

Surrender Sword details by B.W.R.

THE TO-KEN SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

for the Study and Preservation of Japanese Swords and Fittings



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PROGRAMME 100

I am afraid that we are on the move again. The Society seems to have assumed a no-fixed-abode or nonon status of late, but we hope to have it sorted out soon, and will keep you informed. Meanwhile we will continue to meet at the Lamb and Flag, Rose Street.

Subscriptions:

Members who have not yet paid their subscriptions for the current year are reminded that they were due in March and that the Secretary would be glad to receive them. "Full Members" is £4.00 and "Corresponding Members", £3.00.

No further issues of the Programme can be sent to those who have not renewed before the next edition is sent for printing.

Editorial:

This, being the 100th Programme of the Society, I felt that it would be a good idea to reprint an article first published in 1969. We have been through the 'boom years' of commercial exploitation of the Japanese sword, picking up many interested dealers some four or five years ago, and seeing them leave the Society as the profits grew less. Those 'faithfuls' that are still with it and the genuinely interested new members who have not been scared off by the "that's very nice - how much?" gang, might like to remember sword etiquette. This subject covers the safe handling of swords and shows the respect of the person handling it. These are detailed instructions by Albert Yamanaka and bear repeating. It was first printed in the October 1969 Programme.

The first part of this article was written by Bill Baxter, a member who regrettably resigned from the Society during the dealing boom. His remarks, and those that follow are as pertinent today, if not more so, than when they were written. I make no apologies if this sounds like a sentimental exhortation to return to the old samurai virtues.

Sword Etiquette - Bill Baxter:

This question of etiquette and the care of swords has been brewing for some time and the committee have been most unhappy about what we have seen in the way of handling swords, sooner or later someone is going to lose an eye, an ear or something even worse - damage a sword.

When this was first discussed, something did crop up in my mind, and that was an old Christie's Sale. It goes back to November 1967 that sale, which was known as the sale of sales, on account of the prices paid and the quality of items available.

But the thing was this - there were two particularly notable swords at that sale, one an Ichimonji and the other a Masamune. When the Masamune came up, John Harding held it up for display. There was a frail old gentleman who stood in the middle of that crowded assembly and bowed to the sword - that gentleman showed due respect to the sword that we should see more often. That gentleman was Raymond Johns, who regrettably has now passed on. He was one of the old school and there are not many of the old school around now. There is a very changed membership (of the Society) with a lot of new people.

At the old meetings at the Mason's Arms, the quarters became so cramped that you could hardly move a muscle. There we had a Master of Arms whose job it was to ensure correct handling of swords at all times. That gentleman was Alan Bale who is a founder member and knows how to handle swords. I have brought blades along here (to meetings) and when I have got them home I have found finger marks on the blades, and on one occasion I didn't look until a fortnight later, and of course, rust had set in - result a ruined blade.

I will now recall to all old members and tell those new people, of the detailed instructions by Yamanaka on etiquette, reprinted here.

ETIQUETTE AND CARE - Albert Yamanaka

In ancient Japan the etiquette regarding the handling of swords was very strict. The Samurai having to carry these blades day in and day out and it being a very sharp instrument, care naturally had to be observed. Further, since the Samurai revered it as something sacred, they took care of its preservation and certain rules were followed in its care and handling.

Women in Japan were not allowed to handle swords with their bare hands, but used the sleeves of their Kimono to carry them.

In caring for swords, some strict Samurai even went so far as to forbid women from entering the room when they were cleaning their swords. Also the process was something like a ritual. Of those who followed the very strict rules, some went so far as to hang mosquito nets and they cleaned swords under them, this was found to be the only dust free place. In some Japanese movies depicting scenes where a Samurai is cleaning a sword, one

Etiquette and Care - contd...

will notice that the Samurai will have a piece of paper in his mouth, not only in cleaning but in looking at swords as well. This was done so that one's breath would not defile the blade.

We do not feel this served any purpose, since if one closes his mouth, then he must breathe through his nose, in close inspection of the blade "hot air" from the nostril will fall on the sword and thereby defeat the purpose of having the paper in the mouth. Though the appearance of a person seated on a Japanese Tatami, with a paper in his mouth looking at a sword, certainly poses a pretty picture, that seems to be the extent of it. Today the ancient rules are no longer heeded, however, in its preservation and appreciation certain rules are still applied.

We, as students of the Japanese Sword, should heed the following rules:-

1. When one is given a sword to see, whether it be for appreciation or otherwise, it is proper to give a slight nod of respect to the blade before the swords are removed from the sword bag, or from the scabbard.
2. In removing the sword from the sword bag, grasp the bag in your left hand, unravel the silk cord so that only the hilt of the sword is exposed. During this phase always keep the cutting edge uppermost.
3. Having exposed the hilt, the opened part of the bag is folded back, and is lightly wrapped around with the loose cord. The sword is then held so that the tip of the Saya Kojiri is away from you, and the tip of the Tsuka Kashira is near to you, then you are ready to draw the blade from the Saya. At this point, with the Tsuka exposed, it is proper etiquette to use a "Fukusa" around the Tsuka so that you will not soil the Tsuka.

"Often a fine blade is in a fine mounting and will be wrapped in fine aged silk cord or deer skin and they are easily soiled by the oil in your skin, therefore in looking at such blades one should always carry a Fukusa, in addition one should also have a Nuguigami or another Fukusa, like a well to do person, a good blade wears expensive clothing. Though not all blades are in fine clothing, sometimes one comes across a blade in a very dirty mounting, and at such times, rather than dirty your fine Fukusa and Nugui, as well as your hands, plain newspaper may be used or be well prepared to get your hands dirty."

4. Grasp the Tsuka with your Fukusa wrapped around it firmly and with your left hand have a firm grip on the Saya.

Etiquette and Care - contd...

5. In drawing the blade from the Saya, always keep the tip slightly lower than the Tsuka, and also when you have drawn the blade out, keep in mind not to allow the tip of the blade as it leaves the Saya to scrape the mouth of the Saya (Koiguchi).

At times one sees a person draw a blade out about 10 inches or so, then look at the half drawn blade, turning the blade and Saya over and over. This act is a very bad offence and an insult to the owner of the blade, as well as to the blade itself.

