

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.
SECRETARY. MRS. C. DALE, 16 BRIGHTWELLS CLANCARTY ROAD LONDON. S.W.6. (01-736 6838)

PROGRAMME NO. 64

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER, 1971.

NEXT MEETING: Monday, 6th September 1971, 7.30 p.m. at the Princess Louise, High Holborn. To get there: Underground to Holborn, turn West, cross Kingsway and the P.L. is 50 yards on the left-hand side. Just past the Sex Supermarket!

FOLLOWING MEETING: Monday, 4th October, 7.30 p.m. at the Princess Louise.

SUBJECTS: September - Bon Dale will give a slide show. Bon is hoping to receive some slides from Japan shortly and will show these if they turn up in time. If not, he will probably discuss blades from Juyo.

October - The Annual General Meeting, and election of officers. This is the most important meeting of the year. It gives every member the opportunity to organise the type of Society he wants and the sort of people he wants running it. Don't fail to come as there are some major changes in the air.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by Bon Dale.

For several issues we have been building up to the Shinsa, to be conducted by Mr. Terumine and Mr. Sayama in London. The first Shinsa to be held in Europe, or probably anywhere else outside of the U.S.A. and Japan; so far as we know, that is. We will certainly be interested to hear of another.

Now it is all over; the Shinsa took place and Terumine Sensei and Mr. Sayama have returned to Japan. This Programme will doubtless, when it has been compiled, contain ample reference to the Shinsa. For my part I can give statistics and describe the event as I saw it.

First statistics. There were 159 swords submitted for examination. These being brought in by 41 To Ken members. This may not seem an enormous number of swords, and certainly isn't by the standards of a Shinsa in Japan. Mr. Sayama said as we have been told before that there the hundreds of swords submitted only allow a few minutes or moments even, to be

devoted to each blade by the Shinsa panel. Whereas here, Mr. Terumine was able to devote much longer on each blade, checking and rechecking his impressions. This was to our advantage, and in many cases very necessary because many of our blades were not in a condition which made judging easy! In fact, there was a delightful moment at the last Meeting, after the Shinsa, when Mr. Terumine made a speech in Japanese, translated by Mr. Sayama. So far as I can remember, the way he put it, he said that he was very impressed by the way our To Ken members cherished and loved their swords. Particularly so because most of them were in such a terrible condition that he found it most difficult to see the forging and tempering - and he wondered how we could see anything at all, let alone love them! Fred may have also reported this incident elsewhere but I cannot omit to put in my version; it was a good moment and certainly brought the house down.

About 9.20 a.m. on July 1st I arrived at the Westbury Hotel; Syd Divers arrived shortly afterwards. Our delightful Japanese translator arrived, Mr. Sayama and Mr. Terumine were ready and we were all set to go. There was an air of expectancy. At ten o'clock precisely, Capt. Johnes arrived, bearing a huge bundle of swords, seeming almost to bear down his frail but upright frame. It was very refreshing to see our eldest statesman first on the scene, and he reappeared several times more during the next two days, bringing more swords.

As the morning progressed there was at one time shortly before lunch, the beginnings of a situation I had feared from the start. Rather too many To Ken members occupying rather too many luxurious seats in the Westbury entrance lounge, surrounded by too many strange bundles with Japanese swords protruding from them.

Nevertheless, this situation was the fault of the Westbury Hotel itself. Despite bookings made many weeks ago, the Westbury completely fouled things up; or perhaps ignored our bookings altogether. We had not realised that the Shinsa coincided with Wimbledon week, and the Westbury accommodated most of the stars and visiting enthusiasts. This was not the only experience I had that week of the Westbury's shortcomings. Mr. Sayama mentions in his letter "we have experienced some inconvenience" and I think he unfortunately attributed this to To Ken inefficiency. In fact, it was not us but the Westbury Hotel who created the inconvenience, and I would certainly not recommend it for any future occasion of this kind, or anything else.

Due to the efforts of Mr. Sayama, Syd Divers and myself, we were able to transfer to a larger suite after lunch on the

first day, as we had originally booked. This made everything much easier, we were able to accommodate waiting members and I think from then on, the Shinsa went very smoothly.

Mr. Terumine sat for long hours studying the swords submitted, so long in fact, that one began to fear for his health. It was a great experience to watch him work, silently recording his opinion and taking oshigata of nakago which he found especially interesting. For this he used two specially shaped magnets, taking great care as he moved them down the nakago to produce a clear rubbing. I realized that one must take longer than I usually do to obtain a really good oshigata.

The first day finished well after the stated 8 p.m. We were ready to go again on the second day by 9.30 a.m. and at ten o'clock the first members began to arrive. Again a late finish. By the third day the Shinsa had developed an atmosphere to those of us who had been in attendance most of the time. Mr. Sayama had brought Japanese tea and tea bowls for the occasion, and one memory is of mystified waiters bringing in continual jugs of hot water. At 7.5p a jug the To Ken was disorganized: we should have produced an electric kettle. On this third day the Shinsa closed its doors finally and early, about 7 p.m. There being no sign of further customers, we decided anyone who had left it that late was just going to be unlucky.

