

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, March 3rd 1969 at the Masons Arms, Maddox Street, London W.1 at 7.30 p.m.

FOLLOWING MEETINGS

Monday, April 7th 1969 and Monday May 5th 1969, at 7.30 p.m. at the Masons Arms.

SUBJECTS

We are trying the experiment of having a "Meeting Subject". The subject for the March gathering will be "Men in Armour". Members are asked to exercise their imaginations and bring something which is relevant to the subject. This can either be actual swords, tachi, actual armour or any fuchi-kashira, tsuba or other object which illustrates the subject, or paintings or prints. This is your choice, let us have a variety of "Men in Armour" for discussion at the meeting.

The subject for the April meeting will be "Fakes of any Kind". This should be a good one, with plenty of examples! Subject for the May meeting, "Helmets", real or anything.

LAST MEETINGS

January was one of general business discussion. Following this the sword described in the letter from Col. Dean Hartley in the last Programme was discussed. The oshigata and drawing of the blade and the photograph of this sword, by MASAZANE ca.1065, caused much favourable comment on its obvious excellence and beauty. Little light was thrown, however, on Col. Dean Hartley's query about O-Koshiba; perhaps he will have more success from overseas members. For my own part I am sure I have seen a splendid example of O-Koshiba illustrated somewhere, but I cannot remember the book. I'll keep looking and if I find it I will send details to you, Colonel.

The 31st January was the special meeting at the NENRIKI KENDO DOJO, organized by Sydney Divers as previously announced, with co-host Sir Frank Bowden. Sir Frank at the end of the meeting had the double-take task of thanking the Kendo Dojo on behalf of the To Ken Society for having us, and of thanking the To Ken Society on behalf of himself and the Nenriki Dojo for coming. I may say he did this very well.

The evening was full and varied. A quick summary of the Programme was as follows: First a great Rei, bow, from all members. Followed by Suburi (empty cutting) from all members, demonstrating men-uchi, ni-dan uchi, san-dan uchi. Next Kirikaeshi (cut and counter) and kakari-Geiko (sustained practice) from selected members. This was followed by one of Roald Knutsen's impeccable demonstrations of Iai. There were then some three point Kendo matches, followed by a further demonstration, this time of Kata from Mr.Knutsen, with Mr.Fujii Okimitsu; within this framework of events there was also a demonstration of Naginata by Mrs.Knutsen. The evening ended with a fast and fiery bout between Fujii Okimitsu and another Japanese gentleman of high Dan rating whose name does not appear on the Programme, and to whom I apologise for the omission in this Programme. The whole evening was covered with an excellent commentary from Mr.R.A.Lidstone, Chairman of the Eikoku Kendo Renmei. The final note was the provision of plentiful and excellent sherry in another room and gathering together of To Ken members, some of whom were corresponding members and whom we were particularly glad to welcome. Once again, on behalf of the To Ken may I express our thanks to all concerned.

## MEETING

February 3rd 1969 was a meeting which I was unable to attend. It was a meeting which was marked with a sad note in that it was the day on which the death of Clement Milward was announced in the press. There follows a short note by David Tudor-Williams :-

"Clement Milward. The meeting learned with deep regret of the very sudden death of Clement Milward on Saturday, February 1st. Occurring as it did, within a matter of hours from the time when he had been together with many To Ken members at the Kendo demonstration at the Nen-Riki Dojo, this news was particularly poignant. The members stood in silent remembrance for a short period.

Clement Milward, who was part of the "sword scene" for as long as most of us can remember, must go down as one of the leading experts of his day. Particularly erudite on the matter of the "Christian Century" in Japan, he will long be remembered and missed for his good taste in matters artistic, his impatience with humbug and pretentiousness, but above all, for his unfailing interest in and encouragement of

all students of the sword, particularly "new" collectors."

It was a few days later that I learnt of Clement Milward's death, the shock being greater because he had appeared in such fine form at the Kendo evening; it was a great joy to see him there because this was in fact, the first To Ken meeting which he had been able to attend. He will be greatly missed, he was, as David Tudor-Williams says, one of the "old school" of collectors, of great knowledge, experience and good taste. A friend to new collectors always, it was he whom I met nearly twenty years ago when I first started collecting, and it was from the examination of his then extensive collection that I gained much of my early experience. I'm sure there are many collectors today who could tell exactly the same story and who will miss him just as much.

#### FILM EVENING

As has been previously announced, the To Ken Society is showing Akira Kurosawa's "Throne of Blood" on Tuesday, April 8th, 1969.

