

To-Ken Society of GB June 2016 meeting

The meeting commenced with an update by Ian Chapman on the overhaul of the website. There ensued a lively debate about the sword register, a member-only vs non-member area of the website, the archives of the Society and how all of these materials should be publicised. It was felt that the Society, being an educational organisation, should make these available widely but ensure information integrity is safeguarded, eg by conversion of some of these materials into a different format.

Then, Ian proceeded to facilitate a discussion about merchants' swords. In general, most of those are blades of wakizashi (predominantly) type or just under katateuchi length housed in lavish or ostentatious koshirae. The social class 'chonin' comprising predominantly traders but also craftsmen were not allowed to carry blades of more than 1.6 shaku (49cm) during the Tokugawa era.

The visual impact of these was more emphatic than their performance as a weapon by virtue of the occupation of their owner. Therefore, with the elegant aesthetic of the peaceful Edo period (thriving in places like Kyoto and Osaka) there emerged a fashion trend within these chonin 'accessories' for highly flamboyant hamon coupled with ornate and expensive koshirae. Such blades were commissioned to Sukehiro, Yoshimichi and others.

The attendees had brought swords and koshirae as study material:

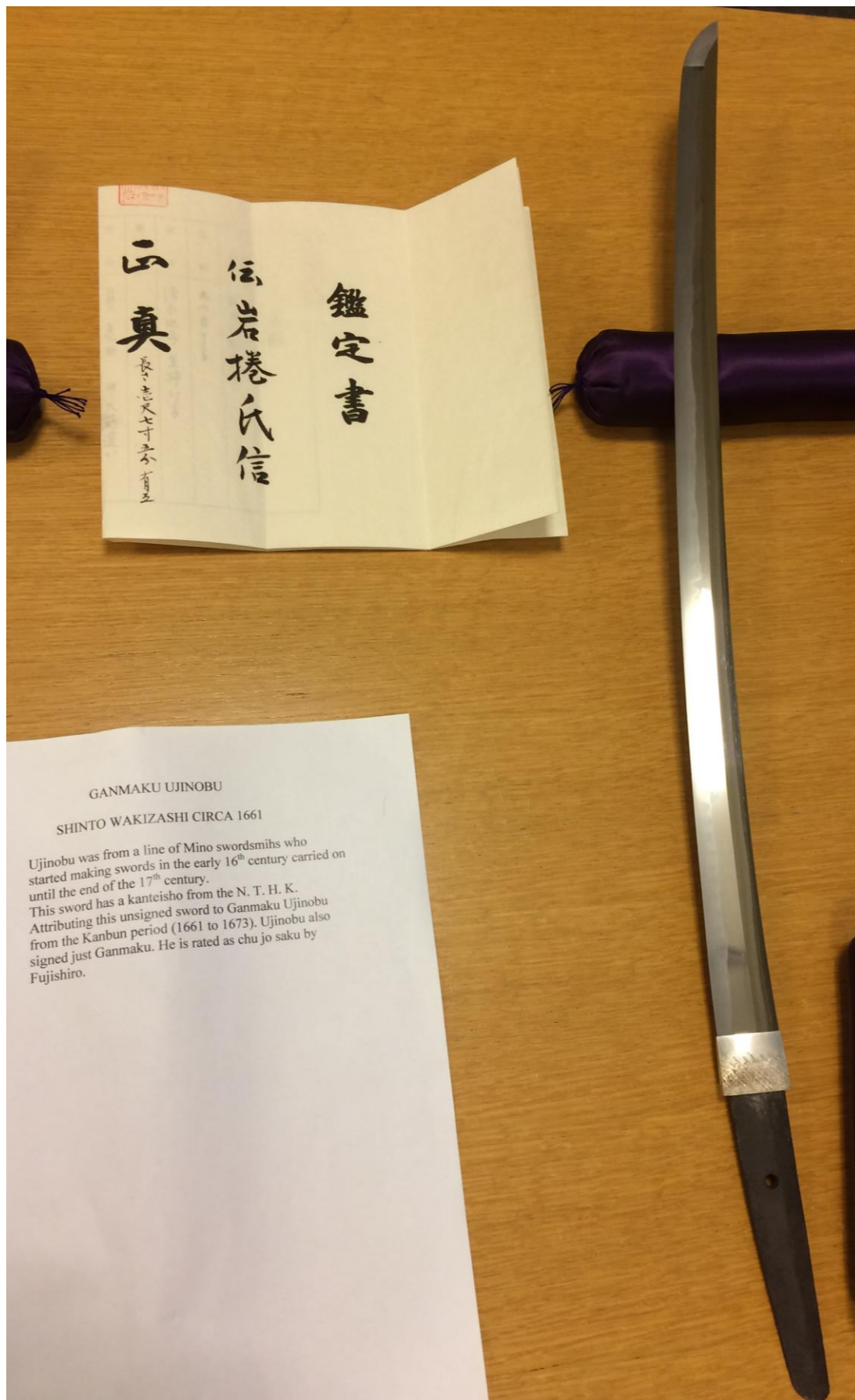
- Yamato den sword / Masanori
- Early Shinto Owari Ujifusa
- Kanbun-era Ujinobu wakizashi
- Gassan Sadakazu
- Various koshirae / tosogu: Mino Goto, Omori, etc

As usual, there was a lot of study material encompassing elegant koshirae and tosogu, blades as well as curious artefacts such as an Edo-period military map only recently discovered in a secret compartment of a box.

