

To-Ken meeting report – 25 June 2015

The meeting was dedicated to interesting koshirae and tosogu. Some members interpreted this as visually appealing sword furniture and ornaments, whilst other of the attendees decided to bring along curiosities and unusual or rarer items.

Clive commenced by talking about an Efu-no-tachi (Heian court style) koshirae made in late Edo. The tachi koshirae, well preserved, was hypothesised to have been made for a shrine as it was accompanied by a wooden tsuba and clearly was not meant for combat. It held a straight, slender blade resembling Kanbun Shinto and attributed to Fujiwara Takada due to its irregular hamon and not very lively hada (please refer to UK sword register No103 for further detail). The swords of that school, while not very attractive artistically, were quite practical and sharp and were extensively utilised by the Otomo clan in Bungo province. The koshirae is quite aesthetically attractive, with a Takeda mon emblazoned all over it and doe skin sageo.

Next, Clive presented a very pretty, silver daisho koshirae which housed a Momoyama Tadamitsu and a Hizento. The mounts were all in the wave style of the later Omori workmanship. Finally, it was the turn of a Mino Muromachi blade (Mino Kanemune) in beautiful koshirae with a Taira/Heike (Gempei wars) themed tosogu. The fuchi, kashira, menuki and mon all complement each other, depicting the legend of Yoichi Munetaka as he shot the fan in the Taira boat. One menuki show him riding into the waves and the other the boat with the fan. Meanwhile the Genji are shown on the land on the Kashira with the Taira fleet is on the Fuchi. Finally, the yotsune-mon of the Sasaki family is tastfully shown on the saya and repeated on the shakudo and gold habaki.

David Maynard talked about his Soten tsuba and Mino Goto koshirae which contained an Osafune Sakamune blade from the Meiji period. Following that, Ian Chapman shared with the attendees his unusual and elegant sets of Higo koshirae – one with monkey-skin-covered saya and another one rendered in delicate nanakoji.



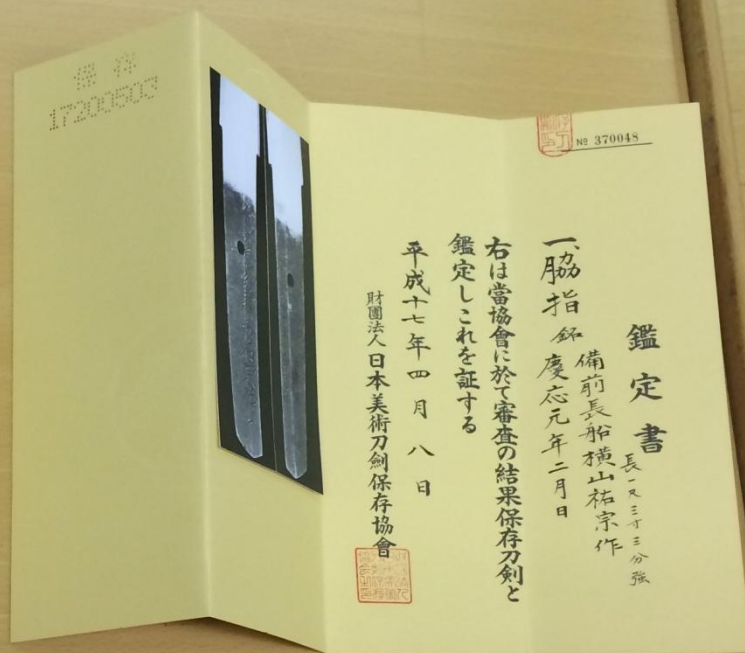
Omori mounted Daisho



Mino Kanemune katana with Gempei war scenes



MOGARASHI NYUDO
SOTEN SEI.





To-Ken meeting report – 30 April 2015

Graham Curtis delivered a lively and entertaining lecture about the Yasutsugu mon. The shodai Yasutsugu, who started work at the end of 16th century, was a favourite of the Tokugawa shogunate. He was reputed for creating great copies of other smiths and their disparate styles but was a masterly craftsman in his own right (jojo saku rated by Fujishiro). He started a dynasty which lasted 12 generations.