Of whose sword was praised or whose was rejected, I have no knowledge. Mr. Terumine wrote his report, the translator wrote the translation and handed it to the owner. The owner could keep this knowledge to himself - I'm sure many didn't and many were the stories by the third day about this or that sword. But I'm sure these will be reported elsewhere, and go on circulating.

Many thanks are due to Mr. Sayama for organizing this event, and for bringing Mr. Terumine to give us the benefit of his knowledge. Thanks to Mr. Terumine for being exactly what we would expect a sword expert to be, and for his gentle manner and kindness. Many thanks to Miss Imai, who we found at the last moment to translate for us and who was absolutely worth more than her tiny weight in gold. Also to Miss Nakagawa who came specially to help us out on the third day, by courtesy of Vulcan Freight. We could not have survived without the help of these two girls. I would also like to thank Committee Members John Anderson, Fred Stride, Malcolm Hutchinson, Bill Baxter and Dave Parker for their help in running the Shinsa. A thousand thanks to all members who appeared with swords for judging, from as far away as Yorkshire and Lancashire; without them the whole thing would have been a dismal failure.

Finally, thanks to Syd Divers and me, for being involved in everything else as well as the Shinsa; our guests certainly completed a very full programme whilst they were here and probably were as exhausted as us by the time they left.

MR. SAYAMA'S LETTER (Extract)

Kobe, 16th July
1971.

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Dale, I wish to express my hearty thanks for your kindness and close co-operation extended to Mr. Terumine and myself by your goodself, Mrs. Dale and the members of To Ken Society during our stay in England.

I have returned to Japan safely to-day in company with Mr. Terumine according to our itinerary, for which please rest assured. The circumstances of our appraisal party, which was held in London for the first time, have been reported immediately to Dr. Homma and Dr. K. Sato of N.T.B.H.K.

As it was our first attempt, we experienced some inconvenience, but the party has been completed successfully and we feel happy that the members of your To Ken Society were pleased by our appraisal party.

During three days, while the Shinsa party was held, your goodself, Mr. S.V. Divers and the Committee of your To Ken Society have helped us by turns in attending the Shinsa party during the whole days, and I wish to thank you and all other people very much once again herewith.

I wished to inform you of my safe return to Japan quickly and also wished to thank you from the bottom of my heart as promptly as possible. Please give my best regards to all,

Sincerely yours, K. Sayama. President,
Kasuga & Co. Ltd.

JULY MEETING

This was incidentally our 80th meeting as a Society. Bon was in the chair, and our President Basil Robinson was warmly welcomed. Mr. Terumine and Mr. Sayama were our honoured guests. Although many members had already met our guests at the Shinsa on the previous Thursday, Friday and Saturday, this was our first official Society welcome to our two eminent guests. Bon reminded members that the meeting should give our guests an opportunity for relaxation and not for us to obtain a quick free Shinsa. A point with which everyone present complied, I'm glad to say. Syd Divers, who had played a major role in organising the visit, announced that Mr. Terumine had brought several books for our Society. These were the official quarterly(?) publications of the N.B.T.H.K. and certainly were an eye-opener as to what an erudite Society can achieve. Your

Programme Secretary caught on too late to realise that the magazines were to be taken by members present, so he didn't obtain one for lengthy perusal. Sydney also announced that Mr. Terumine had donated £30 to the Club funds. This certainly was generous of him as we really are in his debt for the expertise he made available to us. Sydney expressed our appreciation to him with a short speech in Japanese, a translation of which is the following:

Teramine Isao Sensei

"It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to your first British To Ken Kai Meeting. We hope you will be able to visit us many more times in the future.

The Shinsa you have conducted from 10 in the morning till 8 at night non-stop for 3 days has been superb. Many of our members are very pleased, and equally some are disappointed with what they hoped were Juyo swords. The To Ken Kai members have taken you to their hearts because of your frank honesty at the Shinsa and you will always find a welcome here at any time.

Your generous gift of money to the Society has come as such a pleasant surprise as it is indeed us who owe you much. Our members thank you for all your help and advice. Take care of yourself."

Bon also expressed the Club's appreciation to Mr. Terumine and Mr. Sayama. B.W.R. said he associated himself completely with Syd and Bon's remarks. Mr. Sayama replied he had met many of us three years ago. He wished to encourage us in the appreciation of Japanese swords and hoped that Mr. Terumine would tell us about our swords. He had found us very enthusiastic and most of us were extremely keen to learn. Also he realised that when some members sold their swords to Japanese dealers, fair prices were not paid. He felt it his duty to bring an expert on swords and fittings. In Japan, there are many clubs existing for sword enthusiasts but the most powerful and influential is the N.B.T.H.K. under the leadership of Dr. Homma, Mr. Saito and Mr. Terumine. Shinsa and orikami issued by this organisation are the most respected and carry great authority. Mr. Sayama pointed out we in England did not realise how formal a Japanese Shinsa could be. In Japan, owners formed a queue and could wait for days until their turn for appraisal came; also, of course, they never were present at the examination. We were very lucky indeed without Shinsa arrangements. Normally, Mr. Terumine would have about 12 assistants who did all the preparation and organising so under the conditions here, he really worked extremely hard and long as anyone who attended the Shinsa would testify. Mr. Sayama said that Mr. Terumine's expertise was such that his opinion of a blade coincided with that of Dr. Homma

and Mr.Saito in every case. It was a privilege for himself and Mr.Terumine to meet new and old acquaintances here, and if there were any questions that they could help with, then please ask freely.

