

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.
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 HON. PRESIDENT, KAZUTARO TORIGOYE, Dr. LITT. (01-736 6838)
 SECRETARY, 17, PICCADILLY ARCADE LONDON, S.W.1. (HYDe Park 6496)



PROGRAMME

NEXT MEETING Monday, April 1st, 1968 at The Masons Arms,
 Maddox Street, London W.1. at 7.30 p.m.

SUBJECT We hope to have an informal talk by Douglas Wright on "Some Aspects of Small Fittings". We will all look forward to this, I'm sure; it is a long time since we had a talk and discussion on sword fittings. Please bring along examples of choice fuchikashira, kodzuka or menuki, no particular type specified. Bring them all and we'll have an orgy. One thing that constantly worries me as Prog. Sec. is that the To Ken Society is devoted to the study of the sword and it's fittings. This Programme is mostly devoted to the blade. This is not because I am a blade man; all the correspondence I receive is about blades, all my references are on blades, and so the Programme tends to become weighted in favour of the blade. If only someone will write in on fuchikashira or other small fittings, I will publish their writings with pleasure. This applies to tsuba and armour too, anything to do with To Ken in fact - so please write. No excuse for saying the Programme is only about blades - you do something about it!

EXHIBITION
 CATALOGUE

An apology is due to members in the U.K. and Overseas who have written in and sent money for Catalogues. Some wrote three weeks or so ago, and some no doubt are wondering if their letters have gone astray. Everything is under control - no cause for worry. We were obviously finally in the hands of the Printer. This gentleman only produced initially enough catalogues to cover the start of the Exhibition, and these arrived fifteen minutes before the doors opened. Inevitably these contained a number of mistakes which had to be rectified before we could send the catalogues out to the membership. The Printer took another week to do this and we only received the remainder of the catalogues and correction sheet a couple of

(April 1st. Prog.)

2.

days ago. All orders to date for the catalogue have now been despatched and should be in the hands of the members concerned by the time this Programme arrives. We apologise for this delay, but it has been due entirely to circumstances beyond our control - namely, the Printer.

For those members who received a catalogue at the Private View or otherwise before the correction list was to hand, I publish the Errata and Addenda at the end of the Programme for removal and insertion in the catalogue.

LETTER

From Ben Vincent, congratulations to him for being the first member to spot the deliberate mistake in the January Programme! I've been waiting for this one, I haven't said a word to anyone, not even Andrew Ford - I began to think I must be wrong! Read on, Comment will follow :

"Dear Mr. Dale, Recently I received the January issue of the Programme and it was, as always, interesting. Andrew Ford writes that Hankei's work was sometimes mistaken for that of Masamune by the "Motoami". May I ask, "Who were the Motoami?" The first character from the name of the very famous Honnami family can also be read "MOTO" but such a mistake borders on heresy, does it not? I am sure that you got many letters from other members about this. Could it have been a clever ruse to stir up interest? "Also, I saw that "tate" was mentioned as a characteristic of Hankei's blades. I have seen eight Hankei blades and have yet to see "tate". Nor have I seen "tate" on anybody else's work for that matter. No one in Japan has been able to tell me what "tate" means, when used in connection with swords. Tate-ware of course, is a different matter and this is found in Hankei's work. Can some kind member please tell me, and the students of the sword here in Japan, the meaning of and Japanese characters for this term? Also I remember reading about "antei" in connection with utsuri. Nobody here can tell me what that means. They invariably ask "Is that an English word?" Once more may I ask the membership to teach me the meaning and Japanese characters for this word?

Very sincerely, Ben Vincent."))

COMMENT

On the confusion of "Motoami" for Honnami, I assumed when I first read this that Andrew Ford's translator, Shoichi Tanaka, had perhaps being inexperienced with swords, used the wrong reading for the first character of HONNAMI, and that Andrew had failed to spot this. I still assume the same and have been waiting for someone to start something.

Ben Vincent starts a few other things too! But this is what we want! On the word "tate" I had assumed here that tateware was meant; I've heard Andrew Ford use this abbreviation for tateware in conversation - but it isn't correct and I agree Ben Vincent has a point, even if he is a little acid.

Now the word "antei" is a different kettle of fish (letter from Han Bing Siong, Dec. Programme 1967). I confess I'm with Ben Vincent. I don't know what antei is either. I'm a student of the sword too, and sometimes I just publish and wait for someone else to elucidate. I think Mr. Han may have confused a word in his own language, English and Japanese. But, there is only one solution - over to you Mr. Han. What is antei?