In turning the blade over and over, there is a great possibility of chipping the cutting edge as well as putting scars on the blade. This offence should never be committed by a student of the Japanese Sword.

6. Having drawn the blade from the Saya, cover the mouth of the Saya with the loose part of the bag, so that dust will not enter the Saya, then the Saya must be laid close by.

It may be rather difficult for a person to draw the blade and cover the Saya with the loose bag, so then you must lay the sword down. However, when you do lay the sword down, place a Fukusa or Nugui at the tip, so that the blade will not touch the floor or the table or whatever you are laying the blade down on.

7. You are now ready to look at the blade. First hold the blade at arms length with the Habaki at about on an even level with your eye and look at the shape of the blade from the side in a like manner. It is very important that your first impression of the blade be taken in a proper manner and your etiquette for your impression of the blade at this point will largely influence your judgement later in observing other parts of the blade. Your observation at this stage will give you a good foundation in determining what school and in what period the blade was forged. It will also tell your host that you have the right attitude and know the correct etiquette. Accordingly, he will be glad to show you what he has. On the other hand, improper observation of these rules will result in a negative reaction from your host.
8. Now you are ready to observe the finer, minute details of the blade, blade pattern and steel structure. For this you must have another Fukusa or Nugui in your left hand and place the blade on it at a slight angle. Point the blade towards the light and you will be able to see the finer workings of Niei in the blade pattern. In looking at Niei, you must have the light source shining over your shoulder on the blade which will give you the best angle in observing Niei. In looking at the tip or Kissaki, slightly lower

Etiquette and Care - contd...

8. contd...

- it bringing it nearer to you, however, whenever you move the blade in any direction always be careful that you are not near any object, so that you will not cause injury to the cutting edge, or for that matter any other part of the sword. You can scrutinise the details and fine points such as the workings of Nie/Nioi, condition of the Jitetsu, grain of the steel, as well as the area of the ridges. Never allow any part of the blade to come in contact with your clothes, this is considered a very bad offence.
9. Having gone through the ritual, you then replace the blade in the Saya in reverse order of the way you withdrew it. In returning the blade into the Saya, keep the cutting edge up and straight. Allow the Mune to rest on the Saya mouth, keeping the blade and the Saya always in a straight line, and let the blade slide into the Saya. However, you must always maintain control of the blade so it won't rub against the side of the Saya.
10. At this point you may re-wrap the Saya bag and the cord, though in most cases the host will do this himself according to his own liking. Also the host will always rewipe the blade before putting it away after your visit, so this part should be left to him.
11. In looking at a good quality mounting, extreme caution and care must be observed. A fine blade in fine mounting will have Tsuba Menuki, Kozuka and Kogai by master craftsmen. In drawing the Kozuka and the Kogai out from the Saya, use utmost caution so as not to mark the Tsuba, Saya, Kozuka or Kogai, for in certain cases the Kozuka and the Kogai rest very snugly on the Hitsuana of the Tsuba, and if one is to draw the blade without caution, the sliding action will cause the Kozuka and Kogai to rub hard against the Hitsuana, thereby marring the backside of the Kozuka or Kogai and that part of the Hitsuana the two rest against. It would perhaps be best to leave this operation to the host and have him draw the blade, Kozuka and the Kogai for you.
12. It often becomes necessary when one has drawn the blade to pass it from one person to the next. In such cases, again extreme caution must be used. When passing a drawn blade to another person, ALWAYS keep the cutting edge towards you.

Hold the blade right below the Tsuba or Habaki (if it is in Shira-Saya), and make doubly sure the recipient has a firm enough grip on the Tsuka below you before letting go. With a blade in Shira-Saya it is advisable before letting go to shake the blade a little to see if he has a firm grip.

Etiquette and Care - contd...

(We may seem a little persistent on this part about passing a blade to another person, however, we have seen the result of a person who has not heeded the "caution signal" which always results in cut fingers and very deep cuts they are too).

The person receiving the sword holds the Tsuka below the hand of the person passing it to him. Also with your other hand, hold the Tsuka at the Kashira and then you will know for sure that your grip will not slide. After one has seen the blade, then one may wish to see the signature, in which case permission from the host "MUST" be obtained first.

If the host is proud of his blade, he will show you the Nakago without you asking, and so it becomes necessary to remove the Tsuka. The host in most cases will remove it, however, at times this operation is performed by the person wanting to see the Nakago. At such times the following rules must be observed:-

1. With the small hammer available for this purpose, remove the Mekugi by giving it a small push at the smaller tip of the Mekugi. Once having taken the Mekugi out, put it aside so you will find it readily after you have examined the Nakago, for this peg is very easily lost.
2. Having removed the Mekugi you are ready to remove the blade from the Tsuka. Hold the Tsuka in your left hand at the Kashira or pommel with your right hand give a rap at the wrist of your clenched left hand holding the Tsuka, this will usually loosen the blade from the Tsuka. If the blade has not been out of the Tsuka for a good many months or years, then it will not come loose by this action alone and you must resort to other methods. The blade should then be returned to the host to have him loosen it. He will use a mallet and a small block of wood set against the Sappa and tap with the mallet. This will loosen just about any hard to remove Nakago. Having loosened the Nakago from the Tsuka, you then replace the blade in the Saya and remove the Tsuka. Many times this is done without replacing the blade back into the Saya.

You are now ready to observe the condition of the Nakago; the colour of rust, the signature and dates and the shape of the Nakago. Having finished, replace the Tsuka and then remove the sword from the Saya. Give a slight tap upwards, holding the sword vertically. This should set the blade in the proper position so that you can replace the Mekugi then put the blade back in the Saya.

In inspecting the sword, both the cutting part as well as the Nakago NEVER give your opinion without first being asked.

Etiquette and Care - contd...

If your host should ask for your opinion then you may give your thoughts, but never voluntarily. If one sees a signature which he thinks is not right often your thoughts show in your facial expression such as a frown or a smile, so be sure at times like these to keep control of your emotions.

