

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. G. DALE, 10 BRIGHTWELLS, CLANGARTY ROAD, LONDON, S.W.6. (01-726 6838)~~

PROGRAMME NO.66

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 1972.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

All members please note, the official Society address is now that of the new Secretary:

Andrew Ford,
Secretary To-Ken of G.B.,
17 Stanley Park Road,
Carshalton Beeches,
Surrey.

Telephone: 643 1130.

Letters and information for the Programme to the PROGRAMME SECRETARY - his address:

Fred Stride,
Preston Cottage,
North Road,
Preston Park,
Brighton, Sussex.

NEXT MEETING - Monday, 3rd January 1972, 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.

FOLLOWING MEETING - Monday 7th February 1972 at the Princess Louise.

SUBJECTS. January:

A free meeting, bring along a favourite piece and be prepared to say just a few words about it - we may all learn something.

February:

We shall hold a Shinsa, sort of, to see whether all this talk about blade shapes is teaching you anything!

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by John Anderson

My first report as Chairman will be essentially a short one, the main reason being that having so recently taken over the position my post-bag is pleasantly empty. However, it might be as well to introduce myself to those members who are fortunate enough not to know me, and to make my position clear. I am fully aware of the difficulty of filling this seat coming after a chairman such as Bon Dale and know it would be presumptuous of me to think I can do as good a job. Suffice it to say I will do my best, knowing that Bon will always be on hand with ready advice. I should like to take this opportunity to thank both Bon and Ci Dale for their years of work on our behalf. It is a pity they have to vacate their respective positions but I for one realize how much To-Ken matters have interrupted their everyday tasks of earning a crust.

It is generally known, I think, that my main preoccupation is with armour which I have studied and collected for something like 18 years, but like so many collectors of things Japanese my interests extend over most areas of Japanese art, so if you far-flung (and not so far-flung) members have any problems on armour, let me have them and I will do my best to sort out the answers. Any queries on other subjects, we will soon find somebody who knows. There is a mine of information in the Society waiting to be tapped and it is only modesty that keeps it hidden. Let's have your letters and we will supply the answers.

My chairmanship of the meetings will, I regret to say, be very limited for a while as my studies unfortunately conflict which makes for my late arrival at meetings, but I have no doubt that the seat will be adequately warmed by Sidney Divers in my absence.

The only report I have is of a trip I made in November this year to the far North (Manchester) to visit that outpost of our Empire, the Northern To-Ken. I was accompanied on this expedition by that intrepid explorer, commuter and friend, Bernard le Dauphin of Paris, France. We arrived in a surprisingly rain-free Manchester and "enjoyed" the delights of a sumptuous meal at the Golden Egg, a meal, I may add, completely free from any alcoholic beverages which was a unique experience for Bernard and one, I feel sure, he will not wish to repeat. Then on to the meeting to be welcomed by fellow chairman, Ian Bottomley and Secretary Stephen Turnbull. We gate-crashed a meeting where the subject was lacquer and listened to a talk on the subject by Mr. Kilner, and examined a number of fine pieces brought along by him as examples. Let it be stated here and now there are some fine things in those Northern climes. After the meeting, a group of us adjourned to

a coffee bar from which we were eventually evicted. It was an interesting evening and one both Bernard and I enjoyed. Thanks Northern Branch and don't forget to drop in on us sometime (it's warmer down here!)

RECENT MEETINGS

November: Vic Harris' talk on Swords

Changes in our committee were shown by the chairing of the meeting by Vice-Chairman Sydney Divers. In his opening remarks, Syd welcomed back to the Club meeting Mr. & Mrs. Roy Clarke after a stint of two years in Singapore. They were and will be again we hope, regularly in attendance - that's real enthusiasm when you come all the way from Portsmouth. Sydney said that if you wanted a course in instant Japanese, there was one available from Japan Airlines. They supply you with a gramophone record and an illustrated book. There was even a song at the end, "Sakura". There was also another free issue of pictures of swords, armour, etc. from the Kirin Beer people. You'll have to find the address yourselves as I seem to have lost it. Loud mutterings were heard that the Programme was not out. Although ready for the press long before, the script just had not managed to get out to members. It should be out shortly promised the Prog. Sec. It was!

