

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



HON. PRESIDENT, KAZUTARO TORIGOYE, Dr. LITT.

~~SECRETARY, XIX, XENOCADIX, IXARICA, DEB, XUCO, ERIC, J, SWY, K, X, HX, Rec, P, O, X, 0, 9, 6, X, X~~

PROGRAMME

NEXT MEETING.

Monday, January 8th, 1968 at the Masons Arms,
Maddox Street, London, W.1. at 7.30 p.m.

DID YOU
COMPREHEND ?

MONDAY, JANUARY 8th 1968. The SECOND Monday
in the month. We have had to alter the Monday
for this meeting because of New Year Festivities
etc. Please do not forget - JANUARY 8th, the
SECOND MONDAY.

A REMINDER

The address of the Society for all correspondence
is now :- c/o 16 BRIGHTWELLS, CLANCARTY ROAD,
FULHAM, LONDON, S.W.6. Telephone Number 01-736 6838.

AN IMPORTANT
ANNOUNCEMENT

We have received a letter from Dr. Torigoye in which
he says that due to his age and commitments, and
due to the fact that he lives in Japan and is far
removed from us, he must regretfully resign from
his office as Hon. President of this Society. Dr.
Torigoye is still, however, willing to correspond
with members who wish to seriously study the sword.

We have approached Basil Robinson and are happy
to say that he has agreed to be the new President
of the To Ken Society. We are lucky in having
this eminent personality as the Head of the Society,
and we shall look forward to the benefit of his
avuncular advice.

NEXT MEETING.

Will be the debate between J. Harding and myself, or
rather I expect we will start the proceedings and
then the discussion will be open to the membership.
The subject is "Perfect Blades versus not so
Perfect". I suggest members bring blades from
their collections which they are pleased to own,
for one reason or another, whether it is because
the blade is perfect or because they found it in
a junk shop for ten shillings. According to my
argument either reason is valid.

LAST MEETING

Was the dinner, which eventually was held at the Hiroko, a new Japanese restaurant off Oxford Street. I wasn't able, unfortunately, to attend being a couple of hundred miles away at the time. I believe a good time was had by all. Our Chairman has promised a report which I'll publish next time.

SWORD MUSEUM
IN JAPAN

As a member of the Japanese Society for the Preservation of Art Swords, I have recently received from Japan a translation of an article, published in the Nippon Keizai Shinbun, on a new Sword Museum in Tokyo. I publish this in full because it may be of interest to members who have not heard of this. It is also interesting and perhaps a little disconcerting to note the plain message about preventing swords from leaving Japan and bringing back those which have left.

"The Museum to Protect and Preserve Masterpieces of Nipponto.

The Nipponto, with its thousand-year old history and tradition, is now quietly attracting the attention of the world as a unique art object, originally developed as a form of weapon. However, great difficulties lie in attending to the well-being of the history-relating koshiraye, as well as the perfectly polished and sharpened blade. The Sword Museum currently under construction in Yoyogi, Tokyo is a project designed by the NBTHK (Mr. Hosokawa, Chairman) to cope with this problem. It has storage and display rooms specially designed for Japanese swords, and is in near future going to make its debut to the public with its National Treasure and Juyo Bunkazai objects, such as Masamune, Sadamune and Ichimonji, and some 500 other swords under its custody.

The building is fully qualified for permanent preservation of the art works, being equipped with fully automatic air-conditioning system as well as fire doors and alarm bells. The administrative setup, being an organization of specialist and members of the Society, is expected to help prevent Japanese swords from getting scattered and lost in overseas markets.

Currently Japan has some 1,150,000 swords officially registered, including 110 swords designated as National Treasure, about 500 Juyo Bunkazai, and about 1,000 Juyo Bijutsuhin and others designated respectively as Juyo Token, Tokubetsu Kicho Token, and Kicho Token. Even within the Tokyo Metropolis alone there are more than 140,000 swords known to

exist. The majority of them are in the hands of museums at various places in Japan or else owned by sword collectors and students "who would prefer swords to the daily three meals." However, there are no few "phantom" masterpieces yet to be recognized which are rusted and decaying without proper care.