CARE

Rust is the greatest enemy of steel and iron and the Japanese Sword is no exception. No matter how good a blade, if a rust is left on for any length of time, chances are that eventually this will render the blade worthless. There are different types of rust which we find in swords.

One is the ordinary red type, and being rust it is bad enough, however this type, since it does not run deep into the steel, is not too harmful. The second type, black and stringy which usually results from mildew turning to rust, is a bad one, this type usually runs deep into the steel and oddly this type often occurs on the better blades by better smiths. However, in polishing much of the outer layer of the steel must be removed thereby reducing the value as well as the quality of the blade. The only solution against rust is constant care and by this we emphasise that "oiling" is the best and essential.

It has been the belief of Japanese Sword collectors that the best oil for Japanese Swords was Choji oil, and that oil with a mineral base was not good. However, we have found through long experience that many oils used in the West are just as good as those recommended by the Japanese.

Such oils as "3 in 1" or any oils used by gun collectors seem to be just as good.

Care should be taken not to leave oil on the blade for any length of time, for if the oil coagulates, then one must resort to using such oil solvents as benzine, carbon-tetrachloride, alcohol and others. And, though they will dissolve the coagulated oil, they will put minute scars on the blade while rubbing off the hardened oil. Therefore, oil should never be left on the blade for any length of time.

EQUIPMENT USED IN CARE

1. Uchiko

A good quality Uchiko is made from a mixture of finely ground powder of deer horn and powder of Uchigomori used by the sword polisher. The powder mixture is wrapped in a thin layer of cotton which in turn is wrapped in Yoshinogumi (very thin rice paper) and lastly in silk Habutae. The silk should have been laundered once or twice.

EQUIPMENT USED IN CARE contd...

The above mentioned type of Uchiko is very difficult to obtain, those obtainable in sets are usually of a poorer quality, and since they are the only ones one can get, we must be satisfied with them. One must know a good polisher very intimately to get better quality Uchiko. The ordinary Uchiko may be purchased at about 50 cents (US) and upwards.

2. Nugui Gami

A special Hosho paper is wrinkled softly until all coarse grains become loose and removed. In areas where Hosho paper is not available, a soft deerskin or Chamois or flannel or cotton may be substituted. In this one must always launder them well before use. Hosho paper costs about 15 cents (US) a sheet and upwards. Good quality Hosho made in Echizen District costs about 20 cents (US) a sheet.

3. Choji Oil

Previously referred to.

Choji Oil comes in many grades, the cheap ones costing about 25 cents to good quality oils costing about 75 cents for a small bottle.

4. Yoshino Paper

This paper is used to oil the blade with. Recently it has become hard to obtain even in Japan. Many use as a substitute a fine gauze.

5. Fukusa

Is used in handling the blade and so it is outside the scope of "care", however, we feel mention is necessary.

Fukusa usually about 10 to 11 inches square is made from a fine quality of silk called "Shioze" and usually dyed purple. Some collectors have their names or initials dyed in white on the corner. A fine quality Fukusa made from Shioze cost about 10 dollars (US) upwards, though there are cheaper ones of lesser grade silk.

This is the same type of Fukusa which is used by the Tea Ceremony or Cha-no-ryu people.

METHOD OF CARE

1. Having removed the blade (as previously explained) from the Tsuka, now remove the Habaki. If the Habaki does not move due to rust, oil must be inserted and allowed to seep in. Then with a mallet, lightly tap it round the edges. Use extreme care in tapping for, if force is used, a Habaki with a gold or silver foil cover will become loose and useless. If the Habaki does not come loose, it should be left alone.
2. A blade which has not been cleaned for a long time must have all foreign particles removed as previously mentioned, such solvents as alcohol benzine or carbon-tetrachloride may be used. Oil should be used first before resorting to the above mentioned solvents.
3. Having removed all oil and other foreign particles, next cover the blade with Uchiko.
4. With the Nugui Gami placed between your thumb and forefinger and the middle finger, with an upward motion wipe away the Uchiko. Care should be taken not to allow pressure in your fingers on the downward motion, always have the pressure only in wiping upwards, otherwise you will end up with a cut finger. The upward motion should be started about an inch or two above the Habaki, leaving the lower portion for the last. Having cleaned off the Uchiko on the upper part of the blade with a careful downward motion, wipe the last couple of inches above the Habaki towards the Nakago. However, after each stroke use a different part of the Nugui Gami that is clean. This is because in the previous downward stroke, the Nugui Gami has touched the rust on the Nakago and the rust particles will cause fine scars called "Hike" if one was used on the polished surface. Therefore, after each stroke use a different part of the Nugui Gami and also after several strokes, shake out the Uchiko powder by wrapping the Nugui against the edge of a hard object.

Always remember that the price of the very best polish by the very best polisher today starts from about 100,000 Yen or about 280 Dollars (U.S.) upwards (at 1969 prices - Ed.) but there is only one person who can do this top quality polish. Therefore, a blade which has had such a polish will require extra care in using Uchiko (cheap Uchiko will always leave "Hike" on a blade).

With a very valuable blade having a fine polish, or if you are in doubt about the quality of your Uchiko, having covered the blade with Uchiko, make a brushing or fanning motion against the covering of Uchiko with the Nugui, this fanning motion will blow away any hard particles of Uchiko, and in wiping you will not have to worry about "Hike".

METHOD OF CARE contd...

The use of Uchiko is in a sense the last phase of polish, for in wiping, the abrasive will act as a polish, so too much use of Uchito is not recommended, except in the case of a newly polished blade, because the rubbing will help set the polish.

5. If in caring for the blade you find the Nakago rusted badly, remove the blade from the mounting and coat the Nakago with oil, so that it is drenched and then expose the blade to the hot sun for about half a day. This should turn the top layer of rust loose and it should cake-off. Also a small mallet with wooden pegs may be used in removing stubborn rust, the tapping will loosen any top layer rust. Never use hard metal for this purpose, you will injure the old rust below. This is a tedious operation and something that cannot be rushed, so one should be well prepared for the time consuming work ahead.