Andy Ford raised a constitutional matter. He wanted to know whether the Society had approved him as Secretary as he had not heard the results of the voting. Approval was made known and so the footsteps of Andrew Secretary Ford can now be heard echoing down the holy corridors to the Hall of Fame where our illustrious Secretaries have been enshrined forever!

Syd asked members to describe any swords they had brought along. Andy kicked off by saying that Alan Bale had said that he didn't like the Tsuba on Andy's Sword, so Andy knew it was good. I think that it's time we had an N.B.T.H.K. week - Nice Bales Tsuba Have Klass! (Sorry about that....Ed). Back to Andy's sword. The saya was black ribbed lacquer and all the mounts en suite. The blade was Shin Shinto and dated Kwaiyei 5 (1852). The odd important detail of the smith seems not to have been noted. Bon pointed out that the blade was interesting in the manner which the rust had formed on the blade surface. The main discolouration had occurred on the soft ji hada showing the yakiba and the hamon shape quite clearly. Our metallurgical members can doubtless give a very interesting reason for this occurrence.

Les Elgar described a Katana with a Kinai type tsuba. The blade was dated 1334 and signed Sukeyoshi. B.W. Robinson had a look at the blade and suggested that the very well defined hamon was definitely indicative of a Shin-Shinto blade,

but with a 'funny' tang signed Bishu Yoshioka Sukeyoshi, a rather famous Ichimonji smith.

Vic Saville was the last candidate to describe his sword. This time a wakizashi with brass mounts en suite, tiger menuki and tsuba with a Chinese painting motif. The blade looked like a good 16th century Naginata. The saya was very striking in a very nobbly same. It felt very good to the touch. Syd handed the speakers platform over to Vic Harris. Vic's talk was really illuminating. Your Ed. was particularly impressed by the clear information and has since been rushing around trying to date blades only by looking at the shape. There was a certain amount of incredulity amongst members present however, at the wide difference of opinion between what they considered a good blade and the wakizashi which turned Vic so blissfully on. I'm afraid Vic's talk suffers very badly in the write-up as it was essentially a visual presentation. Vic had gone to some trouble to provide photos of the typical shapes of the various periods. Members also contributed about six swords to help out.

Vic showed the glorious shape of the Heian and early Kamakura smiths including the Emperor Gotoba and Munechika. Small points, fumbari koshi zori, and hamon in fine nie with every sort of activity and hada. They were very refined swords for refined gentlemen. During Middle Kamakura, the rule shifted and blades changed shape. Osafune blades, for instance, were now grandiose, wider with great choji hamon. These were rip-roaring swords having ikubizaki - the bull neck point. In the late Kamakura period, following the wake of the Mongol invasion, came Masamune, Yukimitsu and Rai Kunimitsu. The small point had been found just not suitable for the new type of warfare - they frequently broke and the narrow hamon when chipped left a useless sword. The new styles had much larger points and wider hardened edges. In the Nambukocho period, the Soshu style gained ground and it saw the rise of the Masamune pupils. Long broad swords, with long points and very shallow sori. In the Oei period of Muromachi, swords typically Oei Bizen, were long, narrow with no koshizori and of even curvature - zakisori. In the middle and late Muromachi, the swords were also zakisori. However, the great schools broke up and the Kazuuchizono sword was prevalent. Large numbers of swords were exported to China. There were, however, some fine smiths such as the Sukesadas and Muramasa. Keicho began the Shinto period (Momoyama) and swords were shaped like suriage nambukocho swords. This is why Horikawa swords are often mistaken for fine old Soshu swords.

After this time, degeneration set in, swords became hefty, inelegant and junky. The shape being largely dictated by the rules of behaviour of the Samurai and the progress in the study of Kendo.

December: Andy Ford on Horimono and Films

This meeting and the last were really of great interest. We really were honoured. Vice-President Syd Divers introduced to the meeting, Inami Hokusui and his son, Tomiko Hokusui who were on a visit to various sales. If you stop for a moment and think of the impact of Inami Hokusui on sword collecting outside Japan, you would realise that you are in the presence of an historic personage. His book, "Nippon-to, The Japanese Sword", was the first book written for the outsider - he is to me, the Father of post-war collecting in the West. The meeting broke into spontaneous applause at the end of Syd's introduction.

