

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

We Retired Dec. '71.



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. 65

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 1971.

NEXT MEETING Monday, 6th December 1971, 7.30 p.m. at the Princess Louise, High Holborn. To get there, come to Holborn Kingsway Tube, turn West, cross the Kingsway and the P.L. is 50 yards on the left-hand side.

APOLOGIES for lateness of this Programme. Last Meeting on Monday, November 1st will be reported in the next Programme.

Vic Harris recently returned from Japan gave a talk on the Japanese sword which was well received and which will be fully discussed in Programme due before the January meeting.

DECEMBER SUBJECT. Andy Ford will discourse on Horimono. Please bring blades with horimono.

RETIRING CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

With a feeling of déjà-vuonce more I retire as Chairman and this time with great pleasure welcome John Anderson as the new Chairman of the To-Ken Society of G.B. It is time for an infusion of new blood, unfortunate phrase not intended! into the affairs of the Society. I'm sure John will carry on the flag with great success, ably assisted by Syd Divers as Vice-Chairman. John Anderson is, of course, well known to members as the authority on Japanese armour, and author of a book on the subject. I hope we may see a little more emphasis on his subject to counteract the overdose of swords, to which this Society is exposed. Countless times in these pages I've pleaded, and I mean pleaded, for someone to write about something other than swords. So, those of you with armour, write in and let us see a change, and let us all broaden our minds a little. Pure sword collectors can be a very narrow lot.

Another change in the Society's affairs. Ci Dale has earned her retirement from the arduous duties of Secretary, and business and pressure of work make it necessary for her to ask to be replaced. Andrew Ford has taken on the job and I'm sure he will be a great success and carry the Society along with his great enthusiasm. We have another great spirit in

the form of our Treasurer, Bill Baxter. As retiring Chairman, I put a project to this throbbing power house of enthusiasm, something to get their teeth into. Let us have another "To-Ken Exhibition". It's time we made our mark again; it is nearly four years since the Ashmolean exhibition. It will take at least a year to organise, this time let it be in London. I know Bill Baxter is in favour, he suggested it first! It only needs the decision to be made, so how about setting about it? We will all buckle to and help with the organisation of exhibits. We have lots of new talent in the Society to produce a catalogue and illustrations; four years ago there were fewer of us to do all these things. That exhibition was the first of its kind since 1910; we don't want to wait another fifty-eight years before the next! Members pick up your pens and pour in some enthusiasm. Committee - let us have a bigger and better exhibition, now is the time to start!

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Because of the above changes the Society's Headquarters address will be changed. It is traditional that the Society's address is the same as the Secretary's, therefore, the new address will now be:

Andrew Ford,
Secretary To-Ken Society G.B.
17, Stanley Park Road,
Carshalton Beeches, Surrey. Tel: 643 1130.

Communications should be now sent to this address. The present address will, of course, continue to handle mail and forward to Andrew until the change becomes established.

LAST MEETINGS.

September - The meeting started off with a discussion of Club business. Who will be our new Chairman when Beloved Bon retires? Volunteers and proposers were called for but candidates seem to be thin on the ground. Possibilities were John Anderson in the Chair, and Mole Benn and Syd Divers as contenders for the Vice. Basil Robinson proposed Sydney who accepted nomination when he realised the fun involved. Bon had sounded out Andy Ford as to what he felt about being the new Club Secretary as Ci also wished to enjoy a well-earned rest. The remainder of the Committee expressed themselves willing to stand for re-election and it was mooted that Brian Turner should become a fully elected member.

Changing topics, the Arms Fair was to be held on the 24-25th September. It was asked, that a reminder to

members should be sent out. It wasn't, unfortunately, so many members didn't realise the show was on. There were lots of swords there too! Members at this and the subsequent meeting, October, raised the question of lack of information about dates of interesting happenings. Your Programme Sec. is well aware of the gap in communications, but at least two months plus notice is usually required to get forthcoming events into the Programme. People usually cannot firm dates up that far in advance and then frequently the Society is not informed until the last few weeks before an event. In many cases, as in the Imperial Household collection exhibition at the British Museum, your Programme Sec. only learnt about the event when the exhibition was on! Anyway, what is the Club going to exhibit at the Arms Fair? No one seems willing to loan anything and Mole expressed criticism concerning the Club's effort at advertising at the Fair. Vic Harris mentioned that in the next few days, Mr. Ogawa, Dr. Homma's secretary was to visit him for a week. He wished to see the best of the English collections, and Vic was asking for help and suggestions. In the event, Mr. Ogawa managed to see the whole of the Lloyd Collection, which in itself shows the high regard for Mr. Ogawa and Vic's door-opening abilities. The meeting was adjourned for 10 minutes for everyone to get their glasses filled and Bon settled down to give an illustrated talk on Tachi, broadly based on an article by W.M. Hawley, which is reproduced in this issue.

The profusion of variation in Tachi design lends itself to a very interesting study. I would like to hear more on this subject particularly on the etiquette of wearing court tachi. What were the circumstances that warranted the wearing of one form of tachi mounting as against another? Fascinating stuff this! Maybe in time we will know.

