

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



NON-PRESIDENT. B.W. ROBINSON, M.A., B.LITT.

SECRETARY. ~~MRS. DOCKRILL, 21 BRIGHTWELL'S, GLANSABTY ROAD, LONDON, S.W.6. (01-735 6932)~~

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PROGRAMME NO. 68

MAY - JUNE, 1972

NEXT MEETING

MONDAY, 1st May, 7.30 p.m. at the Princess Louise,
High Holborn. To get there - Underground to Holborn, turn west,
cross Kingsway and the P.L. is 50 yards on the left-hand side.

FOLLOWING MEETING

MONDAY, 5th June at 7.30 p.m. at the Princess Louise.

SUBJECTS

May Unfortunately because of delays in producing the
Programme and because your Programme Secretary forgot to announce
a subject at the last meeting, we will have to have an open
meeting.

June Peter Cottis will give a talk on Matchlock Guns.
Those of you who heard Peter's last talk on Castles will know
that you are in for an entertaining evening.

ADVANCE NOTICE OF JULY MEETING

3rd July. John Anderson will chat on his observations
and experiences during his recent visit to the Museo Stibbert,
Florence, to catalogue the rather large collection.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by John Anderson

The April meeting was the time of the Society's first
auction which, I think it is fair to say, was a success for all
concerned.

I must admit I viewed the prospects with a slightly
jaundiced eye having been in the past involved in similar
enterprises with less satisfactory results. It was a pleasure to
be involved with this one. The standard of the items was of
necessity mixed, but with a sufficiency of good items to
interest most of us, even I as a devoted armour man was induced
to make some recklessly high bids on a number of items!

All missing numbers from here on kindly photo-copied & given by Messrs Ron Gregory & Richard Fuller.
: July 1986

2.

All praise for the organization of this sale must go to our esteemed treasurer, Bill Baxter, who not only organized everything but did great work as the auctioneer. Bill never fails to surprise me with his hidden talents, auctioneering is but another one.

It was clearly stated before the sale began that we as a society, were unable to charge a commission on the sales, and I would like to thank those members who showed their appreciation by kindly donating to the funds.

It would be interesting to know how you, the members, felt about this, our first effort and should we have more? How about tearing yourselves away from the television long enough to drop us a line?

I have just returned from Florence where in the company of Mr. Russell Robinson of the Tower of London and member Bernard le Dauphin of Paris, I spent two weeks examining and cataloguing the collection of Japanese items at the Museo Stibbert. We had a good and, I think, worthwhile visit but I cannot say more now as our Programme Secretary, Fred Stride, has induced me to talk on this in July.

NEWS FROM THE NORTHERN BRANCH

The March meeting of the Society was held on Tuesday, March 14th 1972 at the Seven Oaks Hotel, Nicholas Street, Manchester. Ian Bottomley took the chair and nineteen members attended, with two guests.

Members were informed that Mr. J. Hymas acknowledged receipt of the book, and conveyed his thanks and good wishes to the Society.

It was announced that there is to be an exhibition of Japanese Art in Leeds City Museum this autumn. The To Ken Society have been approached with a view to obtaining a loan display of polished blades.

The main event of the evening was a talk by Ian Bottomley on "Polearms". The talk, which was very well received, was illustrated with line drawings and an interesting collection of examples. Ian first described the history of the polearm, and then gave an account of the various types and their use. The talk prompted a long and stimulating discussion.

Next Meeting - Tuesday, May 16th. 8.0 p.m. Talk by Brian Bateman on "Netsuke", illustrated by examples from Liverpool Museum.

Following Meeting - Tuesday, July 18th. Members evening. All are requested to bring an object from their collection and talk about it.

RECENT MEETINGS

March - Syd Divers took the chair. Syd announced that Captain Johnes went down with a stroke late on February 19th. He is residing now in the Jeffries Ward at the Westminster Hospital, Horseferry Road. If any friend wishes to drop in, it would cheer him up no end. Make a quick recovery Captain! - and let us enjoy your company once more.

We had some interesting visitors. John Lissenden came from Jersey with some beautiful tsuba. The detailed cataloguing of his items was a lesson to all erstwhile collectors. Some of our Kendoka friends also visited us. "Chad" Chadwick, the captain of the Portsmouth team, who has represented Britain in Japan, was a welcome sight. Also with him was C suji Techigahara, 2nd Dan from the Nenriki Dojo. Richard Murphy and Peter Mcquade turned up with a bundle of swords after coming down from Birmingham. They were going back the same evening.

Some Club matters were raised, what to do about members who hadn't paid subscriptions for several years. The Club cash tied up in polishing services was another point. These matters were referred to the next Committee Meeting. Someone mentioned if any news had been heard of the swords being polished through John Harding's auspices. Nothing at the moment apparently.

Syd has been travelling the world again. Ever the hunter, he had come across a wakizashi in Tunis. Crummy though the sword was, the effect of finding such an object in such an outlandish place was memorable. Syd also heard of a suit of Japanese armour about 250 miles further on. On the way they had such a good dinner that he completely forgot about the armour!

On the subject of swords appearing in unusual places, Peter Cottis said that he has a photo of a Blackfoot scout wearing a tachi during the last century! There will now be a pause for all our American colleagues to do a lightning tour of the Reservations.