This will take place in the Holborn Library Hall, 32/38 Theobalds Road, London W.C.1. The film, or probably films, will commence fairly promptly after 7 p.m. so members and guests are asked to arrive a little before seven. Tickets will be on sale at the door and will cost seven and sixpence (7/6d). The more tickets we sell the greater the success, so please bring guests. Theobalds Road is at the top of Holborn Kingsway, near Holborn (Kingsway) tube station. We are indebted to member W.L.Baxter for the following notes and biographical details:

#### THE THRONE OF BLOOD

(Kumonosu-Djo)

Produced by Toho Company Ltd.  
Directed by Akira Kurosawa

Japan 1957

#### Cast

Taketoki Washizu.	Toshiro Mifune
Asaji, his wife	Isuzu Yamada
Yoshiaki Miki	Minoru Chiaki
Yoshiteru, his son	Akira Kubo
Noriyasu Odagura	Takashi Shimura
Kuniharu Tsuzuki	Takamaru Sasaki
Kunimaru, his son	Yoichi Tachikawa
Weird Woman	Chieko Naniwa

SYNOPSIS

Adapted from Shakespeare's "MACBETH" and set in the heart of the civil war era in Japan with Macbeth as a captain serving under the Lord of Cobweb Castle.

The sinister unity between Macbeth (Mifune) and his wife (Yamada) disintegrates superbly under Kurosawa's direction. Yamada's chilling performance is of the high standard to be expected from one of Japan's leading actresses and perfectly compliments the action scenes.

(COMPILERS NOTE: I recall having read somewhere, but cannot locate the source, that the volleys of arrows in the final scene were not in fact fired but instead withdrawn from the walls around Mifune while he reacted in reverse - then the film was likewise re-run in reverse. Or maybe I'm getting confused with the well-known knife sequence in Von Stroheim's "GREED").

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

AKIRA KUROSAWA Became a director in his own right in 1942 having previously been assistant to Kajiro Yamamoto a veteran in the art. His "Samurai" films are not typical of the general run of productions in Japan and can perhaps be fairly described as Japanese Westerns, nevertheless they have become highly successful not only in Europe and America (to which markets they were undoubtedly aimed) but also in his home country. His "Rashomon" walked away with the Grand Prix at the Venice Film Festival having hit the western world like a bomb in 1951 and overnight made the Japanese Cinema a force to be reckoned with, since then he has consistently directed films which have appeared on film critics' "best ten" lists and won many awards. No small part of this success must be due to his regular reliance on the same team of highly skilled, professional performers.

Principal productions since "Rashomon" -  
 "The Idiot" 1951, "Doomed" 1952,  
 "Seven Samurai" 1954, "The Lower  
 Depths" 1957, "Hidden Fortress" 1958,  
 "Yojimbo" 1961, "Sanjuro" 1962, "Red  
 Beard" 1965.

TOSHIRO MIFUNE

The first truly international star to be produced by the Japanese film world. Is generally remembered for his leading role in "Seven Samurai" but has many other notable successes to his credit, e.g. "Rashomon", "Yojimbo", "Hidden Fortress", "The Lower Depths", "Sanjuro", "Rickshaw Man", and more recently "Red Beard" and "Rebellion". Made his screen debut in 1947.

ISUZU YAMADA

Japan's leading actress, was firmly established in 1932, specializes in "strong-willed" wife parts. Has teamed with Mifune under Kurosawa's direction in "Yojimbo" - the rapacious wife of the leader of one of the warring factions, and "The Lower Depths" as the amorously inclined Lodging House-keeper.

MINORU CHIAKI

Plays Mifune's right-hand man in this film and has appeared in virtually all the same films but in wide variety of roles, e.g. The Priest in "Rashomon", comic interest in "Hidden Fortress" and one of the "Seven Samurai" in which his craft was most memorably displayed in the scene where he, as a destitute Samurai, is earning his supper by chopping firewood.

TAKASHI SHIMURA

Another "regular" in Mifune & Kurosawa's films, was the woodcutter in "Rashomon" but is probably remembered best for his superlative role as the leader of the "Seven Samurai". Has starred in one film variously titled "Doomed" or "Living" that received wide acclaim and distribution but generally plays principal supporting parts.

NORTHERN BRANCH  
OF THE TO KEN  
SOCIETY

NEXT MEETING Tuesday, March 18th 1969 at the Seven Oaks Hotel, 5 Nicholas Street, Manchester at 7.30 p.m.

SUBJECT Tony Griffiths will give a talk on small fittings. Members are requested to bring items in this field.

There will be, in addition, an auction sale held on behalf of the members. So bring along all your surplus 'National Treasures', even lesser pieces will be considered. I don't think I will be giving secrets away if I say that one of the genuine

Masamune tang holes from Bon Dale's sword will be for sale. So its up to you, there will be no sale without your contributions.

LAST MEETING Apologies were received from Andrew Ford who was abroad on business. An announcement was made of a proposed exhibition to be held at Manchester University Museum in December and January 1969/70. The announcement was well received by the members present but only general topics could be discussed at this early stage. Further details will appear later.

The rest of the evening was taken up with an examination of kodzuka and kogatana. The latter were well represented by a unique collection brought along by Brian Bateman from the Hibbert Collection. It consists of 34 blades by famous swordsmiths mounted in shirasaya for a Daimyo. Among the smiths represented were Naotane, Ikkanshi Tadatsuna, Shizu-no-saburo Kaneuji, Fujiwara Umitada to name but a few. All were in good polished state showing a remarkable range of hamon patterns, horimono and calligraphy styles, a miniature sword collection in fact.

