

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



HON. PRESIDENT, KAZUTARO TORIGOYE, Dr. LITT.
SECRETARY, 17, PICCADILLY ARCADE LONDON, S.W.1. (HYDe Park 6496)

PROGRAMME

NEXT MEETING

Monday, November 6th, 1967 at The Masons Arms,
Maddox Street, London, W.1 at 7.30 p.m.

SUBJECT

Will be a talk by John Anderson entitled "An Introduction to Armour". Members are asked to bring armour, or portions of armour. Sword collector's are asked to bring Tachi as examples of swords which were worn with armour. Small fittings illustrating armour would also be welcome.

LAST MEETING

Was the Annual General and the election of Officers for the next year. A new Committee of seven was elected as follows: Alan Bale, Peter Cottis, Sidney Divers, Bon Dale, Malcolm Hutchinson, Prof. Macfarlane; with David Tudor Williams as the new Chairman. The elections were followed by a lively discussion on the affairs of the Society. The general outcome of this is summed up in our new Chairman's report, which follows:

State of the Society by The Chairman

It is never easy to take over a job from someone else, particularly when that person has been performing it as well and as surely as Douglas Wright. So may I, for the three new committee members and myself, say to all "Hello, here we are, we hope we will repay the confidence you showed in electing us!"

It is usual to start a new year with a review of the old, so I will say just this: the Society is adequately solvent, we now have 112 members and we succeeded in staging 12 meetings in 12 months, most of which were pretty well attended. Bon Dale has done wonders with the Programme and the secretary continues to hold everything together in her inimitable way.

So much for the past - what of the future? We now enter our 4th year with a steadily growing membership, so so much for the wisecracks - without and within - who thought it couldn't be done - and said so! We even have an exhibition scheduled

at one of the great museums of Europe - no mean effort for so young an organisation. Our membership is literally world wide and without a penny piece spent in advertising ourselves. By any standards, this is good, I believe.

Now we must keep it all up, and this is where I turn to you. The Committee of a Society like ours is - in the long run - only as good as the membership will let it be. After all, we are - all of us - first and foremost members together. We are organised in a Society solely by virtue of common interests and all the Committee can - or should do - is to try and co-ordinate these interests to the best advantage of us all. To be effective in this, which is really the task of organising individual interests and points of view to the mutual benefit of all, the Committee must know what is wanted. So, please, all of you, wherever you are, let us know what you think - what is right with us and what is wrong. If there are things you like we will reinforce them and if the contrary, we will try and change them if at all possible. If we don't know we can't do anything!

I think that is all I can say. This is your Society and we are your Committee. Help us to continue to organise things in the direction you want, so that your Society can go on to even greater success.

ITEM

From Peter Cottis, an interesting side light on collecting, particularly as so many swords appear in Salercoms these days, words of wisdom which will repay careful study:

Auctioneers and the Misrepresentation Act 1967

The Misrepresentation Act 1967 came into force on April 22nd and seems to have caused some agitation amongst Auctioneers and some re-thinking of their practice in writing catalogues.

One of the major effects of the Act is that it is much more difficult than it was for anybody to protect himself against being sued for incorrectly describing goods he sells. Before the Act it was possible for an Auctioneer to say, in his Conditions of Sale at the front of the catalogue, that "No liability is accepted by the Auctioneer or the Vendor for any errors of description and no warranty is given as to the authenticity of any lot" and be reasonably sure nobody could sue him. Now

such a clause will work only if the Court considers it "fair and reasonable in the circumstances of the case".

This has had two effects. First, the catalogues include a more reasonably expressed disclaimer in larger type. Second, both Sotheby's and Christie's have adopted a more or less standard wording for Japanese works of art with names on. In catalogues published this season, you will sometimes see things described as "Signed so-and-so" and sometimes "Inscribed" or "Bearing the signature of so-and-so". "Signed" should now mean that the cataloguer thinks its probably genuine, or has an origami which says it is. "Inscribed" or "Bearing the signature" of means that he doesn't.

This may or may not be important in law - it depends whether the court thinks the basic disclaimer "fair and reasonable". However, it is certainly important in practice because one now has an expert's opinion on the genuineness of a piece and because of the sporting rule, (which has always been in the Conditions) that if you bring a thing back within three weeks of buying it and satisfy the auctioneers that it is "considered in the light of the terms of the Catalogue", a forgery, you can have your money back. If the Catalogue says "inscribed", the thing was sold as a forgery and you won't get your money back.

This new description seems to me a good one, and I hope that the cataloguers won't be scared off by buyers demanding guarantees of genuineness which they obviously can't give. Like all other experts, they can only give their opinion for what it is worth, and the collector must make his mind up in the light of all the opinions he can get, including his own. Personally, I propose to treat the implications of "Signed" with some reserve, but to accept those of "Inscribed" without hesitation.

COMMENT

This does not mean of course, that all compilers of catalogues have yet completely mastered the use of these descriptions. One can still see catalogues in which most swords are "signed" and are therefore, on the strength of the above article, presumably genuine. Personally, I wonder if these particular terms can be applied to sword blades, although they can obviously be of merit when describing ceramics etc. with sword blades, as it ought to be with everything else, it must still come back to the personal judgement of the eventual buyer whether

he is buying a genuine piece.