Following on from the above article by Albert Yamanaka, an advertisement has been supplied from Ben Dale for polishing kits obtainable from:-

KASUGA ART CENTER, LTD.
NO. 1-13 ISOGAMIDORI 5 CHOME TUKIAIKU
KOBE, JAPAN (KOBE 651)

Cables: "KASUGAART" KOBE

Telex No. 5622-653

(All prices quoted as at 30.5.1978).

COMPLETE SET OF POLISHING STONES AND
NEEDFUL ACCESSORIES FOR JAPANESE BLADES:

F.O.B. JAPAN

Consisting of:

UCHIKUMIRI STONE
HOSO-NAGURA STONE
CHU-NAGURA STONE
KAISEI STONE
BISUI STONE
KONGO STONE
MIGAKI-BO (STICK)
HAZUYA (Back lined)

COMPLETE SET OF POLISHING STONES AND
NEEDFUL ACCESSARIES FOR JAPANESE BLADES contd...

JIZUYA
KANAHADA
TSUNO-KO (Powder)
IBOTA (Powder)
YOSHINO-PAPER (Japanese paper)

Composed of above 13 items, proper quantities each and
packed in export parcel package.

PRICE: £97.00 Sterling per one complete set, F.O.B. JAPAN
(or Japanese ¥40,000.-)

OCEAN FREIGHT: Postage for £8.00 (or ¥3,150.-) is required
Air Postage for £24.00 (or ¥9,900.-) is required for
one set, if sent by Air Parcel Post.

SHIPMENT: Shipment will be made within about 4 to 5 weeks
after receipt of your remittance.

GROSS WEIGHT: about 6 kilos per set.

DIRECTION OF USE FOR POLISHING JAPANESE BLADES

PROCEDURES FOR USING STONES AND FINISHING TOUCHES:

Ordering numbers written on each stones.

Use stones from No.1 - No. 6.

According to the class of blade, please decide the stones before
starting polish.

The names of each stone are:

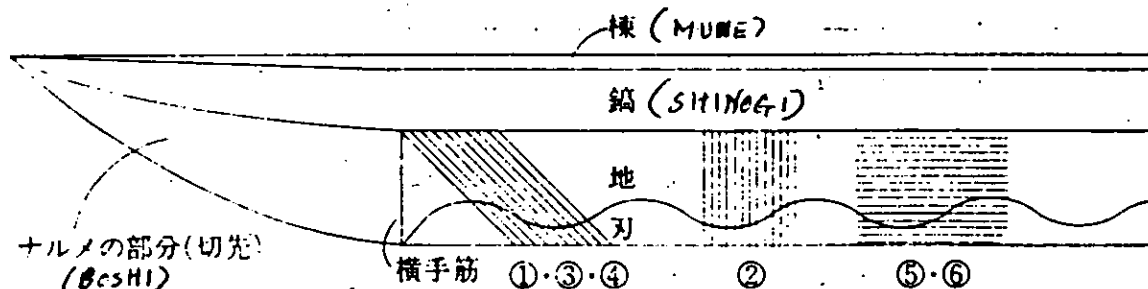
- (1) KONGO-TO (2) BISUI-TO (3) KAISEI-TO (4) CHUNAKURA-TO
(5) HOSONAKURA-TO (6) UCHIGUMORI-TO
- (7) ZIZUYA = Crack in similar size of little finger and rub in
thinner with Stones No.3 and No.6.
- (8) KANAHADA (NUGUI) = Please use KANAHADA after well agitating.
Wrap with YOSHINO Paper, strain through paper and annex on
the face of the blade and polish with absorbent cotton.

PROCEDURES FOR USING STONES AND FINISHING TOUCHES contd...

- (9) HAZUYA (Edge lustre) = Crack in almost same size of No.7 (ZIZUYA)
 Rub with stone No.6 and polish the temper lines with the thumb
 dropping with fluid of polishing.
- (10) MIGAKIBO (Polish) = Make polish for SHINOGI & MUNE.
 (Ridges on each side of a blade and back of blade).
 Knead a little quantity of TSUNOKO with water. Scrape
 the dirt with above, and then wipe off well with absorbent
 cotton. And dust IBOTA (Wrapped with cloth) making smooth,
 and polish with MIGAKIBO.
- (11) NARUME (BOSHI) = Put over Japanese paper on the NARUME-DAI
 (NARUME STAND). Polish putting with HAZUYA, made thinner in
 rectangle size.

* The following is illustrated for each stones.
 Each stone to be polished in direction of sketch.

※ 図は各砥石の研ぎ目です。それぞれの砥石は図の通りの方向で研ぐ。



● 面ずりの使用方法

- (YAKETE)
- 対馬砥 (A) = 内曇砥
 備水砥 (B) = 細名倉砥 及 中名倉砥
 大村砥 (C) = 改正砥 及 備水砥

【セット内容】 内曇砥, 細名倉砥, 中名倉砥, 改正砥, 備水砥, 金剛砥, ハツヤ, ジツヤ,
 磨棒, 金肌, つのこ, いぼた, 吉野紙, ナルメ台, 面づり (A, B, C)

The following article has been written by our President, B.W. Robinson MA, B.Litt. for the Society's 100th Programme.

JAPANESE SURRENDERED SWORDS: A REMINISCENCE OF 1945

Having served my time in the Indian Army (2nd Punjab Regiment) in India and Burma, I found myself, at the time of the Japanese surrender in 1945, a Captain (Intelligence) attached to 14 Army Headquarters. Instead of the hazardous and probably costly invasion of Malaya for which we had been preparing over the past year, we sailed peacefully into Singapore from Madras, and not long afterwards the Headquarters moved up to Kuala Lumpur. We were too late, of course, to be present at the actual surrender ceremonies, but something like 1,800 surrendered swords were still stacked, under strict guard, in a large building in the town. As the only officer on the Staff who had any knowledge of the subject whatever (and at that time my knowledge was pitifully small) I was detailed to sort them out and grade them, so that when the time came for their distribution as war-trophies high-ranking officers should have the best, and so on down.

