SHIBUCHI, alloys ETC

THE TO-KEN SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

for the Study and Preservation of Japanese Swords and Fittings

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PROGRAMME 99

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Editorial:

I am sorry to report that we are once again on the move as far as a monthly meeting place is concerned. The Mason's Arms is no longer able to accommodate us and we have now found a new venue -

The Lamb and Flag
33 Rose Street
London W.C.2.

Rose Street is on the south side of Long Acre. The nearest underground station is Leicester Square. The meetings will be at the usual time of 7.30 p.m. on the first Monday of the month except public holidays etc. when they will be on the following Monday.

I would appreciate any comments or editorial for the programme at my home address, and I would like to take this opportunity of wishing you all a happy and successful new year.

Subscriptions

Members are reminded that the annual subscriptions are due in March. Those who have not already done so are asked to send the remittance as soon as possible so that the circulation list can be completed.

NOTES ON SOME GREAT TSUBA MAKERS

A tsuba must fulfil two functions. It must, by its very essence be an effective, practical guard on a weapon. That is to say it must be completely functional or its raison-d'etre has gone. Secondly it must have a beauty of design that goes beyond the mere fact that it may be made of precious metal as this may be accomplished in mere iron, indeed many would say that both these criteria may be fulfilled better in iron than other materials. It is iron tsuba that design may be fully appreciated as the eye is unencumbered with glitter and may go straight to the 'heart of the matter'. We see therefore, that tsuba combined the talents of form, colour and texture found in other art forms, such as painting, with the skills of the sculptor.

The following notes tell something of some of the greatest makers of tsuba:-

Kaneiye

The name Kaneiye was not widely known in Japan until the latter part of the 18th century. It is thought probable that this was due to the emergence of the Kinko artists of the early middle Edo period which gained popularity of the masses, whilst the earlier iron works of people such as Kaneiye and Nobuiye, although still appreciated by the nobility faded somewhat. It was not until the later Edo period, probably with the patronage of those infamous rich merchants, who realised they were prized possessions of the upper classes, that they once again gained popularity. The demand for this style of tsuba created the Tesunin and Saga Kaneiye school revivals, directly sponsored by the merchant classes.

The name Kaneiye refers to two masters. The artist referred to in the Soken Kisho published in the Temmei era (1781-1789) published by Inaba Tsuryo refers to the first Kaneiye (Yamashiro Kaneiye) but he is now known to be the second. Inaba Tsuryo thought that Tetsunin and his school were the second generation. This was challenged by a certain Akiyama Kyusaka in the early part of the 20th century. He made an extensive study into Kaneiye tsuba, during which he found three pieces that he was certain were by the same master, but older and of better quality to those attributed to Meijin Shodai Kaneiye, previously known as Kaneiye I. These three were signed Joshu Fushini ju Kaneiye. These tsuba changed all existing theories on Kaneiye tsuba, and the above mentioned Joshu Kaneiye is now considered to be the Dai Shodai Kaneiye (First Great Kaneiye).

The work of Yamashiro Fushini ju Kaneiye is now thought to be the second master of this name. He is referred to as Meijin Kaneiye (Masterful First Kaneiye) or simply as Yamashiro Kaneiye or Kaneiye II.

Kaneiye I

The Joshu Kaneiye mentioned above lived in the village of Fushimi and worked in the Momoyama period, probably about 1558-90.

Fushimi was a small village, south of Kyoto. It was serene and remote with many temples and had a strong atmosphere of religion. Kaneiye's work reflected this, and he signed his work as a resident of Fushimi, in Joshu (Yamashiro province). It was at Fushimi in 1592 that Hideyoshi built a magnificant castle, which may explain why Kaneiye took up residence there. The castle was destroyed by Tokugawa Ieyasu in 1600 and the entire city was reduced to ashes after Sekigamara. It is still a tourist attraction and many romantics still visit Momoyama Hill, from which the age took its name.

It may be due to the fact that so many disasters struck the area that there are so few examples of Kaneiye's work in existence. It may also be that he did not start work until late in life. Only five works are known. From these may be seen strong influence from the Katchushi or Ko-Shoami schools and of the Hoju and Onin schools. It is reasonable to assume that he combined the best of these styles and synthesised his own style.