Another visitor was Yasuo Watanabe; Dick Scofield had told him to come along. He is here for a year as an electronic engineer for the Japanese Government liaising with the Decca Company. It is pleasing that visitors are coming along: let's make certain we go out of our way to extend them a friendly welcome.

Our good friend Lt.Col.C.J.Smith and his lady also had dropped in; he was really moved and delighted to meet the Hokusui's again. When in Japan many years ago, he had spent every spare minute he could in the fascinating atmosphere of their shop. Bon also introduced a representative from Sothebys, Graham Newell who is also a prospective member.

Syd announced that Tomiko had kindly donated four copies of his new book on Tsuba to the Club. This very acceptable gift which was very warmly received, caused some difficulties as to who should receive them. Alan Bale, Malcolm Kesson were chosen. Alan for his contributions on Tsuba for the Society's evenings, and Malcolm for his exploration of the craft of Tsuba making. Our President also thoroughly deserved a copy. Tomiko, seeing our indecision said that he would send over another ten copies for members of the Society. A very generous gesture from which some of our Northern members might benefit. One very sour note emerged. It was announced that there were complaints from the Princess Louise management concerning the state we left the room. Fag-ends on the floor, spillages, etc. to the extent that we are on the point of being asked to leave.

Everyone seemed mystified by the complaints and Bill Baxter is trying to assuage their wrath. However, the situation is very serious and if eviction came we could probably not get back to the Mason's again. We really all must pull our socks up. Having said that, I realise that I left my glass on the bar upstairs. Maybe this adds up when everyone

does the same.

Andy announced his talk as the non-event of the season. He had read around a bit particularly with reference to the book "Horimono" belonging to Bon Dale. Here is a run down of Andy's notes which pretty well cover the subject:

"We find the earliest horimono on swords excavated from tumuli and from the Asuka period. For example, "Aodo tsukagashira kin kusari chuhei mei tetsu gatana", a sword excavated from a tumulus on Todaiji yama of Tenri city, and 'Gin zogan mei kan dachi' excavated in Edafune yama, both have inscriptions on the blade stretching from kissaki to hamachi. The kinzogan on the first sword has 24 characters. 'Chuhei' period is about the end of the 2nd century. The inscription on the second sword is along the back.

The sword with horns on page 91 of Bon's book, is the property of Isonokami shrine in Tenri city, and is known as 'Nana saya no tachi' (sword with seven branches). There are inscriptions on both sides relating to the date, method of manufacture, purpose, and maker's name. The inscription on the ura appears to have a beautiful meaning. 316 AD.

Asuka period

Treasure swords of Shitennoji temple in Osaka, 'Shichi sei no ken' (seven stars sword) and 'Heishi sho rin no ken' (which is in the ura koshi in kinzogan), are the oldest swords which did not come from excavation. They are said to have been the swords of Shotoku Daishi. Shich sei ken has a gold inlay of seven stars on the blade. There is also extant a bronze sword with seven stars on the blade. Shichiseiken is finely mounted in karadachi style in gold and silver. In the ledgers of shosoin there are descriptions of Karadachi and Kara (Chinese) styles of mounting. What is what?? Possibly Chinese style meant a Japanese blade in Chinese style mountings. Heishishorinken is a Chinese sword in all probability.

Next period. Nara period....Kogarasu maru has naginata hi. Not certain of date of this sword. Also shinogi bi.

Heian period. These swords sometimes have bohi. Example... a moritsugu sword with sanscrit and shin no kurikara ryu in the groove. These swords also have the makers name engraved on the tang.

Briefly. Horimono have been carved since Heian and early kamakura periods. The primary purpose of Hi is to lighten the blade. We can tell the grade of a smith from examination of the hi. In old times Buddhist images Shinto gods and sanskrit were popular, the impression we get is that the smith invested his beloved sword with the guardian who kept his own self.