There were a number of swords present but the one which caught my eye was a massive Tanto blade by Nagayoshi owned by Brian-of-the-Blades Turner. Possibly it could be a Yoroitoshi; the blade had a good shape with a large groove on each side of the blade. The hamon had lots of sunagashi and looked as if a good polish would make the blade a real eye-catcher. This blade was in a recent sale and to me, is a case that the blade made a great impact when Brian showed it but not when I saw it at the auction. Curious!

October. - Your Programme Sec. hangs his head in shame. After urging everyone to come to the A.G.M. he arrives too late for the meeting! Apparently, there were no fireworks and the elections went as predicted. There was also a Japanese visitor who was knowledgeable, so it should have been a good evening.

By 9.30 it looks as though word had got about that there was a cholera epidemic. Everyone had gone home save Andy Ford, Bill Baxter and yours truly. There was a good reason for our tardiness. Bill had brought to my notice that at 6.15 that evening at the Victoria and Albert Museum a certain gentleman scholar by name B.Dale, was to give a public lecture on the Feudal Age in Japan. Members will be delighted that this lecture, one of a series sponsored by the University of London, gives Bon public recognition of his expertise. There was a surprisingly large audience and Bon's discourse was received very well. Simon, Bon's great hope, drove the episcopo like a Ferrari to provide the many slides. Bon had gotten John Anderson to provide a suit of armour to lend colour to the lecture. It was kept under a cloth until the appropriate moment when it was unveiled. An audible gasp of delight was heard from the audience and no wonder. The suit was stupendous. The colour and glitter and overwhelming sense of alien wars was overwhelming. A feast to the eyes which well deserves the superlatives I've lavished upon it. Bon had also brought along some swords loaned by Sir Frank. A fine tachi, a daisho and a dragon-head tanto; all of which one could eulogise upon quite happily at length. I won't because there was yet another which gave me the glazed-eyed appearance and covetous twitch. Apparently, Bon when on a visit to Sir Frank, had been shown some rusty old blades laying in a cupboard. Bon saw one of superlative shape and recommended that it should be polished. Here it was, looking glorious, having received Toku Betsu Keicho and an attribution to Ko Aoye Kunimitsu working in the mid-Kamakura period. When you see a shape like this, one realises how unsatisfying anything after Yoshino, really is. Bon engineered the talk to enable Sir Frank to demonstrate the sharpness of this particular blade. A sheet of newspaper was held vertically by two apprehensive volunteers. Sir Frank gave a vertical cut and clean as a whistle, the page was severed. The slow collapse of the cut page seemed to be a shot from a Kurosawa duel. Very impressive, although if it had been a sword of mine, I don't think I would have taken the risk of damage. To round off the lecture, Bon showed a film, new to me, on the making of a sword by a Living National Treasure.

It emphasised to me the wonderful creation that derives from the noise, heat and dirt of a smithy. This film is worth a lot more discussion than this passing reference. When next shown at the Club, it will be a good time to analyse it further.

OCTOBER MEETING - Report by Bill Baxter

Business: No further names having been put forward for consideration as Committee Members for the next 12 months and there being no dissentient votes, the following were declared elected:

Chairman: John Anderson
 Vice-Chairman: Syd Divers.
 Malcolm Hutchinson,
 Alan Bale.
 Prog.Secretary: Fred Stride.
 Treasurer: Bill Baxter.
 David Parker
 Mole Benn
 Brian Turner
 David Butler

with Andy Ford taking over from Ci Dale as the new Secretary.

It is understood that Syd's other commitments will prevent him being able to give full attention to Committee matters but he has expressed willingness to undertake the job of Chairing Society meetings in John Anderson's absence. The take over by Andy Ford from Ci Dale of the onerous duties of Secretary, may of necessity be a lengthy business so please continue to forward any outstanding subscriptions etc. to Ci until an announcement is made in these pages to the contrary.

Bon will not sever connections completely and will assist Fred with the programme but both he and Ci feel that the time has come for them to sit in the back row at our meetings, and let someone else have a chance.

Bon, as mentioned at the last meeting, had been in correspondence with Japan (NBTHK) in an endeavour to obtain some sword slides but he has now heard that only 15 are available, and that they are not in fact, in a suitable condition for screening. However, 2 films have been promised instead (subjects unknown) and with any luck they should be available in the next few weeks.

Visitors: We were pleased to extend a welcome to several new friends, amongst whom were corresponding member, Clive Jackson from Newcastle and Ogawa Morihiro who came as the guest of Vic Harris.

Swords on View: Vic Saville had a nice daisho with both blades by one of the Sukesada's, the katana signed and the wakizashi attributed to the same man. The saya's were of polished samé, the tsuba iron rice sheafs in positive silhouette and the fuchi kashira showing those familiar generals crossing that well known river. He also had another katana signed Bizen Hiromitsu that had a rather pleasant unbound hilt in polished samé.

Ilen Holtaway produced one of his gems - a long sword signed Nanki Shigekuni in Shingunto mounts but with a wooden saya lacquered to look like the usual army metal scabbard, the graining of the blade was most delicate and it was of very elegant shape - altogether most desirable.

The writer showed his Naval Tachi signed Kunitsugu with three mekugi ana, suriage and ascribed to the Uda School in Etchu province.