Other members brought kodzuka from their collections. I hope they will forgive me for forgetting details. Two especially stick in my mind; an unsigned piece in shakudo inlaid in gold and silver showing an arrangement of peonies in a bucket, brought by John Hymas, and an iron based one, having a poem in gold and pierced with a hole framing a man's head in silver, which was brought by Tony Griffiths.

One item which appeared in the last programme was a misunderstanding, about arrowheads:

The point I was trying to make, not very successfully, was that the heads being discussed, about 3"-4" long, could not have been shot safely with ordinary tackle. If an arrow carrying such a head were to be shot the inertia of the latter would cause the bamboo shaft to explode in the archer's face. I also pointed out that arrows with broad-heads tend to "plane" away from the desired line of flight unless used with very large fletchings. One method of preventing this is to cut out as much metal as possible from the centre of the blade, a method common in Japan.

#### ARTICLE

Following the undoubted success of the last published article on Toshinaga I, by our anonymous author, who will remain so despite several postal and verbal queries I have had, I have great pleasure in publishing a second offering.

KANO NATSUO

It is difficult to consider Kano Natsuo, 1828-1898, without a feeling of nostalgia. The last and one of the greatest of the makers of sword fittings, he lived through the final collapse of the Tokugawa Shogunate, the penetration of Japan by the Western Nations after 1858 and the restoration of the Imperial power after more than a thousand years of decline. By the time of his death Japan had begun the immense climb into the modern world of Western civilisation, yet as a child he had grown up in a largely fossilised Feudal society.

His life was one of justifiable distinction. Born in Kioto in 1828 as Fushimi Jisaburo, he became the adopted son of a sword-blade merchant, Kano Jisuke, at the age of seven. He studied under the painters Nakajima Raisho and Okomura Shohachi. He took many designs from the Maruyama School and showed particular attachment to the work of Okyo whose carp and birds he often reproduced, particularly on tsuba, and which have proved extremely popular with Western collectors. In 1869, fifteen years after he had moved to Yedo, he was appointed to the mint at Osaka to design the new Meiji coins and in the same year was ordered by the Imperial Household Department to carve the fittings of a sword. He served on the Commission for the Registration of National Treasures and became professor of metal work at the Tokio School of Art where he dictated a book called Chokindan dealing with the work of earlier metal workers.

Natsuo's position at Osaka provided him with an occupation suitable to his gifts at a time when so many metal workers were forced to turn to lesser work including the production of the huge quantity of decorative metalwork which flooded Western markets at the close of the 19th century. The mint was set up in Osaka in 1870, the third year of Meiji and began production on English machines and with English technical advisers, among whom was Professor Gowland whose fine collection of coins and Japanese drawings was almost certainly formed on Natsuo's advice. Production began with coins in gold, silver and copper and changes of design and standard were numerous as Japan adjusted itself to world money markets and continual inflation. The design of these first coins is simple and elegant and usually includes a coiled dragon with flaming pearl, a sun in splendour and borders of mon or branches of leaves and flowers crossed and knotted with ribbon. He worked on designs and dies for eight years and this

work is considered by many to be his greatest achievement.

Natsuo was trained in metalwork by Ikeda Takanaga, the son of Ikeda Okitaka, a pupil of Otsuki Mitsuoki. Mitsuoki, foremost master of the Otsuki school, lived in Kioto at the beginning of the 19th century, and studied under the naturalist painter Ganku who was employed by the Imperial Court. Despite Natsuo's love of the Maruyama school, and Okyo in particular, it is fair to assume that his lifelong love of naturalism originates from the influence of Ganku transmitted by the Otsuki masters. Naturalism in the arts of Japan is found sporadically in all ages but increased greatly after the Genroku period until the 19th century when the tenets of Zen-directed aesthetics were largely forgotten. It would be wrong, however, to condemn Natsuo as an out-and-out realist as the tsuba in the Victoria and Albert Museum, ex Hawkshaw collection, depicting Kanzan and Jittoku on a fan set in a plain iron ground, shows all too clearly. These roistering Chinese Ch'an (Zen) poets are shown in a simple but subtle manner in the best canons of Zen taste. Nevertheless, it is as a realist that Natsuo excels. Almost any example shows his brilliance. In the Field Museum, Chicago, the collection of Frank W. Gunsaulus contains a large iron tsuba of a wolf on the battlefield of Musashi-no. The animal, in reddish-bronze, looks up, with teeth bared, at the moon seen emerging from clouds, while on the reverse a human skull represents luridly the horror of the setting. The realism of this piece can seldom have been equalled and never surpassed.