Captain Johnes added a nice touch to the meeting by giving to Mr.Terumine a presentation copy of his book "Japanese Art". Mr.Terumine thanked Capt.Johnes profusely and mentioned how much he had enjoyed the visit although when he said before his visit, that he would inspect blades in any condition, he didn't realise what he was letting himself in for. We certainly have some rusty blades! Members had brought along some delightful swords to make a display for our guests. Bon started the viewing by getting our President to offer his contribution to the display. This was the Nobuhide blade made for the Emperor Meiji. Anyone who has seen it would call it a masterpiece. Mr.Terumine gave it a very close inspection and confirmed it. The surface of the blade was marvellous and the horimono excellent; Yamato-take-no-Mikoto and the Emperor's banner. A "mei-to" sword.

Robbie also had brought along a 'joke' object. An odd shaped brass bowl which had a series of holes around the rim. "What was it?" asked B.W.R. as he had puzzled over it for years. Our guests were also defeated but someone hazarded a guess that it might be an arrow holder.

Mole Benn asked if our guests would answer any general questions on the Shinsa. Of course, they would. Mole said that the translation of the Shinsa paper was that the sword was made by a "sword lender". He didn't understand this, but wondered if it was from a Japanese Moss Bros. Mr.Terumine explained that our translator was not familiar with sword expertise and the line should have read "by a follower of a school". In this case, the sword was a long blade, which the smith named on the tang was not known to have made: he was only known for tanto and short swords. Hence the attribution rather than dismiss it as would happen at a N.B.T.H.K. Shinsa. Mr.Terumine had wherever possible, tried to attribute a blade to a smith except of course, in the case of out and out fakes. In Japan, unsigned blades would be attributed "to the school of" but Mr.Terumine had tried to give us more accuracy where possible. Sydney Divers asked if at an N.B.T.H.K. Shinsa whether all the experts agreed on a blade. Mr.Sayama explained that usually agreement was possible but there was no collusion between the experts. The assistants moved the blades along so quickly that there just wasn't time. However, if serious doubts occurred the most senior appraiser's decision would be accepted.

Before adjourning to examine the display, Mr. Terumine added that he expressed many thanks to the Club for making the Shinsa such a success. It was a great pleasure for him to complete the three days. Conditions were difficult especially as in many cases the surface steels could not be seen for scratches. That is why he had to take so long over his examinations. If any members were angry at the delay then many apologies. On his return to Japan he would be pleased to report on our activities to Dr. Homma and Mr. Saito.

Peter Cottis mentioned that doubtless he would see many of the blades again after returning to Japan for a polish. David Butler added that he was most impressed by the length of time given to each sword by Mr. Terumine.

The meeting then broke up to examine the display. Mr. Terumine obviously enjoyed it. He really expressed great interest in a sword of Captain Johnes. This was a ken blade fully mounted with gilt fittings. He said that when a sword was as old as this, he knew little about them. At first, he thought that the sword was 1500 years old, but on further examination thought it to be later, probably 1000 years old. This sword is the first Nara period to be discovered in Europe apart from excavated relics. Quite an historic occasion!

On display were some very fine swords, described before in our programme. Malcolm Hutchinson had brought his long sword with butterfly decoration on the brick red scabbard. Also the delightful wakizashi with aogai lacquer scabbard and large silver peonies inlaid and mounts by Omori Terumasa.

Ted Newman brought along his elegant Soshu-den blade. Bill Baxter displayed his fine Ishido school blade, again a sword having personal interest to me.

Brian Turner had two fine tachi in military austere mounts. Andy Ford had silver mounted dirk - very desirable. Yours truly showed his best wakizashi with a blade by Kodzuke no Daijo Sukesada and a particularly fine Kodzuka blade - not my words by the way.

AUGUST MEETING.

A talk on Mino blades by Alan Bale. Bon being away on holiday tramping the wilds of Northern England, John Anderson took the chair. Guests at the meeting were Colin Rollason and Katie from Glasgow, descending on us with yet another large bundle of swords. Corresponding member, Mr. Leary from Birmingham, also came along to see what it was all about. John also had as a guest, his wife Liz just there to keep an eye on him!

Sydney had two letters from Mr. Sayama. As Mr. Terumine had promised events here had duly been reported. This and other matters concerning the Shinsa are scribed elsewhere in this issue. Sydney had written a letter back to Mr. Sayama airing some fairly strong thoughts on the subject of selling prices. Apparently, some members were disappointed by the prices offered and also apparently by the fact that the same offer did not hold if you went away to think on it for a day or so. John summed the situation up well to my mind.

If you took along a sword to learn about its quality, you were not disappointed, but if you went to make a financial killing, you were, and serves you damn-well right too! John added that sword buying at the Shinsa was a secondary consideration and that the event had worked out extremely well for the Society. John and Tony Chapman had taken Mr. Sayama and Mr. Terumine out for a meal and Mr. Sayama had insisted on footing the bill.

