illustrations alone.

Between them they should provide plenty to chew on until the appearance of the next programme, when inevitably, the names Hawley and Coop and Inada will crop up.

Brian Turner. To judge a poor blade from a good blade is an entirely different matter from judging the latter from, say, a first-class blade. The former is relatively easy; the latter is not! This article is merely an attempt to lay out some of the basic points a collector with only a little knowledge should look for when buying a blade.

The hamon, or temper pattern, in whatever form it may appear, must form an unbroken line, however complex, from the hamachi to and round the kissaki, where it is known as the boshi. There is only one exception to this rule, yakiotoshi (Illus.1) where the hamon can be seen to curl off the blade an inch or so before the hamachi. This is not often encountered; it can be found on the work of certain early schools, notably Bungo Yukihiro and his followers. In more recent times, and more commonly it can be found on Shin shinto and Showato blades. In its less drastic form it can be found on a great many Shinto and Shin shinto blades; here the hamon merely narrows and straightens anything from an inch to three inches or more before the hamachi - this is known as yakidashi (Illus.2); any other break in the hamon, whether it be

through polishing down of the blade until the hamon is lost in places, or through poor tempering, is a flaw which cannot be excused. If you are buying a rusty or burnished blade, take a good look at the point as this is the most vulnerable part of the blade. It is the most likely area to have been tampered with. Be sure that it has not been broken and re-shaped, if the boshi is not clear look at the geometry of the point, is this right? Look for vertical cracks in the yakiba or hardened edge. These are often very difficult to see, only hairline cracks, but enough to destroy the value and interest of a blade. Chips in the yakiba are easy enough to see, one just has to decide whether or not they will polish out. Large chips may go right through a narrow hamon, or if not, may sadly impair the shape of the blade when removed.

There are many things to look for in a blade with a reasonable polish. The misty greyish outline of the hamon:- Nioi., and generally mixed with this, Nie (Illus.3). Small mirror like particles along the hamon can be coarse or fine, but should be even, can be deep or narrow or scattered all over the Ji. Tobiyaki (Illus. 4); detached areas or islands of temper can be found on some blades.

And finally a word on signatures. One is generally safe with minor swordsmiths though even these are sometimes faked. If a man acquired some local repute, the chances are someone would be around to cash in on his name. There are obviously a lot more spurious Naotane blades than genuine and the same applies to many other good men. The more obvious forgeries can be sorted out with the aid of various books available. A decision on the more competent forgeries especially Shinshinto can only reliably be arrived at by entering the blade for A Shinsa and procuring a certificate or Orikami ("folded paper") for the blade in question.

#### Beginners Armour - John Anderson

The basic suit of armour comprised - helmet (Kabuto); mask (Mempo); cuirass (Dō); shoulder guards (Sode); sleeves (Kote); thigh guards (Haidate) and shin-guards (Suneate). Some armours were produced without mempo or sode, others usually of finer quality, would have additions of a separate throat defence (Nodawa) and armpit protectors (Wakibiki).

Armours fall into two distinct groups. Those styles of the early periods, Ō-Yoroi, Dō-Maru and Haramaki of which the majority had close lacing and lamella construction, being termed Yoroi even when made later as reproductions, and those styles usually of solid plate design introduced during the 16th century being termed Tosei Gusoku (modern armour).

The styles of armour vary greatly but the type name usually stems from the style of the Dō. When dealing with Yoroi it is amazing how often in catalogues for sales and exhibitions errors of descriptions arise. An Ō-Yoroi must be a two-piece Dō with four large tassets (Kusazuri), the main portion carrying the

front, left-side and back with three tassets attached while the fourth tasset is attached to the separate plate for the right side. The front of the Dō may or may not be covered by a sheet of stencilled leather (Tsurubashiri). The Dō-Maru is a one piece cuirass wrapping round the body, opening on the right side and having no hinge and seven or more tassets, the later style which looks similar but is hinged on the left side is not Dō-Maru but Tachi (standing) Dō or Ni-Mai Dō (see following). The Haramaki is again easy to identify, this type opens down the back and may or may not have a separate narrow plate to cover the gap left at the back.

When we come to Tosei-Gusoku the styles are numerous each with its features but further complicated by variations on basic themes. One of the simplest ways of describing Dō of this type is to classify them numerically, i.e. Ni-Mai two pieces, front and back only. San-Mai three pieces, Go-Mai five pieces. Roku-Mai six pieces. In the case of plate cuirasses one can add Tatehagi if the plates are vertical or Yokohagi if horizontal.