It is sad that English collections do not represent Natsuo as they did in the early part of the century. The C. Norman Collie collection, sale 1921, contained an iron tsuba of a carp after Okyo and in the same year the Tomkinson sale produced another of similar subject. The fish are all but alive, twisting and turning in a marvellous flash of arrested movement. The Behrens collection contained an iron tsuba of almost octagonal shape with a plunging hawk and cryptomeria leaves below. The realism is so brilliant that one all but hears the rush of wind through the wings. Natsuo could work at will in all styles and was master of all metals and patinations. We are lucky to live close enough to his age to see pieces with colours little affected by the passage of time. He patinated iron with a rich brown colour against which the raven black of shakudo or the amazing effects of red-bronze and pale copper are seen to their best advantage. In shibuichi he could produce the kozuka,

once belonging to the Stone collection, engraved in katakiri, with a carp and signed "Natsuo after the picture by Okyo".

Natsuo was much copied in the early Meiji period and his name was given to work clearly neither in his manner nor of his quality. He, on the other hand, was an incomparable copyist of the earlier masters. Though he admitted to being defeated when attempting to reproduce the work of Goto Yujo, the kozuka in the Behrens collection, signed and inscribed "made for Mr. Nuki after the curious work of Toshinaga" is a masterpiece in this genre.

The great collector Alexander Moslé reproduced in his catalogue a photograph of Natsuo seated with his son Akiho and his pupil Katsurano Fumio. Moslé arrived in Tokio in 1884, five years before Natsuo died of a skin disease. Moslé certainly knew Natsuo's son and bought from him a daisho of tsuba and the drawings for them which he reproduces in his catalogue. The photograph of the great man was taken in 1895 when he was sixty-seven. He looks younger and intensely alert. He holds in his right hand a small carved wood figure of Daruma at which he gazes intently. It is appropriate that the Daruma was carved by one of Natsuo's few peers of earlier days, Yasuchika I of Nara.

A CHALLENGE  
NOT  
ACCEPTED

Occasionally I suppose in these pages I get carried away and make sweeping statements, or tend to tread heavily on someone's toes. That is the trouble with being sole author of this Programme - there is no one with whom to discuss it or fight. Last issue I threw out a challenge not my own idea this time, but discussed with the author of the above article. Do you remember it, you sword fittings collectors? You have had two months, two whole months (sitting on your fat hakama's, to use an expression I throw out when I'm annoyed with you) to gently prepare a list of your personal choice of the Ten Best Makers of Sword Fittings. And what have you done about it? NOTHING! And yet some of you complain about lack of material in this Programme on sword fittings. I'm disgusted, and don't say you haven't had time - I know about lack of time. I wish I had 48 hours in every day, so does our anonymous author I'm sure. And don't say you haven't any knowledge with a capital K. You don't need knowledge, facts, figures, all you need is an Opinion - you must have an opinion! I said two months ago, if you don't know Ten Makers send in a list of two, and say why you like them. Surely you could do that!

After that blistering attack, which I must keep free from violent invective for the sake of our gentle lady typist, I'm delighted to say, Thank Heaven! We have one wide awake fittings collector, and I know he's not a chap hanging around looking for something to occupy his time either!

Therefore, the To Ken Society is proud to announce the winner of the Ten Best Makers Competition, Mr. Tony Griffiths of Wymswold, Leicestershire. Prize - one years' free subscription to the Society. Congratulations Tony, wish we could give you a Natsuo.

TEN BEST  
MAKERS OF  
SWORD FITTINGS

By Tony Griffiths.

My choice of the Ten Best Makers is as follows:

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1. Natsuo             | 6. Yasuchika IV   |
| 2. Ishiguro Masayoshi | 7. Omori Teruhide   |
| 3. Yokoya Soyo        | 8. Yanagawa Naoharu   |
| 4. Hamano Masayuki    | 9. Otsuriuken Miboku  |
| 5. Sugiura Joi        | 10. Unsigned (This chap did some superb work, and for some unaccountable reason examples are to be had relatively cheaply). |

With a selection, virtually guaranteed, to send the purist scuttling for the consolation of his favourite lump of ancient iron, I've no hesitation in justifying it with the greatest (and most neglected) of all justifications .....I like 'em!

I place Natsuo first on account of his mastery of such a wide range of techniques and have in my own collection examples ranging from rich iroye to wonderfully restrained engraving, all superbly executed. Also for his artistic interpretation, instanced by a pair of menuki which really do have the quality of a good impressionist painting ...quite incredible! My choice was absolutely confirmed for me with a Tsuba by him which I saw recently in London. Shakudo peonies, moving in the wind, on a copper ishime background... one looked around to see where the draught was coming from...great stuff!

I place Masayoshi second because, although most of his work was mediocre, I know from the evidence of one piece that he was capable of achieving an incredible perfection. It is an iron fuchi of the 'The Concert and Dance outside Amaterassu's Cave' and the tiny figures could be magnified a thousand-fold and not disgrace a Michelangelo statue. For all I know, he never equalled that standard again (odd there is no kashira ever recorded) but if the achievement was

solitary, it is no less magnificent and for that alone he gets in my Best Ten.

Since I have now exceeded the two hundred words allowed you will never know why I placed Soyo, third...an omission which I'm quite sure will not cause you to lose any sleep.