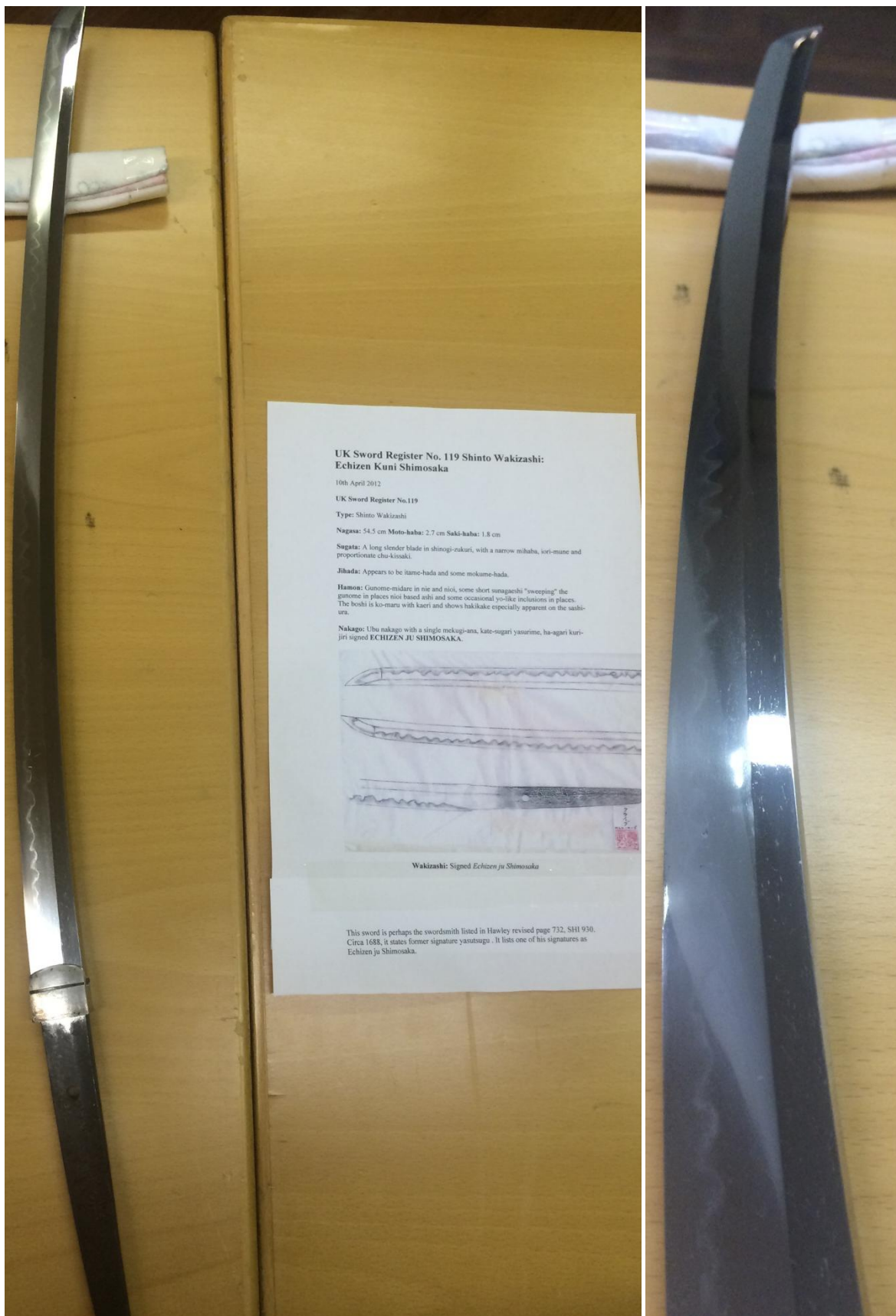
After the death of the second Yasutsugu smith (who was of similar stature and skill as the shodai), the house split into two branches – the Echizen and Edo ones. The skills of the successive smiths deteriorated over time. Often there were unsigned blades in Tokugawa or other warehouses and these were useful currency / assets to dispose of. Successive generations of Yasutsugu smiths signed those blades with the mei of previous generations, who were more accomplished in the craft and therefore could realise higher selling prices than those for their own creations.

Following that presentation, Paul Bowman talked about his views of how the Society could be modernised and opened the floor for a broader discussion. Various avenues were mentioned of exploring further collaboration with other Japanese sword enthusiast groups and organising joint events. The Society could endeavour to integrate more tightly with the NBTHK European Branch and NTHK Europe as well as other UK sword-study groups.

Ian Chapman also described the efforts being made to update the Society website and devise ways of improving our online presence and search results related online discovery.

Finally, David Maynard talked about a couple of swords he brought along. The first one was an Echizen Shimosaka, 4th generation Yasutsugu with a very flamboyant hamon. The second was a long Echizen Seki (Mino den) wakizashi forged in the Enpo era. Swords of the Echizen Seki school blend characteristics of Mino and Shinto Tokuden, and together with the Yasutsugu blades dominated in the Echizen province.

Members had also brought along various other items, including tanto, a katana housed in a 'walking stick' koshirae (shikomizue koshirae) – probably originating from the late Edo / early Meiji period, and various papered tsuba.



**UK Sword Register No. 119 Shinto Wakizashi:
Echizen Kuni Shimosaka**

10th April 2012

UK Sword Register No.119

Type: Shinto Wakizashi

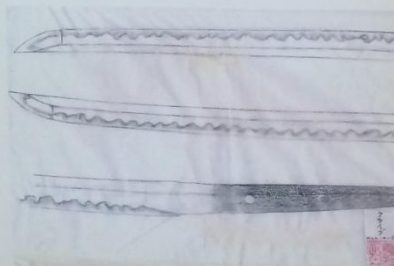
Nagasa: 54.5 cm Moto-haba: 2.7 cm Saki-haba: 1.8 cm

Sugata: A long slender blade in shinogi-zukuri, with a narrow mihaba, iori-mune and proportionate chu-kioaki.

Jihada: Appears to be itame-hada and some mokume-hada.

Hamon: Gunome-midare in nie and nioi, some short sunagashi "sweeping" the gunome in places; nioi based ubi and some occasional yo-like inclinations in places. The boshi is ko-maru with kaeri and shows hakikake especially apparent on the sakikura.

Nakago: Ubu nakago with a single mekugi-ana, kate-sugari yasurime, ha-sagari kuri-jiri signed ECHIZEN JU SHIMOSAKA.



Wakizashi: Signed Echizen ju Shimosaka

This sword is perhaps the swordsmith listed in Hawley revised page 732, SHI 930. Circa 1688, it states former signature yatsutago. It lists one of his signatures as Echizen ju Shimosaka.