Helmets with all their multiplicity of shapes are perhaps even more difficult to classify but here again a recourse to counting can help. Multi-plate bowls will for the most part, be constructed of regular members of plates, 8 - 12 - 16 - 18 - 32 - 62 - 72 and 120 are the most common but others may be found. If each of these plates has a standing ridge then the helmet is a Suji Bachi; if the rivet heads are left protruding then the bowl is Hoshi Bachi. For helmets of more unusual form it is necessary to be able to recognise the object copied, i.e. cloth cap (Zukin); court cap (Eboshi or Tokamuri); peach (Momo Nari); plum (Ume Nari) etc. Probably the easiest to recognise is the simple three plate Hineno style which looks so Germanic and which although made mostly for less expensive armours, is often of good quality. These are often used as the basis for more elaborate designs often built up in metal, leather or wood. The name would then be taken from the resultant design.

Masks are basically of three types: Hambo covering chin and cheeks only; Mempo covering the lower half of the face and nose and the Somen which covers the whole face. True Somen are comparatively rare, a large proportion of those found are Mempo with brow plates added later. Some years ago at Glendinnings (back in the good old days) there were thirteen false Somen in one lot and one genuine one.

Shoulder guards are again basically of three types. The small Kō Sode, medium Chu Sode and large Ō-Sode. Here the main difference is in size and it is often difficult to decide which group a particular pair fall into. However, although large Chu Sode often reach the size of Ō-Sode the latter has the large standing cap plate lying in the same plane as the surface of the Sode whereas the Chu Sode have plates which are at right angles to it.

Sleeves again display a widely diverse number of types. The ones most often encountered are:

Shino Gote; narrow strips on the forearms which may be 3-5-7 or a larger number shaped to the forearm.

Tsutsu Gote; the forearm is protected by a tubular defence usually of three hinged sections.

Oda Gote; both the forearm and upper arm have a gourd shaped plate attached.

Bishamon Gote have some form of Sode attached to the upper arm.

Ikada Gote; there are small elongated plates scattered over a mail sleeve.

Kusari Gote are entirely of mail.

The same rules where applicable can also apply to thigh guards and shin guards.

#### Sword Signatures - Genuine or Fake? W.M.Hawley

It is one thing to read the characters on a sword tang and something else again to say for sure who made it! As we all know, 90% of all big name signatures are fakes, as well as a good percentage of lesser smiths.

This was possible because many smiths left unsigned those blades which did not turn out well enough to suit them. Often they are very superior blades compared to those made by average smiths, but lacking verification of a signature, their origin may be doubtful. Then, of course, there are the out and out fakes and copies imitating the style but seldom the quality of those of the great masters. So, the problem is to be able to recognize a fake signature.

Signatures cut with a chisel exhibit as many or more characteristics than those written with a pen or brush. The variables are as follows -

1. The chisel. Each smith had his own favourite chisel for cutting a signature. Now - what shape point? Was it V shaped or U shaped and what angle V or how wide a U? A wide angle V point held at a low angle to the work would cut a shallow groove the same width as a narrow V shape that was hit harder at a steeper angle, producing a much deeper groove. The depth of the groove would not show up on an oshigata rubbing, only the width. Neither would the roundness of a U shape of the same width. The difference between a V and a U might be apparent in a photograph but not the depth of the cut. In badly rusted old tangs you would not be able to see either. Direct comparison with a genuine blade would be necessary to prove this point. So here we have a

number of characteristics that would not be in hand-writing or show up in a rubbing - depth and shape of the cut.

2. At what angle did the smith hold the chisel and how hard did he tap it with what weight hammer? We don't have to know these three variables but they would definitely affect the cuts. How many taps with the hammer did he use to cut a line  $\frac{1}{2}$ " long? If the strokes were heavy this might show up on an oshigata, but if light it probably would not. A magnifying glass on the sword itself would be necessary to reveal this characteristic.

3. Most important of all, and easy to see is, how did he form the strokes? Length of strokes, shape and angle of dots, curved or straight lines, shape and angle of the hook on the end of a line, are all just as individual as in brush or pen writing, as are the width and taper of the strokes and these are just as hard to imitate even if you could know all the points covered in 1 and 2 above. Also, these were a matter of unconscious habit and were not affected by his age or changing chisels. These all show up in the oshigata and are ample to show up all but the cleverest forgeries. For this part we do not have to have actual genuine blades to compare with as pictures of oshigata in the books will serve. Such works as the Juyos, the various Taikans and the two volumes of Fujishiro's Nihon Toko Jiten are available even if you don't own them. The more pictures you can find the better knowledge you will have of the peculiarities of a man's signature so that irregularities should be easy to spot. Natural variations will show up but the shape of the strokes will remain pretty much the same. For the kind of changes that occur in a man's signature over a period of years, study part 2 of the Osaka Shinto Zufu which shows year by year progressions of a lot of smiths.