Syd had held a farewell party at the Hiroko with saki flowing like water. Everyone was well preserved. Our President has written this event up also elsewhere.

Capt. Johnes asked Syd "how infallible is Mr. Terumini?" Sydney reckoned that he was right 9 times out of 10; - no one is infallible especially in such a difficult subject as ours.

After a short break for refreshments, Alan Bale gave his talk on Mino blades. As Alan felt that he had only undertaken a preliminary investigation, he wished to develop and write up his talk more comprehensively at a later date. The major Mino smiths dealt with were Kaneuji, Kanemoto and Kanesada. By and large, all late Seki blades are rubbish - mass produced for foot soldiers, Kazuchimono. But Alan was mightily impressed by the Kanemoto at the last Christie's sale. Really superb, he felt. Alan pointed out that most late Seki blades were short, 22-24 inches long. This length became unfashionable and many of these blades were cut down to Wakizashi length. Hence the abundance of unsigned Mino blades, when comparatively few wakizashi were made. Alan pointed out that invariably the hada in the shinogi-ji is Masame and the hamon has a pointed shape somewhere along the blade. If you have these characteristics you have a Mino blade. Surprisingly enough, not many Mino blades were brought along to the meeting. Only Bill Baxter had done his duty and brought along his Kanetomo - signed Kaneuji. Alan showed the soshu-den characteristics but with the masame hada of Mino den in the shinogi-ji.

Syd Divers asked if Alan had ever seen a Kanesada "no-sada" which was considered genuine. Only one could be remembered by Alan. Syd thought that you could tell little

from the signatures as they were all nearly alike. You really had to judge each blade on its merit. Alan certainly thought this was true in the case of Kanemoto but here Sydney disagreed. He had made a study of seven Kanemoto's and could detect the individual characteristics of the smith in his signature. Fred Stride said that what appealed to him on some Kanemoto blades was the very pronounced hada. This apparently meant little as the later the smith the coarser the hada became. Fred had obviously seen later generations at work.

Vic Harris showed a Kanemoto hamon on the blackboard which he said just would not reveal its details unless properly polished. Vic went on to illustrate some of Sadamune's work which possibly influenced the shape of the typical Sambon sugi hamon. More on this subject at a later date.

Looking around the meeting, Colin Rollason had a beautifully mounted aikuchi with silver waves on its fittings. The blade was unsigned and looked as if a good polish would really show up a fine blade. The highlight of the mounting was the saya which was of red lacquer, with a very fine silver lacquer dragon on both sides. If I told you how much he had paid for it, you would go beserk! Colin also had a beautiful handachi. The blade dated 1266 and signed Sukesada. The tang seemed to have a modern shape and local experts seemed to think the blade to be much later than its date. I wonder? The scabbard was very tasteful in Aogai work and the tsuba, a pierced design with a silver rim was very fine indeed. Bill Baxter had a very attractive blade in military mounts. Again it might be very early or very late, certainly desirable. The military mounts had a silver family mon on the Tsuka, all adding up to a type of shin gunto sword which is becoming very much sought after.

Federico Luciano had a nice collection of twelve iron tsuba. The more you looked at them, the nicer they appeared. He also had a katana which had seen happier days.

Fred Stride brought along another lost National treasure. A pretty aikuchi blade with itane masame hada and hoso sugu hamon in nie and nioi signed Nagasone Kotetsu Nyudo Okishato. Mounted as a court aikuchi, Fred was considering an offer of £20,000 for it from the usual rich American. Later it was learned that he had refused to part with it and it now joins the Masamune, Sadamune, etc. of his collection.

Malcolm Hutchinson had brought along a blade of very fine shape. Rather rubbed, the hamon looked very satisfying in interrupted sugu-ha. Unsigned but when of this quality, who really worries? It certainly makes one think of front line smiths. Maybe at the next Shinsa, all will be revealed.

THE LONDON SHINSA: SAYONARA

The last evening with our guests by our President, B.W.Robinson.

All who took advantage of the London Shinsa were lost in admiration of the unremitting application of Terumine sensei to the work in hand - the long stream of applicants with their swords, few or many, good or bad, all despatched with exemplary efficiency, speed and courtesy. It was at once a lesson and a nightmare to a museum man. But it was not surprising that at the conclusion of the session, and after an intensive round of sight-seeing, the sensei showed signs of fatigue.

On their last afternoon in London, I had arranged to meet Messrs.Terumine and Sayama, together with Sydney Divers at the Bethnal Green Museum for a look at the Japanese swords, fittings and armour. I arrived on time, but they were already there, and Mr.Terumine was enjoying forty winks with his feet up on one of the seats. By common consent, therefore, we only looked at a few of the outstanding pieces, and our Japanese guests then retired to their hotel for a couple of hours rest before the main event of the day, the farewell dinner arranged at the Hiroko Restaurant in St.Christopher's Place; Sydney Divers being our generous and genial host.