These early engravings are simple and high quality. Buddhist subjects have the dignity we find in old buddhist paintings. With the shinto period we are struck with the skill of the engraver and the beauty of his work, the engravings themselves lack taste. Old swords mostly had simple motifs cut by the smith, but from the muromachi period there are specialist engravers. So engravings are of three kinds: Utility, Religion, Decoration: reflecting the character of the engraver and in later days especially, the desires of the customers. I would hate to think of a samurai of Nabeshima han wearing a sword bearing carp, plum or laughing good luck God without arms."

Andy was prettywell served by Mole Benn who had lent some of his mouth-watering collection. The Nodachi with the double Horimono, the Nobukuni, the Umetada Myoju and the legendary colossal Wakizashi and more. Syd also showed two examples.

Hardly having time to top up our glasses, Mole set up the projector to show the first of two films sent over by Mr. Sayama on behalf of the N.B.T.H.K. The sound was simply appalling which didn't worry us but the colour was superb. Both films were somewhat 'arty', coloured lighting used to produce dramatic effects on Armour, helmets, etc., but thoroughly enjoyable. Both were very similar in theme, showing the forging and tempering of a blade and its polishing and many examples of National Treasures. All the familiar tachi, tsuba and blades of the glossy picture books, were shown off superbly. I thought the first film in particular was of the highest technical merit. The clearness of the hada and the hamon was outstanding and as anyone of you who have tried to photograph a blade in detail knows, this was a real achievement. But it was decidedly depressing to realise how fantastic these blades are compared to one's own collection. They had everything you dream about and then some - great swirling hada and crowded with activity plus of course superb form and beauty. I might add that the polish on these blades looked more than somewhat better than ours. Why are the tsuba so good? I certainly can see that they are good but what makes them that good?

Possibly my artistic appreciation needs proper development. The making of the sword in colour was particularly interesting. The apparent lack of precision in cutting the billets and selecting the sizes of the metal pieces made me think the process very hit and miss. No joke intended. What really shattered me was to see the large pieces of forging scale blithely folded into the metal. I wondered whether this caused the white grain pattern of Shin Shinto hada. However, one cannot say that the method we saw was how the great smiths made their swords. As Vic Harris said, their methods are lost forever.

Masahide published a book, which he has read, on how to make swords like Masamune etc. and the results whilst strikingly similar are still not in the same class as the genuine ones, and Masahide admitted it. The originals could well have been made by an entirely different method. Maybe what we saw in the film inadvertently shows why latter day smiths are not regarded as superior artists. There were some excellent shots of a Kendoka practising Iai, magnificently, too. Then he walked into a bamboo grove and using a form of men cut, sliced through bamboo about 6 inches in diameter very neatly and easily indeed. The most lasting impression of this kendoka was the fantastic speed and confidence and great style with which he placed his katana back in the saya. How he never cut his fingers off, I'll never know. He looked straight ahead with not so much as a glance at the scabbard mouth. I sure would like to see these films again and with luck will be able to on the 20th December at a special showing.

Apart from Mole's beauties, there were some interesting swords present. Roy Clarke had a real beauty. When I saw this tanto in shirasaya, I thought early Soshu den and what activity, fine nie and chikei, all sorts of things. At the same time I kept getting a little warning bell ringing in my head. Sure enough, this beautiful blade was made in 1926 by Hideaki, the President of the Muroran steel mills.

Andy Ford also has a very fine example of this man's work. Roy's blade was exhibit No. 166 in the Ashmolean exhibition. Col. Smith had a very nice late Muromachi blade mounted as a tachi. The mounts were sentoku engraved with scrolls, the tsuba being cast massively with deep relief carvings of a dragon. The very good blade was signed Yamato no Kami Fujiwara Tadayuki and well worth polishing.

I must mention Bill Baxter's latest acquisition - a plain iron tsuba of rounded rectangular shape and with a bamboo design in relief. A few silver shells (?) and the result in absolutely mint condition, exuded tremendous quality. Very satisfying.

TO-KEN SOCIETY NORTHERN BRANCH

November Meeting. The November meeting of the Branch was held on Tuesday, November 16th at the Seven Oaks Hotel, Nicholas Street, Manchester. Fifteen members attended and were honoured by a visit from our new Chairman, John Anderson and M. Bernard Le Dauphin from Paris.

