

THE TO-KEN SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

for the Study and Preservation of Japanese Swords and Fittings

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PROGRAMME

NEXT MEETING Monday, October 7th 1968 at The Masons Arms, Maddox Street, London W.1. at 7.30 p.m.

SUBJECT Annual meeting in which nominations for the new Committee will be taken, general business and fortunes of the Society discussed. Members please turn up to this important meeting, the evening otherwise will be a free for all, so bring along swords, tsuba, etc. for discussion, swapping or quiet corner trading.

LAST MEETING I was unable to attend this and have only reports from other members. I understand that Sidney Divers showed examples of Kesho and Sashi-kome polishes on sword blades, and also the result of a "home polish" on a blade, using correct polishing stones obtained from Japan, I believe in sixteen different grades. Peter Cottis gave his talk on Bows and Arrows. I hope it may be possible to obtain notes from Peter on his talk. Sid Divers' written remarks on his part in the meeting are as follows :

"As promised at our last meeting, I have brought examples of good (Sashi-Komi) and cheap (Kesho) polishes. There are incidentally whole ranges of prices for both types of polish. The Sashi-Komi polish makes the colour of the Yakiba almost the same as the Jihada. This does bring out all the smallest details of Nie and Nioi which would not show by the Kesho polish. The Kesho polish yakiba form depends a lot on the polisher's skill as he has to follow with a slightly coarser stone the position of the yakiba; it does however, bring out the contrast much better between Yakiba and Jihada.

The Sashi-Komi polished sword is Bishu Osafune Sukemune and the Kesho polish is Oishi Sa. The latter is a very good example of Kesho. Also incidentally, a cheap polish does not prevent the obtaining of panel origamis as you all know the latter took a green paper.

I have also brought two swords which will interest members as both are going to Japan for very good polishes and I want members to see the poor state they are in before they are sent. About 8 months from now I will bring these again to show you the polish. One is signed Hasabe Kunishige (Masamune's pupil) with Honami mark (Chu Kei) all in gold on the tang. The other is an extremely early tachi (blade signed Toshifusa Kaneuji). If you recall Allan Bale's talk on tachi fittings I understood I owned probably the earliest known fittings in this country. This Kaneuji tachi certainly beats that! Hasabe Kunishige incidentally is rated Bunka zai 380 points by Hawley."

ARMS FAIR
1968

The Society had a table in the non-trade section of the Arms Fair at the Dorchester Hotel on Friday and Saturday, September 27th and 28th. Numerous members turned up to this and much gossip on swords ensued. We had enquiries about the activities of the Society and gave out pamphlets. We expect to have a number of prospective members as guests at the next meeting. Many thanks again to the members who invigilated at the Fair for the two days.

ANTEI, TATE

These two words have appeared many times in Programmes over the past months. As this is likely to be the end of the trail on this subject, for the benefit of new members who may have wondered what this has all been about, I will quote part of the original letter which was in the April Programme from Ben Vincent.

"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."

After this publication, the discussion, or was it battle, raged back and forth for several months,

during which period I have managed to keep the pot boiling by throwing out the highly provocative statement, "One day Ben Vincent will proclaim from Mount Fuji". Well, at last the good Ben has proclaimed, and I publish his Proclamation below. Personally, I'm not sure this completely clears the air, but it would appear that this is about as far as one can go. It is one of those obscure linguistic matters about which even the Japanese, as Ben Vincent states, are not always clear.

"Tate" and "Antei?" by Ben Vincent

立 in Japanese has many readings, among them "tatsu", "ritsu". Nelson's Japanese-English character dictionary lists these readings on page 676 of the first edition. When used above as it was in Bon Dal's letter to me of April 13 1968, it cannot be read "tate". For this character to be read "tate", it must be written in conjunction with okurigana. Enclosed is a photostat from Dai Kanwa Jiten by Dr. Morohashi Tetsuji of the page where "立" is explained. Please note that absolutely none of the readings listed call this kanji "tate". Therefore on linguistic grounds alone, "tate", as it was written in the communication to me, is a mistake.