Capt. Johnes added a touch of hilarity to a rather quiet meeting by producing a "jingasa". It was of iron, very thin and embossed with a dragon and about 2 inches diameter. What purpose it had originally served defeated us all; I will not elaborate on some of the ribald suggestions.

Comment: It was a pity that this, the most important Society meeting date of the year when the members decide upon the people to guide activities for the ensuing year, should have been so poorly attended, not only by "back-benchers" but also by Committee Members. As far as some of the latter were concerned we can only lay the blame on whoever was responsible for the unfortunate choice of the same day and time for your outgoing Chairman's lecture at the V. & A. Museum, which I feel he is now duty bound to give to the Society at a future date.

The question of finding suitable subjects for discussion at meetings is always difficult but I think Syd Divers has as a result of his comments about the correct pronunciation of Sukesada (apparently the 'U' is dropped) found himself a job for one of our future gatherings. Who better qualified than someone who has spent some time in Japan? So how about it, Syd?

NEWS FROM THE NORTH

Due to particularly early publication of our August issue, News from the North has two entries., one from Ian Bottomley and Steven Turnbull.

"Last meeting held on July 20th was an unusual and interesting talk, or rather discussion lead by Joe Jolly on

sword polishing. The main points brought out were that normal European polishing techniques are alright for shaping up a blade and for removing rust pits and scratches, but are of no use at all for the finishing process. For this a very soft abrasive is needed, something the Japanese always refer to as 'limestone'. Now, as Joe pointed out, limestone is not one type of rock but a generic term added to which calcium carbonate crystallises in other forms as well, so where does one start? Joe's answer has been to collect samples of rocks from all over the place, including coal-tips and monumental masons and try them out. Judging by the samples he brought along he must have covered some ground and acquired quite a rockery, but he assured us that he is winning slowly and that it is only a matter of time before he masters the mechanics of the process, the artistic side being another matter. Finally, Joe handed round some examples of his work and there was no doubt about it that he was working along the right lines; for my part I wish you all the best - you'll need it!

Next meeting at the 'Seven Oaks', Nicholas Street, Manchester on the 21st of September at 7.30 p.m. and will be a repeat of our popular not to mention hilarious type of blade judging session. (Will a certain member not put down Bizen Province for every item on the principle that it is bound to be right sometimes!) Please bring along blades that are characteristic of a smith or school, the more the merrier so that we can select some good ones.

Since it is sometime since there has been anything in the Programme about armour, and since I have given up swords for the same, I include a short article about one of the lesser known schools, the Unkai. I must stress that the observations made in it are mine, and made from a relatively small quantity of material and subject to criticism. I believe however, that they are essentially accurate and are at least a start in getting away from the Miochins, which have dominated the scene for too long in spite of their excellence.

September Meeting. The September meeting was held on Tuesday, 21st September at the Seven Oaks Hotel, Manchester. 11 members attended.

Concern was expressed over the long delay suffered by swords sent by the Society to Japan for polishing. One member had heard nothing of his blade for 18 months. The suggestion was made that each blade sent should be allocated a number, and the progress of each blade be reported in the pages of the To Ken newsletter. One or two members voiced the opinion that there was some delay between sending blades to London and their despatch to Japan. Could anyone shed light on the problem?

Following a suggestion by the Chairman, it was agreed that in future all meetings should commence at 20.00 instead of 19.30.

Forthcoming Meetings: All to be held at the Seven Oaks Hotel, Nicholas Street, Manchester.

November 16th: Talk on "Lacquer" by John Kilner
January 18th '72: Talk on 'The Japanese Warrior Monks' by Stephen Turnbull

March 15th '72: Talk on 'Polearms' by Ian Bottomley
Shinsa - see report below.

A.O.B. A discussion was held on whether the Society's meetings should be held monthly. It was agreed to stay as at present.

Shinsa

Passing judgment on a work of art is always more daunting and considerably more difficult than merely examining and describing. Judging swords is a process fraught with snares, for example, a good polish can make an inferior blade look first-rate to a casual glance. As one of our members commented, "All that glitters is not Masamune". I felt a certain trepidation at first, realising my lack of experience, but as time passed confidence developed. By the end of the evening I felt I had learnt a lot, and we were all pleasantly surprised to find such a close correlation between various members' assessments of the same blade. One or two 'puzzles' provided a wide spread of opinion, and it was generally agreed that all members knew to some extent what to look for in a sword blade.

Nine blades were brought for the shinsa. Members were asked to award points from 0 to 10 for quality of shape, yakiba, boshi, forging and tang. I was unable to make a list of all those submitted, but they included an interesting Tadayoshi (8th generation) and a katana blade (late Koto), signed Mito Kanemitsu.

The blade that was awarded the highest number of points was brought along by Bryan Bateman. This was a tachi, signed Arikuni, with a horimono by Umetada Mioju.

Thanks are due to all who brought blades along, and to Bill Ince, whose incisive mathematical brain computed the totals in record speed.

The UNKAI ARMOURERS by Ian Bottomley

Unlike swordsmiths who generally signed their work with their name (or someone else's) and some biographical details; armourers, except for the Miochin, seemed to have

been a rather modest lot. The result is that most of the armour making groups are known to us by name only. One such group is the Unkai.