ITEM

Before people start writing letters to slay Ben Vincent and his article on Horikawa Kunihiro in the last Programme, may I hastily state the following. The article arrived written in long hand, which if Ben will forgive my saying so, wasn't very legible. In fact, it was awful! Due to my involvement in the final stages of the exhibition, I wasn't able to sit down and edit this and had to pass it straight over to our typist. She did a marvellous job on this, but a few errors did creep in. These are mostly confined to Ben's 'T' which looks like a J - so we get Jensho instead of Tensho, etc. I'm sure members can sort the rest out for themselves.

LETTER

This Programme begins to read like the Wars of the Gempei; now we have Andrew Ford on Ben Vincent as follows :

"I must say how much I enjoyed Ben Vincent's article on Horikawa Kunihiro. As I merely had translated such articles on Kunihiro as I have in various Japanese books it comes as no surprise to me that the bulk of it is not now considered to be true. I am sure that all the sword collectors in the Society would be pleased to receive more information of this type on any swordsmiths, the intermediate as well as the brilliant. If Ben Vincent can 'shoot any holes' in my other articles I will be only too pleased to read it, because it does mean we are getting nearer the truth all the time, which must be the prime objective."

NORTHERN BRANCH
OF THE TO KEN
SOCIETY

Andrew Ford has had the brilliant idea of forming a branch of the To Ken to bring together members in that part of the country. This is an excellent idea which might be repeated by any

other member who feels there are sufficient members in his part of the world to justify a monthly or bi-monthly meeting. We will publish details of the Northern Branch activities in this Programme as they arise.

The following is an announcement from Andrew Ford on the first meeting; it comes a little late this first time but I'm sure we will be able to organize our dates better as the Northern To Ken progresses. Good luck to your efforts!

FIRST
MEETING -
NORTHERN
BRANCH

Due to the response so far I have booked a room at the Seven Oaks Hotel, 5 Nicholas Street, Manchester 1. The first meeting will be on the 19th March commencing at 7.30 p.m. The hotel is just round the back of the Art Gallery on Princess Street. The venue was chosen with a view to being more convenient for those members coming in by train, and parking is no problem in the evening. We will be glad to see as many members as can possibly make it at this first meeting.

SWORDSMITHS
OF JAPAN

Perhaps more years ago than we both care to remember, Basil Robinson wrote for the Apollo Magazine a series of biographies of eminent swordsmiths. With his permission I propose to republish these for benefit of most of our members who will not have had the opportunity to read them. Some of the historical fact may since have been revised and may indeed provoke comment, but they are written in the rounded and polished style of our President and make good reading, a marked contrast to the ungrammatical stuff I push out each month! The first biography will be published in two parts - part two to follow next month.

NODA HANKEI by B.W.Robinson. Part I.

Hankei was born about 1580 in the province of Mikawa, but moved eastwards into Suruga, and began forging blades at Funayama. He was, it appears, self-taught and never apprenticed himself to any other smith; independence was one of his most prominent characteristics. Early in the XVIIth century the Shogun Iyeyasu visited Shidzuoka, the capital of Suruga province, with his favourite swordsmith Yasutsugu in his train. During his stay he summoned Shigekuni, another famous smith, from Kii province, and ordered the two to forge a blade in his garden. Hankei, who had presumably achieved a certain local reputation, was called in to assist them by swinging the big hammer, and it may be imagined how highly honoured the young amateur must have felt to be working in the Shogun's presence with two such eminent craftsmen. He kept his eyes open and learnt so much that he afterwards forged a blade on his own account and offered it to Iyeyasu. It was accepted, and Hankei determined to settle at Yedo, the

Shōgun's capital.

His journey eastwards along the Tokaidō post-road, later immortalized by Hiroshige's colour-prints, took him through the province of Sagami, and at Kamakura he found the swordsmith Tsunahiro working in the tradition of the greatest smith of all, Masamune (1264-1343). Hankei asked him for instruction in this style of forging, but Tsunahiro was unwilling to impart his secrets to a stranger who had evidently not undergone much previous training. However, he extended temporary hospitality to the young smith, though he took care that the latter should have no opportunity of learning his methods. One night Hankei was awakened by the sound of the bellows in the forge; he got up stealthily and was able to observe Tsunahiro and a trusted pupil at work on a blade in the semi-darkness. But his presence was detected, and the master, snatching up the red-hot blade "coloured like the moon rising on a summer evening", as one Japanese authority puts it, immediately dowsed it in water. Hankei took to his heels, and though pursued some distance by the infuriated Tsunahiro, reached Yedo safely about 1609.