May we make an assumption here? Say that "tate" is written correctly, i.e. 立. What does it mean? It means "stand". Now if a person says, in English, the word "stand" what does he mean? "Stand as in "stand-up", "stand" as in a film actors "stand-in", "stand" as in "hat-stand", "stand" as in "to take a stand on an issue", etc.?

In this case we cannot tell what is meant without having a clear context or some other qualifying words.

Tate presents the same problem. Even in the context of katana, we do not know its meaning, or at least nobody in Japan seems to.

Since the theoretical definition of this term is "a row of nie along the hamon as seen in Izumo blades", could the term "nie tatsu" be what is meant? Here the term "tatsu" is qualified by the word "nie" which gives us "standing up nie" or nie that are large and bright and seem to stand out conspicuously. Once again the term used in Japan for this phenomenon is "nie tatsu" not "tate" and it is often found on the later Satsuma and Mizuta works.

Then this brings the subject of Izumo blades into the discussion. Izumo was, and is, a region far removed from the important centres of commerce and sword making. Were there enough smiths there to constitute what could be called an Izumo school of smiths in the same sense as, for example, the Osafune or Osaka schools? If so why is not the Izumo school recognized as such in Japan? Why is it that reliable authorities in Japan contend that there is no such thing as the Izumo school.

Could the so-called Izumo blades have been the works of a few scattered country smiths who happened to be living in the Izumo area? If this is the case, would these sundry men have had a common style that would have been similar enough to feature "tate"?

Keeping the following 3 points in mind:

1-this character "𠄎" cannot be read "tate"

2-even if it could it would have no clear meaning without being used in a specific context or with some other qualifying words.

3-there seems to be no school of Izumo smiths, and Hankei, whose work is supposed to be characterized by "tate", certainly did not live in Izumo -

do we not have some reason to question the validity and usage of this term?

"Antei" also presents us with problems.

"...utsuri without antei or without a broad antei is mainly to be found on good Koto blades" was said by fellow To-Ken club member, Han Bing Siong in an undated issue of the Programme.

Mr.Han is absolutely correct in differing with the statement that utsuri is found only on good koto blades, but "antei" hurts an otherwise perfectly valid case.

In the May issue of the Programme, we learn that "AN" means dark and "tei" means an emperor.

Therefore utsuri without a "dark emperor" is mainly to be found on Koto blades. This can be called a handsome reply. Is there any meaning here?

My fellow student of the sword would like a translation because he is not at all sure of the pronunciation.

Problems again beset us here for in Japanese it is often possible to understand the meaning of a word

perfectly without being able to pronounce it correctly. Therefore is a translation or a pronunciation needed?

In a personal communication to me from Bon Dale the kanji 暗帯 where read "Antei". The correct pronunciation of these characters as found on page 242 of volume seven of Nihon To Zenshu is "ANTAI". Nelson's Japanese-English character dictionary lists these characters on pages 486 (No.2154) and 358 (No.1474) respectively. "An" means dark and "TAI" means belt or zone or area.

A character which bears some resemblance to 帝 is 帝, which is pronounced "tei" and means emperor, can be found on page 116 of Nelson (No.305).

Is this the same character found in Nihon To Zenshu Volume 7 page 242? No, it is not as the enclosed photostatic copy to the page under consideration will clearly show.

Can it now be said that the term "antei" has any validity? Undoubtedly some members will say that these points are too small to bother with.

Yet any mistake will eventually interfere with the progress of a serious student.

COMMENT:

Many thanks to you Ben for a sincere and thorough piece of research; I know I have been gently ribbing you in the Programmes over this antei tate business, no hard feelings! The members will be interested to know that Ben Vincent has decided to have a little quiet revenge on me by sending me a stinker of an oshigata, from Japan, with a request for a reading and explanation. Why it should be necessary to ask for my poor help when Ben Vincent is in Japan, Bishamon alone knows! I'm pretty sure that he knows perfectly well already what the oshigata has to say. However Ben, I accept the challenge and will do my best when I have time to settle down to it, and will send you the result. As you say, I did volunteer to read tang inscriptions!