What do we know of them? Very little; we know they were based on the province of Kaga and that they made high quality and highly individual armours. It is this individuality of style that makes Unkai work so readily recognised.

Starting at the top: the helmet can be of any shape or even the work of another group, but the tehen - kanemono will be of iron splashed with sawari. Tsuba collectors will know this style of decoration as gama - hada. The lowest stage will be of lobed outline rather like a circle of Aoi leaves (1).

The shikoro is generally of ko - manju shape and laced with groups of vertical laces. The fukigayeshi often carry iron bonji rather than the usual mon (1&2).

The most notable feature about the do will be that the backplate will be extended rather high giving it a humped appearance. Watagami are often hinged to the back plate. The lining of the do seems to be really characteristic and it will be of lacquer with a curious cloth textured surface, as opposed to the more usual leather lining. Examples seen by the author have been either gold or red. One very un-Japanese feature found on do made by the Unkai is the use of curved plates laced under the armpits (3), a feature found on European armours. Do, like other parts of the armour, may well be decorated with applied ironwork (4&5) once again splashed with sawari and held in place by curious spherical headed rivets. Decoration often has a strong religious theme (6) with a vague Namban feeling about it. Something almost impossible to express in words although once recognised it is obvious. The word weird has been used, and it does seem apt in some cases, although the skill with which it is carried out results in splendid effects.

From all this it can be seen that the Unkai were primarily the makers of striking and often splendid parade armours for wealthy patrons, although there are armours by this group that are very functional and completely undecorated. An attempt to compile a family tree is as yet impossible because of the lack of inscriptions but it is to be hoped that these will come to light in the future as more people take an interest in armour.

- References:
1. H.Russell Robinson, FSA: 'Japanese Arms & Armour'. Plate 47
 2. L.J.Anderson: 'Japanese Armour'. Plate 56
 3. ibid Plate 26.
 4. H.Russell Robinson FSA: 'Japanese Arms and Armour'. Plate 49.

5. ibid Plates 38 & 39

6. ibid Plate 31.

JAPANESE MILITARY SWORDS

Ron Gregory has worked hard and long to produce a short handbook on military mounts and blades. I might add that I managed to translate a modern signature with its help within a few days of obtaining my copy. A must for all students of the sword and at a reasonable price of £1.25 per copy. Please send your cheques etc. Direct to the publishers - Elliott & Snowdon Ltd., 75A York Street, London, NOT to the To Ken Society. Elliott & Snowdon are the only suppliers.

AUTUMN ARMS FAIR Cumberland Hotel, London. Sept. 24th & 25th.
Report by W.L. Baxter.

Your Committee decided that the Society's stand needed a more colourful approach, i.e. less Shirasaya blades and something more likely to arrest the eye of casual passers-by. Well, it certainly got just that, as a result of the wonderful display of spectacularly mounted swords that Fred Stride produced from his archives. Fred stood guard over them all day on Friday and is the obvious man to give the best descriptive write-up, so I'll leave it to him to cover them and give his impression of Friday's activities.

Eds.note: Fred exhibited a sword stand of pleasing proportions in black lacquer and gold tendrils all over. On the stand was an ornate small katana with mounts of cloisonné enamel en suite. The saya with a fierce dragon in brown lacquer holding a large mother-of-pearl tama. The blade signed Sanetsugu. The other sword was a wakizashi with Fuchi kashira signed Ishiguro Masatsune of cranes, the very large circular menuki of plaque form of moon on water and flowers. The tsuba of square shape with shoki and an oni in high relief in the style of Nara Toshinaga. The blade 16½ ins. signed: Bishu Osafune No Ju Nin Yokoyama Kodzuke No Daijo Fujiwara No Sukesada. The saya in black lacquer with gold and silver mons inlaid. Fred also had an aikuchi in silver mounts and green aogai lacquer, the blade with a Fudo and waterfall horimono signed Kanemoto, also a hamidashi tanto with an ebi saya. The mounts of iron with ishime ground. The menuki were kiri mon and the tsuka has "elephant hairs" binding. The blade signed Hizen Tadayoshi. There was a tanto with Goto type mounts of flowers of the seasons, the lacquer work in gold also in this motif. The soshu shaped blade signed Soshu no Ju Akihiro with a horimono of a ken and spear with a bonji. Fred also showed four tsuba; one Kyoto-Tsu Kashi of a chrysanthemum, another of mokume iron with the eight trigrams; another with Fukuro kufu

feeding his crane in shakudo signed Shunshodo Konkwan and the last in Sentoku of three silver egrets on a willow tree signed in sosha Jochiku.

As usual Alan Bale was in charge of the stand throughout both days and I took over from Fred for Saturday's stint. The big trouble that faced us on the second day was that a new display had to be mounted in the absence of Fred's armoury which had returned home with him on Friday night. We still had our President's superb Kabuto and some fine tsuba, he had also provided, and Alan's Sadamune but the stall would have had a decidedly naked look with these alone, so Alan decided to again show his Tadayoshi Aikuchi and several tsuba which had attracted deserved attention at the last Fair and I dug out a couple of tsuba and my Korekazu Ishido school sword. Happily, we also managed to persuade Brian Turner to loan his fine Nobukazu tachi which many will recall on show at the Princess Louise when we entertained honoured guests Sayama and Terumine.