#### COMMENT

Yes, Tony, I am losing sleep. I'd like to hear more and know why Soyo is placed third! For those others who didn't get around to their list, please note that the above is purely personal choice, and I quote, it was selected "with the greatest (and most neglected) of all justifications...I like 'em." This is exactly what I wanted, so how about having a try at second prize all you silent ones? Even if you keep your choice to Tony Griffith's number - ten, I like that one! By the way, pure coincidence that Natsuo was also the subject of this month's article.

#### NIHON TO AND NEW COLLECTORS

Every month we publish a plug for Albert Yamanaka's Nihonto News-letter, repeated as usual at the end of this Programme for the information of new members. This is an excellent publication, and it must be stressed it is the only one in English which regularly publishes highly technical and authoritative information on Japanese swords. I mean Japanese sword information, the only sort that counts. In the past year the Nihonto Newsletter has covered, sword History, Historical, Heian, Early mid- and late-Kamakura, Yoshino, Muromachi, Sengoku, Tokugawa (3 parts) and Shin Shinto periods. Swordsmiths it has covered are: Gotoba, Munechika, Sanjo Yoshiie, Gojo Kanchaga, Gojo Kuninaga, Awataguchi School, Ayanokoji School, Rai School (4 parts), including Kuniyuki, Niji Kunitoshi, Kunitoshi, Kunimitsu, Kunitsugu, Kunizane, Kuninaga, Tomokuni, Kunitsugu, Mitsugane, Ryokai and Nobukuni.

Famous swords described and analyzed have been many, ranging through Dojikiri Yasutsuna many famous Masamune, etc. etc. Apart from all this, there have been articles and advice on the care of tsuba, swords, on etiquette, sword terminology, history of sword judging, Kantei etc., etc., space forbids me to detail everything.

I have gathered from Albert Yamanaka's editorial remarks that he is plagued by the same trials as me. Lack of more than 24 hours in a day, and the financial consideration of each publication - I'm likely to break the Society on this one. The Nihonto Newsletter needs support, as all our small

societies do, to carry on the good work. I would strongly recommend any collector, new or ancient like me, to forego the price of that next crummy wakizashi - a mere twenty dollars - and get in on the act, so that you can recognize a good sword when you find it.

I have had permission from the Newsletter to republish articles or part articles for some time, but space has so far prevented this. Below I publish an article by one of our co-members, R.B.Caldwell, originally published in the Newsletter, which will be informative to newish collectors. The scene is American, but the pattern applies to any country, the books and use of them apply to all.

### The Beginning Collector - a Suggested Method of Procedure

For the purposes of this limited article we must assume that the reader has already convinced himself that the study and appreciation of the Japanese Sword, and its related arts is a desirable and fascinating pursuit. Granted this basic premise; what is the best way to pursue our chosen hobby? The mastery of any art form is difficult enough in our own language but the introduction of a new form of communication places the student in a double bind. To anyone willing to study and inquire; their curiosity will be greatly awarded in many areas of personal gratification.

One of the first of many mistakes I made upon becoming enthralled with the world of the Japanese Sword was making the assumption that the learning of Japanese terms, letters, and names would be circumvented by the use of English equivalents. The more quickly one gives up this fallacy the better off he will be. True, there are some adequate books on the subject in English but they are at best only the first stepping stone on our journey of mastery. So your first assignment is to buy your text books. This won't be too traumatic financially and I assure you it will be the smallest expenditure you will ever make in the sword business.

- 1) The Samurai Sword, a Handbook; by John Yumoto; Tuttle.
- 2) The Arts of the Japanese Sword; by B.W.Robinson; Tuttle.
- 3) Japanese Swordsmiths; W.M.Hawley, Vols.I and II.
- 4) The Sword and Samé; Joly and Hogitaro; Tuttle.
- 5) The Japanese Sword; Inami Hakusui, Japan Sword Co. (a reprint)
- 6) The Japanese Sword Blade; A.Dobre; Paragon.
- 7) A Primer of Japanese Sword Blades; B.W.Robinson; Paragon. (a handy condensation of #2).

If you wish to break this down into steps, numbers 1, 2 and 3 are the first ones to read and read most often. These books will form the backbone of your reference material in English. Hawley's books are rapidly becoming the accepted method of reference between English speaking collectors and both volumes contain a wealth of information. You now have 90% of the available books in print in English. About the third time through these books you'll begin to want more. While you are omnivorously devouring your text books you should also be looking at swords, swords in museums, other collections, shows, etc. Swords in any shape, condition or location. You can read all you want to but there is no substitute for actual visual and tactile experience. So your next 'must' is to communicate. Talk, write or shout to as many people interested in swords as you possibly can.

There are four active groups that maintain regular publication in English to their members. Join as many of them as convenient and correspond with their members and contribute to their efforts.