He used landscape subjects combining relief carving with the use of inlay with various metals. The plate is of the Oroshigane type (smelted sand iron) and forged to perfection in the two fold method of the Katchushi style. The colour of the plate varies between a deep reddish black to a rich red-brown. His iron resembles that of the old Katchushi style with mixtures of Heianjo-zogan and Ko-Shoami inlay blended into a style of his own depicting nature and the pervading religious atmosphere of the Momoyama period.

Kaneiye II

Both the first and second Kaneiye's work etc. are very similar. Some schools of thought think that because of this similarity, and because of the fact that their total output of work was so small, they may have been one and the same persons.

Both Kaneiye's work was of the same subject matter, landscapes and religious themes. This would not be surprising as even if they were different people, they both lived in Fushimi. The main difference between the two was in signature. The signature of the first master was always Joshu Kushimi (no) ju Kaneiye whilst the second signed always Yamashiro (no) Kuni Fushimi (no) ju Kaneiye. The signature of the second will be known to members, it having been forged many times in later years and used on the work of the Saga school.

Nobuiye

The famous Miochin armourer named Nobuiye (see last programme) who worked at the end of the Momoyama period is not thought to be the tsuba maker of the same name. There is some evidence to suggest that they may have been related, although probably not directly and they were both working at the same time so may well have known of each others existence. A comparison of signatures of Nobuiye that are considered genuine, may be an indication that, like the Kaneiye theory in reverse, there may have been more than one man working. There are eleven distinct signatures using only the two characters Nobu Iye. They may be put into two distinct groups and probably represent two generations. The signatures of the first generation are light, gentle and tasteful, whilst those of the second are bolder and thick.

The style of workmanship in both generations is very similar. The colour of the iron ranged from dark brown to deep blackish grey with a wet or glazed appearance. A great variety of surface textures and engraving is evident with designs including tortoise shell patterns, torri gate, seals, ho-ho birds, and in relief designs of plum tree, cherry blossom and pine needles.

The work of the second generation Nobuiye, like the signature, is bolder and slightly more crude in feeling. His work is generally of a lower standard than the first, but a few works are of equal quality.

Towards the end of the Tokugawa period there was a demand for Nobuiye's tsuba and it was of course catered for by the forgers. There was, however, a conscious attempt to revive the style and most fell well short of their "target". The best reproductions were by Iwata Norisuke the first and second, father and son, the son was rated higher than the father.

Umetada Myoju

Umetada Myoju must have been some kind of genius. He is known for his horimono work, blade making, sword appraising as well as being a great tsuba maker. He worked as a retainer of Ashikaga Yoshiaki, Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Hideyoshi's son Hidetsugu. He was also called Shigeyoshi and Kikojiro and was a member of the Umetada family.

It is not known what Myoju's position in the family was. Umetada work before Myoju is known as Ko-Umetada and there is work of very high quality by a maker named Mitsutada. The work of Mitsutada is slightly older than that of Myoju and he is thought to be an uncle or great uncle of Myoju who may have received some instruction from him. Mitsutada conveniently

bridges the gap between Ko-Umetada and Myoju.

Myoju was skilled at working in all metals but preferred iron brass or copper. His iron tends to be of medium hardness but some have softer plates in order that they may carry certain soft metal decorations.

The tempering is very fine as would be expected from someone known as the father of the Shinto style and founder of the Hizen school. He signed his work Umetada Myoju or simply Umetada, although many pieces are unsigned.

His designs are varied, but he did not use relief inlay in his work as did other Umetadas, nor did his designs include landscapes. His work shows his ability as a painter with his engraving style called tagare bashiri (moving chisel) meaning that it was fluid. He used gold, silver shakudo, shibuchi and copper in his inlay. He was particularly brilliant at hira-zogan and in numone. He was considered superior in both decoration and the making of the plate to all of the Kinko workers of the Tokugawa period.