JAPANESE SWORDSMITHS by W.M.Hawley

Some months ago I reviewed these two excellent and indispensable volumes for the benefit of members who were not aware of them. For new members since then, these books contain the names etc. in English and Japanese of some 16,000 swordsmiths (that's an awful lot of swordsmiths!), and a

wealth of other information. These are still available, in this country, or direct from the author, W.M.HAWLEY, 8200 Gould Avenue, Hollywood, California 90046.

In the August Programme, Andrew Ford commented on various apparent paradoxes in Hawley's ratings. Below is an interesting letter from Hawley himself explaining his methods in arriving at the ratings.

From: W.M.Hawley. Subject: Value System in
"Japanese Swordsmiths"

There are two parts to the value index system.

1. The relative values of blades by various smiths.
2. The money conversion value. The \$7 per unit though changing is still not too far off around here in Southern California and benefits the collector who is trying to buy, which is what it was supposed to do. Unhappy with it are those collectors whose prime interest seems to be impressing people with big figures, and dealers whose interest is solely commercial. Even those persons happily show the \$7 figure when they are trying to buy. Just trying to hold down inflation!

Now back to No.1. It is fairly obvious that the blades turned out by any smith when he just went on his own would not match in quality those made after he had gained experience. Also, many others just didn't turn out well and mostly were left unsigned. Conversely, an occasional blade would have everything, and do wonders for a smith's reputation if recognized.

Then there were the personal factors which affected smiths ability to produce top quality work. Consider Kiyomaro the No.1 Shinshinto smith who drank to excess "which somewhat interfered with his work" and others who suffered from various ills at times and had to let students help or finish a blade.

Another factor was economic or war-time pressure under which smiths were forced to speed up work at the expense of quality. This was especially true in the late Koto period when smiths received orders from lords for so many blades to be delivered as quickly as possible. During this time students and apprentices did most of the steel making and lesser steps with the master only forging the blade and tempering it. A clue to this kind of work is the signature which often just read Bishu Osafune So-

and-so instead of the smith's full signature which could be pinned down. Just try to sort out a Sukesada signed that way!

So, we have many ways that any given smith's work could and did vary from his normal quality. This accounts for smiths whose rating is only 5 to 10, getting an occasional Juyo award. If you examine the book carefully, you will find many value indexes which read "10 - Juyo 80", which means that his average blades were just ordinary but that a very superior one has showed up and been given recognition.

Now, where are we? Is the system of rating useless, or can we use it to advantage in our appraisals?

In the first place let me state that the only values I furnished were for names not listed in the *Tosho Zenshu*. The rest I copied from that work, deficient as it is, for what they are worth. Changing from units of ¥10,000 (¥28) was my idea as that value at either end of the scale was completely unrealistic, not to say fantastic when, just before the Olympics they revised the values by multiplying everything straight through by 3! (That book is put out by the Bijutsu Club, an association of sword and art dealers in Tokyo).

Reduced to units with flexible values, the system does serve a very important purpose in giving a general idea of the relative worth of the blades of various smiths. But, this in no way supplants the necessity for studying the fine points of blade construction so you can at least judge whether a blade is good or poor quality. In fact, where spurious signatures are so plentiful, it would be folly to just go by the book.

One more value point - condition. My index assumes a blade is in acceptable condition. Some collectors are much fussier than others and the high price of polish jobs requires serious consideration when buying a blade. If you are not particular and have access to a cheap polish job as supplied by some of the less reputable Japanese sword shops, you can come out for not too much money. Generally, a blade that is worthy of a top quality polish costing from \$3.50 to \$7.00 per inch is worth spending it on regardless of the value index.

For those impatient souls who have to have a lot of swords, right away you're on your own - just throw the book away! Happy hunting. Hawley.

COMMENT

I like the last sentence and heartily agree. If you have to have a lot of swords immediately, best to throw the swords away too and collect stamps.