SWORD SALE

It may be of interest to our more far flung members to know of a sale which will be held at Christies on the 14th of November next. We are not being paid by Christies for advertisement! This is merely a service to our members, because this promises to be an interesting sale in as much that it might set a new high in prices for swords. Most of these swords are of a far higher quality than usually appear in salerooms. Briefly, without going into great detail, there is an Ichimonji, inscribed with an Ichi character and bearing various documents, with two shiasaya, one bearing an attribution to Ichimonji Sukemune. Nothing like this has appeared for many a year. It will be interesting to see who has sufficient trust in his own judgement to dig deep enough to buy this. There are some fine tachi, handsomely mounted, one has a fine blade by BISEN SHIGETADA apparently an unrecorded smith; the mounts to this are superb. There is a superb blade in shiasaya which has an inscription on the tang stating it is the work of MASAMUNE & DAISHINBO. This has an orikami dated 1650; as the catalogue says, this in itself is a rare item. Many other great names appear in the sale, Echizen Yasutsugu, Hasebe Kunishige, Tamba no Kami Yoshimichi to name three. There are some excellently mounted swords, a Daisho or two, including one "extravagantly mounted" with all the mounts signed Omori Teruhide; this indeed, is a fantastic pair of swords. It is not our business here to guess at prices, nor do I wish to express an opinion on those which should be "signed" or "inscribed"; this is for those who engage in the battle to decide, and the best of luck to them. We will however, report on the sale in our next Programme.

ITEM

This reporting on sales is something which we hope to do more regularly in future; here follows the first note on a recent sale from Alan Bale.

Sale Report

The First sale of the new season was held at Christies on the 17th October. The tsuba were generally speaking, of not much interest and prices were quite high as were those of the swords.

Lot 73, a quite ordinary Tachi with an 13th century Kins blade, matt black lacquer scabbard, iron and brass mounts, made 40 gns. Lot 82, a finely mounted katana with mounts of copper ishime, the blade by Omi no Dajo Tadahiro, the son of Tadayoshi 1st. Unfortunately, the blade was tired, this smith was very good but made blades with a very thin skin that soon showed their age, 75 gns. Lot 85, a fine katana with mounts of Shakudo nanako all en suite, the blade by Tairyusai Munehiro dated 1366, 135 gns. The three best swords in the sale were Lot 88, a short (21") sword signed Nagamitsu probably 3rd generation, the shape was Unokubi sukuri, mounted in shirasaya with a Hikusui orikami 88 gns. Lot 89, a tachi with a fine blade signed Naminokira Yukiashi probably 14th century, 190 gns. Lot 94, a wakibashi by Tatara Hagayuki of Settsu, c.1630, a dragon horimono was carved on either side of the blade. This smith has the rating "Supreme Sharpness", 70 gns. It does seem that swords of no particular consequence sell for almost as much as really good blades. Perhaps this situation will change at the next Christies sale of swords when some of the best blades seen for a long time are sold.

DECEMBER MEETING

It has been proposed that the December meeting shall take the form of a dinner for members and their guests at a Chinese Banqueting Hall. Members are asked to think about this, write in if they would like to be present or say so at the next meeting. Then we will know numbers, can work out a cost per head and arrange a time and place.

JANUARY MEETING

Arising out of John Harding's recent talk, and my remarks in the last Programme in which I said "don't worry if you like it collect it" - a challenge has been thrown out by John Harding. It has therefore, been decided to arrange a debate "Perfect Blades versus not so Perfect" or "Harding versus Bon Dale and probably everybody else". So will you please bring your perfect blades and your not so perfect ones too. It should be a diabolical debate!

LETTER

Overdue for publication from Ronny Ronnqvist, Helsinki; an extract which I hope will stimulate some members into thought, and also into putting pen to paper. It's about time I had another flood of letters - fallen off a bit lately!

"Dear Mr. Dale, Thank you for your last letter, which I'm able to answer only at this late moment, so I apologise for the delay. I'm very pleased to hear from your letter and the programmes that some work is in progress among To Ken members concerning last war military swords and shingunto. I think this is not a moment too early, since these things have been somewhat neglected by collectors, perhaps due to emotional reasons (especially in U.K. and U.S.A.) Be it as it may, this sub-group of Nippon-to is well worth studying. There is, however, one point more I should like to stress. For a collector it is not enough to know everything about the sword itself, the blade, the mounts, forging process, etc. but he should also be busy in studying the social customs of different times which have influenced the sword, and which have been influenced by the sword. By this I mean the handling and etiquette of the sword and the manners of the gentleman who is the bearer of the sword, i.e. the samurai of all ranks. Also the fencing techniques should be studied, in order to get a picture of Japanese swordsmanship. All this is most important when we have the Japanese sword in mind, a weapon which has played so an important part in the Japanese history. This is also true when we consider the second world war, the last time (perhaps) when the sword played an important part in the military history of a nation. All this has, in my opinion, hitherto been somewhat neglected, and such information is hard to obtain from books written in any western language. And few of us can read Japanese well enough to get anything out of Japanese books. Maybe something of this could be published in the Journal in the future? We already have a good account on seppuku (reliable?) in Mitford's "Tales....", but more could be done. At this moment such information appears only a bit at a time as, for instance, in Harrison's "The Fighting Spirit of Japan" etc."

NEW MEMBERS

We have pleasure in welcoming the following new members to the Society :

Mr. E. Willoughby,
5, Fernhill Road,
Maidstone, Kent.

J. Raun Kristensen,
Hectors alle 7,
2650 Hvidovre,
Denmark.

NEW MEMBERS
(Cont'd)

Malcolm Allan Kesson,
76, Clifton Road,
Kingston-on-Thames,
Surrey.

CHANGE OF
ADDRESS

J.S.Naemura, M.D.
12235 N.E.Rose Parkway,
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