Yasuchika

Yasuchika was born in 1670 (Kanbun 10) in Shonai. Up to the age of 34 he studied under the master Chinkyu of the Shonai Shoami school. He married the daughter of his master and had one son, but he left them nine years later. His father, Karenon had gone to Edo and Yasuchika followed him, hoping to find fame and fortune. There he studied under Tokimasa where pupil soon overtook master.

At the age of 34, during the Kyocho era (1211-36) he became a retainer of Matsudaira Daigakū-no-kami Yorisada, a powerful lord, who allowed Yasuchika to develop his skills. Yasuchika seemed to have the wander-bug and in his search for fulfilment left his services and began to work in the Nara style. Although Yasuchika did not gain fame in the Nara style during his life, he is now known as one of the Nara San Saku (three great Nara masters) the other two being Suguira Joi and Toshinega.

Most of his life was spent in financial straits which may well have affected his work. Simplicity was forced on him and he had to use a minimum of elaborate decoration and only occasional nanako work.

Besides being a great tsuba maker, Yasuchika is known for making small fittings, netsake and inro. His styles varied greatly. Basically a Shonai Shoami worker, he also employed designs of

Edo and Bushu as well as being a master of the Nara school. He liked landscapes, animal and human figures, historical and mythological subjects and executed these in a variety of styles.

Although he did not always reach the heights of perfection attained by Kaneiye, Nobuiye or Myeju he was one of the greatest of the Tokugawa period tsuba makers. He died at the age of 75 in 1744 at his home near the Kanda Myojin Shrine.

A Patron

In 1632 the Hosokawa family were made Daimyes of Higo Province, having left Kokura and before that Tango province. It is evident that Lord Hosokawa was a patron of the arts and it is said that he even made tsuba himself, indeed one purporting to be by him was given a Juyo rating some time ago. The first Lord Hosokawa and his son had working for them four of the greatest tsuba makers of the early Tokugawa period, all working in Higo at the same time. They were:

1. Hirata Hikozo
2. Hayashi Matashichi
3. Shimizo Jingo
4. Nishigaki Kanshiro (nephew of Hikozo)

All four of these masters were probably accomplished artists, before coming together under Hosokawa. Their styles were quite different and although there was probably some influence from each other, they retained their different approaches. Some generalisations, however, may be made about these "Higo Tsuba".

Higo iron is readily recognisable by its superb qualities of workmanship. The surface of Higo tsuba have rich variations in texture and iron of a rich black colour. Creatively the Higo artists' originality of both naturalistic and abstract designs, influenced many of the schools of the Tokugawa period.

Hirata Hikozo

Before the patron Hosokawa became Daimyo of Higo one of his retainers in Tango Province was the father of Hirata Hikozo. When the Lord moved to Higo, both father and son accompanied him.

Hikozo, in his turn became a Hokozawa retainer for a reputed 100 koku of rice. It is not known from whom Hikozo learnt the skills of making tsuba but it is apparent that he was strongly influenced by the Tachi-Kanaguchi school, although the best work of this school does not measure up to that of Hikozo. Similarities are that they both use the Yanagane

or brass plate and the rim of the tsuba is often of shakudo or silver.

Very often the tsuba of Hikozo are oval, mokko or nadekakugata (rounded square shaped) and the plates are of Yamagane, pure copper, shishu and occasionally shakudo and iron, patinated and coloured with Hikozo's own processes. His techniques include, shishiai bori (sunken relief carving), katakiri, shigare-yasuri (intermittent broken radial lines). One particular speciality, peculiar to this man is Okina-yasuri, which looks like an old man's beard made up of broken, curved concentric circles. The masterful use of these techniques, coupled with his superb plate making produced some great tsuba, combining the best of metal working techniques with some of those of the master painter.

It is important to handle genuine pieces by this man, as only one example of a tsuba signed "Hiko Hikozo" is known to exist. The texture of plate and its patination are very difficult to reproduce and so make telling genuine from fake relatively easy, providing of course one has seen the 'right' one in the first place.

Hayashi Matashichi

Born in 1613 (Keicho 18) in Owari Province Hayashi Matashichi was variously known as Shigeyoshi, Shigeharu but was famous as Matashichi. His family lived in the town of Kasuga and at first he studied to become a gunsmith.