Conscious of my inadequacy for this task, I sent down to the Japanese Prisoner-of-War Camp at Rengam nearby to ask if there were any Japanese Officer prisoner-of-war with a good knowledge of swords. In due course there arrived Colonel Yamada Sakae, of the 3rd Air Force, who had been a member of the judging committee for swords attached to the War Office. He was a quiet, cultured and polite man of middle age, and with the help of an excellent young interpreter, a certain Lieutenant Horiuchi, we embarked on a series of sessions. Horiuchi, I remember, was a Roman Catholic and I was able to obtain permission for him to leave the camp from time to time in order to attend Mass. The Colonel would examine the trophies briefly, blade by blade and his findings, faithfully communicated to me by Horiuchi, were duly noted down. This was my first experience of a kanteisha in action, and I was astounded at the unhesitating confidence with which he assigned each blade to its correct period and school - often to the actual maker - before removing the hilt and looking at the signature.

I still have a rather tattered typed list of 60 koto and 80 shintō, shinshintō and gendaitō blades which he considered to be the best of the lot. Of these he starred 4 of the former and 16 of the latter as exceptionally fine, and members may perhaps be interested to know what they were. The 4 koto were Kanemitsu II of Bizen (mid 14c), Ichimonji of Bizen (early 14c), Naminohira of Satsuma (early 16c) and Sukesada of Bizen (3rd $\frac{1}{4}$ 16c). The later ones were Tadakuni of Hizen (3rd $\frac{1}{4}$ 17c - 2 blades), Kunisuke of Osaka (mid 17c), Tadayoshi III (Mutsu no Kami, mid 17c), Kanesada of Osaka (3rd $\frac{1}{4}$ 17c - 2 blades), "Shozen" of Bungo (3rd $\frac{1}{4}$ 17c - I cannot identify this swordsmith), Kunihiro of Bizen (mid 17c - also unidentified), Kanehiro of Bizen (3rd $\frac{1}{4}$ 17c - misprint for Hizen?), Yukinaga of Bungo (3rd $\frac{1}{4}$ 17c), Yasuhiro of Osaka (3rd $\frac{1}{4}$ 17c), Yoshitake of Yedo (3rd $\frac{1}{4}$ 17c), and Hiroshige of Musashi (3rd $\frac{1}{4}$ 17c); it is interesting to note that three gendaitō were also included among these top-class blades, by Yasukiyo, Yasutoshi, and Yasunori, all of Tokyo. No doubt some of these fine blades are rusting on the walls of

JAPANESE SURRENDERED SWORDS contd...

country houses or suburban villas, but it seems likely that quite a few have by now found their way, via the sale rooms, into the hands of appreciative collectors.

Once things had settled down a bit, 14 Army became Malaya Command, under General Messervy. He received the sword of his opposite number, General Itagaki (later executed as a war-criminal), and on my recommendation he had it vetted by Colonel Yamada. I was summoned to his residence on the top of a hill, to witness this proceeding and I remember watching through the window as the two rather forlorn figures of Yamada and Horiuchi toiled up the hill to the house in pouring rain (I had been driven in a staff car!). The blade turned out to be a very fine one by Seki Magoroku Kanemoto II, and was a classic example of his work - broad, on the short side with a perfect sambon-sugi hamon and two-character signature. It is now in the British Museum.

The war-criminal business has been mentioned above, and a footnote on the subject may perhaps be permissible. While there is no doubt that in many cases the death penalty was deserved, there were others where, in any less emotionally-charged atmosphere, a term of imprisonment would have been considered quite sufficient. The only trial I attended came, I felt, in the latter category. A friend of mine had been detailed as defending officer; he did a splendid job, and I could hardly believe my ears when the verdict of guilty and the death sentence was pronounced. The Japanese Officer in question, whose name, I remember, was Mori Yoshitada, had been responsible for keeping order in a large and unruly area during the occupation. He had an exceptionally troublesome prisoner in the compound who had escaped and been recaptured twice; he was warned that if this occurred again he would be shot; it did occur again and he was shot. For that Mori was hanged. His dignity and composure as he faced his judges was in sharp contrast to the sneering and gloating of the Malays and Chinamen who filled the court and hung over the galleries. He had been allowed to write a farewell letter to his wife in Japan, and a translation of it was printed in the Headquarters Intelligence Bulletin, a proceeding which struck me and several others as cruel, macabre, and in the worst of taste. War is indeed hell.

So that is how one lot of Japanese swords got over here. I myself was allowed to take two early 16th century wakizashi blades in shirazaya (nobody else wanted the unmounted blades!) by Tsunahiro of Sagami and Uda Kunimune of Etchu respectively. I still have them, though they did not earn one of Colonel Yamada's stars. I also have, and treasure, a brief pencil-written introduction to the study of Japanese blades, specially made for me by the Colonel and translated by Horiuchi. I heard that when at length he returned home, Yamada went into the radio business with his two sons at Koganei, Tokyo, and died about ten years ago.

B. W. Robinson



ITAGAKI SEISHIRO

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:

The General Itagaki mentioned above was a character of some interest. Born in 1885, Itagaki Seishiro was of a good family high among the retainers of the old Nambu clan, which had governed the northern extremities of Japan for the Tokugawa shogans. He had a sleek round face with a neatly groomed moustache.

He was, throughout his career, extremely "well connected". In May 1929 he was posted to the Kwantung Army, in order to assist his superior, Ishiwara Kanji, politically in the seizure of Manchuria. It was the smooth talking Itagaki who managed to make the Mukden incident become accepted through the faction-torn beaurocracy of Tokyo, and oversaw and financed several other 'incidents' that were used as excuses for aggression.

For Itagaki the founding of the puppet state in Manchuria, known as Manchukuo was no asthetic principal of the Co-Prosperity Sphere. To him Manchukuo would have only a facade of self government. Japanese 'advisors' would, in reality, run the state and have dual nationality status. This would enable the exploitation of the country to operate smoothly and efficiently.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE contd...

It is recorded by Marquis Kido that in his capacity on the Kwantung Army staff as Chief Advisor on Manchukuoan affairs; (a responsibility shared with Doihara Kanji), Itagaki reported directly to the Emperor himself.

In the first year of the war with China, he commanded the crack mobile 5th Division, who in February 1938 he led on a brilliant drive down the Tientsin - Shanghai rail link, where they teamed up with the 10th Division. In April of the same year, the 10th walked straight into a well planned Chinese ambush at Tier-er-chuang. Itagaki's 5th came speeding to the rescue, but six thousand Japanese soldiers lay dead on the battlefield, and the Chinese at last had a victory they could make much propaganda of.

