

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



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PROGRAMME NO. 61

FEBRUARY - MARCH 1971

LAST MEETING: Monday, 1st February at the Masons Arms, Maddox Street, London W.1 at 7.30 p.m.

FOLLOWING MEETING: Monday, 8th March at Princess Louis, <sup>209.</sup> High Holborn; Holborn Kingsway tube, turn West, cross Kingsway, - the Princess Louis is 50 yards or so on the right-hand side.- 7.00 p.m.

FOLLOWING MEETING: Monday, April 5th at the Masons Arms, Maddox Street, London W.1 at 7.30 p.m.

SUBJECTS: February - Bon Dale talked on new members and catering for "Beginners" with the aid of the rest of the members present.

March - A round table discussion on Yamato and Yamashiro Den. If you have an example of either tradition please bring it along. Bon Dale will supply 'juyo'.

CHAIRMANS REPORT by Bon Dale

We can make no apology for the delay in sending our this Programme. Members here will require no explanation and I'm sure overseas members will know by now that we are having postal service difficulties, namely a Strike. When this issue will fall on your doormat is in the lap of the Gods; let us hope it will be soon.

One or two important matters have occurred since the last Programme. The first is something which I have great pleasure in reporting, something which I inadvertently omitted from the last Programme. It was the second part of John Harding's letter, part of which I published, and contained information which I thought John would want to announce himself, but he has since asked me to do this for him, he being in Japan.

So I quote the second extract from John's letter, as follows:

"With regard to Malcolm Kesson's tsuba making, we have spoken to Mr. Koheguchi who is Japan's leading carver of Horimono and he has decided to make Mr. Kesson a set of chisels to help him with his work and also provide some special resin required for polishing without which he says, the job could never be done properly. The question of a name for him is being carefully

considered and you will be informed in due course.

I had the pleasure of announcing the above at the February meeting. Malcolm Kesson was present and obviously received the news with great delight. I believe he has now received the chisels, we are all very pleased for him and we'll look forward to seeing them at the next meeting doubtless. We recorded our thanks to John Harding for his kindness and thought in bringing Malcolm Kesson's work to the notice of the experts in Japan. Thanks, John.

The next thing is that having talked about doing so for some time, we have at last organized a meeting at another place. This is a room at the Princess Louis. I am told that this room is larger, which is what we need, but whether or not it will be suitable to our purposes we are not yet sure. There seems to be some difficulty over establishing a permanent fixed date. This will not do of course; it will be seen that the March meeting is a week later than usual, just to try the room this once. If we cannot secure a fixed booking we will return to the Masons Arms and still hope to find a larger room.

In any case the April meeting will still take place at the Masons Arms, as announced at the start of this Programme. Mentioned elsewhere is the suggestion that if To Ken Meetings could coincide with auctions at the leading Auction Houses this would be a good thing. More out of town members might think it worth while to come into London for both an auction and a meeting. So, I am pleased to announce that we have been honoured by Sotheby's, who have arranged for their next sale of swords and sword fittings to take place on the first Monday of April to coincide with our April meeting. I hope the strike will be over in time for all members to receive notice of these two events. Heaven help us all if it isn't!

For some months now we have discussed at meetings the desirability of finding a second source of polishing services in Japan. Mr. Sayama is doing us a great service with his polishing and we have no complaints about his efforts on our behalf. Unfortunately he, as other agents, is restricted to taking only nine blades at one time, and that only at intervals of six months. Which means that we now have a back-log of swords waiting to go to Japan, the last of which will probably not leave here for twelve months. Our original offer to polish a blade in approximately six months, now means at this date, around eighteen months - twelve months wait and six months in Japan. So, we obviously are in need of further help, and John Harding who is now permanently resident in Tokyo, has offered his services. At the last meeting I showed a blade which John recently had had repolished, and this blade exhibited a very excellent polish indeed. Charges for this second service are given below, shipments again must be restricted to nine blades, time about six months from arrival in Japan.

the thought of a freshly filed tang obviously caused consternation. Syd remarked that signatures can be removed by clever hammer work without filing which seems to be the best alternative. C.J. Smith preferred to keep the tang untouched and to obtain an Orikami showing the correct smith. Andy Ford handed Mr. Saito a wakizashi blade signed Hosa Kawa Masayoshi, and for which he had received Tokubetsu Kiecho. All very cunning, and a test for Mr. Saito - he passed. His opinion was that this was a genuine blade by Masayoshi. This smith usually worked in Soshu or Bizen Den. He made boshi in the Ichimonji style. Masayoshi often had his signature removed and other more famous names placed there. To avoid this, he utilised a deep stamp along with his normal signature, which this sword had. Mr. Saito pronounced this to be a very fine blade.