1. The Japanese Sword Society of the United States  
P.O.Box 5092, Berkley, California 94715
2. Japanese Sword Club of Southern California,  
8200 Gould Avenue, Hollywood, California.
3. The To Ken Society of Great Britain,  
16 Brightwells, Clancarty Road, Fulham S.W.6.  
London, England.
4. Nihonto, C.P.O.Box 967, Tokyo, Japan.

All of these organizations have current publications and activities, but most important: people. We humans are gregarious animals and like to share our triumphs and disappointments with others of the species. What good does it do to discover a 'National Treasure' if the only creature you can share it with is your neighbour's dog? In many large cities, such as New York, London, Chicago, Minneapolis, Dallas, San Francisco, Seattle, Los Angeles, etc. there are active groups and alive individuals that you can communicate your enthusiasm with. Seek them out and share with them.

In Japanese there is a word "sensei", literally it means teacher; but like many Japanese words it implies a sole concept. A sensei not only undertakes the education of his pupil but is responsible for much more of the students' development than mere information. He is a teacher, friend and counselor. There is an old Zen saying, "when the student is ready, the Master will appear". May you find your sensei! Ideally, you

should have books for information, swords for examples, fellow collectors to share ideas with, and a teacher for guidance. Few of us have access to all these elements, but we can strive for as many of them as possible.

The next step is a big one. So far, a beginning collector is a dilettante. The one thing that separates the men from the boys is their command of the Japanese language. It is a cold experience to expertly whip off a Tsuka and with a sinking feeling realize that you can't read that signature. It happens to all of us, and we constantly strive to reduce the frequency. You don't have to learn the whole language, just the most frequently used sword terms and names. This is the way I went about it, and the method may help you.

The first books to buy that are solely in Japanese are Fujishiro's "Nippon Toko Jiten" Koto and Shinto. They are in print and readily available. The important thing about them is that they contain more examples of swords we are likely to encounter in this country and are well organized and presented. When you get your two copies, flip the Koto volume open to the beginning (which is the back of Japanese books) or table of contents. Now you are going to learn how to count in Japanese from one to ten and from this read the page numbers. Above the page numbers at the top of the dotted lines are first characters of the swordsmith's names. Start to memorize those from right to left, using the fold-out page of Japanese characters in your Robinson book to translate. With just a few minutes each day you will be surprised how fast you can be reading full Nakago. Next, start memorizing the names of the provinces and already you are an expert. One day you will wake up and want to learn the terms used to describe the technical details in Fujishiro. You don't need me any more!

So much for the blood, sweat and tears of study - how about putting into practice? I know a man who set about to learn how to play poker. He read every book in the library on poker. He could recite every detail of the history of the game; he could quote rules and odds by the hour. As long as money was not involved he could play a bang-on game of poker. But let the media of exchange enter the game and he went to pieces. I know a collector who can walk through a display of swords and generally identify most blades clear across the room. He is hell-on-wheels in a Kantei session; but he has a lousy collection. His amazing store of knowledge has gotten him into much trouble chasing the big name and ignoring his good taste and intuition. He can always be persuaded to sell his good numei (unsigned) blade for cash to pay for a big name sword of doubtful quality.

When I began to collect just six years ago, I could still find a Japanese sword or "Harry-Karry Knife" in most pawn shops or gun shops in small towns. These would be bought for ten to thirty dollars and some very good ones could be 'lucked' onto. But those days are gone. The floating supply has been under accumulation and going into strong hands. The mark-up period has begun (as we say in the stock business). Everybody has their 'judgement limit' which is constantly changing. At first mine was \$50, then \$75, then \$100, \$200. I would rely on my own taste to buy a blade or reject it. Now my comfort limit is about six or seven hundred dollars. Past that I need all my books and someone else's opinion I value. It hurts too much to make a bust!

Today, any decent hand-forged and tempered blade in passable condition is worth \$100, "if you like it". If someone thinks enough of it to have a first class polish and shirasaya you have a piece worth a minimum of two to three hundred dollars. I estimate that I must refuse five blades to get one "keeper" now, so my base price of \$100 for an acceptable blade may be low. Too many of the old collectors are geared to the \$25 to \$50 syndrome. This is one area where a new collector coming in at a higher price level has an advantage of sorts.

A young collector of my acquaintance approached me last year during a show and asked me if I would sell him any swords. I had several blades to trade and offered him his pick. He chose a mumei blade, flawless, newly polished and in shirasaya. He liked the blade and wanted to buy it. I offered it to him at what I had in it, or \$200. He wanted to borrow the blade and went to see the "experts" present. Four people gave him four different opinions. By this time our young friend was so confused he bought a lesser sword that had a signature on it. Later, my blade brought much more in a trade with someone who could appreciate its qualities.

At another show a young man was offered two good swords at a price that I am convinced was below present costs of polish and shirasaya. Again he pulled the delegation of experts and by the time the vote was all in, the blades had sold at a higher price to another collector who relied on his own judgment. The point I am trying to make is that these young men will have to learn to act on their own good taste and intuition. If the price had been two or three times the minimum price they should have asked for help. In any given economic situation some risk must be assumed if one is to be successful. Personal judgment dictates the assumption of that risk. One of the first big purchases I ever made was three tanto from a local gun shop at \$75 each. Two turned out to be junkers for which I realized \$35. The third turned out to be a Tadayosji I. The first good blade I ever owned.