We assembled in the bar for a glass of Japanese biru - Messrs.Terumine and Sayama, our host and the Hon.President being shortly joined by Bon Dale and Neil Davey. Soon after we had taken our seats (your Hon.President not without some creaking of the joints and careful arrangement of legs under the low table) the party was completed. ("We are seven . . .") and enhanced by Miss Makiko ("Daughter of ten thousand joys") Nakagawa, whose highly decorative appearance and lively conversation added much to the evening's enjoyment. The lavish meal was brought on by Hiroko's attentive charming kimono-clad waitresses: a delicate broth in delightful pottery "tea-pots", followed by tempura, leading up to paper-thin slices of superb beef arranged in a double chrysanthemum of many more than sixteen petals and cooked with chopped vegetables and shōyu before our expectant eyes. A constant and liberal supply of warm sake kept the proceedings lively and our host wisely decreed that anybody who mentioned the word katana, or anything connected with it, should buy the next round. Mr.Sayama incurred the first forfeit.

When hunger and thirst had been well satisfied, the company relaxed; Terumine sensei moved round to take sake with the other guests, and some short complimentary speeches were made. Our host then broke into a (possibly ribald?) Japanese song which was heartily applauded; one of our delightful waitresses "obliged" with what sounded like a sentimental ditty;

and Mr. Terumine then gave a vigorous rendering of another song with strong emphasis on the last syllable of each line. Finally the Hon. President felt constrained to sing an old English song of the Momoyama (or Elizabethan) period, which seemed to sum up our sentiments:-

"Sing with thy mouth, sing with thy heart,
Like faithfull friends, sing "Loath to depart";
Though friends together may not alwayes remaine,
Yet "Loath to depart" sing once againe."

This splendid party, we all felt, formed a happy and appropriate close to a very notable visit, which all members of the To Ken Society will long remember. On the way home the Hon. President's thoughts formed themselves into a haiku:

Feet trace a hamon,
Homeward bound from Hiroko,
O-notare.

THE LLOYD COLLECTION

Anyone who remembers seeing the Lloyd collection when it was on full display although apallingly set out, must be concerned at its present state. Rumours have been circulated that the collection was to be moved to York; this letter received by member Scott and reproduced here, offers hope. It does not mention when or where. The British Museum is violating its trusteeship, I believe, as the collection was donated with the condition that it should be on display. I guess these large public bodies can ignore these conditions willy-nilly but I wonder what Lloyd would have felt about his swords. Thanks member Scott for taking an interest in the collection:

"Dear Sir, Thank you for your letter of June 18th. I have delayed answering in the hope that we should receive definite news of the allocation of space in the British Museum for Japanese antiquities. I can now tell you that we shall soon be able to plan the permanent exhibition of the Lloyd collection of Japanese swords. Until then, however, they can be kept only in storage which makes it very difficult to show them to students, both from the point of view of their conservation and of the safety of those handling them. Meanwhile, I enclose a hand list of the swords, made by Commander A.N. Newman for your information."

Yours faithfully, L.R.H. Smith
Assistant Keeper.

The Visit to England by Messrs.Sayama and Terumine by S.V.Divers

After an exhausting and very full 10 day itinerary our two Japanese friends have now arrived home safely. The first thing they did on their return was to report to Dr.Honna and Dr.Sato on the subject of the Shinsa, and I have had a letter of appreciation from Mr.Sayama for all the work entailed by myself, Bon Dale and some To Ken Committee Members in making this a very successful tour.

The Shinsa

No doubt a lot will be written about this and it will be discussed at meetings for some time. This was a fantastic success. Bon Dale and I were rather worried in case not enough members would come to keep it going for the whole 3 days. As you all now know there was hardly any time even for a quick lunch break and the whole three days from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. was booked solid.

Societies and Associations either progress or disintegrate. In the progressive ones there are always landmarks to be picked out. Just as our To Ken Kai Oxford Exhibition organised mainly by Prof.Macfarlane and Bon Dale was a landmark, so can it be said that the Shinsa (I understand it was the first in the West) will always be remembered, as another step forward in the dissemination of knowledge on the arts of the Japanese Sword.

Sword Buying

To defray some of the enormous cost in coming from Japan, hotel bills here, etc. the sword buying session operated in a separate room. It was hoped that the profits made when the swords were resold in Japan would go towards part of the costs of visiting England.

A tremendous amount could be written about this and I made a study of the buyer's and seller's reactions wherever possible on each deal, thanks to those who showed me their swords prior to obtaining offers and who subsequently told me the prices they had obtained. It was important that members received fair prices for their "trade goods" in view of the publicity we had given to the buyer before his arrival and yet leave a sufficient margin of profit for him to cover his costs.

A few remarks here may not come amiss. The retail sword prices in Japan are very much higher than retail prices in England BUT the Japanese wholesale margin is very much larger. The buyer has to assess his buying price allowing for paying immediate cash here, repairs to the swords such as scabbards, add tsuba and tsuka, etc. There is the polishing cost plus obtaining of NBTHK certificates, air freight from London, customs

clearance and permits in Tokyo. Then after all these costs the sword may remain in a shop for 1 to 3 years before it is sold. The financing long term of a quantity of swords thus comes to quite a sum of money.