Malcolm Hutchinson submitted a long sword which looked interesting in the hada. The sword was made in the mid-Edo period, 250 years ago, and copied from Norishige. It was impossible to place the smith but it was either a Kyoto, Osaka, or an Osafune man. The steel for this blade was imported from outside Japan, probably. Mr. Saito himself showed Malcolm the various colours in the steels, which led him to this deduction. Mr. Saito was willing to continue, although we were concerned that we might be wearing him out.

Captain Johnes had an interesting tanto. Tomihiko said that this was called Owari Koshirae. The owari were a branch of the Tokugawa family. The unusual habaki, a double type but only about half an inch long, was typically Owari. The tsuka is very narrow waisted and the Kurikata is placed very near the Koiguchi. The koshirae was designed to meet the specifications of the Yagyu Kendo masters. The kozuka, Fuchi and Kashira were en suite and signed by Takiaki. The blade was by Ujifusa of Mino, in the Momoyama period, 400-500 years ago. Owari was very close to Mino so it is usual to find Mino blades in Owari koshirae. Tomihiko said that this was a very fine piece. It also clearly showed that whilst we are struggling to learn about sword blades, there is an enormous field of exploration in the mounting of blades. Capt. Johnes had another short sword which had a weatherproof case to cover the scabbard and tsuka. Tomihiko said that this was a "raincoat" for a sword and were very rare nowadays. Apparently merchants would use them on their swords and by sliding the cover down the scabbard would apparently lengthen their sword and so give themselves the status of Samurai. When danger threatened, they would quickly pull the cover up! The mounts of the sword were ordinary and the blade was signed Soshu Masahiro. The blade was Shimto, 330 years old. It looks older but isn't. The tang was not of good steel and the blade might be said to be a ready-made quality. The ujifusa was much better.

Bill Baxter really looked a picture of dejection as he offered his latest Wallis & Wallis acquisition. He KNEW his sword would be laughed out of the Mason's. It was a medium length sword in military leather scabbard and the blade was of shobu-zukuri form.

Mole asked Mr.Saito whether the blade was originally that shape as he thought that it was cut down from Unokubi-Zukuri along the back edge. That Mole is a canny and observant collector! Mr. Saito replied that this was so. The blade was altered to the Satsuma style. This style of blade shape was originated by the Shimadzu family whose kendo style required a sharp point. Originally, the blade had been much more curved and had been straightened and pointed by grinding along the back edge through the kissaki. The blade itself showed strong activity and pronounced itame hada and was signed Kaneuji. Mr.Saito said that this sword was made by Kaneuji's son, Kanetomo who most probably inscribed his father's signature as a tribute. This sword was a very good sword indeed and the best sword seen that evening. The effect on Bill was magical, he sat purring all evening whilst the rest of us looked on enviously. At that moment, Bon Dale arrived with a blade he had acquired and was very excited about. Bon thought it to be identical to Len Holtaway's Riokai, which had been brought to the meeting for a comparison. So to top the evening off, and to Bon's good luck, these two swords were shown. Bon felt it fair to Mr.Saito to state that the Riokai had been given an origami by Tokyo Museum. Mr. Saito gave it a stringent examination and said himself to be in agreement - it was indeed a genuine Riokai. It was in the Rai style with sugu ha. It had good Riokai utsuri rather like fingerprints. It was now the turn of Bon's sword. After long consideration, Mr.Saito pronounced that this was true Yamashiro den and was older than the Riokai. Everyone got excited at that, particularly Bon. It was the work of perhaps the Sanjo but more likely the Ayanokoji school, about 1240 A.D. There was more activity in the narrow suguha hamon which was in nie, whilst that of the Riokai was in nioi. Said Mr.Saito, this sword was very much better than the Riokai. Cor! (Chairman faints!)

Tomihiko said both these swords should be given the best of care.

Syd Divers proposed a vote of thanks for our Japanese guests which was supported by a really good round of applause. Bon as Chairman rose to thank both officially and he proposed that we should extend Honorary Membership of the To Ken Society to both Mr.Saito and Mr.Inami. Mr.Inami accepted on behalf of both of them, and the Club is proud to have them.

So ended an evening which became a really memorable event, giving us all hope for future knowledge in the years to come.