Fig.1 Koshirae



Fig.2 Ujinobu wakizashi



GANMAKU UJINOBU
SHINTO WAKIZASHI CIRCA 1661
Ujinobu was from a line of Mino swordsmiths who started making swords in the early 16th century carried on until the end of the 17th century.
This sword has a kanteisho from the N. T. H. K.
Attributing this unsigned sword to Ganmaku Ujinobu from the Kanbun period (1661 to 1673). Ujinobu also signed just Ganmaku. He is rated as chu jo saku by Fujishiro.

Fig.3 Ujifusa



Fig.4 Gassan Sadakazu

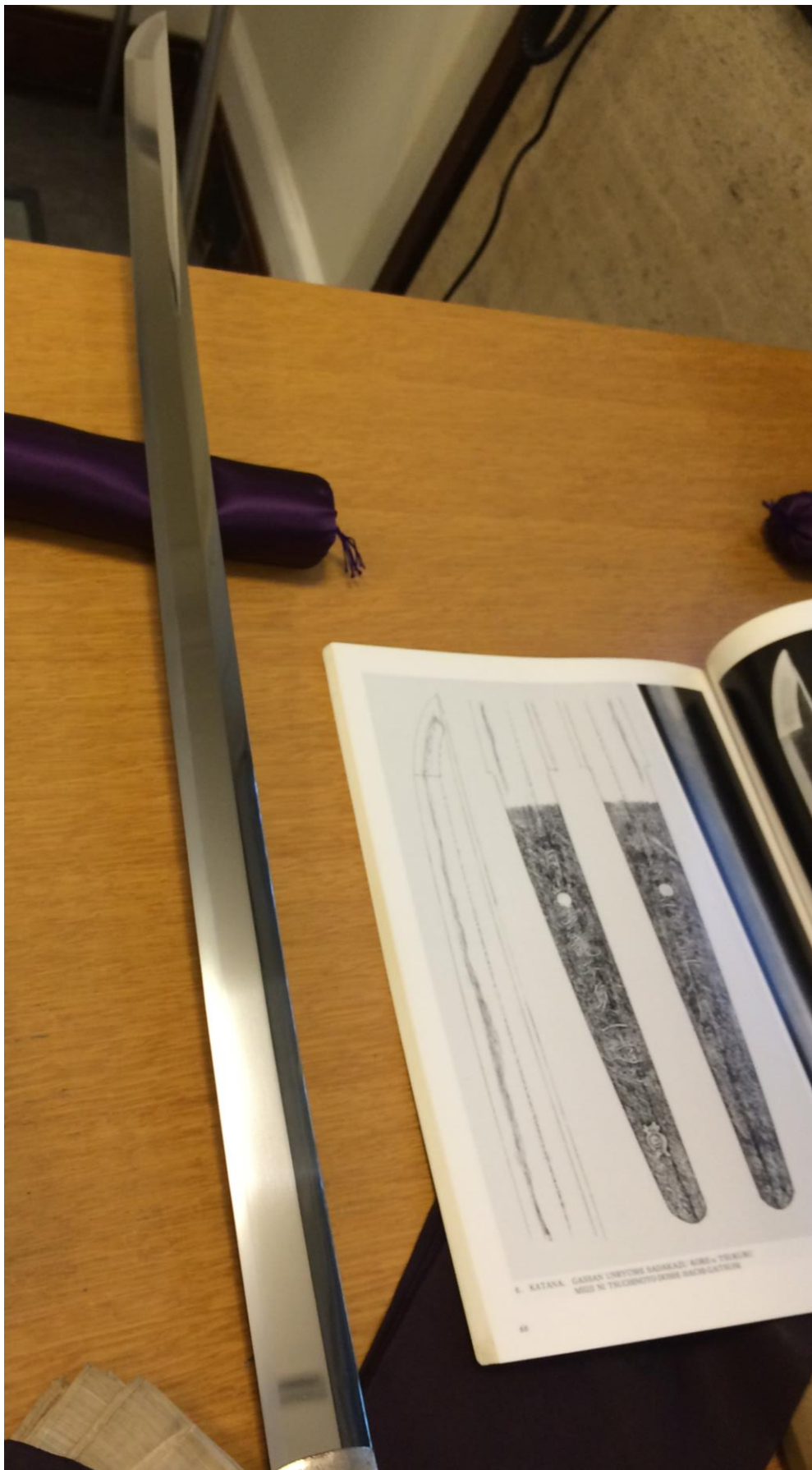


Fig.5 Military map concealed in koshirae