Notwithstanding all this I cannot but agree with our members' views that the offered prices were going up and down like a yo-yo and bearing little resemblance to the swords offered. Some of our members were delighted with the prices offered, much higher than they ever expected to get. Others were disappointed to find that their treasures were not as valuable as they had hoped. The result of course, was that the better swords were not sold and the lesser swords fetched good prices. In fact, I understand that the very best were not even shown after a general run-down of the assessment had been made, by some members.

On the credit side the buyer made offers without the member having to name a price, and the cash was paid within 3 or 4 days.

There are some fine swords left in England which can be prised out, but I think only by a reasonable consistency in valuations.

On the subject of sword exports, from England, at the last To Ken Kai meeting Andrew Ford mentioned to me that some English dealers were annoyed with us for setting up this Shinsa and sword buying for Japan as this would mean fewer swords left in this country. If these remarks were not so pathetic they would be laughable. Show me a dealer who refuses to sell swords to a Japanese because it will mean that the swords leave this country! We tried our best to get higher prices for our members "swaps" and where offers made were accepted, I think the majority were quite satisfied. If the offer made was insufficient, the member only had to refuse. The members could have sold to English dealers if they wished! They chose to sell to Japan. Only 120 swords approximately left this country as a result of this exercise.

Some Highlights of the English Visit

The To Ken Programme is primarily written for those members who live abroad or who are not regular visitors to our monthly meetings, so the following is really written for them. Bon Dale and myself, taking it in turns, kept our Japanese visitors fully occupied by a comprehensive itinerary for the whole of their 10 day stay. Looking back on it I think this was too much and too hectic. Possibly a couple of days rest for them in the 10 day visit may have been better. There were some amusing incidents however, which made up for the hard "sword slog".

I took our visitors to No.10 Downing Street. The secret is to go by taxi and say in an authoritative voice "No.10 Downing Street". The cab driver took us right up to the door. I noticed a partial salute from the policeman on the left of the steps and by great speed got our visitors to the door, a quick photograph, and back into the cab before anyone knew what was going on. To those who don't know, the crowd is held back on the other side of the street by the police!

To get a good view of the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace, you arrive by cab with one minute to spare. On descent, you go straight up to a policeman holding back the crowd and you have a chat with him on which way the procession is going to take, etc. The sound of drums coming up the Mall makes him politely request you to move back, which you do and you are thus in the front row with a good view of the ceremony!

I took our visitors to the To Ken Kai meeting by underground as they had not travelled this way in London. There appeared to be more tourists than English on the tube.

At Thame Park Sir Frank and Lady Bowden gave us a superb welcome. Those who have been know what I mean. Fine lawns and lake with island and pet cheetah, and masses of food and the amazing English pub built into their 11th century house. All this and hundreds of swords and armours all around the walls and yaris and naginatas. This was more than our visitors could take in in such a short time. Each time I have been to Sir Frank's there is something I haven't seen previously. It never fails to make me bewildered. Our grateful thanks to Sir Frank and Lady Bowden for making our short stay so welcome.

We visited the Bethnal Green Museum and were met by Basil Robinson. How nice it is to go around this place and say: "I like to see that sword" - pointing into a glass showcase. Basil had all the keys with him and opened up any case we wanted. To hold the sword in your hand and to take the peg out and to judge it, is very different from looking at it through a glass case. The polish on the blades is very much better than anything we see from Japan these days, and Basil mentioned that they were last polished during the Meiji period. Some of the armours are magnificent, and the workmanship on the "Kotetsu" sode quite, quite superb.

On the night before departure, I gave a farewell party to our visitors and a few friends at a Japanese restaurant in London. We all sat on tatami and ate and ate. We sang Japanese songs with the waitresses joining in. 18 bottles of sake later Mr. Terumine sang a song! Not to be outdone I sang a Japanese song from the days of the Anglo-Japanese friendship treaty! Basil Robinson sang a song! Anyway, it was a nice round off to a remarkable visit to England for our guests.

SALESROOM by Bon Dale

As promised in the last Programme I will write a rambling report on the last two sales of this season at Sothebys and Christies auction rooms. I think I can say without fear of libel action that both salesrooms scraped around the barrel a little to make up a sale. End of season sales always tend to be like that, but nevertheless both contained some good swords and each room had one excellent sword. Sotheby's also had a "sleeper", that dream of all collectors. It wasn't spotted by anyone, incredible as that may seem, but our Japanese guests were here, and they did not miss it!

Sothebys was first on June 30th. Lot 1, was one of those first lots which need watching from time to time. An interesting blade in military mounts, needing a polish but interesting soshu den, not too cheap however at £88. Lot 7, a wakizashi with a "naginata style" blade, in a fairly good state and well mounted. The blade by Echizen Shimosaka Sadatsugu. Nice sword, it made £145, just about the right price. Lot 9, a Tachi blade by Harimanodaijo Tadakuni, a good blade worth more than the £100 which it made, but it was in a poor state. Lot 11, a very nice katana, well mounted and all in excellent state. A good blade by Hizen Minamoto Hirotsuna; I can't find this man recorded anywhere, made a good figure, £320.

The next lot 12, a tachi blade by five character Tadayoshi, fetched £100, not Shodai I'm sure, but later, still cheapish for these days. Lot 13 a well mounted wakizashi, nice tsuba Ishiguro Masachika and kakihan, not a bad blade, mumei, this one made £110, again a reasonable price. HOKI NO KUNI KURAYOSHI NOJU MASA - and again I can't find him in Hawley or anywhere else, but it was a good wakizashi for £95, Lot 18.