January. - This was quite a crowded meeting in spite of the weather. Bon was in the chair. Visitors were Mr.Wilf Dodds from Durham whom Bon had first met fifteen years ago, through the illustrious columns of the Exchange & Mart. There was also an incursion from the North; Friend Rollands from Glasgow appeared with his usual bulging bag of swords. Also Brian Carver, who has moved to London from Lowestoft so we will be seeing him regularly, it seems. Our guest speaker, Roald Knutsen, had brought

two Kendoka who were staying with him. Mr. Ohta Hideaki 3rd Dan, and Mr. Miki Eiji, folk singer and 4th Dan Kendo. The meeting got under way, some discussion being necessary on the sword polishing facility. Capt. Johnes mentioned that he had had to wait 6 years to get a blade returned from polishing. Bon is still waiting for some sent in 1961 but that is another story, our time is usually well under one year, which shows how times have changed for the better.

Bon is trying to find a copy of the film on swordmaking, "The Art of the Swordsmith" - any information please? Len Holtaway mentioned that a friend of his had an interesting film which members might like to see. There was a great clamour for something really rude and erotic - not at all expected from our good members! However, the film turns out to be a sequence showing an ancient Nepalese ceremony in which a sheep is beheaded by a kukri. This is obviously rare and unique, and is available if we wish to borrow it.

Sydney Divers was congratulated on introducing Mr. Saito and Mr. Inami at the last meeting. Sydney is now trying to coerce the leading auction houses in to rearranging their sale dates to coincide with club meetings. If this can be done we may be able to get the benefits of our Japanese friends guidance on a more regular basis, and would be an attraction to out of town members to visit both auction house and a meeting on the same day.

Roald's talk I have reported elsewhere but I will mention that we enjoyed it, especially the singing! With the theme of spears, there were some very nice examples around. Bill Baxter had just found a high quality Yari blade. About six inches long of broad and solid shape, it looked very attractive. Moreover, it was really well made and in excellent state. Apparently the blade had been mounted in a Mother of Pearl covered shaft but the dealer had taken a hacksaw to it to remove the blade from the shaft. So somewhere there is a fine shaft badly butchered. Peter Wenman brought another attractive Yari. This one was socket-headed with a very short stubby blade - rather nice.

Dave Parker had very delicate Yari for the Boy's Festival. Total length was about 2-3 ft. and complete with parrying bar - Hadome.

Brian Turner had a huge Yari blade nearly 3 ft. long, complete with saya. It had a dragon horimono on one side and a bonji inscription on the other. It was suggested by some unfeeling members that it was more of a Crusaders or Viking sword. It is difficult to believe that it was a useful weapon, but one never knows. Brian also had a massive blade of wakizashi length, fully half an inch thick. It was of unokubi-tsukuri form and signed Takatenjiu Kaneaki of Totomi. It had a tameshigiri inscription stating that it had cut through one body in the third position. It was made for Honda Suishu in 1558. There was a ken horimono on

side of the blade and a bonji inscription "Hachiman Daibo Setsu". I thought it a very fine blade but was surprised that it was made as early as 1558. A really interesting piece. Looking at some of the other swords, Vic Saville had a Mino blade in army mounts with good Sambon Sugu-ha - whilst Andy Ford had two blades for polishing. One was attributed in gold to Katsumitu and looked a good Bizen blade. The other, almost in a fine polish but not quite to Andy's perfection, was a beautiful blade which Andy hoped to be by Hizen Tadayoshi. Trevor Armstrong had a blade which made my mouth water. This was a wakizashi with very large itame hada and sugu-ha hamon which was extremely deep in nioi and nie. Mole Benn also had a fine sword very soberly mounted in best samurai tradition although everything was best quality. It had a brick red ishime saya with those delightful bird mons of the Kojima family and sported solid gold menuki. The blade was 14th century Bizen with very flamboyant chogi hamon and most attractive.

#### NEWS FROM THE NORTH

Ian Bottomley sent a letter with some more information for erstwhile tsuba artists:-

Last Meeting - Was a talk by Bill Ince on sword tangs. Bill had carried out a large statistical survey of tangs from oshigata, motivated he said, by a need to identify old blades among a pile of rusty bangers. After dealing with the form, position and number of holes found in tangs from Heian times to the end of the Koto period, he then went on to deal with signatures. From all these factors he could find no definite indicators that would identify an old blade. All this was discussed by the meeting together with the great problem of faking. The conclusion brings us back to the old idea, so often voiced in these pages, look at the blade - the answer is there.

Next Meeting. - At the Seven Oaks Hotel, Manchester at 7.30 p.m. on the 18th May 1971. This will be an account of experiments on sword polishing by Joe Jolley. We have been over all this ground before but we have all learned a lot since then and new members will probably appreciate some comments on this problem.