LETTER

From Per Terje Norheim, Oslo, with some interesting comment on our recent discussions on sword polishing.

Polishing in Japan. I was very interested to read in the August Programme about possibilities in Japan. However, there are a few things that I think should be mentioned. First, that the price quoted for the polish of a katana, 20.000 Yen etc. seems to be far from reality. I wonder what sort of polish you will get for that price. According to recent standards a second class polisher will claim about 30.000 Yen, a first class polisher if one ever gets access to him, probably at least the double. But what is more, the costs of document making, registration etc. are completely forgotten; I enclose a copy of an invoice I recently got from the packers recommended by museum people in Japan. I have taken away the firm's name, but the amounts are still there. As you will see the estimation of the import and export of 5 swords is 97.000 yen, approx. £115. This is of course, without polish and other work. This is the price you have to pay if you are going to send your blades to a private polisher. Probably the mentioned firm is doing a lot of this work themselves, but on the other side I am not too sure about the quality of the polishing. I think it might be well to remember what Mr. Yamanaka says in the Hihonto Newsletter for April about this. I quote: "The hands of an incompetent polisher will render a blade worthless....The sorry state of affairs is that there are very few good polishers today, but more than enough polishers who can ruin a blade," etc. I think Mr. Vincent is the right one to tell us how much one has to pay for a polish worth having at present. The price of other services are probably not differing very much."

COMMENT

Yes, of course, Per Terje Norheim is brilliant! Could you please, Ben Vincent, tell us anything about polishing charges in Japan? No one is proposing to land you with swords but have you any advice to give us please?

NAMED SWORDS

Mr. Norheim also comes up with another named sword, the first we've had for a long time. I like this one, the implications are very subtle; I quote:

"I may mention, if you are going to publish more named swords, that I have got a katana by Izumo Tadasada, TA100, which has its name inlaid in gold on the tang. It reads "Fuse Nai Kyo" which translated is "Sutras without charges" or more freely, "A Free Guide to Paradise". Other swords with this inscription are known in Japan, but then with the name in Chinese characters; on my blade two kana are mixed in."

MUSEUM
COLLECTIONS

From time to time we have published details of various collections of Japanese Arms in Museums throughout the world; finally in his letter, Per Terje Norheim gives us the following piece of original research:

Swords, Armour etc. in the Ethnographical Museum of Oslo, Norway.

Swords:

Exhibited, bare blades

Katana, signed on the blade: Shosammin Arikoto tsukuru narabi ni utua, with a long poem in sosho and hiragana engraved on the blade.

Wakizashi, same signature and poem as above. The poem reads freely translated: The Hero had sheathed his tempered sword, but his soul had an always stronger desire after giving it free.

Wakizashi, signed Satsuma Kwankohei Masayoshi, MA 702, dated Temmei 8=1788.

Wakizashi, signed Yonezawa no shin Kato Chuunsai TSUNATOSHI Naniwa ni Oite, on the other side of the nakago: Sakuyo Bakkashi Tada MASATOSHI horu do nin. Dated Kayei 3=1850. Very fine blade by Tsunatoshi, Masatoshi's carving consists of bo-hi with bonji. TS 182.

Tanto: signed Oyama Takayoshi Go MASATAKA shison Suketaka, sho gatsu kichi horu do saku. MA 503.

O-tanto, fine old blade in Soshu-style, signed Masamune

Unsigned naginata blade.

Exhibited in koshirae:

Katana, signed Koyama Sobe Munetsugu, MU272, with a tameshigiri. Dated Tempo 7=1836.

Daisho, signed: Hoki no Kami Fujiwara HIROTAKA, HI 246

Wakizashi, signed Soshu no JU Akihiro, probably a fake, but a fairly good blade.

Short ken, signed Yamashiro no Kami Toshinaga, probably TO 476

Tachi, signed Jumio. probably 17th C.

8 other unsigned swords.