Herewith a rundown of the pieces mentioned above other than those previously displayed, and written up for the last Arms Fair. Our President's Kabuto was spell-binding, made by Yoshisada (18th cent.) it consisted of 120 plates of russet iron with 4 shakudo lamés and dark blue lacing decorated throughout with Tokugawa mon in rich shakudo, the whole piece in mint condition and weighing about a ton; that anyone could carry such a weight on his head and still be able to fight seems most unlikely - I feel sure that those 120 beautiful minute plates were intended just to show what an armourer could produce if he set his mind to it - and how well he had succeeded.

Our tsuba display included Basil Robinson's very nice Goto school (c.1630) of oval shape with a gilt mimi styled as bamboo with its leaves also in gilt, spreading over the surface of the tsuba. There was also an eye-catching mokko shape in pronounced swirling mokume of mixed copper, silver and shakudo with a thick shakudo mimi; it was most unusual in that the grain went right through the metal as was clearly visible in the central aperture. Another mokko in sentoku was signed Hirado Ju Kunishige (c.1720) and showed a finely incised dragon in the clouds.

New items not previously exhibited by Alan were two very fine kodzuka, one by Hagiya Kasuhei (c.1860) in silver and beautifully detailed in gold, silver, copper and shakudo showing rats at the foot of a man who is spilling the contents of a tray, the other a Mino Goto of very dark shakudo being a conversion from a kogai and showing a line of finely detailed mantis. He also showed an aikuchi lacquered overall in gilt incorporating Hosokawa and Kiri mons; the blade signed Bishu Ju Shigeyasu and dated 1365 of

hiratzukeri shape with gomabashi grooves showed slight signs of tiredness but no flaws were discernable and I agree with Alan that only a very light polish was all that was called for to complete a most presentable ensemble.

Brian Turner's elegant and soberly mounted tachi of massive proportions signed tachi mei Tamba Ayabe Ju Unju Fujiwara Nobukazu and katana mei "In late winter of the first year of the cycle in the period Genji made this in the palace of Inouye Shishu at Southern Aoi, Yedo", had en suite mounts of heavy nanako silver shibuichi with gold mon throughout, the saya of mottled brown lacquer incorporating a dragon design; the whole giving the impression of printed leather.

My own Korekazu, Omi Ishido Group (17th cent.) Katana completed our sword display; this has the school's typically exaggerated choji-ha yakiba and is mounted in a plain vermilion lacquered saya. An interesting background note to this sword is that documentary evidence came with it showing it originally to be the property of Daimyo Akiyama and a family heirloom. After his heir had been baptised into the English Catholic Church, it was given to the officiating priest as a gift of remembrance of the momentous occasion. When the new owner was dying (1930) he in turn bequeathed the sword to his doctor in gratitude for long and valued service.

It was an interesting coincidence that both Brian's and my sword came together for Nobukazu, originally of Ayabe in Tamba but later of Asabu in Musashi, was a pupil of Korekazu and member of the Ishido school.

Brian Turner, Don Bayney, Syd Divers and Ron Gregory put in long periods of attendance at one stand but I'm not at all sure that it wasn't the beaming smile of "Mrs. Ron" that proved one of our better selling points, for the coincidence that we took most money from sale of Society literature when she was on hand, was remarkable. The expertise to be expected from the wife of our latest author was also evident as I well remember her business-like turning of pages of one of the Japanese text books on hand, to produce pictures of a swordsmith at work to reinforce a point Ron was expounding to a visitor.

Several visiting members commented on the large number of Japanese swords spread throughout the Fair - far more than on previous occasions and I am certain that many of the purchases made will in due course, be on display at the Princess Louise. As usual the majority of items on offer were valued too highly but patient negotiations could produce happy conclusions especially during the last mad

"knock down" half-hour on Saturday evening. By and large there were no pieces of exceptional note on view although Stephen Yorke had a fair daisho with an extremely attractively grained wakizashi blade; another well-known dealer had a rather nice nodachi which I recall he purchased included in a bundle of European swords at Sotheby's about 6 months ago - I remember because I was an underbidder; the same stall had a most intriguing collapsible swordrack which consisted of little more than two pieces of wood at right angles joined by hinges, lacquered overall and decorated with Tokugawa mon; this was discovered only a few days previously in a London street market.

I regret having to report that sale of Society literature was slight although it is believed Ron's book sold well privately; however, there were a fair number of enquiries on the Saturday at least and it can only be hoped that many of the Application Forms taken will be returned completed by new members.

Editor's Comment:

I was at the Arms Fair all of Friday. I have been sceptical of Mole's criticism of our efforts there but now I wholeheartedly agree with him. I would go even further. Should we be there at all? On the Friday, we were completely disorganised. Most people thought we were an extension of a book-seller who really cramped us. The table site was poor which is the luck of the draw, I guess, but our lack of large notices or publicity stills is inexcusable. That apart, on the Friday less than half-a-dozen people were interested in the Club; so it is a very expensive method of recruiting members. Do we need to anyway?

Serious collectors hear about us sooner or later and by which time they know what society they wish to join, if at all. So, I feel that the Club should save its money and stop providing us privileged members with a good day out. What's your reaction to it? After all, it is your Club's funds that are used!