But his ambition to become a great swordsmith seems to have been somewhat damped by this unfortunate episode, and he apprenticed himself to one Akagari Sohachiro, a celebrated maker of gun-barrels who had settled at Yedo in the train of Iyeyasu in 1590. Akagari is said by some to have been a naturalised European, and was in any case connected with Tanegashima Tokitaka, who first learnt the use of firearms from the Portuguese. He was highly thought of by the Shōgun, being exempted from taxation and receiving a yearly salary of 150 bags of rice (equivalent to about £500), together with certain other privileges.

Under his instruction Hankei quickly attained proficiency in his new craft, and signed his gun-barrels with the name of Kiyotaka. Nevertheless, by about 1618 he had resumed sword-forging, and found that the experience he had gained as a gunsmith stood him in very good stead. Although his methods were original, individual, and sometimes experimental, his blades were of remarkable quality, since he succeeded in combining in them the extreme toughness of metal required for a gun-barrel with an exceptionally hard and keen edge. He used to test them at the house of his teacher Akagari, using at first bundles of straw and bamboo; but at length he forged one which cut through an iron-gun barrel without nicking the edge, and Akagari was as delighted as if he had made the blade himself.

News of this reached a certain Nakagawa Saheita, one of the Shōgun's personal bodyguard, and an expert tester of swords, whose privileged position enabled him to use criminals under sentence of death for this purpose. He therefore procured one of Hankei's blades, and with it successfully cut through the bodies of three criminals at a stroke. Hankei's reputation was made.

He was not satisfied, however, until he had mastered the Sagami style of forging which he had earlier tried with such conspicuous ill-success to elicit from Tsunahiro. He was fortunate enough to hear of two smiths who forged in this style at Shitahara, to the west of Yedo, and who were anxious to

learn gun-making, so a bargain was easily struck. After a short sojourn with them he returned to the capital in full possession of all the coveted secrets of the great Masamune. He offered his next sword to the Shogun Hidetada, and the latter was so pleased with it that he allowed Hankei an annual honorarium of a thousand bags of charcoal in addition to the normal rewards of his work.

NEW MEMBERS

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

J.W.Ince,
2 Roman Road,
Meols,
Wirral,
Cheshire,

W.H.Northcote,
17 Market Street,
Crewkerne,
Somerset.

David Butler,
71, Chalk Hill,
Oxhey,
Hertfordshire.

M.G.C.Lardge,
Chem.Eng.Department,
The University,
Edgbaston,
Birmingham.

O.F.Brown, F.D.S.,
Ferndale,
St.Margarets Street,
Bradford-on-Avon.,
Wiltshire.

Docteur Claude Durix,
13 Rue de Terves,
Casablanca,
Morocco.

Bernard Brugidon,
61, Rue de Strasbourg,
Courbevoie,
France.

Bernard Le Dauphin,
57, Rue de l'Aqueduc,
Paris Xe,
France.

ERRATA and ADDENDA
to
EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

- Page 2. Acknowledgement is also made to Mitsubishi Shoji Kaisha and, for the loan of a sword, to Captain Goro Yoshimura, Japanese Naval Attache in London.
- " 16. Item 8. For Plate 8 read Plate 20.
- " 17. Item 11. Illustrated on Plate 6.
- " 17. Item 14. Delete reference to Plate 6.
- " 24. Add:
52. SLUNG SWORD (TACHI) (Plate 6)
Mounted for wear at Court, probably by an elderly nobleman. Mounts of solid silver with a nanako ground, abundantly decorated with gold "swastika" mon of the Hachisura family. Scabbard of gold nashiji with floral decoration, decorated with Hachisura mon, signed.
- Blade signed BIZEN MORIKAGE and dated 1390.
Length 23 inches.
- " 52. Plate 6. For 14 read 11.
- " 70. Item 175. In line 5 for fukigayeshai read fukigayeshi
- " 80. Item 197. Illustrated on Plate 26.
- " 80. Item 198. Illustrated on Plate 26.