Shortly after this, in June 1938, Itagaki was recalled to Tokyo where he was made Minister of War. With him from the Kwantung Army came the new Vice-Minister of War, Japan's notorious war-time Dictator the much maligned Tojo Hideki. Whilst in office from June 1938 to September 1939, he presided over two disastrous border incidents with Russia, known as the Lake Khasan affair and the Nomonhan Incident.

Throughout World War II, Itagaki was in command of new armies in China and Korea and it was his lot to surrender Singapore back to the British in 1945. From 1945 to 1948 he was imprisoned in Japan where he was classed as a Class A war criminal. He greatly impressed his American captors with his optimistic, devil may care attitude. His career came to an end in December 1948, when the vengeance of the victorious was meted out, and along with Tojo, Doihara, Hirota, Kimura, Matsui and Muto he was hanged at Sugamo prison.

It may be seen, therefore, that throughout the violent pre-war period, and throughout the war, Itagaki not only played a part in implementing national policy, but was also instrumental in forming it, probably accompanied throughout by his second generation Kanemoto.

Editor.

From member, R.D. Wilson of Kettering, Northants the following article on the Nara Craftsman Jōi.

When collecting Tsuba and other fittings, it is quite possible that one day the collector will come across the signature of Jōi, who worked in the Nara School. However, it is said that his work is found to be rare in Japan, making it doubtful that original work, if any, exist outside.

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Jōi contd...

The rarity of his work alone would make signatures found venerable to scrutiny. Jōi himself a pupil of Nara Toshinaga, worked from 1700 - 1761. He worked in high relief and is ranked very high among workers of Tsuba etc. A variety of signatures shows the following that Jōi had, (forgeries or otherwise), in particular the Metalworker Tsunenao of Kyoto a pupil of Nagatsune of the Ichinomiya School and many others using the Kakihan of Nagaharu.

A few fittings in the Naunton Collection have the "Signature of Jōi with the seal of Nagaharu".

A few examples of signatures are shown.

R.D. Wilson

HOW TO RECOGNIZE A GOOD BLADE

by BON DALE

With a title like that I deserve all I get in the way of abuse. However, being co-founder of this august Society I feel obliged to put pen to paper, as this is Programme No.100. Clive has been chewing at me for some months (years?) to produce something. The Programme Secretary has my deepest sympathy, I spent also years trying to extract "something" out of clammed up members.

Very difficult, either on paper or in the form of audible noises. I have agreed to make, I hope, intelligible noises at the next meeting of the Northern Branch of the Token in Manchester. This may be the first time our Programme Secretary has received notes on a talk before it has been given.

To the Subject - although I have not appeared in print for a long time, I am still very much involved with Japanese swords. I view all the major sales and some of the minor ones, with the intent of trying to buy the good swords, if any are present. I thought that some words on my method of procedure might be of interest. Sales at Sotheby's in particular, may comprise up to one hundred swords and some way of being able to judge the essential good or bad quality of a blade is a necessity. All very nice to sit in one's

HOW TO RECOGNIZE A GOOD BLADE contd...

home and linger over the quality of a sword blade, but in the salesroom good judgment quickly applied is very necessary. I may say here that I am not spending my own money, but somebody else's, and if your mind works the way mine does, that means you have got to be even more sure of what you are doing.

So, what do I look for? How do I look? And what do I need, to see what I am looking for?

It seems best to take these in reverse order. Ideally what I, or anyone else who is seriously looking at a sword blade needs is an eye, an "eye" to see, and a naked electric light bulb to help it, about 40 or 60 watt, and lit of course. Sothebys I give credit for supplying this in the form of an angle poise lamp. Failing this ideal light source one is forced to search about to find some other suitable illumination at which it is possible to point a blade.

Make no mistake, I've said it many times already, to really see a Japanese sword blade, you do need a single source of light. Point your blade towards this source and all will become clear. Here I ask the forgiveness of those for whom all this is far too elementary. But for those in the early stages of collecting, and certainly for some more established Token members who I occasionally see aimlessly waving sword blades towards the ceiling these words may not come amiss.

Right, we have the source of illumination, about eye level. Set yourself comfortably on your feet, probably left foot forward a little. Hold the blade about shoulder height, right hand holding the nakago of the blade, or the hilt of the sword, left hand supporting the blade about three quarters of the way towards the point. Don't rest it on your coat sleeve. Very bad manners, and sleeves have abrasive qualities which produce scratches even on steel. Silk cloth in the left hand is nice, tissue is alright, "Kleenex", but naked fingers are better than sleeves.

Hold the blade flat, cutting edge towards the left let us say. A flick of the wrist after you have inspected that side and the cutting edge is pointed in the opposite direction, inspect that side, flick of the wrist and you return to the first side. Very professional this movement, see the real Japanese expert doing this, absolute economy of movement, no wasted motion, speed, concentration on the job in hand, judging the blade. How do you think the N.B.T.H.K. team get through judging maybe twelve hundred blades in two days? Not by waving them aimlessly at the ceiling. The time required to extract basic and essential information from a sword blade is on average about 30 seconds, given a fairly well polished blade. The worse the polish the longer it takes, and there are blades where it is impossible to see

HOW TO RECOGNIZE A GOOD BLADE contd.....

anything at all in the way of constructional detail. These then become speculative blades if you want to buy 'em, anything may appear when they are polished, good or very bad, but with a blade it is possible to see something, then you should be able to reach a decision on its quality within a minute. A N.B.T.H.K. shinsa expert once said to me, if you can't decide if its good or bad within that time, then its probably bad, and best forget it.

So, back to the job in hand. You are holding the blade about shoulder height, pointing straight at the light source. Incline your head, so that your eye is perhaps two or three inches above the blade surface and look along it towards the light. Now this is where the technique comes in, where you have to adjust your eye and level of blade to the light source, to be able to see what you want to see. This in fact amounts to a see-sawing motion of the blade, left hand up right hand down sort of thing coupled with a bobbing of the head. Sometimes detail will appear more clearly with the point dipped towards the ground. An oblique twist rather than a level surface may produce the desired result. It's a case of trial and error, different lighting and different blades require adjustments of technique. But the basic form is always the same, be comfortable, hold the blade well up and look along it towards the light.