I've nearly forgotten all about the other two! We all make mistakes but we also make good decisions that make collecting a worthwhile experience.

The area of Japanese Swords and related art forms is the only field I have been interested in that does not pall. Each year the intensity of my participation increases. Twenty years from now I suspect it will be the same story. This is truly an almost unlimited field with new horizons to explore at each turn. May every beginning collector find the same excitement and satisfaction.

LETTER

From Sydney Divers, expressing a point of view which often comes up for discussion.

Reference our talk at the To Ken Kai the other night and your request for my views on the subject of quantity collecting and origami, I give these hereunder so that you can publish the "other side's" viewpoint.

There are some of us as you know, myself included, who collect quantity. This does not mean we collect rubbish only - examples are the fine blades from my collection I bring to the To Ken Kai from time to time and the other 'quantity collectors' have remarkably fine blades as you already know. In fact, I would hazard a guess that we 'quantity collectors' could put up probably a better quality selection of blades than those who collect only a few blades can do. The important thing is quantity and quality go together - they are not opposites! In fact the 'quantity collector' has a much better chance of learning from a vast number of blades thus enabling him to judge quality better than the collectors of a few blades only are able to do. Think of some of the finest blades you have seen in the West - do they not belong to 'quantity' collectors in England and the States?

My second contention is this. If one is offered blades cheaply and these blades are Koto then it is ridiculous not to buy them. If blades of some 500 to 600 years old are still in existence today then they must have been thought highly of by somebody and passed on through umpteen generations till this point in time. If you advocate non-collecting of quantity you know as well as I do that the blades end up by cutting firewood. By what right has this generation to decide which of these early blades are lost to posterity?

The quality collector sets his sights high and endeavours to get hold of the big names - result 6 swords - 6 forgeries!

We are lucky in the West as we are still able to collect quantity. In Japan this is now impossible due to high prices. The time soon will come when this will be impossible here as Japanese dealers have started buying in quantity in the West as you recently know.

Now to origami. It is all very well advocating that the white paper origami is not worth the paper it is written on. If dealers persuade you that this is so then beware and ask yourself why? If I were going to pay a lot of money for a blade I would want it to be well authenticated. Blades bought cheaply, it doesn't matter as one sends them for polishing and panel origamis one expects a percentage of forgeries. An origami is purely the opinion of an expert or a body of experts. These people have on tap a vast fund of knowledge. No matter how clever we think we are our knowledge is but a dew drop in the ocean compared to theirs. An origami is only an opinion - nothing else - but it is an opinion I willingly pay money for just as I pay consultants to advise me how best to run my factory. It does not mean I am without knowledge of sword blades.

It is really pathetic how any Englishman can say origamis mean nothing and even more try to persuade other collectors that this is so. In the land of the experts (Japan) do you think you could sell a Juyo without a certificate? It would be 'borrowed temporarily' and a Juyo certificate obtained. No certificate would mean that the blade is suspect! I am just wondering who is trying to kid who on all this.

To every opinion there is usually a contrary opinion both with well founded arguments endeavouring to substantiate their logic. You, as programme secretary, have the right of the pen and people read your writings, and start to believe them, hence the opposite viewpoint stated above.

#### COMMENT

I publish Syd's views above with pleasure, but I must object to the last sentence. This is putting a twist on my words which has never been intended. Certainly I would prefer to collect quality and not quantity, but I have never suggested that 'collectors of quantity' are in some way inferior beings. What I have always said is acquire, examine, see and study as many blades as possible; this is the only way to learn. What I would then say, is discard the inferior and keep the quality. In this way the collector will gradually learn; what was 'quality' in one year will become inferior in the next, and so on. My ideal collector would never have a lot of blades at one time. But he would examine and have for study many blades, always keeping the best, and even these he would eventually discard for better.

It would seem Syd's method is to keep the lot - but surely this amounts to the same thing in the end? My collector learns and perhaps ends up with one superb blade; Syd's collector perhaps ends up with two hundred blades amongst which there is a gradation of quality to one superb blade.

I therefore see no 'opposite' viewpoint in Syd's letter. I think we agree that the collector should collect to improve his knowledge of what he collects. What I have always been against is the collector who merely amasses swords without any attempt to learn. I will amend this in view of Syd's letter and say even this type of collector does a service by preserving blades for posterity to study.

FURTHER COMMENT

The last word from Syd, which I accept, as follows:

On looking through the cockshy I sent you recently on "quality" and "quantity" it occurred to me that you may have misconstrued my badly worded sentences. When I said you who collect a few blades, I don't mean you (Bon Dale), but you people who collect a few.

THE KENDO  
EVENING

Sydney Divers has also sent the following report on attendance (the last words are his not mine;)insulted members please use the stamped addressed envelope to reply.