It is also hoped that a non member will be able to attend and bring along some of his attempts - the results will amaze you. If you have any home attempts please bring them; the sooner we co-operate and solve this problem the sooner we will all save a bit of money (and help the balance of payments).

Congratulations Mr. Kesson for having a go at making sword fittings. There is no better way of learning to appreciate the work of Japanese workers. Many details of the techniques used are described in "Silverwork and Jewellery" by H. Wilson (I always wondered what happened to the gold reserves!) published by John

Hogg, London 1912. The details are from a lecture given by Prof. Unno Bisei of the Tokyo Fine Art College. All the basic techniques are described together with the tools used. He also gives methods for patinating alloys as well as making them. Here is an extract on the making of shibuichi which you may find useful:

"The alloy most generally used is that called 'Shibuichi' -

Copper - 100 parts  
Silver - 30, 40, 50, 60 or 70 parts.

The colour of Shibuichi more generally used is grey of a soft and pleasing tone, but you can make it dark or light, according to the proportion of your alloys. For instance, you wish to make a tree in flower, the petals of which may be made in gold if you wish them to be yellow, or silver if you wish them to be white. The leaves are to be in Shibuichi and are of different colours, so you would make up your different grades of Shibuichi according to the quantity of silver employed.

To make a darker Shibuichi, that which is called 'Kuro-Shibuichi' in Japanese is composed as follows:

Shakudo - 10 parts  
Silver - 3 or 4 parts

The method of melting in order to produce Shibuichi is one which is simple after experience, but which requires considerable care. If the two alloys are melted at the same time you will not get the general Shibuichi colour, with fine spots showing grey grain -- composed of silver and copper -- like a pear skin, but on the other hand, if the two metals are melted together, they will become somewhat darker and less of the nature of Shibuichi because the molecules of silver will have mixed too much with the copper.

Now, the first stage in the production of Shibuichi is to melt the copper as usual, and when it is quite melted put the silver in (sheet, or grain or wire) and watch that it is not too much melted to mix. When this is done, pour into an oiled pot (the quantity of oil, rapeseed, about half, according to the size of the pot).

There is another way to mix the melting metals, viz: by taking a pot large enough for the quantity of metal, covering it with a common but strong, cloth of a muslin-like nature (not too tightly stretched), place in it hot water -- just hot enough to put the fingers in -- and then pour the metal through the cloth into the receptacle. This gives almost the same result, but it will probably bring a much softer and finer surface."

### CHRISTMAS QUIZ

I'm pleased to see this was well received. Here are the answers as supplied by Han Bin Siong, except 8 and 10 which I have

supplied and may well prove controversial.

### Beginners Answers

1. With the Ha-Saki (cutting edge) upwards taking care that the sides of the blade do not touch the scabbard.

2. An Aikuchi has no tsuba (and consequently no seppa). Other types are Hamidashi tsuba and Kwaiken.

3. Kaneuji.

4. Not older than 374 years. Yakidashi is a sign of a Shinto blade.

5. Bizen.

### More Advanced Students Answers

6. Bungo school. Bungo Yukihiro.

7. Muramasa or Sengo school.

8. Sanguri Tetsu is steel forged in such a way as to give a very open hada, and is a feature of the Horikawa school.

9. According to the Japanese: Gassan Sadakazu. In To Ken circles: Kurihara Nobuhide.

10. Ko Bozen Tomonari.

### ROALD KNUTSEN'S TALK ON SO-JUTSU.

Roald started off asking Miki Eiji San to sing a very old song of the Samurai which extols the Yari as well as arm bending (Saki of course). The song, delivered with tremendous style, really evoked the spirit of bushido and gave impetus to a highly interesting talk.

#### "The Spear in Japanese History"

Roald M. Knutsen

Miki Eiji San = Kuroda Bushi in Japanese.

Drink sake, drink sake

If you drink sake

Drink it

So as to take this yari

Number One in Japan.

Then you will be a

Real bushi of Kuroda!

This is a literal rendering of a famous folk song composed by the retainers of the Kuroda family. It has been popular in Japan ever since the early seventeenth century and it is still commonly to be heard. But what of its origin? Preserved by the Kuroda family is a very fine nageyari - or more correctly, a hira-sankaku nageyari - whose blade measures about three shaku. Engraved on the widest face is a dragon. Although unsigned and an orthodox work it is considered to be of unparalleled quality.



In the records of the Kuroda-han is preserved the account of how they acquired this fine spear.