One of the functions of the Sword Museum is to try to accomplish permanent preservation of this traditional art by storing and taking care of the swords, especially those which are currently in private hands, such as of the NBTHK members (about 5,700) and others, but are too great a burden for these individual collectors to attend to properly. The Museum would accept such swords as a trusted loan to the Museum. The construction started last fall at Yoyogi near the Olympic Village site, with the gross construction cost of about 200 million yen, composed of contributions from various sources, such as from Prince Takamatsu, the Japanese National Government, political as well as financial circles, and major collectors.

The Museum is four-storied, reinforced-concrete building. The total square measure is 1650 square meters. The storage which is the most important part of the building, is on the third floor, and protected by a four-layered entrance, consisting, from the innermost, of a lattice door, a large safe-type door, a steel door, and finally a shutter. All the four doors are equipped individually with an alarm bell. "The Museum is guarded so heavily that even an Arsene Lupin (the hero of the stories written by Le Blanc) could not possibly break in." is the proud comment of the staff. Moreover in order to protect the most ideal state of steel obtainable only after a number of repeated forgings, the storage is kept at constant moisture and temperature levels, namely, at 55 percent and 25 degrees Centigrade, by means of an automatic air-conditioning device. Even an abnormality in the slightest degree would be detected by the blinking of the lamp fixed in the custodian's room on the ground floor.

The complete system includes also a device which, should the temperature in the storage go up above 40 degrees C. would cause the fire shutter to close automatically, while the alarm bell connected directly with the nearest fire engine station would alert the firemen. Besides, carbon dioxide would be blown in to fill the storage, whereby at least the safety of the swords may be guaranteed even at the cost of the rest of the building. The display room on the

second floor which can accommodate 40 swords is also equipped with automatic air-conditioning. The library is designed to preserve important documents and reference materials relative to the traditional know-how of sword-making. The appraisal room is to provide a place for regular, periodic appraisal by the experts.

The construction is 80% finished and they are working on the interior of the building. The completion is expected to be in the midst of July. However, their precautions would not allow them to bring in the swords until the interior is completely moisture-adjusted. In view of the Museum's setup for taking care of swords currently in private hands, a hundred and one swords all designated Juyo Bunkazai or above, have already been applied for loan to the Museum; to name some of them: Aizu Shintogo Kunimitsu (Kokuho), Hocho Masamune (K), Ichimonji Yoshihira (K), Meibutsu Kosetsu Samonji (K), Mumei Sadamune (Juyo Bunkazai), Ishida Masamune (J) favoured by Ishida Mitsunari and Goken Kagemitsu (J) used by Honda Heihachiro. The total monetary value is estimated to amount to 7-800 million yen. There are a number of institutions in various parts of Japan, either of public nature or for arms and armour, but this institution is of course unique and the largest in scale in terms of being a project developed by a private organization purely for the Japanese swords.

The applications for loan are already coming in also from overseas collectors, and the staff responsible for the project is hoping that the Museum will prove helpful in bringing back those "phantom" masterpieces yet sleeping in foreign lands and eventually in preventing the Japanese sword from leaving the country of their origin."

BOOK REVIEW

A new book has appeared in the last month which is well worth adding to our members bookshelves. This is "Swords & Daggers" by Frederick Wilkinson, published by Ward Lock & Co.Ltd., 116 Baker Street, W.1. at thirty-five (35/-)shillings. It is not specialised to our subject and Japanese swords receive a fairly brief mention. But it should be interesting to our members because it covers the whole scope of edged weapons. World wide examples are discussed and very well illustrated. These include swords of all ages and types and also include pole arms. There are chapters on history, manufacture care of weapons, collecting, whereabouts of major collections, a bibliography of books on swords, and a good index. I think that collectors of one

specialized kind of weapon as we are, should be aware of the development of that weapon in other parts of the world - this beautifully produced book admirably fills the bill. Get someone to buy it for you for Christmas.