Ref.Kendo meeting and promised statistics on replies received, this is as follows:

37 replies received including one from the Isle of Jersey who suggested society should pay for overseas fares!

24 accepted the invitation and nearly all brought guests. Also received 2 telephone acceptances.

TOTAL 61 visitors showed up including members.

To those who came, thank you very much. To those who couldn't come but replied in the stamped addressed envelope provided, thank you very much. To those who didn't reply, here's hoping that you burnt your fingers steaming the stamp off the envelope!

LETTER

From Lt.Col.C.J.Smith.

Gentlemen, A few months ago, while I was still in the States, one of the very informative letters of the Society caught up with me. Someone was looking for information on a curious and little used addition to the "fixin's" on a dress scabbard. It seems that there was a removable rim around the mouth of this scabbard and in the cavity underneath, he had found a

small horn tray; unfortunately empty.

In one of the swords of my collection, recently stolen from me, I had such a contrivance. A small brass tray full of rectangular silver coins. The equivalent of a money belt. Someone else has probably answered the question by this time, but if it didn't happen, I hope this helps him out.

LETTER

From W.M.Hawley, as follows:

Regarding the bone and ivory scabbards which seem to puzzle you as to their use, I would like to comment.

The gift sword in Japan seems to fill a definite need in their code of etiquette. It is never proper to give money openly even to your closest friends. Therefore, the system of camouflaging the gift by concealing it in an envelope attached to some art object. It appears this has been done for hundreds of years.

Gifts to women would be attached to almost any kind of art object other than a sword, but to a man, the sword implies that he is of sufficient rank to wear one, and the gift sword selected for this use should be of such quality as his station in life indicated. Hence the great range of gift swords from tinsel-wrapped wood toys to fake Masamune's!

As the gift sword was never taken seriously as a weapon, this aspect was ignored and the blade need only be somewhat in keeping with a showy scabbard.

I am sure that all bone and ivory mounts were intended primarily for gift purposes. Secondly, for the tourist trade.

I have quite a few regular swords that I am sure were mounted solely as gift swords. They are invariably poor quality or in such a bad condition as to be worthless to collectors. Scabbards are usually showy but cheap lacquer with non-matching fittings, or cheap cast imitation fittings. One pair has the tangs shortened by breaking off in a vice to fit in new tsuka. When signed with good names they are always forgeries, or gold or red lacquer attributions but without the Honami kakihan.

It is possible that a great many obvious fakes were inscribed with big names for gift use as one of the niceties of the system was that good swords must be signed never mumci, but neither giver or receiver took the signature seriously! My club talk No.23 elaborates on this.

There are hundreds of bone and a few ivory swords around here, and I have seen the uninitiated pay as much

as \$200 for a miserable bone job with brass binding!!  
This at a Beverly Hills auction 3 months ago.

The gift is usually accompanied by a beautiful speech extolling the heroic deeds of the Great Samurai to whom nothing less than a Masamune would be appropriate!!

### BOOKS

Alan Bale, 476 Chiswick High Road, London W.4 has FUJISHIRO, NIHON TOKO JITEN. Koto Volume. £9.10.0, postage 3/-. Shinto Volume £6.18.0d postage 2/-. He also has John Anderson's new book, Japanese Armour, reviewed briefly below, at 30/-, postage 1/6d.

#### JAPANESE ARMOUR by John Anderson

The author of this well illustrated, readable and meticulously detailed book needs no introduction to To Ken members. Those of us who have been fortunate to see John's collection of fine armour know the infinite care with which he cleans and keeps it in immaculate condition. This same care has gone into the preparation of his book, coupled with his immense experience and knowledge of the subject. No further recommendation is needed from me, except to say that this work should be added to the bookshelves of all members of the To Ken Society, whether they collect armour or not, all the military arts have a bearing on each other. The book deals with the Myochin family of armourers and their branch family, the Saotome, from the 15th to the 20th century. Apart from the wealth of detail on these armourers it contains a short chapter on the warrior class system, an excellent Bibliography and a list of Museums throughout the world where Japanese armour, and other weapons, can be seen.

### 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

For overseas members wishing to have their Programmes  
sent air mail, the subscription rates are increased  
as follows:

Europe	-	£3.--.
U.S.A. and elsewhere		\$10.00.

NEW MEMBERS

We have great pleasure in welcoming the following  
new members:

Robert T. Dunne,  
Terrapins,  
Buckley Street,  
Salcombe,  
Devon.

C.R. Rolland,  
621, Pollokshaws Road,  
Glasgow S.2

Ian C. MacDonald,  
Campbell House,  
28 College Crescent  
Hampstead, N.W.3.

Samuel McKay  
1796 Great Western Road,  
Glasgow W.3.

CHANGE OF  
ADDRESS

Lt.Col.C.J.Smith (Ret.) to:

Residence Desvallieres  
48 rue de Sevres  
92 Ville d'Avray  
France.

Prof.R.G.Macfarlane to:

Park Cottage,  
Ramsden,  
Oxford.