What can you expect to see?

If you have got your angles right the surface of the blade will appear to be more or less evenly illuminated, or at least the section you are looking at will. With a long blade you will have to tip it to as it were, "run" this even illumination along the length of the blade surface. This usually means that the reflection of the light bulb in the surface if it occurs, will be slightly above the section at which you are looking, and you must ignore this bright reflection. The even illumination which you are trying to achieve means an apparent condition in which the entire surface of the blade from cutting edge to shinogi-ji is the same. No contrast must be apparent between whiteness of hamon, matt surface of jihada and high polish of shinogi-ji and mune, which is the appearance of a well polished sword blade when viewed normally, held upright in the hand, flat on.

You must strive to achieve this appearance of a pale glowing opal, satin like, surface illumination spreading across the entire width of the blade.

If you get this right you will be immediately struck by an amazing and unique phenomenon! Running along the length of the blade, parallel with the cutting edge will be a brilliant translucent narrow line. This is the Nioi line, the actual edge of the hamon, probably the most important single feature in a Japanese blade. The shape of this line of light, will depend on the form

HOW TO RECOGNIZE A GOOD BLADE contd...

of the hamon, from straight suguha to the most complicated midare or choji-ha. What this Nioi line may not do is to conform to the polisher's white hamon shape, seen when the blade is viewed "flat on". It is important to realize above all else that a skillful polisher can produce an apparent hamon of any kind he wishes by use of his stones. The real hardened tempered edge, the yakiba, which is what Japanese swords are all about, is revealed only by the Nioi line. A good polisher will of course have adhered as close as his skill allows to this actual line. But taking this very important point to the extreme case, if there is no Nioi line the blade is not tempered and is useless. Such a blade may have an apparent whitish hamon when viewed held upright, usually suguha in these cases, which I have seen many times. But if there is no Nioi, the white hamon is a fake produced only on the surface by polishing stones, or sometimes etched on by acid.

It is a "must" that you are sure that you are finding and recognizing the actual real Nioi line. Get the lighting and the reflection from the surface correct and you will have no doubt that you have found it. A quite brilliant narrow line of light, maybe 2 to 4mm in width, the outline of the actual hardened edge of the Japanese sword blade. This is the place where the quality of steel changes from hard edge, to the softer steel of the Jihada, or main surface area which supports the hard tempered edge.

And, so now at last we have found this illusive Nioi line - what should we expect to see? Ha! there is the rub, or rather pun.

Look closely at this Nioi line, it is composed of tightly packed niye, martensite to us, which look like tiny pin pricks of white metal. If these are very fine they are called "nioi", a misty line. If they are slightly larger we can see them easily and they are ko-niye, "small niye". These progress to ara-niye, which are large shining spots clearly visible to the eye, occurring on Soshu blades, work by Shinkai and some other later blades, Motohira for example.

You will discover that this nioi line is very interesting and can be very subtle and complex. But, to go right back to the beginning of this article, at this moment we are judging with some speed, and to do this is basically very simple. A blade can be speedily judged on the quality of the nioi alone. This will immediately tell you whether you are holding a good blade, or a bad one, and if you cannot judge which it is - then from what I said earlier it's got to be poor at least.

The quality of the nioi will tell you immediately then if the workmanship is good. The blade of course may have some major or minor fault like ha-giri in the worstcase, a crack across the hamon. But these are things you must find on further examination and we will come to them, at the moment quick initial judgment.

It very simply comes to this. The nioi line must be firm and continuous, no gaps or breaks in it whatsoever. Continuous from ha-machi, through the yokote and into and around the boshi, returning if it does slightly down the back, mune, of the blade. Even if it continues all the way down the mune as sometimes happens, it must be a firm continuous shining line. That is the first point, secondly - if you look carefully you will observe that the nioi line "fades" or breaks up into wider spaced particles of niye on one side. So that there is a more or less hard edge on one side of the line, and the other side fades slightly or very obviously. This fading must be on the side towards the cutting edge, in order words within the hamon. If we call this "activity" or detail, at its best it will develop ashi, or "legs" which are tapering lines of fine niye descending towards the cutting edge, Yo "leaves" may also appear, spots of niye within the hamon. This detail will vary depending on the style and age of the blade.

In Shin-Shinto the nioi line may be narrow and even and show little activity, except in the case of Sukenaga, Sokan and some others, where very distinct and beautiful ashi will be apparent.