Lots 21 and 21A were both very interesting, both in mint condition, in shirasaya. They were similar in technique, with very active hamon and a lot of exciting business going on, with strange vertical tobiyaki and sunagashi in nie. Both I think excellent Shin-Shinto, the first the better of the two. The first made £260 and the second £110. The signatures? Oh yes - Lot 21 was signed MASAMUNE and Lot 21A was signed YOSHIHIRO, GO of course.....

The sword worthy of real notice was Lot 23. A great tachi blade, over 31 inches, in very good and healthy condition. It was thick, strong and almost heavy, although well balanced. Signed Bizen Norimitsu and dated Eikyo 10 (1439). This blade was a revelation to me, because although I thought it to be very good, the date had me puzzled. I could more easily have believed a date around 1600. But this was a time to listen and learn, it

was judged to be genuine by someone with more experience than any of us, and on the day the blade made a noble £800. It was generally agreed afterwards by the main antagonists that £600 would have been the right price. But, that will be a fine blade when it has been repolished and restored to complete perfection.

The sleeper: Nagayoshi can also be read CHOGI. There was an exquisite little dirk blade in shirasaya and the signature should not have been read Bizen Osafune Nagayoshi in this instance. It had a solid gold habaki too, with a secret or two of it's own, and the sword made a quiet £75. Ah well. And if you don't know who CHOGI was, look him up! "Rotten swine!" says our member in the middle of Siberia with no references; "How can I?!" Alright, I'll tell you - CHOGI was a "Masamune Jutetsu", one of the ten pupils of Masamune.

Just to cheer up the picture, these things can still happen, so keep looking. I have another exquisite dirk beside me at this moment, in blade and mounts. This one has a blade by Masashige, pupil of Muramasa and it's a pip. Forgive me for not saying where that one was very recently bought. Just don't loose heart, "they're around" to coin a phrase from John Anderson.

The tsuba at both Christies and Sothebys were not very exciting on the whole, some nice pieces but generally fairly ordinary iron. The best tsuba probably in either sale and interesting, in the price it fetched, was Lot 158 at Christies. "A Fine Iron Mokko Tsuba, inlaid with paulownia and karakusa scrolls in brass, copper and silver hirazogan - unsigned. Washida School of Yoshiro, 17th century". A very nice piece in excellent condition, it made £170, an indication of what good early iron is worth.

Lot 88 also at Christies (July 5th) will be of interest to tsuba collectors. Described "An Extremely Fine and Important Kinko Tsuba" the subject was Benten seated amongst rocks, with fine work of a river, dragon, etc. worked in various metals. This was by MORIHEI, described as "Japan's only living Kinko artists, mid-20th century". It was in an inscribed and double fitted box which was a masterpiece in itself, it made 340 gns. A macabre note was that unfortunately Morihei died some months ago, and his obituary from a Japanese newspaper was added to the lot.

Perhaps also of interest to collectors; I am not a tsuba man and only can judge them for quality of workmanship. The only thing I did not like about this particular tsuba was the carving of the hands of Benten. I thought them rather coarse and too big when I first viewed it. Later when I viewed with our Japanese guests, Mr. Terumine said that the tsuba was

undoubtedly genuine, because Morihei was recognised as being not very good at hands and feet. So, a point to remember; all these little snippets help to increase our knowledge.

The best sword at Christies was not the most expensive, which is another way of saying that the most expensive swords were not the best. I've said before that price lists after the sale are not always a good guide to the quality of the goods.

Let us take the best first, this was undoubtedly Lot 150, a fine blade in shirasaya signed Kanemoto. My first impressions of this blade was that it might be a later generation of the name, despite a Hakusui origami ascribing it to "first generation". It was big and strong, same story as the Norimitsu, but it was judged to be Magoroku or perhaps 3rd generation. Very nice, it made 460 gns., that is £483. A sound price for an excellent blade.

Of the rest of the many swords, I particularly liked Lot 146, a finely mounted tanto with a good mumei blade which had a sukashi horimono (pierced right through the blade). Not very common. I once had a beauty which I curse myself for having swapped. This made 300 gns., a bit on the high side. For the remainder, many rather average swords made somewhat above average prices, one or two I wouldn't give house room to knocked up nearly £100. Lot 179, which was a nicely mounted aikuchi, but really the blade just did not have any hamon at all, went for 220 gns. A good sword was Lot 180, nice old mumei blade, o-suriage, in good state and well mounted for use not decoration. This made 300 gns. Of the high priced stuff the last lot, a Daisho, both blades in shirasaya, with "papers". Lacquer and mounts in mint condition and very flashy, leapt up to 1,800 gns. in the twinkling of an eye. The other was a fine old set of tachi mounts, with a blade signed Suishinshi Masahide. It made 1,200 gns. It had a "green" paper, which was for the mounts. "Something" by the way happened to my last "Sales report" on the sale of naginata in Birmingham. The final sentence in brackets should have been "Dave Parker tells me that it was over £9,000 for 139 lots" not as it was published for 1390 lots. That price would have been right for some of them!