Hayashi Matashichi's father was a retainer of the famous Lord Kato Kiyomasa and they moved to Kamamoto castle in Higo province. After Kiyomasa's death he remained in the service of his son Tadahiro until his banishment in 1632. At this time he moved to Higo where he became a retainer of Lord Hosokawa where he worked until his death in 1699 (Genroku 12) at the age of 87.

The fact that Matashichi lived in Owari province in his earlier years had a great influence on his tsuba making after he had turned from gun making. Many good tsuba were at this time being made by the Owari-Sukashi school of which Matashichi's iron work bears a close resemblance. Unlike the abstract geometrical designs of the Owari school, Matashichi's designs were more symetrical and the subjects naturalistic, with added nunome and hira-zogan (gold filigree type) which added richness to the design. The use of cherry-blossom, paulowina, drops of water and kiri feature in his designs regularly.

Shimizu Jingo

Shimizu Jingo's real name was Nibei and it is thought that the previously mentioned Hirata Hikozo was his uncle. He changed his name to Shimizu and was then known as Shimizu, and all later generations were known as Shimizu Jingo.

The first Shimizu was famous for rustic or heavy tsuba. The ironwork was very good but thick and heavy with an undulating textured surface. Most often they were of a squared round shape, a squared mokko or aoiri gata (trapezoidal), round tsuba being rare.

These tsuba look the heaviest and strongest of all Higo tsuba. This is partly due to the shape, partly due to the irregular texturing of the surface of the plate accentuated with strong suemon inlay (large portions of inlaid metal). His subject matter is completely at one with this style of plate. The use of designs of an eagle on a branch, a large rooster, a turtle etc., executed in a heavy bold manner illustrate this point. Later generations often lack the power and control of the first master although some are quite well rated.

The nunome-zogan in gold and silver often gives the appearance of being worn or ribbed on Shimizu tsuba. This, however, is intentional and not a sign of deterioration or misuse. The nunome-zogan work that Shimizu-Jingo did is considered to be surpassed by later generations but his bold brass inlays were never bettered. He died, still in the service of Hosokawa in the year 1675 (Empo 3).

Nishigaki Kanshiro

The shodai Nishigaki Kanshiro is believed to have been a priest in Tanba Province until he joined Lord Hosokawa in Higo Province.

He seems to have been influenced to some degree by several other artists, including Hirata Hikozo from whom he learnt the methods of Kawarigane (soft metal) tsuba, by Hayashi Matashichi who influenced his Sukashi work and also by Shimizu Jingo. He managed, however, to produce work that was unique and totally different from these others.

A favourite subject was the depicting of waves in brass, executed with a few chiseled strokes. This subject, as with many Kanshiro Sukashi tsuba were often copied by contempories and many are very good imitations. The quality of his iron work and the economy of strokes in his chisel work are the mark of the master.

The second Nishigaki Kanshiro, son of the first master, was also an artist of great repute. His work tended to be somewhat more refined and delicate than that of his father whose bold and powerful designs had a different appeal.

The diversity, creativeness and variety of these two men, influenced the styles and methods of many of the later Higo workers. The first Nishigaki Kanshiro died in 1693 (Genroku 6) at the age of 81.

Bibliography: Yasuchika by Tomijiro Mizaki Samaisha
Great Masters of Buba-ko by Gery Solomon
Japanese Sword Guards by Sir Arthur Church

JAPANESE ALLOYS AND METALS USED IN SWORD FURNITURE

We have all seen and appreciated tsuba and may have wondered at the different alloys and metals used in their manufacture. Iron may be of the highest quality and the beauty of such tsuba is very often in the design. Sometimes easier for the layman to appreciate, are those tsuba made up of alloys such as shakudo, shibuchi etc. names I for one use and recognise, but have not fully understood for some time. In conjunction with the aforegoing notes on tsuba makers, I felt the following may be of use to some members. Comments from the "metallurgical" faction of the society would be very much appreciated.

Shakudo and Shibuchi are two such alloys, peculiar to Japan and found nowhere else as far as I am aware. In their pure cast form there is little to recommend these alloys and their beauty becomes more apparent when their surfaces are patinated by special treatment.