Even clever forgers had their own habits and chisels and a wrong hook, curve, or weight of stroke will give them away. If you have access to the current sword magazines from Japan, note the true and false signatures shown side by side with sometimes very slight discrepancies pointed out.

It would seem that certain men specialised in forging signatures of certain smiths as the forger's own characteristics may show up in several fakes. A study of true and false signatures of Kiyomaro and Naotane bear this out. In the big work "Minamoto Kiyomaro", huge blow-ups of his big signatures show an even swelling or tapering of his horizontal strokes, while all the fakes show bumps at the end of each stroke. Fake signatures of Naotane are extremely close to the genuine except in the kakihan where the top zigzag lines of the genuine are crowded together but appear much more open on the fakes.

In order to research signatures, you need as many examples as possible that can reasonably be expected to be genuine. Disagreement among experts is mostly confined to unsigned blades and a few



Juyo certifications have been repudiated. However, some of the very old books, while considered reliable in general, are completely useless when it comes to checking the fine points of strokes. This is because the oshigata first had to be copied by brush, then carved in wood blocks, then printed, and sometimes re-copied, re-carved and re-printed for later editions. It would be impossible to go through all these operations and retain anything like the photographic quality necessary for comparison of chisel strokes. Such works as the Honcho Kajiko, Honcho Gunkiko, Shinto Meijin and all the other 16th to 18th century wood block books are useless for this purpose, even assuming that all examples shown were genuine, which would be doubtful.

The modern books give accurate reproductions leaving only the sometimes pertinent question of how expert was the "expert" who said the blade was genuine? Here again, signatures would have a better chance than mumei attributions.

Now, we are back to the problem of source material. We of the West cannot compete with the big Japanese appraisal groups who have enormous libraries and thousands of genuine blades for direct comparison. But still, it will help and save the cost of sending swords to Japan for appraisal if we can spot the more obvious fake. If you still want to send it you can state "signature probably false but who did make it?" which will save your face if it is a phony!

Certainly we all should want to study, regardless of whether we own an almost "National Treasure" or a Sukesada we can't pin down because he didn't add his personal name. So, the only answer is to acquire as many books as possible that show pictures of tangs. Some are certainly expensive but there are a lot of inexpensive ones also being turned out in Japan, that are in the \$5 to \$10 bracket. Assuming that you have acquired some of these, there is still the problem of finding the picture you want without a knowledge of Japanese, or a whole day of searching. Indexes are the answer. An index is being prepared for "Tanto", but many more are needed. For those of you owning some volumes of the Juyo Token nado Zufu or the two volumes of the Nihon Toko Jiten, these are indexed in my book "Japanese Swordsmiths". For myself, I am indexing one by one, all of my library that contain pictures, and using a code letter for each work, note each picture of a tang, opposite the man's name in my book. Anyone who can figure out names and dates well enough to use my book should be able to do this to almost any modern book. If you want to benefit mankind - make your index available to club members by mimeographing it.

Two good sources are the Koson Oshigata and the Umetada Meikan which reproduce the scrap books of oshigata gathered by these two men who were experts in earlier days. Both need indexing.

Now back to reading and evaluating inscriptions. We have to remember that there are genuine swords to which the name was added later by someone who recognised the work and added the name with or without trying to imitate the signature, in order to make the blade easier to sell. Properly, such attributions should have been done in gold by a recognised appraiser and signed with his name and/or Kakihan, but many tried to fake the signature. Certification of these has to ignore the fake signature.

Signatures added at a much later date often exhibit a different colour of rust in the chisel marks. Another thing to watch is a hole through a character of a signature. Generally new holes were added when a blade was shortened, but a blade with signature and only one hole right through a character is obvious nonsense! Or even several holes if the lowest one pierces a character. When blades were shortened, the new holes (always drilled not punched) had to be higher not lower. When a hole pierces a character, use a glass to see if burrs from the chisel were pushed into the sides of the hole - this is a dead give-away.