Stored Away

Wakizashi, Minamoto no Kunishige, KU 548

Wak. Tadimitsu, probably a Bizen blade

Tanto Yoshimitsu, attributed on the saya to Awataguchi Y. It is not, but a nice small blade, probably from about the period.

Katana: Kanemaki, Kaga, probably last generation

Wak. Sadamori SA252(?)

Wakizashi, Bishu Osafune Norimitsu, dated Tenbun 8=1539. Poor blade, mass production

Wak. Kanesada (no Sada) Signature faint because of corrosion, but blade certainly from the school.

Tachi. Iyetsugu, fine old blade, strong fumbari, bo-hi both sides, probably IY.199

Wak. Mutsu no Kami Kanenobu KA881

Tanto: Yoshiyuki, YO 671

Hachiwara, spurious date 1331, long inscription, and signed Goro Masamune.

Katana. Bizen Osafune no Ju Yokoyama SUKEHARU saku, dated Ansei 2=1855; a powerful and good shin-shin-to SU.367

Yarihead in tanto mounts, signed Shimosaka.

Tanto. Uda Kunitsugu, KU762.

Tanto. Wakasa no Kami Ujifusa, dated Genki 2=1571, fairly good blade UJ11. Tanto. Jumio, one of latest gen.

Tanto. Shaped as a miniature tachi, Kawachi no Kami Kunisuke, the signature doesn't fit any of the ones in Nihon Toko Jiten, nakago also looks too new.

Wakizashi. Yoshisuke, prob. YO 989

Wakizashi. Norifusa.

About 15 mounted unsigned swords.

Polearms: 12 exhibited, about 20 stored.

Matchlocks: 5 exhibited.

Armour: 4 suits and 5 Jingasa exhibited. 9 suits, 3 kabuto and about 10 Jingasa stored. Nothing special, two of the suits have signed Saotome helmets

Sword furniture: about 200 tsuba, a few fuchi-kashira and kodzuka exhibited, together with a small but good collection of decorated arrow heads. Plus a few bows, arrows and abumi, etc.

No catalogue. The arrowheads illustrated in a booklet: Japanese Ornamented Arrowheads, Hawley has this.

The exhibited shin-shin-to are illustrated together with oshigata and description in a booklet which is available.

Should any of the members like further information photos or oshigata of any of the mentioned items, I will be glad to help.

LETTERS

Many thanks to all members who have written in with comments and queries. I'm a little behind in my replies at the moment but will eventually catch up and will publish more comments next month.

OSHIGATA

A reminder to new members who may have difficulties in reading tang inscriptions due to inadequate references, that if they care to send a rubbing (oshigata) of the tang, addressed to Bon Dale at the Society's address, I will check it for them and send them all available information I have on the swordsmith or inscription. Please remember to make a careful rubbing of the whole tang, both sides, not just the inscription.

NIHON TO
NEWSLETTER

New members will like to know and others be reminded of a venture started in Japan in January 1968, by Albert Yamanaka and Associates. The Nihon To Newsletter is a bi-monthly publication in English, 30 plus pages, on Japanese swords and its related fields. Packed with information from authoritative Japanese sources, there is no other publication in English which can offer such a wealth of knowledge to the serious student of the sword. Members wishing to subscribe to this non-profit making publication should write to :

NIHON TO NEWSLETTER,
C.P.O. Box 967,
Tokyo, Japan

Enclose: Name, Address, City, State, etc. and remit Twenty (20) U.S. Dollars or equivalent. Bank Cashiers cheque only - NO personal cheques.

AIR MAIL
POSTAGE

We have decided that overseas members might like to receive their Programmes more quickly by having them sent air mail. In fact, some members have already arranged to have this done recently. Next month we will give the cost in dollars or sterling extra to the normal corresponding subscription. Members who want this service can then write.

CHANGE OF
ADDRESS

H. Bartlett Wells is now at :
5602 Ogden Road,
Washington, D.C. 20016.
U.S.A.

{ Wynswold 558.
{ Longbarn 5781. Ask for sec.