Shakudo: Shakudo in its finished form is a dark blue-black colour and sometimes called "U-kin" or comorant gold. Before it is patinated it is of a deep copper colour as some may already know from observing over-cleaned tsuba, when it has the appearance of bronze.

The presence of not less than about 4% gold was considered essential in order to obtain the finest black sheen. This amount was very variable, however, as there were no less than fifteen grades of shakudo; the lowest known as "chusho" contains only traces of gold. The shakudo of the Satsuma artists was generally considered to be the richest and most

valuable although some of those made in Edo were considered as good.

Certainly some of the finest work in shakudo appears in the furniture of swords, one of the earliest recorded being on the sword of Ashikaga Takauji (1335-1357). It would seem that no large castings were made in this alloy but from the time of Goto Shirobei (1439-1512), the first of the Goto line, up to the end of the Edo period it was in common use, particularly in the manufacture of tsuba.

The alloy has the properties of being both malleable and ductile (able to be hammered into sheets and drawn into wire) which must have made it very 'workable'. Its popularity was no doubt somewhat due to the rich black surface providing a perfect ground for inlaying other metals such as gold, silver and copper.

The patination was, of course, the important part of the making of shakudo. I quote verbatim one method for producing the necessary patina, and trust it is understood as it stands:

> "The object is first boiled in a lye prepared by lixivating wood ashes, after which it is carefully polished, if necessary with charcoal powder. It is then immersed in plum-vinegar containing common salt in solution, and after being washed with a weak lye, is placed in a tub of water to remove all traces of alkali. After this treatment it is digested in a boiling solution of copper sulphate, verdigris and water, to which sometimes potassium nitrate is added, until the desired patina is produced".
> (Transactions of the Japan Society)

Shibuchi: The name means that it contains one part of silver in every four. An analyses of alloys in the shibuchi group show that the silver content varies from 13.5% - 50% (Table II).

Like shakudo, the beauty of this alloy may be seen in the patination of the metal rather than in its untreated state, which is a dull, unimaginative, gun barrel grey, or pale bronze colour. It retains an overall greyish appearance when patinated but of a richer and more aesthetically pleasing quality. In the same way as shakudo, therefore, it provides a good background for other metals such as gold, silver and copper. The patination process is the same as that of shakudo.

Shibuchi seems to have also been in use in the Ashikaga period

(1338-1573). There are in existence several masterpieces in the alloy, including a kogai by Goto Tokujo (1631) and a Kodzuka by Goto Junjo (1699) whilst in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was commonly employed in the manufacture of sword mounts. The first official mention of the alloy (that is to say, in official records) dates from as late as the beginning of the eighteenth century, when it was used in the Government Mint in the preparation of debased silver bars known as "chu-gin" (trade silver) and used for commercial purposes. It was at about this time also used in tsuba and given a bright silver finish by the application of a different patination process.

It should be noted that shibuchi is rather more of a generic name, the quantities of silver varying so much. As previously mentioned shibuchi in its purest is one part of silver in four. Similarly when silver is one part and copper two parts the alloy is called "sanbo-gin" and "hoji-gin" consists of equal parts of each metal but also several lower and intermediate alloys. It is in fact "sanbo-gin" that is most often used by art-metal workers.

Sentoku: This yellow alloy is used as a gold substitute in much sword furniture of the seventeenth-nineteenth centuries.

An interesting story of how it was discovered has many parallels with the story of discovery of prehistoric man discovering cooked meat. Known on the Chinese mainland a legend describes the destruction of a temple by fire, when the bronze vessels, brass and gold of the altar were melted together into a mass. The beautiful colour of the metal attracted the attention of some art founders, who after many unsuccessful attempts, finally managed to reproduce it.

The basic composition of the alloy is copper, tin and zinc.

With the use of these alloys, shakudo, shibuchi and sentoku, combined with basic metals such as iron, gold, silver and copper, the Japanese tsuba maker was able to use colour, as well as form in his quest for perfection.

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1. Iron tsuba imitating wood, a shibuchi snake crawling round the edge. Signed Shoami, late Edo period.

2. Early Goto work, shakudo plate with very fine nanako work. Details in gold, silver and shakudo, a very rare piece, circa A.D. 1450.