For the most part, fake signatures were intended to upgrade the value of a blade, so were intended to indicate the most famous man if several generations existed. However, later generations sometimes thought they were good enough to pass off a blade as that of a famous predecessor and cut an inscription that was only recorded to him. Generally the blade itself will give this away and a check of signature characteristics will confirm it. So the wording of an inscription does not always pin it down to the only one listed in the books. Always check the other generations.

A signature badly incrustated with rust may require some cleaning, but don't disturb it if it is obviously very, very old. First lay the tang on a hard wood block. Lay a piece of thin leather or thick cloth over the inscription and tap lightly with a small hammer. Not hard enough to distort the metal but enough to break up the layers of rust. A chisel made of bone or bamboo may help to lift off the layers of rust. New red rust often indicates a deliberate attempt to make a tang look old. It won't stick very tight and usually comes off with a wire brush or coarse steel wool. After cleaning, oil or wax the tang to prevent further rusting.

One final word - a signature is a lot easier to fake than the blade itself, so a thorough study of the blade should precede the research on the signature. Then, if the school and probable date are compatible with the inscription, it is time to go to work on the signature.

Of course study is the key to understanding swords in general and the same applies to the peculiarities of signatures.

Start with the swords you own and check out every stroke of every character in the whole inscription. Then read up on the mar., making notes on everything pertaining to him, then go on to other generations of the line, then to pupils, etc. With special attention to the outstanding points of difference in the signatures. Sometimes one line or dot will be enough to identify a generation.

On your sword record sheet enter a reference to every book and page that shows one of his swords. It will surprise you how soon you will have a fund of knowledge about a lot of smiths.

### HILT BINDING

We have had several enquiries about "do it yourself hilt re-binding". We will do something on this in the next Programme.

### NIHON TO NEWSLETTER

Although we always publish our regular plug for this excellent bi-monthly publication by Albert Yamanaka, it is a long time since we reminded our members of the excellence of its content. We publish below an extract from a recent long article on blade polishing. This is relevant to our current Programme and contains information for those of experience as well as the beginner.

The collector of experience will, I'm sure, particularly appreciate the great detail in which each stage is discussed as the article proceeds to the final polish. It becomes abundantly clear the great craftsmanship and more required to successfully restore a fine blade. It is needless to say that a good polish cannot be acquired cheaply or quickly, or that the operation should be left strictly alone by amateurs.

Sword polishing is an ever present problem with collectors outside Japan, and although many of us will criticize or praise the excellence of a polish we have little knowledge on which to base this judgment. Or knowledge of how the polish was achieved; we hope to publish a further extract in the next Programme by kind permission of Albert Yamanaka.

### KEMMA by Albert Yamanaka.

In one of the earlier issues, we wrote a brief line on polishing and here again we would like to go a little more into detail. This is by no means complete, however, since there seems to be such a wide interest in this field in the West in the recent years, perhaps, what we give here may be of some guide and interest to those who are dabbling in TOGI.

We all know that the Togi makes or breaks a sword...for a good blade in the hands of a poor polisher, literally means the

'ruin' of that blade. On the other hand, when a poor blade is given to a good polisher, at least that blade will come out looking much better than what it is supposed to be....but, it should be remembered that a good polisher rarely will 'touch' a poor blade. For one thing, it will render his polishing stones useless and he will have to put a new surface on the stone which means that there will be a great deal of waste to a stone. A very good stone being so very hard to come by and even if one does come across one they are so expensive that this will be one of the major reasons, of course, there are a great many other reasons as well. The reason for a polish is to bring out the hidden qualities within the steel, and this is a task which is impossible to the poor or average polisher when he is confronted with a good blade. We have all heard of how many months it takes for a blade to come back from the polisher and this is especially so with the good polisher.....a good polisher will take great pains in finishing stages such as Jizuya, the Hazuya and the Nugui and these steps take a great deal of time. The poor polisher will finish this step in a few hours (some do it in a few minutes) whereas the good polisher will take days.

#### STEP ONE: ARA TOGI

A newly forged blade goes to the polisher for Ara Togi in which case the polisher uses the Arato stone. In this first step, the polisher MUST pay particular attention to:

- a. not to take off any excess 'meat' from the blade
- b. to take off the indentations along the HA, making this one smooth line
- c. to check and correct the waves on the blade

A newly forged blade will have a very thick Ha Dori and therefore it is the job of the polisher to take this excess steel off making the Hasaki into a thin line as it should be. In doing this, he must make sure that the 'wave' on the blade edge is removed at the same time, those areas where it is excessively rounded will have to be made flat along with the other sections of the blade. Once this step has been completed, then he next goes to the whole of the blade and polishes the whole of the blade in Kiri line. Next he goes to the Shinogi which is done in Sujichigai line. This will have completed the Ara Togi.