One day a retainer of Lord Kuroda came to see Fukushima Masanori, who after the Sekigahara War was given Hiroshima by Tokugawa Ieyasu with an income of 498,000 koku, replacing Mori Terumoto. Masanori immediately recognised his visitor as Mori Taihei, a general and clan councillor of the Kuroda-han. Very pleased to see him, Fukushima Masanori offered him some sake but Taihei politely refused it on the grounds that sake would do him no good.

"Taihei, I know of your fame, but if such a brave bushi does not drink sake, it means you are disgraced" remarked Masanori who had already been drinking heavily. "Shame! Coward!"

At this, Mori Taihei felt anger rise within him.

"Drink it" Masanori continued, "and if you do I will give you anything that you may want".

Taihei looked up at the yari that was on a special rack in the place of honour behind his host; the famous yari that was given to Fukushima Masanori by the Taiko Toyotomi Hideyoshi. Masanori named it "Number One in Japan" and bushi also called it "Nihon-go". He considered for a moment, then drank three large draughts of sake.

"I will have that yari then". Taihei had it in mind to return the insult made by Masanori when he had cried 'Coward!'.

"Alright, take it!" said Masanori, handing the weapon to the Kuroda general and smiling.

The following morning Fukushima Masanori was sober and recalled what he had done while full of sake. He sent a messenger to Mori Taihei asking him to return the spear, but Taihei refused.

Just as it is true to say that while there were famous swords, there were equally famous swordsmen, so we can say with certainty there were many famous spearmen. But here we do not need to surmise for in Japan there existed many hundreds of schools of the martial arts and some of these preserve well documented traditions.

An important contributory factor towards this preservation was that the fighting arts of the warrior were exclusively in the hands of the professional bushi class. Secondly, we know that the traditional respect towards one's teachers ensure that the actions and thoughts of these teachers will be kept as examples to succeeding generations.

Spear technique is quite an ancient as the recorded study of swordmanship, and here we can find most interesting parallels with the development of weapons in Japan. In fact although excellent swordmanship was the ideal of the bushi, the first recorded system of weaponry was not of the sword but of the naginata.

It is considered that the Kō-ryū of naginata can be reliably dated to 1164 compared with the earliest date for a Kenfutsu style at around 1350. However, we must remember that during the late Heian and Kamakura periods the naginata was highly regarded by many warriors and we have many stirring accounts in lyrical language of the use of this weapon in the "Heike Monogatari" and the "Taiheiki".

These very ancient records are unreliable and possibly exaggerated, but we come to surer ground about the time of the Ōnin War in the Kyōto region from 1467 to 1477.

It is at this time that we find a resurgence of interest in the simple straight bladed yari as opposed to the heavier naginata. The former was better suited to battle between infantry at close quarters; the latter more suited for open fighting. Although there are examples of yari made before the Ōnin War, these are rare; but after Ōnin the many varieties come onto the scene in increasing numbers so that it is now common to find examples from even the first half of the sixteenth century.

In parallel to this development we find the art of spearmanship, or sō-jutsu being studied by the bushi. The first such school may have been the famous Tenshin Shōden Shintō Ryū originated in the latter part of the 15th century by Iishino Choisai, a samurai from Shimosa in the Kanto. This man studied sō-jutsu in Kyōto under Kabusetoki Gyōbi Shosuke. He then spent three years at the Kashima Katori Shrine perfecting his theories of the martial arts before announcing his "Heaven Revealed Divine Style".

Iishino Choisai is regarded as being one of the greatest spearmen both with yari and the naginata. His style attracted many students, though the fame of his school rests chiefly on Kenjutsu. Amongst his students was a ritualist at the Kashima Shrine, Matsumoto Bizen-no-kami. On the 15th April 1488 Choisai died but his style is still followed to this day.

Matsumoto Bizen-no-kami Naokatsu founded his own style during the time of the Ashikaga Shogun, Yoshitane, about 1490 to 1493. Kendo historians acknowledge him as one of the truly great swordsmen in all Kenjutsu history, a master of tō-sō jutsu. The invention of the cross bladed form of yari known as magari or jumonji-yari, is reliably credited to him. During his active lifetime he fought in twenty-three battles, his favourite weapon being the yari. In these battles he took over one hundred heads. He was a general of the Kashima clan.

Though Matsumoto was a brave bushi and was immensely skilled in the arts of war, he died of a spear thrust in the stomach received during the night battle at Takamagahara in Shimosa which occurred in 1525. This small scale battle, scarcely bigger than a skirmish between a few hundred men, took place when Lord Kashima Yoshimoto made a night attack in an effort to recover his fortress. Matsumoto Bizen was fifty seven at the time of his death.