LETTER

From Per Terje Norheim, Oslo. I publish two extracts from his letter; he also asks me to say that he would like to hear about any sword signed BUNGO FUJIWARA TOYOMASA (TO 554-555-556) and swords signed MUNETSUGU (MU 272-273). Any correspondence on swords and armour would also be welcome to him. I quote :

"About one month ago I was together with other members of the Danish Arms and Armour Society on a studying trip to Austria. It was of course mainly European arms to be seen, but in Vienna we had also one day at the Museum fur Völkerkunde, where they happened to have an exhibition of Japanese Art just then. It was called "The Profile of Japan" and covered all sorts of life, also that of the Samurai. A few swords were to be seen, to me none of them outstanding. A very few mounts and a little armour. Among the latter there was an interesting helmet, a real "barbarian", I should think Mongolian converted to Japanese taste. I will send John Anderson a photograph to pass around at a meeting. There was also an armour with a nice D_o, said to be decorated by Somin. I did not check. They answered my inquiry that they had quite a lot of swords and other items of interest, but had no time to show it to me as they had to take care of all the 97 of us, and as this was the last day in Vienna, I had no possibility to go back, neither did they have any catalogue, so it was impossible to see if there were any great names. There is a catalogue prepared for the exhibition, the price is about 15/- where three sword blades, and the Somin-decorated armour is illustrated, together with a few mounts.

Nov. 14th. A Day to Remember?

I was very interested to read the comments in the last programme, but I missed something, viz. the question: Was this sale to the benefit of the collectors? My opinion is no. I admit there is the plus of getting the possibility of acquiring good swords, but in general were these swords really this good? To my eyes the best should be that the real serious collector, spending the necessary time in studying and with the true interest and knowledge, should have a possibility to have a good blade at a fair price, because of his knowledge. But what happens? Are the high

prices the sign of a lot of collectors with suddenly better knowledge? I feel that something to the opposite is true. Now an expert is telling everybody that wants to know "An excellent katana...", "a very fine blade, etc." with nice photographs (but not of the nakago of the doubtful ones!), and it is not necessary to think anymore, it is good, because the catalogue says so. Or am I wrong? Is it just incidentally that prices went up at the same time as Christies started with detailed catalogues? If it is not, I think all the so-called very good, excellent, very fine, etc. swords (where are all the ordinary?) are not sold to the benefit of collectors, but of vendors and salerooms. I should like to know what you English think about it."

LETTER

From Han Bing Siong in the Netherlands; this is of great interest and follows on from the part of a previous letter I published in the last Programme. I quote this one in full :-

"Further to my letter of Oct.the 1st, an extract of which you have published in the Programme, I would like to inform you that during my last visit to London on the occasion of that Sale of Sales on the 14th November, I have gathered some details about the Terauchi-sword in Windsor Castle which I could view at close range this time. It is a wakizashi of Bizen Osafune Yasumitsu, circa O-ei 28. To my surprise the sword is mounted not as shingunto with the red and gold tassel, but as o-tanto with an extremely fine saya of nashiji adorned with a crane in very high gold relief and with koshirae of shakudo nanako-ji with mon (two cranes) en suite in fine gold relief. I was told then that according to Field Marshal Viscount Slim this is not the sword Count Terauchi has actually worn during the war. That sword Lord Louis Mountbatten has returned to the family of the Count for which he received this one in exchange. I wonder if the returned sword could have been one presented by H.I.M.Tenno Heika Dai Gensui when the Count was promoted a member of the Gensuihu in June 1943. I now remember that according to newspaper reports fifteen years ago the Chief of Staff S.E.A.C.(General Sir Frederick Browning?) has done the same with the surrendered sword of the Chief of Staff Southern Army.