Ian Bottomley informed members that there was to be a price increase on the orders placed for items from Japan. The increase was deplored by all concerned, but it was agreed to continue with the orders.

The main feature of the evening was a talk by John Kilner on "Lacquer". John apologised in advance that none of the information he was to impart would be wholly new to the Society, but any lack of words was outweighed by the beautiful collection of specimens that he had brought along. He gave a brief introduction to the sources of lacquer, its nature, collection and storage, and mentioned some of the various types. He then began to describe the objects on show, which were passed round the room with a delicacy of touch usually reserved for signed Nara blades. There were some perfect "inro" specimens, with deep, lustrous browns, delicate mother-of-pearl and flashes of gold, each topped with a finely carved "netsuke". There were boxes, jars, and items of sword furniture. In all a fascinating evening, and we are indebted to John for allowing us the opportunity to examine such craftsmanship at close quarters.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Tuesday, January 16th, 8.0 p.m. "The Japanese Warrior Monks" by Stephen Turnbull, illustrated by slides and tape recordings.

Tuesday, March 15th, 8.0 p.m. "Polearms" by Ian Bottomley. If you have any please bring them along (including the shaft?!)

EDITORIAL

Another year has slipped away. Time seems to accelerate as one gets older. For the Society it's been an important year. The Shinsa was held and many important visitors graced our meetings. I would like to extend our Christmas Greetings and grateful thanks to Mrs. Lockett, who masters my writing and types the script. She most probably knows more about Japanese phrases and words than I do. Many thanks Mrs. Lockett!

Also may I send best wishes to all our friends - the corresponding members who are linked by this Programme of ours, all around the world. Especially, those to whom I owe letters. I'll get round to you eventually. Just to keep your minds ticking over, we've arranged another little quiz to go with your turkey and Christmas pud. Lastly, a special word of thanks to Malcolm Kesson who at a last minute request by yours truly, came up with the special cover design.

THE CHRISTMAS QUIZ

For you armour buffs, John Anderson has set these posers:

Quiz Questions - Armour

1. Name the 7 principal portions comprising an armour.

2. What function did the bow on the back of some cuirasses perform?
3. Give the name of the flag often worn on the back of an armour.
4. Name 3 famous armouring families.
5. Name 3 styles of cuirass.
6. At what period was the 3 plate Hineno helmet introduced?
7. In what 4 positions were helmet crests worn?
8. When were Kiwame Fuda (documents) first introduced and by whom?
9. Give the names of three helmet bowl shapes that refer to mountains.
10. What two names are given to the decorative mount for the hole in the top of a helmet?

And for us sword enthusiasts, Vic Harris asks these questions:

Pick out the mistaken characteristics among the following:-

- Ko Aoe Sadatsugu -
1. Inscription is Tachi-mei
 2. Yasurime is Osuchigai
 3. Many of his swords have saka choji hamon
 4. The kitae is tight koitame with mokume mixed and jinie with jifu
 5. He specialised in tanto.

- Osafune Nagamitsu -
1. Large kissaki, wide shallow blades
 2. Nioi based choji hamon with ashi and yo in profusion
 3. Boshi is O-maru
 4. A beautiful Bo-utsuri

Who made these swords:

- a) Length 2 shaku 3 sun 8 bun, shinogi zukuri, iori mune, ikubizaki, wide blade, koshi zori, overall a boisterous extravagant blade. Kitae is tight koitame hada, prominent midare utsuri, hamon is nioi based o choji midare with kawazu no ko choji mixed, many ashi and nioi guchi is shimari, the boshi swells out a little with slight midare komi. There is about 1 sun kaeri in rather togari style on the boshi. Rather broad grooves are cut on ura and omote. The sword is Osuriage with a gold inlay inscription.
- b) Length 9 sun 2 bun, Hira zukuri, iori mune, natural blade width, thin blade, saki zori, kitae is itame hada tsumi with slight shirake feeling (white); on ura and omote there is a large koshiba style hamon with gonome, and on the upper part of the blade the hamon is a konotare with gonome mingled and small ashi with thickets of nie. The ura and omote are

the same. The boshi is midare-komi with small maru kaeri. In the middle of the omote is a rather stunted So no kurikara, and in the middle of the ura is a similar gomabashi with rendai.