Of course the Ara Togi mostly concerns the newly forged blade, but the same can be said for some blade which has been rusted completely whereby that blade must be started all over again by removing the thick crusts of rust.

Needless to say, the Ara Togi should not be used for this will greatly reduce the thickness of the blade.

The stones used in Ara Togi are Kongo or Omura.

Kongo is man-made carborundum and the Omura is a natural stone.

STEP TWO: SHITAJI TOGI and SHIAGE TOGI

Shitaji Togi means foundation polishing.

Shiage Togi means finishing polishing.

a. Iyo Togi sometimes referred to as Shiroto.

In most cases when a blade comes to a polisher, that blade is started with the Iyoto Togi.

Iyoto Togi is considered to be one of the most important steps in polishing, for if a blade has not had this good foundation, then the succeeding steps will be very difficult, if not impossible. In this step, if the polisher takes too much steel off the blade, or does not do so where it should be and proceeds to the next step, then it will be impossible to make that area what it should be. In the olden days, the polisher used a stone called Jokenji, however, this stone is no longer available and the stone used in its stead is called Iyo, since it comes from the Iyo Province.

A natural stone will always have hard particles and though this first step stone is hard, it will have harder particles and so this should be given careful attention. (For a novice, it may be impossible to detect these hard particles with the naked eye and only on polishing where he runs the blade over the stone and actually 'feel' that hard particle run across the blade will he be able to know it, but then in that case, it will have been 'too late' for then he must take excessive steel off that part where the hard particle made the deep gash on the blade).

To avoid running the blade over these hard particles, polishers use a stone to rub over the stone and try to 'feel' that hard particle, and if he finds one, then he will take a sharp chisel or knife or whatever to dig this particle up and out. In this case of Iyo, the previous Omura is used. This stone is shaped in a block of about 2 x 4 inches. This is called Omote Zuri and it served a double purpose, for not only will it find the hard particles, but also it will help smooth the surface for better and easier polishing. Therefore, regardless of whether there is a hard particle or not, it is advisable to use this Omote Zuri from time to time to check the surface and give it a better one.

Regardless of what the stone may be, the surface of the stone must always maintain a mounded form....if the stone is shaped like a kitchen honing stone or have a dent all along then one will never be able to give the blade the proper polishing that is needed.

Furthermore, it will make the next step, a very difficult one and also one will never be able to remove all the marks left by the previous stone.

Sword polishing is nothing but series of making scratches on the surface of the blade, step one makes a hard deep scratch, this scratch is removed in the next step, but in this step it will be given a smaller scratch and so on until in the very last in the Nugui, the scratches being so minute they are no longer visible. The Uchiko in fact, can be considered as the very last phase of the polishing for it also gives the blade microscopic scratches which helps remove oil and lints.

In the olden days, a sword fancier whenever he took a sword to a polisher to be polished, he made sure that he got a good look at the polisher's stones, for it was easy to tell if that polisher is good or not merely by looking at the surface of the polishing stones....if the stone has many indentations, then one should stay away from that polisher and vice versa.

### 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.

### 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, Preston Cottage, North Road, Preston Park, Brighton, Sussex, he will check it for them and send them all available information he has on the swordsmith or inscription. Please remember to make a careful rubbing of the whole tang, both sides, not just the inscription.

### AIR MAIL POSTAGE

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

Europe.....£3.00  
U.S.A. and elsewhere.....\$10.00

NEW BOOKS

New books available from Alan Bale, 498d Chiswick High Road, London W.4:

THE ARTS OF THE JAPANESE SWORD by B.W.Robinson. A new edition is now out with several new plates. £5.50 postage 20p, foreign 16p.

JAPANESE SWORDSMITHS by W.M.Hawley. Vol.1 £6.30 post 20p. foreign 14p. Vol.2 £4.20 post 10p, foreign 9p.

Japanese Text

TSUBA NO BI by Kashima. 12½" x 9" bound cloth, slip case. 273 plates with about 20 in colour showing 364 fine tsuba, 48pp of Japanese text £12.00, postage 30p. foreign 43p.

ZUROKU SATSUMA NO KATANA TO TSUBA by Fukunaga. 10½" x 7½" bound cloth, slip case, 360pp. almost all plates showing 79 photographs of blades, 178 plates of rubbing sketches of blades and 113 tsubas all produced in Satsuma. £15.00, postage 26p, foreign 32p.