Kashima Yoshimoto also fell in the fighting.

In the middle of the Sengoku Jidai two of the most famous protagonists were the Daimyo Uesugi Kenshin and Takeda Shingen who carried on their belligerence over decades. While their praises have been sung by older generation Japanese historians as examples of excellent strategists this can be shown to be in doubt and their four major encounters in the Kawanakajima Wars in the mid-16th century were muddled and inconclusive.

But one of the Takeda generals deserves mention. He was Yamamoto Kansuke Yorinori, who became skilled in to-so jutsu in his earliest youth. He is known to have practised cutting running water in a stream and so his style is sometimes called Doki-ryū. During his career in which he followed in the main the Kyo-ryū from the Kansai region, he was "most successful in capturing castles and forts and in increasing his lord's territory". He was killed in action in August 1561 by musket fire.

An early record of an actual contest also comes from the annals of the Kyo-ryū. Yoshioka Mataichiro Naoshige, a member of the family carrying on the style, was twenty-four when he had a match with one Asayama Santoku of the Ten-ryū at Higashiyama Yasaka, and broke Santoku's head. This was on the 15th August 1605. News of this fight spread rapidly among the bushi and eventually it reached the ears of Kashima Rinsai of the Shinto-ryū. He immediately came to offer a contest to Yoshioka Naoshige, travelling from his home province of Hitachi. This was in June 1606.

Rinsai was a big man standing almost six shaku and he was very strong. At the commencement of the contest he advanced slowly inch by inch. He was armed with a nagemaki which had a real sword blade mounted at the end of a seven foot shaft. His opponent, the youthful Yoshioka Naoshige, was armed with a katana.

As soon as he saw Rinsai stepping forward, Naoshige said "Rinsai! Tactics do not depend on our power alone. It does not matter if we fight a small or a large person. I am sorry but I will take your life away soon. You had better pray to Buddha!"

In this way Naoshige forestalled his enemy by making Rinsai angry. His opponent replied: "Don't be impertinent". He attacked Naoshige like a dragon. The distance between them was about six or seven shaku. Mataichiro Naoshige avoided this attack by leaping back and stood ready in chudan-no-kamae to rush in close. Then Rinsai tried to cut him by whirling the shaft but at that instant Mataichiro jumped in and struck down at the centre of Rinsai's head. Rinsai fell down instantly and died two days later.

Although comparatively short-lived the Kyō-ryū is remarkably well documented. The following extract provides an interesting illumination of the period when the Tokugawa Bakufu had just come to power.

On the 22nd June 1615 an ancient theatrical festival known as sarugaku was held in Kyoto and the populace was allowed to attend. The military government arranged for bushi to take strict precautions to prevent disturbances.

A cousin of the Kyō-ryū masters, named Yoshioka Seifuro Shigesuke, was a noted swordsman. Although this Shigesuke had only just recovered from an illness, he went along to watch the sarugaku for it was rarely possible for ordinary people to watch such an event.

Amongst the constables was a low class samurai named Tadami Yazozemon who was on bad terms with Seijuro Shigesuke. This Yazozemon was suppressing the spectators in a most officious manner with a stave. Catching sight of Seijuro he came across and deliberately struck him on the head shouting that the samurai was standing too high. Seijuro was very angry but contained himself out of consideration for where he was. Soon Yazozemon came back and struck Seijuro's head for a second time. Glaring at him, the samurai did nothing. But when this happened on yet a third occasion, he lost his patience and left the place saying to Yazozemon "You shall pay for this".

He came back a short time later with his katana concealed beneath his clothing. It was nearly two in the afternoon and only one programme remained of the Sarugaku. Seijuro worked his way close to Yazozemon and as soon as he came within striking distance he drew out his sword and cut the man down, saying "This is in return for your actions". Tadami Yazozemon, covered in blood, died immediately.

Seeing this incident the crowd was thrown into a turmoil and this hampered the bushi who struggled through the press of people to arrest Seijuro. But the swordsman cut anyone who came too close to him one after the other without becoming excited! his sword was so lively that he had soon cut through about thirty sodegarami and mojiri and some fourteen or fifteen men lay injured, six or seven to die of their wounds. They naturally hesitated to close with so formidable a man. Seijuro took advantage of the respite to jump up onto the stage of the sarugaku and regain his breath. Then he stood waiting for his enemies to close in, knowing that there could be only one end to this incident.