LETTER from Bartlett Wells, Washington member, who comments:

"Your Programme No.63 has contained interesting things that arouse comment from me. I am glad to see that the Society has bought a bishop (episcopus). It will console you to know that elsewhere in the world bishops come higher than 42 pounds. On page 5 you say that Andy (Ford) "felt the hamon was purely dependent on the way the blade was forged and that the clay covering and patterning didn't do anything". I feel sure that this overstates a case for which, in certain elements of detail,

rather formidable arguments have been advanced. At the risk of repeating things that are very likely already known to you (as they certainly are to B.W. Robinson and some other distinguished figures in this field in England, all of whom receive credits from the author for their help), I should say that in 1957 Professor Cyril Stanley Smith (an Englishman by birth) published the results of a metallographic study of certain Japanese sword blades, plus a resume and critique of written and other material available to him at that time on the making of Japanese swords. It appeared as the second of three articles (this one the only one in English) in "La Tecnica di Fabbricazione delle Lame di Acciaio presso gli Antichi", edited by Professor C. Panseri and issued by the Associazione Italiana di Metallurgia, Milan.

While this is certainly available in most major English libraries and B.W. Robinson certainly has a copy, it may be a bit difficult to get. In 1960 Professor Smith published "A History of Metallography", the English source for which is the Cambridge University Press. This should be readily available at any big library, and while the material on Japanese swords, pages 40-62, is briefer, it has the advantage that it is more recent and incorporates some conclusions of Professor Smith that add to his earlier ones. (Pages 1-70 of the book are good general reading; the remainder is very, very tough going).

Professor Smith's essential sentence in connection with Mr. Ford's argument is on page 59: "Though the principal means of achieving the /hamon/ effect was the shaping of the clay coat to give local variations in the cooling rate during quenching, the incorporation during forging of streaks of steel of different hardenability in the zone of the temperature gradient was also important, for many fine details are on a scale finer than could be achieved by any possible local variations in cooling rate produced by variations in thickness or contour of the superficial insulating layer". He then goes on to say "Lines and streaks of nive away from the hard zone, such as those in Fig. 40 /of the book/, clearly result from a forged in layer of different metal".

I think that until this problem is again analyzed, by someone having the authority of Professor Smith, and able to perform the metallographic analyses he undertook, and having more and new material which would justify a different conclusion, the above quotations must stand as the definitive statement. There would thus seem to be something to Mr. Ford's argument, as related to a secondary process (even though prior in time to the hardening): but the basic element in producing the hamon pattern was the thickness and contour of the protective clay layer above it as contrasted with the thickness above the jigane.

The argument from plasticine is interesting but not persuasive. Professor Panseri, in studying how certain types of lamination in other blades was produced, actually extruded, cold alternate layers of copper and aluminium to produce similar patterns. He was the one, by the way, who suggested the way "forty-steps" pattern is produced in Damascus steel and I supposed settled the matter. It had been supposed that the pattern was produced by filing notches at the "steps" and then forging flat. Panseri pointed out that this would leave the steps coarse in grain, the remainder fine, while the reverse was actually true; so he suggested that the "steps" were beaten thin between swages, and the remainder was then filed flat.

Another interesting thing is that Professor Smith sees that the Gassan jigane pattern was artificial, and that its essential weakness was acknowledged by the manufacturers in that they never allowed this decorative pattern to form part of the hardened edge area. He suggests the welding, to the hard and strong cutting material, of strips pre-patterned and deliberately including slag so as to produce wavy-line contrasts."

LETTER from George Robinson

"The Scottish Military Collectors Society will be holding a Militaria Fair on Saturday and Sunday, 25th and 26th September 1971 from 9.00 a.m. - 6.0 p.m. each day.

The Fair is being held in the Appleton Tower, Crichton Street, Edinburgh which is a University building of modern design and has excellent facilities for exhibitors and the trade. We would like to invite any of your members to the Fair and wondered if you would mention it in your Journal? All enquiries should be sent to:

Capt. A.H.Hughes
Branch Secretary,
S.M.C.S.
7 Livingstone Place,
Edinburgh 9. Scotland

Would you also be interested in exchanging Journals with us? We have an exchange list of 50 and our own "Dispatch" is produced as a bi-monthly. We would appreciate your help in giving us a mention."

Yours faithfully,
George Robinson.

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.

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,
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Yew Cottage,
Station Road,
Eynsford, Kent.

M.E.Read Esq,
64 Burton Bank Road,
Monk Bretton,
Barnsley, Yorks.

M.Davis Esq,
33 Selsdon Road,
Upton Park,
London E.13 9BY

J.R.Deuchars Esq,
P.O.Box 1101,
Sun Valley,
California 91352. U.S.A.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS:

B.W.Thomas Esq,
c/o 59 Little Collins Street,
Melbourne,
Victoria
Australia 3000.

Stephen D.Cooley Esq.,
2516 E.Riviera Drive,
Tempe,
Arizona 85281,
U.S.A.

R.J.Sanders Esq,
46 Park Lane, (Not 47 as on list of Members)
Ramsden Heath,
Nr.Billericay,
Essex.