NIPPON NO BIJUTSU No.6 Swords. 9" x 7" soft covers, 134pp mostly plates 20 in colour, showing blades, koshirae, tsubas, etc. £1.50, postage 11p, foreign 9p.

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NEW MEMBERS

The Society has much pleasure in welcoming the following new members:

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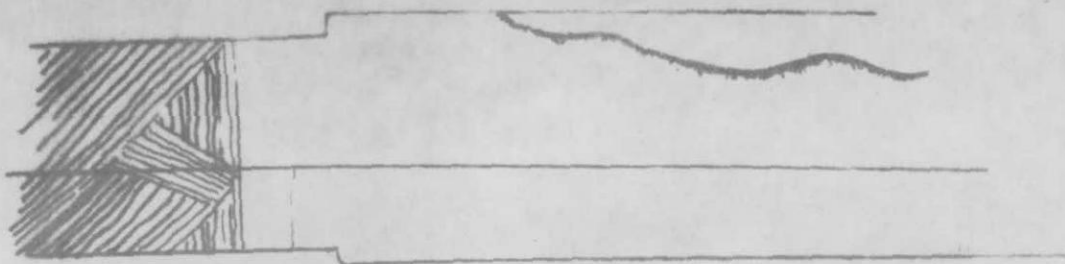
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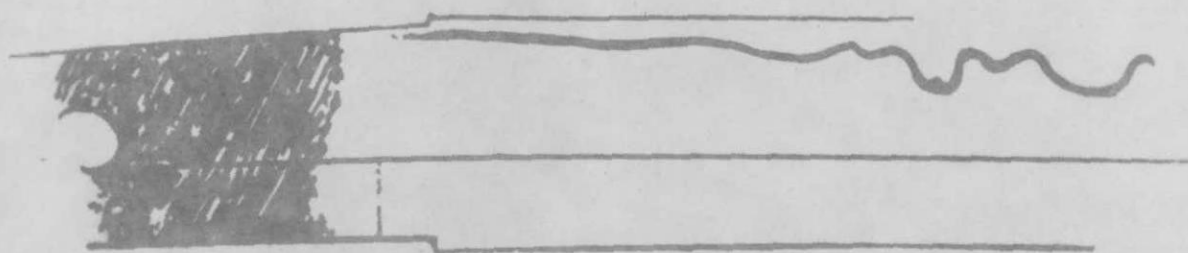
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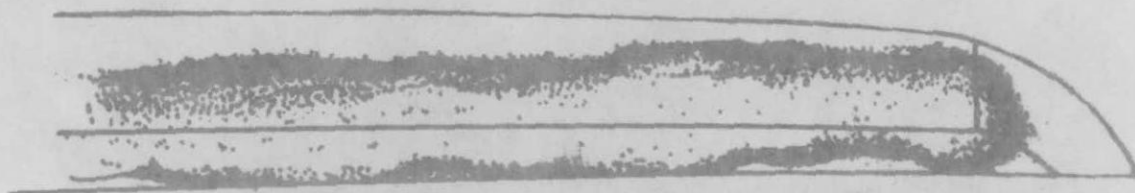




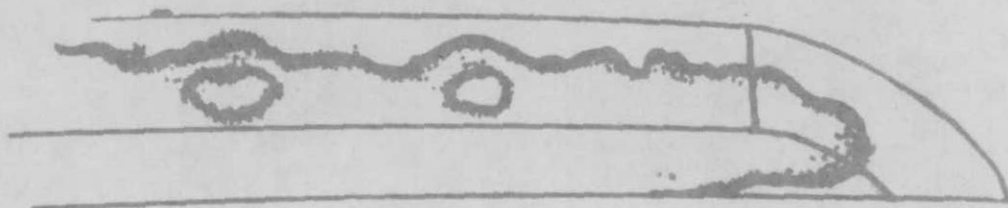
1 YAKIOTOSHI, KATANA BLADE UNSIGNED 19th CENT



2 YAKIDASHI ON A BLADE SIGNED: "HIGO NO DAIJO FUJIMASA MASAKATSU. ECHIZEN SHIMOSAKA GROUP. C. 1620.



3 NIE ON A BLADE SIGNED: "YANASHIRO NO DAIJO MINAMOTO KUNISHIGE" (THIS IS OTSUKI ICHIZO MINAMOTO KUNISHIGE, CALLED HACHIROE). MIDZUTA SCHOOL OF BITCHU. C 1650.



4 TOBIYAKI. UNSIGNED SHINTO WAKIZASHI BLADE.