Ōta Chubei, a retainer of the Military Governor of Kyoto, Iga-no-kami Katanshige, was given a chōtō or naginata, by his lord and commanded to go and defeat Seijuro. Chubei closed with the swordsman but in the fight Seijuro, weakened by his recent illness and exertions, fell down. Chubei said "It would be a shame to cut a person who is a warrior when fallen. Stand up and we shall continue".

When Seijuro came to his feet, Ōta Chubei cut and killed him. It was because of this serious incident that the Kyō-ryū was terminated in Kyoto and the Yoshioka family became dyers, giving up samurai rank.

Tsukahara Bokuden was one of the most colourful figures amongst the swordsmen of the sixteenth century. Probably born in 4189, his life spans almost the entire length of that violent period called the sengoku jidai. He lived eighty-two years, dying in 1571, a decade after Oda Nobunaga, Lord of Owari, had commenced his forcible subjugation of central Japan.

Equally familiar with sword or spear, he had studied at the Kashima Shrine where his adoptive father was a ritualist and a noted swordsman. Tsukahara Shinzaemon Takamoto was Lord of Tsukahara castle in Hitachi province and a powerful minor lord. Bokuden inherited both his father's kenjutsu style and fiefs. During his early years he studied to-so jutsu under the two famous masters, Yuki Masakatsu and Sanō Tentokuji, and especially spearmanship from Kaniidzumi Musashi-no-kami Nobutsuna. Even when his style had become famous he still received training from Nobutsuna at Ueno in Musashi, now part of Metropolitan Tokyo. In the 30's and 40's of the sixteenth century he was the instructor in military tactics to many famous figures in Kyōto including the Shōgun, Ashikaga Yoshiteru (murdered in 1565).

From the time of his first duel with real swords fought at the age of seventeen at Kiyomizu in Kyōto, he fought nineteen shinken-shōbu (live-blade matches), participated in thirty seven battles, and engaged in several hundred wood sword matches. In all these he received not a single sword cut, though he was wounded six times by arrows in battles. He is thought to have killed more than two hundred enemies.

There is a reliable record of one of his real sword matches fought against Kajuwara Nagato of Shinnofusa though the date cannot now be fixed. Nagato was an expert with the chōtō, or naginata, favouring a weapon with a blade length of one shaku, four or five sun in length. The average length of naginata blades at this period would be about two shaku. His blade was so sharp and his technique so good that it is said that he could cut down flying swallows, pheasants or ducks with ease. He was considered by many bushi as worthy of the highest praise for his naginata skill in fencing matches. Despite this, Nagato's pupils were greatly worried when they heard of the impending match with Bokuden and they urged their master to refuse the fight. But he replied: "The shrike has the ability to pursue and capture the pigeon which is much larger than himself. But if the shrike sees a hawk which is even smaller than himself, then he hides. There are always strong and weak things. It is due to an opponent's unskilled technique that I can cut both his arms with my chōtō. It is not so easy to defeat a man armed with a three shaku sword, but the naginata with a blade less than three shaku is the same as the short bladed yari. Even if I am cut by Bokuden, I shall not die without defeating him."

On the day of the match as soon as Kajuwara Nagato left his stool armed with the chōtō of one shaku and five sun, Tsukahara Bokuden stepped in, made a single cut with his tachi of two shaku, nine sun and cut his opponent in two.

A little earlier I mentioned a student of the Ten-ryū who met his defeat at the hands of Yoshioka Naoshige in 1605. The originator of the Ten-ryū was Ide Hangan Deni-bo who, in his youth, studied under Tsukahara Bokuden. This was just prior to Bokuden's death. After a period at the Kamakura Hachiman shrine he formulated his style and called it the Ten-ryū, or "Heavenly Style".

He made his style well known in the Kanto in Hitachi Province but his success caused jealousy in a follower of another Kenfutsu school. This Kasumi-no-suke spread slanderous tales about Denki-bo.

Eventually Deni-bo offered to settle this with a match with real swords and, as Kasumi-no-suke was his inferior in technique, the latter was cut at once and lost his life.

When the news of his son's death reached O'kuma-no-kami he became very angry and went straight to his master and complained of the matter. Makabe Anyaken was also angry and commanded him to challenge Denki-bo to a match. This was because Kasumi-no-suke had been a favourite pupil of Anyaken's school and it was felt to be a dishonour to himself if Denki-bo was left alone since Denki resided within Anyaken's territory. The offer was accepted and Denki-bo decided that it should take place at the Acala Shrine in Makabe.