Answer these questions:

1. How did a fine samurai choose a sword?
2. Why were swords of only 2 shaku length produced during the sengoku period?
3. What is like the milky way?
4. What kitae do we find on yari.
5. What is a Tengu?
6. Who taught Yoshitsune swordplay?
7. Blades of which periods are of almost uniform width?
8. Blades of which school are often mistaken for fine old Soshu work?
9. What does Fudo san hold (Japanese)?
10. There is an old story of a man who mistook a rock for a tiger which had killed his father, and threw a spear right through it. Which smith may have named himself with this story in mind?
11. Tanto of what period are uchizori style?
12. What is the connection between Hankei and Norishige?

Vic says that some of these questions are really difficult so it's a real test. I don't have the answers and am scratching my head too! Answers will be in the next Programme.

JAPANESE CINEMA

Bill Baxter has tried to get some information well in advance. Make the most of it.

Throughout January there will be presented at the National Film Theatre, Waterloo, S.E.1. a season of films directed by Mizoguchi and Ozu and others who can be considered as first generation Japanese film-makers, i.e. those who commenced activity in the 1920's. The National Film Theatre is run by the British Film Institute and unless you can get a member of the B.F.I. to take you as his guest, you will need to apply for Associate Membership - this only costs £2.00 p.a. and allows admission together with 3 guests. Seats are bookable at 40p and 50p with a limited number of unreserved at 30p. The demand is usually pretty heavy and it is advisable to book well in advance to avoid disappointment.

A different film is shown each night and there are two performances, usually at 6.15 and 8.30.

Concentrating on "costume" and "action" pictures, the following are particularly recommended as being most likely to please and interest To-Ken members:

"YOJIMBO" (Dec. 28th and Jan. 4th) TOSHIRO MIFUNE destroying 2 rival gangs single-handed.

"LIFE OF O-HARU" (Dec. 29th). The decline of a courtesan to beggar. Brief appearance of MIFUNE - he had yet to achieve true recognition when this was made (1952).

"SHIN-HEIKE MONOGATARI" (Jan. 1st) Story of the clash between the TAIRA clan and warrior monks.

"FIVE SCOUTS" (Jan. 3rd). Made in 1938 and dealing with the Sino/Japanese War.

"SANSHO DAYU" (Jan. 13th) An 11th century setting and considered as MIZOGUCHI's most atmospheric period piece, action-packed, combining barbaric violence with courtly opulence.

"UGETSU MONOGATARI" (Jan. 30th). Superb photography - a ghost story with a war-torn medieval background.

There are many other films showing in this season with either a quieter or more modern setting and a visit to South Bank almost any evening in January should be well worth while.

HILT BINDINGS

Dave Parker has been told by Mr. Sayama that it is necessary for both Fuchi and Kashira to be supplied with the hilt when sending for rebinding. Of course, menuki as well. Without the Fuchi, which some members do not send, the correct spacing cannot be obtained and possibly the fuchi will not fit properly. So in future, please send all the bits.

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.

STOLEN SWORDS

For some reason not apparent to anyone the following two items were omitted from the last Programme. In addition to these, I have since heard that Deneys Bowers at Chiddingstone Castle has had great success in tracing finally swords stolen from his collection several years ago. No details are yet available about this because I gather there is a court case

pending. More when this has taken place, but it is good news anyway.

NIHON TO KEN SWORDSHOP

Reported stolen from Mike Dean's sword shop in St. Giles High Street, top of Charing Cross Road, London. A hira-tsukuri dirk, about 9 to 10 inches long, in mint new polish condition in shirasaya. Signed YASUMITSU. Stolen about first week in October. Information please to Mike Dean or To Ken headquarters.