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TACHI IN JAPAN by W.M.Hawley

This is the article which formed the basis of Bon's talk in September. We are indebted to W.M.Hawley and the Southern California Sword Club for permission to publish:

The earliest swords in Japan came with settlers and traders from foreign countries, but the earliest known types appear to have originated in China. Among these are a number of elaborate tachi types now preserved in the Shosoin

Repository in Nara. The tachi is a slung mounting hanging from a belt or sash by chains or leather straps.

The early books describe many swords of various types. The bronze Chinese ch'ien appears to have been the prototype for two styles of sword in Japan - the short double-edged ken which retains the Chinese name as pronounced in Japan. It is now associated with Buddhist rituals. The other is the long double-edged sword which was straight and mounted in tachi style. This in turn developed into a long straight single-edged blade which gradually developed increasing curvature.

The book Honcho Gunkiko says that blades called tsurugi in Japanese are described by the same ken character which is variously read as ken, tsurugi, or tachi when written in kana. These could have either one or two edges, or sometimes one and one half, having the back sharpened half-way down from the point. At various times, the word tachi was used for swords in general, regardless of mountings. Later the word tachi was confined to the slung type long sword with the term kotachi for a shorter version.

The earliest extant blades were dug out of burial mounds dating from about 500 to 800 AD. They ranged from 1'8" to 4' long overall.

A sword made by Amakuni had two edges on the upper half and was called Tsurugi-no-tachi.

In the illustrations herewith, taken from the Honcho Gunkiko, No.1 is called Tamamaki-no-tachi and is now in the Shosoin. No.2 shows the sword in a famous picture of Prince Shōtoku Taishi who was a Regent about 625 AD.

Certain types of decorative fittings together with different coloured cords on tachi indicated the rank of the wearer. It is doubtful if these swords were intended for fighting but were used for court ceremonial appearances. In the wars of the Gosannen (1036-1089) the style called Itomaki-tachi (No.6) was worn.

The cord wrappings and probably some leather coverings date from before glue was used to hold the two halves of handle and scabbard together. Some scabbards are shown which are wrapped their full length. Even after glue was used, metal reinforcing rings around the saya form part of the traditional mountings of the tachi.

The braid wrapping of part of the saya next to the tsuba was continued as it furnished a better grip for drawing the blade quickly in the rain when a smooth saya would be slippery, especially if the habaki stuck due to water.

to water swelling the mouth of the scabbard. A stuck sword in a slippery saya might even result in stripping the suspension rings off the scabbard, making it impossible to draw the blade, so the braid wrappings made sense.

In the old days, on public occasions, the nobles wore a black lacquer tachi while an attendant carried a silver mounted tachi called Shiratachi. This was before the Kamakura period.

In Ashikaga times, a gift of a tachi, to or from a lord was accompanied by the gift of a horse and other things, but as the country became impoverished by the long fighting, these gifts degenerated to where the gift tachi was no more than a cheap iron substitute wrapped to look like an itomaki tachi, and a few coins substituted for the horse!

In the period from 1530 to 1570 a very long sword called Ō-tachi came into being. Normally about 2'7" long with an extra long handle, it was strapped to the back with the handle over the shoulder. When used this way they were called nodachi or nagatachi.

By 1730 a type of nodachi was in use having a saya decorated with lacquer and mother-of-pearl.

In the old days, covers made of tiger tails were popular on tachis.

Referring to the illustrations again, the Honcho Gunkiko shows several other types of tachi, No.3 being Sugaru-no-tachi which has an early type of shitogi tsuba, and No.4 Shinsaku-no-tachi which has no guard at all. Up to this time these blades were straight or very slightly curved. No.5 shows the usual shitogi tsuba on a blade with a very definite curve.

No.6 the Itomaki tachi has a very pronounced curve that was suitable for the slicing action needed to cut the padded cloth and boiled leather armour that preceded the metal armour and helmets.

In fighting from horseback, the long tachi was effective and the scabbard presented no problem, but as horses were used up in battles faster than they could be replaced, the armies were soon on foot.

The foot soldier found the hanging scabbard a nuisance, getting in the way of his legs and requiring two hands to draw it. Also, on drawing a sword edge down it was not in a fighting position as it came out of the scabbard. Then, the length made it difficult to keep from hitting the ground, so the katana came into being. This was 6" to a foot shorter than the usual tachi and was worn edge up in the sash where it was tied down so it could be drawn with one hand

and in fighting position.

Tachis were still worn by generals on horseback, and they remained the proper sword for court or ceremonial use. In later times, fashion dictated the late Kamakura period, light, curved, normal length tachi styles for formal wear.

From the 1850's through the early Meiji period, many very fine tachis were produced for ceremonial wear. Two general types were in favour. One used the shitogi tsuba with or without engraving on the fittings which were of brass, silver, or gold or silver plated. Another type featured the three layer Aoi type tsuba with either engraved decoration on the fittings or shakudo nanako ground with gold mon mostly Tokugawa. Lacquer scabbards show various grades of lacquer from the best to poorest with designs of dragons, flowers, mon, etc. Another type has a Hoho bird, the mythological phoenix, draped over the handle. As the phoenix is the symbol of the Empress, this would be suitable for the officers in charge of guarding the women's quarters of the palace to wear.