On the day of the match, Ide Hangan Denki-bo waited with only two pupils at the appointed place. Sakurai O'kuma-no-kami arrived with several retainers armed with bows and with many foot soldiers (ashigaru). But seeing Denki-bo standing in the centre of the shrine holding a kanno-yari,--a spear with a sickle blade--with his two pupils, Sakurai hesitated to come any closer due to Denki's dignified bearing. At length Sakurai called out that he had heard that Denki-bo had a secret technique for cutting down flying arrows called Ya-kiri-no-tachi and he asked to see this. Denki agreed and he cut down three successive arrows shot at him using a jumonji-yari. Then Sakurai signalled to his retainers who all shot arrows at Denki-bo as fast as they could. Denki whirled his fumonji-yari and cut down as many as he could but at least he was shot and died. This took place in 1588, and Denki-bo was thirty-eight years old.

In this brief talk I have presented a brief cross section of reliable facts about the actual use of spears in Japan. I have concentrated on the period from the decline of the Muromachi Shogunate to the first years of the Tokugawa Bakufu simply because it is this period that chiefly interests me. More important, comparatively little serious work has been done in this area of Japanese weapon studies compared with research into Kendo history.

Many schools of Kenjutsu, even from the earliest period, descended through the Tokugawa period and still exist to-day. Kendo has been lucky in that with such a living art a number

of the senior sensei are always concerned with preserving its tradition, not only pure sword technique but, more important, its history and philosophy. In 1919 Yamada Jirokichi himself a high ranking master of the ancient Jiki-Shinkage-ryū (Kenfutsu and Naginata) published his "Nihon Kendo-shi" or "Japanese Kendo History" and it is from this previously untapped source I have drawn my data to-day. But if Kendo is very much alive, the reverse is the case with spearmanship.

Naginata is now the only branch that has survived the Meiji Restoration healthily. It is curious that one of the oldest of the major martial arts should have been neglected to almost exclusively a female following, though many lady sensei have formidable skill. The formerly powerful yari is now only preserved in the kata (forms) of certain surviving Kenfutsu schools. While Naginata can be practised safely, the techniques of the yari are drastic and dangerous. In consequence yari-jutsu is in danger of being lost for ever.

We have sword blades to study; we have yari and naginata. In parallel we have Kenfutsu, Kendo and Naginata-dō. For yari we have very little.

#### COMMENT

Roald's talk prompted the question "What makes it so dangerous to fence Yari?" Yari technique is very strong as a hand to hand technique and very drastic. Not like quarter-staff, one of the best cuts is upwards between the legs. Get that cured on the National Health!! (Blue Cross to overseas friends!) Also the yari could be used to cut under the arm pit, the weakest point in Japanese armour. Another question raised was whether all the peculiar shaped spears were actually used, i.e. the Hokko. Yes, they really were, and were developed for various forms of specialist fighting technique. A samurai would select the most suitable spear to be used at that particular instant in battle.

#### SWORD POLISHING - 1st Source

The Society will arrange for the repolishing of swords in Japan. This will normally take about six months from despatch by our shippers in London to return here from Japan. The cost cannot be estimated exactly, depending on the length and condition of the blade and the services required. Very approximately it will be £40-£50 for a long sword, £25-£30 for a short sword at maximum. The services available are: Repolish, shirasaya; wooden habaki, tsunagi (wooden blade for mounts); shinsa (certification of authenticity by N.B.T.H.K. panel of sword experts in Japan). A deposit of £25 is needed for a long sword; £15 for a short sword. There is no limit on the number of blades which can be sent at one time by one member. Each blade must have attached a label giving name and address of owner; swordsmith if signed; services required - repolish, shirasaya, etc. The estimated prices above

include transport and customs clearance charges, etc. which are divided between all members included in a batch of swords. The Society makes no profit or charge. Blades for repolish and deposits payable to the Society should be sent to K.D.Parker Esq, 17 Strickland Row, Wandsworth, London, S.W.18.

### SWORD POLISHING - 2nd Source

The following are the approximate prices depending on the rate of exchange of the services offered by John Harding in Tokyo. Members wishing to avail themselves of these services are asked to contact David Parker, in the usual way, always announced at the end of each Programme.

Polishing: At the present rate approximately 30/- (£1.50) per inch of blade surface.

Shirasaya: Between £6 to £8 including wooden habaki.

Silver Habaki: About £8 extra.

Gold Habaki: About £11 extra

Hilt Binding: About £9 for a katana in silk. Best quality style binding about £13. Wakizashi about 20% cheaper. All bindings in silk only.

Scabbard Repairs: Top quality repairs are offered to lacquer; these obviously by quotation on receipt.

### 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 Fred Stride Esq., Preston Cottage, North Road, Preston Park, Brighton, Sussex, he will check it for them and send them all available information he has 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:



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