IT PAYS TO ADVERTISE

Members will remember a printed enclosed leaflet in the Programme some months ago, concerning two blades belonging to Bon Dale, Isenokami Kuniteru and Bungo Tsuneyuki, legally described as "Lost or mislaid", missing in fact, for nine and a half years, no less. Bon Dale is pleased to report that these two blades have been returned to him, together with a third blade, Bizen Sukesada, missing in the same batch, which belongs to Basil Robinson. So, tell the world about your losses, this is the only way we can put a stop to this petty pilfering by small mean people.

ITEM

In this age of rising costs and increasing "do it yourself" we make no apology for re-publishing this article, by kind permission of the Southern Californian To-Ken Kai, for the benefit of our members who haven't seen it.

Refinishing Lacquer Scabbards by Bill Blackstone

In response to a request from Laurie Allen of Australia, Bill Blackstone prepared the following suggestions for a do-it-yourself lacquer refinishing job. Believing that others will also benefit, we publish it herewith:

- Materials** - Quick drying automotive lacquers are most convenient as these can be obtained in any colour, standard or mixed to order, in small quantities. Some firms specialise in touch-up lacquers to match any automobile colour and will mix to order. Also available in paint stores are spray cans with a limited colour assortment in case you do not have a spray gun.
- Colours** - Assuming that you have had little or no experience, it is suggested that you confine your efforts at first to opaque colours such as Black, Green, Brown or Red. Transparent colours are very tricky to use and should not be attempted until you have

attained some skill from practice. Do not use a stock black if you can have one mixed to order. It should be made from Thalo Green, Cobalt Blue and Burnt Umber - this produces a black that is rich and deep. Varying the percentages it can have a brown or blue tinge. Some old Japanese lacquers were pigmented with ground beetle wings and bodies which produced a black-brown colour. Reds will be matched by eye and the automotive colour men are usually pretty clever at matching anything. Make friends with the colour man and he may let you do your own experimenting. Small spray-guns are available second-hand quite cheaply.

Fillers - Dents cannot be sanded out and must be filled first. For this again the automotive solid lacquer paste filler is good. It comes in a paste form like toothpaste. It sands extremely smooth and takes the paint well. Spackling paste of the synthetic variety in small cans also works very well. You can apply it with a finger, smoothing it as you go. Don't build it up too high as you have to sand it down again. With either filler, let dry 8 to 12 hours before sanding.

Abrasives - Provide yourself with three grades of garnet paper - 2/0, 3/0, 4/0. Coarse paper scratches too deeply. Do not use ordinary sandpaper as the grains work loose and may gouge deeply. Also needed is 4/0 steel wool.

Other tools - A file about 12" long that will fit into the scabbard is handy to hold the saya while working on it. Placed vertically in a vice, it holds the saya while spraying.

Procedure - If saya is split, re-glue it, remove all loose material, repair fittings, if grease is present, remove with lacquer thinner, and mask fittings that are not to be sprayed. Work inside - moderate temperature - some ventilation, good light. Wear old clothes and have some thinner handy to clean your hands, etc. Choose a spot that won't be hurt by your mess!

Give the saya a light coat of lacquer which will show up the imperfections you are going to have to fill. Now start filling the holes. Dip your forefinger in the filler and spread it as evenly as you can. Let the filler dry thoroughly and sand it. Again spray with a light coat of thin lacquer to show up any imperfections and fill again until the surface is perfect.

I apply material very heavily, this takes practice, otherwise you may have a run or a sag in the lacquer. If your spray gun clogs up, thin the lacquer. If you get a run, let it dry hard and sand it out before proceeding. Too much hurry will cost you time and frustration - just take it slow with lots of patience. If applying the lacquer thick doesn't seem to work, apply in many thin coats. Usually about six coats are needed. If the surface is smooth enough it is not necessary to sand between coats as lacquer bonds to lacquer without roughing the surface.

Let's assume that you have finished painting and all is well. Study the piece. If you are happy with it, leave it alone. If it looks like it could stand some rubbing out, there are many ways to do it.

1. Use paste wax and the 4/0 steel wool. Rub in one direction only - the steel wool is the abrasive and the wax a lubricant to keep the wool from cutting in too deeply. Rub about 7 or 8 strokes always in one direction and wipe off the residue with a rag. Polish with a soft cloth. Repeat if needed.