Today, we see many imitations of these types made of poor quality lacquer and fittings that are cast with little or no handwork, cheaply gilded or silvered, which is usually worn off in places. Blades found in these are always poor quality or very tired, sometimes with bad flaws which have been covered up with crude horimono. These swords are made to sell as gift swords as described in my talk No.23. This is the type to display where your guests can leave their finger prints!

ART TREASURES FROM THE JAPANESE IMPERIAL COLLECTION

The visit of the Emperor was highlighted with an exhibition of objects from the Imperial Collection. It was laid out in the splendidly refurbished Upper Gallery in the British Museum. There were no swords but consisted principally of scrolls and screens. As one entered the area, a large painting of a peafowl by Maruyama Okyo (1733-1835) with very powerful colouring held the attention. This was painted by him at the age of 44 and the subject was a favourite one for him. There were some fine examples of calligraphy by the Emperors Fushimi and Goyogai. Fushimi was a renowned scholar of waka verse and a celebrated calligrapher. He had written a chapter of the Ise Monogatari in precise brush strokes in graduating shades of black ink. The paper was Torinoko decorated in the Asahide technique of a pen drawing of reeds with the script hidden at times amongst the foliage.

For vivid colour, there were 6 scrolls from a set of 12 of the Flowers and Birds of the 12 months by Sakai Horitsu

(1726-1825). The months depicted here were March (blossom and birds), April (tree peonies and butterflies), May (iris and waterbirds), June (hollyhocks and hydrangeas), July (corn and morning glory), August (pampas grass and the moon). This artist was trained in the Kano school and was eventually strongly influenced by Korin whose style can be seen in these pictures. There were two very large and busy screens of the panorama of Kyoto. Undoubtedly, a tour de force and an invaluable source of interest for the architectural layout of 17th century Kyoto, but not to my taste! There were two other large screens which I found also highly horrible. These important screens in Western style painting showed a map of the world and its important cities during the Momoyama period. A fun thing, I guess. A pair of magnificent scrolls of waterfalls were by Yokoyama Taika (1868-1958) - a living National Treasure of his day. These were painted in 1928 for the Imperial Household. This artist experimented with many techniques and earned a place amongst the best of his day. These particular paintings were in the grand traditional manner, and of great power using only black on white with grey shading. There were a number of small scrolls; a particularly fascinating one of the late Kamakura era showing wonderful descriptive detail draughtsmanship extremely clearly. This was the Takafusa - Kyo Tsufa - Kotoba Emaki. The scroll painted by Goshin was also interesting. Portraits of seated courtiers in a very sombre style but all wearing tachi. Just as I was about to leave, I saw what to my mind was the gem of the collection.

A magnificent copy of the Konkomyo-Saishoo-Kyo, a Bhuddist scripture, in gold script on a shiny purple paper. It was in absolutely mint condition and dated from the 8th century. Written in formal script (Kai) the effect was breathtaking. It is normally kept at the Nara Museum. A pity there were no martial artforms but these would have been out of keeping with the political climate. The peripheral arts (to us) do have a place in our programme since they undoubtedly set the flavour and background for our artform.

WHERE IS IT NOW?

I've received a newspaper cutting from the Times of approx. 1917. It describes a gift sword with a picture, of a sword presented to King Albert of the Belgians. The sword is a Tachi with Tsune mons on the saya. The paper reports a Mr. Sugrimura as saying:

"The offering of this sword, the soul of the Samurai, which Mr. Murayama begs you graciously to accept, is an endeavour to express the very high appreciation of the people

of Japan for the brave nation of the West whose heroism has been recognised throughout the world.

Mr. Murayama has chosen this sword from his art collection. The blade was made in 1577 by a famous smith named Nakagawa Shichiroyemon-no-jo Yuki-hane, who lived at Osafune, in the province of Bizen, in Western Japan, and died in 1588. Bizen is celebrated for having good sword-blade makers in ancient times."

Mr. Murayama was a newspaper proprietor. I wonder where the sword is now? Maybe some of our keen sleuths can winkle out news of its whereabouts.

SALESROOM by Bon Dale

This is not a sales report. There haven't been any since the last Programme. It has been the summer 'closed season'. Christie's first sale is on November 16th; Sotheby's major sale of swords and fittings is not until December 8th, so perhaps some news on these two in our next Programme.

What I would like to do is add a note to my last report, and in particular the sale at Christies on July 5th. One very interesting item somehow was omitted from my hastily compiled notes. This was Lot 181. I cannot do better at this late date than quote the catalogue description.

An extremely fine tachi blade, honzukurii and shallow torii-zori with funbari and a wide full-length groove each side; forging is itame, tempering is suguba with irregularities, bright nioi and ko-nie with an omaru boshi; the tang is suriage with three mekugi-ana signed near the jiri, Yasutsuna. Length 28 inches. In black lacquered shirasaya with gold sayagaki stating that the blade, the property of the Tokugawa family, was made by Yasutsuna of Hoki province. In a travelling box with red lacquered tokugawa mon, with another inscription and several documents referring to ownership by Tokugawa Iyeyasu and others.

