

London Meeting Report, 18th January 2025

Topic: *How to Read the Blade: Assessing the Sword Features and Craftsmanship*

Our recent meeting, attended by 19 members, focused on the fascinating topic of analysing and examining Japanese swords (nihonto). The session blended a practical demonstration of how to kantei a blade, historical insights, and hands-on experiences. The presentation, titled "*How to Read the Blade: Assessing the Sword Features and Craftsmanship*," revolved around three very different swords shared by a Society member for the educational benefit of our members, and offered participants an opportunity to analyse critically what they see in a blade.

The event began with Igor's insightful demonstration of how to physically inspect a blade. He methodically explained each step, emphasizing the importance of careful etiquette, procedure and observation. This introduction set the stage for an engaging and educational presentation that showcased three distinct swords: a koto katana crafted in the Soshu style during the Muromachi period, a shinshinto katana from the Meiji era, and a Ko-Hoki katana dating back to the Heian period. These swords exemplified completely different periods and styles, making them ideal for the discussion.

The presentation was further enriched by the contributions of senior members, who shared their expertise and added valuable historical and technical context. Their input helped bridge the gap between theory and practice, offering both seasoned collectors and newcomers a deeper understanding of the craftsmanship and characteristics of nihonto. Participants in the early stages of studying or collecting also posed insightful questions, sparking lively discussions that kept everyone engaged and clarified key points about the art of blade examination.

Following the formal presentation, attendees were given the chance to handle the three showcased blades and examine additional swords and fittings brought in by fellow members. This hands-on session was a highlight of the meeting, allowing participants to directly apply the techniques discussed and gain a tangible appreciation of the details and nuances of blade inspection. The opportunity to engage with these artifacts up-close added a practical dimension that enhanced the learning experience.

The meeting concluded with a continuation of discussions at a nearby pub, where members enjoyed a friendly and vibrant atmosphere. This informal setting fostered further camaraderie and exchange of ideas, cementing the event as not only an educational opportunity but also a community-building experience. The session underscored the practical skills gained in reading blades, empowering attendees to pay close attention to specific points and areas during their sword study.



Soshu Katana / gimei to Hiromitsu



Bizen Yokoyama Sukekane Katana (T Hozon)



Ko-Hoki Katana (T Hozon)