3. Sentoku tsuba, the detail inlaid with copper, shakudo and shibuchi. The reflection of the moon is silver, signed Shozui at the age of 63.

4. Very rare kodzuka, shakudo plate with fine nanako ground. Design of Japanese gold coins, signed Goto Hojo.

5. Shakudo Kodzuka with silver karenono, inlaid with single silver arrow, signed Somin.

6. Pair of fuchi-kashira. The plate of iron and the surface inlaid with dropes of silver.

7. An attractive paid of fuchi-kashira the plate metal being of copper, shakudo, gold and silver mokume. Unsigned.

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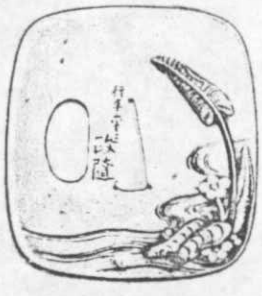

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ANALYSES OF SILVER ALLOYS OF THE "SHIBUICHI" GROUP

	HOJI-GIN		EIJI-GIN	SAMBO-GIN		SHIHO-GIN	ANSEI-GIN
	1 MINT TRADE BARS 1706 A.D. (GOWLAND)	2 SWORD MOUNT (KALIS ER)	3 MINT TRADE BARS 1710 A.D. (GOWLAND)	4 MINT TRADE BARS 1710 A.D (GOWLAND)	5 SWORD-MOUNT Early 18th. (GOWLAND)	6 MINT TRADE BARS 1711. A.D (GOWLAND)	7 MINT TRADE BARS 1854 A.D (GOWLAND)
SILVER	50.70	48.93	41.60	32.65	32.07	20.40	13.50
COPPER	49.18	51.10	58.32	67.27	67.31	79.58	86.48
GOLD	0.12	0.12	0.08	0.08	TRACE	0.02	0.02
LEAD	—	—	—	—	0.52	—	—
	100.00	100.15	100.00	100.00	99.90	100.00	100.00

SENTOKU

COPPER	TIN	LEAD	ZINC	IRON	SILVER	GOLD	NICKEL	TOTAL
72.32	8.126	6.217	13.102 by diff.	0.170	—	BISMUTH TRACE	0.065	100.00

ANALYSES OF THE ALLOY "SHAKU-DO"

	GOLD	SILVER	COPPER	LEAD	IRON	ARSENIC	TOTAL	ANALYST
1/	4.16	0.08	95.77	-	-	-	100.01	KALISCHER
2/	3.73	1.55	94.50	0.11	TRACE	TRACE	99.89	GOWLAND
3/	2.67	2.06	94.90	0.11	-	-	99.74	"
4/	2.45	1.24	96.00	0.06	-	-	99.75	"
5/	1.52	2.01	96.10	0.08	-	-	99.71	"
6/	1.00	1.37	97.40	0.07	-	-	99.84	"
7/	0.49	0.29	99.04	-	-	-	99.82	ATKINSON

SWORD POLISHING

Back in 1968, the To-ken Society were kindly invited to a Sherry Reception and Kendo Evening run by the Nenriki Dojo at the William Harper School, Elephant and Castle. I remember this evening very well indeed because Sir Frank Bowden had at this reception the Ichimonji blade he had recently purchased at one of the London Auction Rooms. It was a lot of money then for a Japanese sword, I suppose by today's prices it was cheap but to me it still seems a lot of money. Bon Dale, then Chairman of the To-Ken, offered me a lift home and at some stage of the journey managed to talk me into accepting responsibility for handling the swords going over to Japan for polishing. Prior to this a few of us had given sword blades to Bon at one of the meetings to act as guinea pigs in a pilot scheme to send swords to Japan for polishing, and to find out what sort of job was made of them.

Since taking on this job I have written to lots of people and received letters from all over the World, even to receiving a telephone call from Canada, which the G.P.O. forgot to charge for.

To-date the number of swords going out for polishing amount to ninety seven, this does not include the present batch. They have arrived in all shapes and sizes, Tanto, Wakizashi, Katana, Tachi, even the odd couple of Naginata and one Yari, but I am afraid even the Japanese baulked at a Magari Yari. I am informed the polishers are not too keen on Yari, it is possibly quicker and easier to polish sword blades as opposed to the many edges of spears.