Quite a solid bit of catalogue space and no further description needed from me. Not every day of the week that a sword even signed Yasutsuna appears, whether it is by him or not. This one was certainly a fine and very old blade, the documents too were very ancient and venerable and bore every appearance of authenticity. If it was genuine Yasutsuna it certainly went at a bargain price of £450, to Sir Frank Bowden. A worthy addition to Sir Frank's many interesting items; swords which have historical interest apart from just being Japanese swords.

STOLEN SWORDS

This still continues to happen, in the first case reported here apologies are due to member Clive Wheeler. Somehow his letter was missed from Programmes which have been published since his letter last May. Apologies Clive, I hope you have had some luck in tracing the theft since then.

STOLEN 7th May 1971

1. A Han-dachi Katana. - The scabbard is a dark green, mother of pearl flecked scabbard with a score mark halfway down it, approximately 4" long. The mountings are black and gold.

The blade is a delicate Bizen blade with an almost straight tempering line and a full 'turn back' on the boshi. The tang has a signature which reads "Bizen (Naga?) Osafune Yasumitsu". There is no handle on the sword. The seppa and the habaki are copper with gold plating on them. The tsuba is almost round, a dark metal (like iron), with pine branches highlighted in gold and silver colours.

2. A showa Katana. In military mountings and signed Kanemasa. This sword has the usual leather scabbard, in good condition.

The blade is quite clean with a very distinct tempering line.

3. A Katana. In a black lacquer scabbard, part of which is flaking. The blade has an irregular wavy temper, but it is not distinct and must be held to the light to be seen. The tang has an inscription on both sides. Kanetsugu of Mikawa 1st Year of Minji (1658). The end of the handle has a highly polished brass face (I think) of a Damura Doll. The base of the handle, near the tsuba has a collar of Ivy leaves. The tsuba is of the Satsama re ellion variety, big, heavy and round. It has an engraving of what looks like two large bees on insects of some kind. The menuki appear to be partridges.

Any information please phone: Clive Wheeler,
3 Tweed Estate, Park Lane, Swanley Village, Kent. Tel:491 7143.

LETTER - News chat from Member Barry Thomas. Always welcome to hear from distant members.

"Have recently received my Programme No.62 and, as usual, devoured every word of it, drooling over the glorious swords described therein. I read that my Post Office magazine eventually reached your country despite that verdant strike. To set the record straight, I didn't write the article, merely supplied the material for a highly independent Editor to sift

and collate as she desired. The photography was done by the Photographic Section at work, and getting my swords photographed for the cover was a very cunning move by friends in that section to get my collection photographed in colour for free!

As for the query raised of everybody wondering "... whether Barry might like to make a contribution to the Programme sometime" I can tell you that I definitely do have an article or two in mind. However, an obstacle to be first overcome is that of my knowledge; I have to catch up on some of your erudite resident gentlemen before putting pen to paper. Hand in glove with this is further study of the field in which I am planning to write my article. Thus, with regret I tell you that my article is at least two years away, as I am one of these types that likes to have as many loose ends as possible tied up before having anything put into print.

I wonder if you could chat your hard-working David Parker for me. Some time ago (just before the mail strike, I think, without looking up my records), I sent David an airmail letter with photographs of my three suits of armour. I am wondering if he ever got the letter, as I haven't heard from him and David is usually very good with his replies despite the extra work for the Society. I also included oshigata of two arrow heads, as I felt these would be of interest to him.

Collecting here moves as slowly as ever, with most of the pieces turned up being either Showa-to, Gendai-to or cruddy pre-Meiji in atrocious condition. The only good piece I have turned up is Mondo-no-Sho Masakiyo (MA 199) and that was a fake, according to Fujishiro, and then the tsuba was a "Soten" that had the hell bashed out of it as it was quite bent. Ah well, I'm still waiting for that missing National Treasure to turn up.

Well, must away to other business. Looking forward to the next Programme (and the renewal notice)."

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,
Tokyo, Japan.

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

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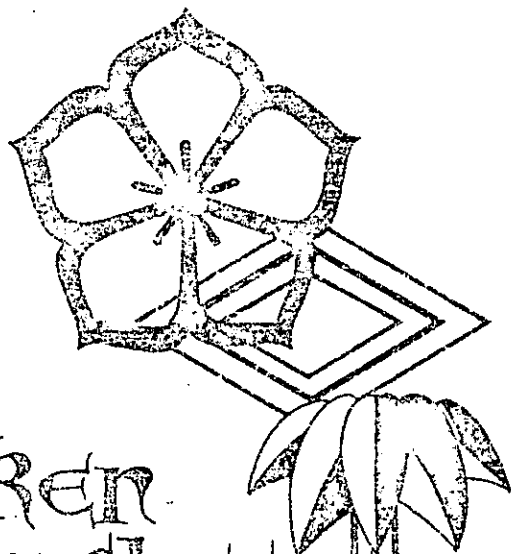
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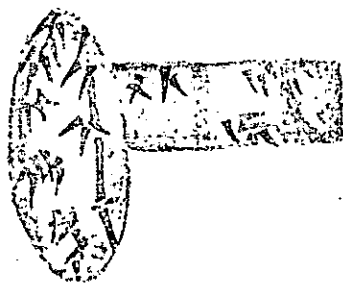
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