2. Women's face powder - Dip your forefingers in face powder and stroke in one direction about 10 strokes. Wipe and study the results. Rottenstone is a good substitute. A furniture finisher can give you some good advice on how to go about this technique. You can try making a paste of the powders with oil. Unfortunately, no two situations are alike so it ends up in a trial and error operation. I do a lot of restoration - in fact, I have possibly put together about half of my collection by trading services for pieces. Over the years, I have assembled materials to make sayas, handles, same, horn fittings.

Just be patient. If you don't feel like working on the piece, leave it alone - errors make for discouragement and failure.

SALESROOM by Bon Dale

This will only be brief. There has really only been one sale of any note so far this season, that at Sotheby's, December 8th. Christies will forgive me, I'm sure, and certainly no slight is intended when I say that their November sale contained nothing of real importance to the discerning collector of Japanese swords. The only really interesting item in that sale was the late Dr. Robert Mills' blade, with a gold attribution to Sadamune. This fetched a good price of 480 gns., a bold speculation on the part of the buyer. It is either worth ten times that price, or is worth a tenth of the amount. Only a trip to Japan will reveal the truth. Knowing something of the

past history of that blade I can reveal that it was originally found, many years ago, nailed above the fireplace of a farmhouse in the West Country. At that time, it was entirely and completely black, except for the beautiful kinzogan mei on the tang. It changed hands a time or two, it could have been mine with a very slight effort, about twelve years ago, but it finally landed on Bob Mills lap, who cherished it and cleaned it and gave it its present rudimentary polish. Without any doubt, but for his untimely death last year, it would still be with him.

Sotheby's December 8th was a good sale, with an interesting selection of swords and many lots of tsuba and fittings. The presence already reported elsewhere of the Inami's at the sale helped to heighten the tension and expectation of high prices. This expectation was certainly fulfilled, but it is interesting and very instructive to note the form these high prices took. For example, on the swords, Lot 3, a beautiful sword, mis-catalogued as "Dodanuki Kami Hirosuke - a Shinto smith appearing to be unrecorded by Hawley". How the good cataloguer arrived at this conclusion I don't know. Don't worry, we all make mistakes! I'm certain Inami correctly read the signature, I'm sure I did, and by the price attained there were some others too. The swordsmith was Dodanuki Kozuke no Suke, a good smith, Keicho period, and in this case a very finely worked blade. It made £560. Inami was the underbidder, modesty forbids me to name the buyer.

Another fine lot was a Daisho, Lot 42. This made £950, and again Mr. Inami was the underbidder. He was unlucky again on the highest price of the sale, £1,150., for another Daisho Lot 44; once more the underbidder. I say this with no disrespect to our Japanese friend, but I make the point to emphasise a fact which may have escaped collectors so far. If one is sure, and I stress the "if", one is sure of one's judgment on a blade, then one can outbid the Japanese sword dealer who has come over here to buy. He is at the disadvantage that he is buying to sell at a profit, and has to ship the goods half way round the world before he can even start to make this profit. Therefore his maximum bid must be less than actual value to him of the sword in Japan. So take heart, do not necessarily be dismayed by sight of the quiet and inscrutable Japanese expert sitting there in the salesroom. But! take care you know what you are about, the lot you are outbidding him on could be his!

Which finally brings me to an interesting conclusion. Mr. Inami knows his tsuba without any doubt, he paid some very good prices at Sothebys on Dec. 8th. It seemed to me that he was not outbid on any tsuba lot for which he went. For example, Lot 71, an unheralded and unillustrated Nara tsuba, decorated with cloisonné enamels, £160. Must have been a good one that.

Which makes me ask, why, when our Japanese friend just sits there with a quiet smile on his face and does not bid - why? Do we Europeans bid each other up to the sky for some illustrated and much signed piece? We saw exactly the same thing earlier this year when Messrs. Sayama and Terumine were here, only they actually broke into broad smiles and audible laughter. Do we really think that the Japanese can't afford to bid on these pieces? Has it not occurred to us that such pieces might just not be quite what they are supposed to be. Dare I use the word, fakes? Here endeth the lesson on how to become unpopular in several directions in a very short time, no malice intended to any one, I just think we ought to reflect on these matters.

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:

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