Do you know whether any of the To Ken Kai members has a sword of a general? In the Army Museum in Leyden is on display the sword of General Itsuo Mabuchi who, according to the label has been commander of the 16th Army that occupied the island of Java (as far as I know the 16th Army has had

three commanders in succession when occupying Java: Lieut.General (later General) Hitoshi Imamura, Lieut.General Komakichi Harada and lastly, until Japan's surrender, Lieut.General Yuichiro Nagano. Major-General Mabuchi was commander of the 28th Independent Mixed Brigade in West Java). It is a katana of Taira Nagamori which, again according to the label, has been used at the battle of Sekigahara. The mounts, not on display, vary from the ordinary shingunto-mounts in that the canonical sakura-decoration of the tsuba is pierced and a small plate with mon is attached to the kabuto-gane. Apart from this sword up to now I have only seen military swords with brown or brown and blue tassels. Kaigunto seem also to be very scarce, I have seen but two. As I'm very interested in swords in modern military mounts, I look forward to No.4 of the Journal with the announced article of Mr.Holtaway and also to the publication of the results of the project Mr.Gregory and you have in progress now. Do you know what has happened with the captured swords Mr.Robinson wrote about in his letter published in a foregoing Programme? As to the catalogue of the coming exhibition, for the foreign members who can't visit it, I'm glad to conclude from the last issue of the Programme that it will be published with photographs of the exhibits. I hope the owner's names will be mentioned in the description of each item as has been done in the catalogue "Arms and Armour of Old Japan" of 1905. With kind regards."

A THOUGHT

As I sit here putting this Programme together, well after mid-night after a hard day's toil, I sometimes wonder what it is all about and why I do it. I suppose I do it for Mr.Han, Norheim, Ronnqvist, and just a few others not forgetting the indefatigable Andrew Ford, who regularly corresponds and whose letters I publish. What about all the rest of you? There's over a hundred of you out there somewhere - what are you all doing? What are you collecting? And what are you doing with it when you've collected it? What do you know about it or what don't you know about it? Can you write? or do you just make hieroglyphics in the frozen or dusty earth? I'm fascinated: it's like writing for Outer Space. Come on in some of you - be daring and write something. I'll give away absolutely free a genuine Masamune with eight holes in the tang to the writer of the first letter I receive from Outer Space!

LETTER

From, guess who! Andrew Ford.

"Re the New Chairman's Appeal. It would seem to me that a great deal of time is spent talking about

the faults in blades and very little time is spent talking about their good points and what to look for. From the lack of response regarding the cataloguing of the swords for the exhibition it would seem that the majority of the members are incapable of recognising the salient points in a blade. As it is virtually impossible for any single collector to have a representative example of all schools and styles, I would suggest this: That one evening is devoted to Soshu-den and all the relevant points of this method of manufacture could be pointed out, obviously this would be followed up by Bizen, Mino, Yamato and Yamashiro-den. This could then be followed up by considering individual schools; the members would be asked to bring along blades relevant to the evenings discussion, and obviously at times some people will bring blades out of context; but, so what. At least then they learn why they were wrong by comparing with the correct subject matter. Then perhaps the bulk of the sword collectors will be able to differentiate between the various technical terms. I am quite sure that Christie catalogues (to quote an example) go way above the heads of the majority of collectors. This system could be used to cover all technical details, and there is no reason why a similar exercise could not be done on tsuba and armour. My only regret is that should this idea materialize I will probably be unable to attend and learn something myself. This surely will bring us back to Article 2 of our Constitution, and the original concept of the Society, instead of a private Portobello Market. I feel this was the point that John Harding was trying to make and in the main I concur wholeheartedly with him. Perhaps in the not too distant future, everyone will know the difference between kinsuji and tate when they see it on a blade. Sorry about this bit Bon, it just sort of happened, perhaps it will cause some more apoplexy; still, I'm glad I wrote it and I hope you'll print it!!"

ITEM

Also from Andrew Ford, translated by Shoichi Tanaka.

HANKEI He was born in Mikawa and his personal name was Ono-zenshiro. At first he made teppo and then he went to Suruga and began to make swords. He also lived in Bushu Hachi-o-ji and in Edo Teppo-cho. While he was living in Hachi-o-ji he was given an income of 1000 byo of charcoal by the second Tokugawa Shogun. (This is similar to an income in koku of rice, though obviously not quite so valuable). In Shinto Mei Sakushu they say that there is a letter from Honda Sakuzayemon to Hankei referring to