For those not conversant with the system I will explain that, apart from the polishing facilities, if we wish, our swords may be entered for appraisal with the Japanese Shinsa Board and it is always rather exciting to see if ones blade has been awarded a paper. There are two grades, Green being the highest and indicates a good blade, then White which is given to blades that in their opinion are genuine, all other blades are disqualified. In these Shinsa the To-Ken Society have faired quite well being able to boast of 25 Green Papers, 22 White and only 10 Disqualified. Also, we have to bear in mind that some batches did not go in for appraisal because the N.B.T.H.K. centralised its meetings which created a vast backlog of swords, this went on for some time before they went back to the old system, and as it meant us leaving swords that were ready to be returned for several more months we decided to give the Shinsa a miss with a couple of batches. On one occasion a blade was disqualified by the Shinsa Panel for just having Hizen (No) Kuni the rest of the signature being cut off, so it would seem an old or partial forgery is enough to disqualify a blade.

Now to prices, in 1969 the price for a Katana, Repolish, Shirasaya, Shinsa, Air Freight etc. was £50.50, a Wakizashi £40. I had an armour piercing Tanto of Naginata style for the grand sum of £28 and £10 of that was Customs and Air Freight Charges. The same sword blades at October 1976 come out at £222 for a Katana, £165 to £215 for a Wakizashi, and £122 for a Hira-Tsukuri Tanto Blade for polishing only according to class of blade, i.e. if its a good blade one gets a good polish even if a cheap one is asked for.

From those few swords in the original test batch back in 1969 a lot of swords have gone to Japan. However, as with everything these days, inflation has taken its toll and members are not too happy about splashing out two hundred pounds to have a blade polished, especially on top of the price they have to pay for their swords today.

David Parker

THE NEW ORIENTAL GALLERY AT THE TOWER OF LONDON

At long last the Tower of London has opened its new Oriental Gallery in the Waterloo Barracks behind the White Tower.

The permanent exhibition is beautifully housed in rooms especially arranged for it and tastefully lit so that all the cases are illuminated and the rooms themselves have a minimum of distracting light.

As one would expect from a gallery of this nature housed in such a distinguished venue the exhibits are of a very high standard. Most countries of the Orient are represented with weapons and armour from India, Iran, Tibet, Mongolia and, of course, Japan. Needless to say the Japanese section is by far the most comprehensive as one would expect from an exhibition of this kind originally conceived by the Late H. Russell Robinson who so tragically died in January this year and never saw the gallery opened. It comprises an impressive display of some 16 armours plus helmets and a selection of swords and sword furniture, bows, arrows, matchlocks and horse harness.

Most of the exhibits are from the Tower's own collection and others are on loan from the National Trust, Wade Collection Snowshill Manor and the Victoria and Albert Museum. As it is quite some time now since any of these pieces was on show it is a welcome sight. One item which has not been on exhibition before is one of the two suits of armour presented to James I in 1613. The pair to this one is signed Iway Yozaemon, is in tolerably good condition for its age and has

been on exhibition before but this one which had suffered terribly over the years has been completely restored in Japan and is on show for the first time. Both suits are of good quality and were made in the 16th century. They were mounted in 1613.

EXCURSION TO JAPAN

We have been informed by Mr Toga Katsuyama that he is organising another visit to Japan from October 18th to the 30th this year. This coincides with the Exhibition to be held from October 20th to the 22nd by The Society for the Preservation of Japanese Art Swords. An extensive tour of places of interest has been arranged. The cost is D.M. 3,600 basic. Personal expenses will be extra and the Registration Fee for the Exhibition is Y 35,000. Details are available from Mr Katsuyama at:

Hofgeest 30, Amsterdam, Holland.

TOURS BY THE JAPAN SOCIETY INC. OF THE USA

The Society will conduct three travel and study programmes to Japan in 1978, May 28 - June 11, June 30 - July 23 and November 1 - 22. Details may be had from The Japan Society Inc., 333E 47th Street, New York 10017, USA.