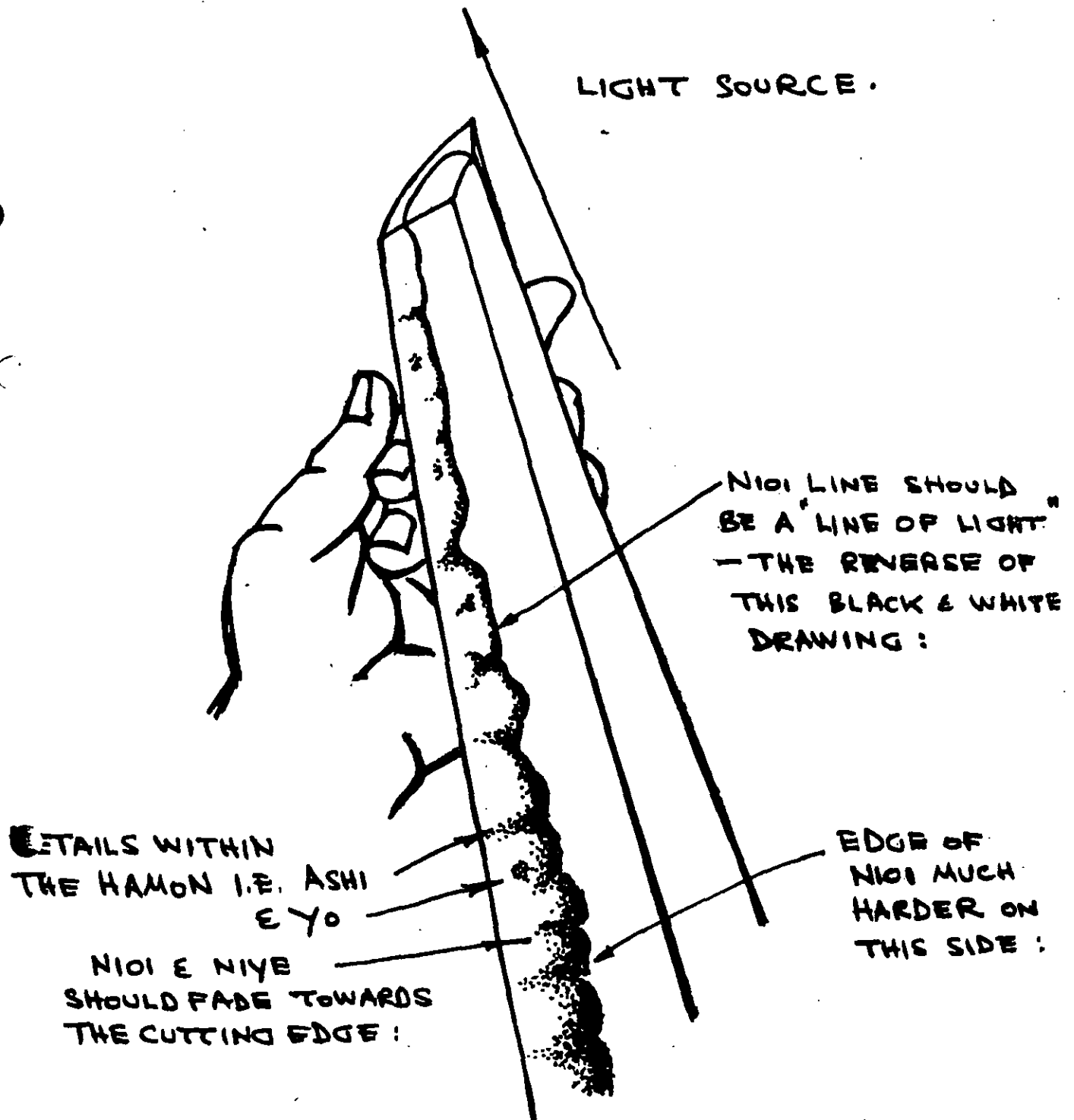
In good Shinto blades this kind of detail will generally be even more apparent and in a good Koto blade activity within the hamon is more or less a must.

This is something which I have seen blades of all periods and it is the first simple rule in quickly assessing the quality, or desirability of a sword blade, on nioi alone. Heaven knows there are many other factors to be considered. But pick up a blade, look at it correctly as we have discussed, and note the direction of the nioi, if it is continuous and "fades" or shows activity on the side towards the sharp edge, then it is worth looking closer. Now, even if it is continuous but shows "activity" above the nioi line, on the jihada side, fading into the surface steel towards the shinogi-ji - then forget it, put it down and pass on to the next one. This blade is of low quality, why? I will explain in Part II.

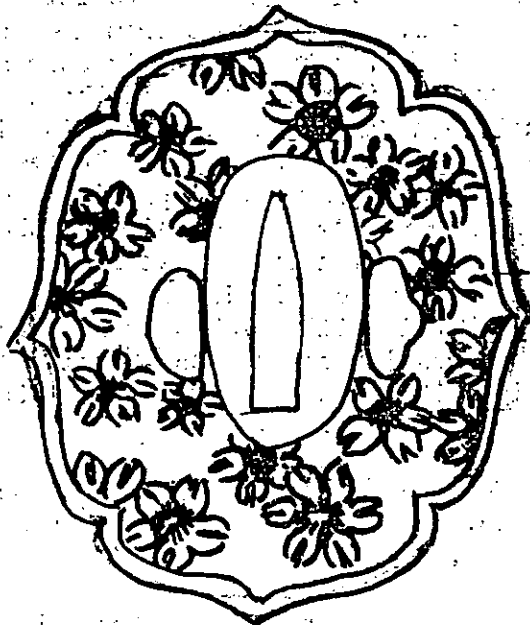
NOTE - REFERRING TO ALAN BALE'S LIST ATTACHED:

As this list is going out early, some items are not yet in stock, notably Nos. 39, 40 and 42.

HOW TO LOOK AT A BLADE : No.1.



ITEMS FOR SALE OR WANTED:



MILITARY
TSUBA

Terry Noon of 7 Keyham Lane West, Leicester, LE5 1RS is
after this pattern of Tsuba. Can anyone help?

BOOKS FOR SALE:

J.C. HAWKSHAW COLLECTION (Japanese Sword Mounts in the
1910 J.C. Hawkshaw Collection)

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J. L. JOLY (Copy No.155)

Auction Catalogue (1911) of Glendining & Co:
Catalogue of a Japanese Collection (the
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Both at £ U.S. 325

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Tuscon, Arizona 85712,
U.S.A.

乘意

● MOST COMMON TYPE OF SIGNATURE WITH TALL, POORLY CUT CHARACTERS AND THE ABSENCE OF A KAKIHAN

乘意



TAKEN FROM KINKO-MEIKAN PAGE 189 WITH THE SEAL OF NAGAHARU. ALSO TO BE FOUND IN NIHON NO BIJUTSU NO 64 PAGE 67 AND STATES THAT THE KAKIHAN IS OF NAGAHARU.

乘意



FROM ACTUAL TSUBA COMPARES WELL WITH SIGNATURE ON THE LEFT

乘意永春

● ALSO FROM KINKO-MEIKAN BUT READS = JS. NAGAHARU = WITHOUT KAKIHAN.

NOTE THE STIFF WRITING OF THE CHARACTERS

一天里堂

乘意



SIGNED - ISSAN DO JOSI WITH KAKIHAN

PEABODY MUSEUM OF SALEM

3 KAKIHAN FROM JOLYS SHOSANKENSHU FOUND AFTER THE SIGNATURE OF JOSI



1.



2.



3.

THE BOTTOM SEAL IS SAID TO BE EARLY (No 3)