There is a very big Nippon-To meeting to be held in Dallas during October this year. Apparently the N.B.T.H.K. are going to hold a Shinsa there. Peter mentioned that since he was going to the States in three to four weeks, he was quite willing to take any swords to the U.S.A. provided an address could be found to leave them and someone then willing to take the swords on to Dallas.

Col. Smith also making a welcome visit, raised the subject of sword etiquette. If at his gun club, people handled their weapons with the gay abandon that he's seen them wielded here, he'd take to the caves. This would just NOT happen at a Japanese gathering. Syd also holds strongly to this opinion. The possibility of insurance cover for potential injury should also

be enquired into by the Committee. Vic Harris mentioned that the table arrangement left a lot to be desired. In Japan, the tables were arranged so that only the blunt ends ! were on the side where people gathered. Again a matter for the Committee. However, it does raise some side issues. Do you know that we have absolutely no contacts with any Japanese clubs to guide us in the matter of expertise. Could it be that our image is such they regard us as not worth bothering with? If so, our sword handling could be part cause of this sad state of affairs and improving our etiquette does matter.

Vic Harris stepped up to give a talk on Soshu Den. He outlined the origins from the Ichimonji smith Bizen Saburo Kunimune through to the full flowering of the Soshu style with Masamune and his father and followers. Incidentally, Vic mentioned that work by many late Shinto masters is easily mistaken for Masamune work. Of the swords which had been brought along to illustrate Soshu Den, Brian Turner had a beautiful tanto blade of Katakiri ba shape which Sadamune started. The hada was the typical Soshu dark hada and the blade shape was of the Muromachi period. The hamon had reminiscences of Uchi-no-suke which appeared strongly on some Soshu blades. The blade had a gold attribution which in view of Vic's analysis seem somewhat optimistic.

Fred Stride had brought a hira-dzukuri blade which had hitatsura. Vic said that the hitatsura was typical of later Soshu work but the blade was so rubbed that the hada was not to be seen and so positive attribution to Soshu-Den was not possible. Syd mentioned that one shouldn't get upset by his opinions on blades as second opinions would be available.

Mole interjected that you wouldn't be able to stop it. Mole himself had brought along a tanto with solid silver mounts of scroll design and formalised dragons kozuka. The saya was of black ribbed lacquer and was complete with sageo. The blade had strong itame masame hada and again was typical of the later Soshu work. Looking around after the talk had ended, you couldn't help but look at the tsuba brought along by Jersey John. One striking piece was a copper guard by Joi.

The subject was Tobasaku holding a peach and a gourd bound with a gold cord. The reverse was a fine fir tree. Another delightful piece was iron marubori of chrysanthemums. The ryohitsa were plugged in silver and finely inlaid. The flowers were splashed in gold on the leaves. The overall effect was one of strength and quality. John also had a long sword with a slender blade by Kyushu Higo Dodanuki Nobuyoshi. The hamon was a form of gunome sambon choji - sort that one out - with some nie.

There was a Sayagaki attribution.

April - The Club Auction

John Anderson, free of evening classes for a while, was our chairman. Our financial wizard Bill Baxter had kindly volunteered to be our auctioneer. I must admit I had great misgivings as to the success of such an evening. When I arrived there were only about two items for the sale so it looked as if my fears would be justified. How wrong I was; the evening was an unbelievable success. The attendance was between fifty and sixty members with a large contingent from the North. Items came along in a steady stream with Bill cataloguing and Brian Turner acting as Principal Porter, sticking on the Lot numbers.

There were many visitors to the meeting; those who announced themselves were Messrs. Murphy, McQuade, Leary and Brammell from Brum for the fun. Hugh Parrish, Syd's son-in-law was also there to help carry home all the goodies Syd bought. John Weeks and "Chad" Chadwick were also very welcome again. Dave Parker announced the arrival of the hilt binding, uchiko cleaning boxes and saseo from Mr. Sayama. These items were going like hot cakes so don't be surprised if Dave tells you they are all sold by the time you get your orders in.

John Anderson handed the meeting over to Bill. Bill started to explain Our rules with a grin. Your Prog. Sec. actually could have done himself some good if he had wanted to sell any items. Apparently, by the legal rules of non-profit making organisations such as ourselves, we cannot charge a percentage for organising an auction. Therefore it cost exactly nothing to the would-be sellers to find out what the market value of items are by buying things back. See what I mean? There were exactly 50 items for sale, and prices were by no means low. A very interesting matchlock pistol reached £160, which made me sit up. A very modern mounted Aikuchi blade with a blade signed Gwassan Sadaichi went for £200 with some members faces not changing expression!

A very interesting Katana blade which I fell in love with went for £75. At the lower end of the scale were pairs of menuki which I thought expensive at £10 upwards, and a smoker's pipe in sentoku and silver - a bargain at £3 to Don Bayney. There were blades from £4 upwards, however, as Club members became more discerning, it is evident that ordinary things are relatively cheap whilst quality is always sought after. There were some interesting odds and ends. The bound catalogue of the Church Tsuba collection went for £8. A good nose piece from a Mempo for £6 and what must have been the bargain of the evening, a gardener's unmounted knife blade (nata) for £2. I enclose Bill's statement for the sale:

"The sale totalled £1,445 but this figure includes Lots which were bought in as failing to reach reserve - in this respect it is interesting to note that "failures" were by no means all in the higher price range as many of the cheaper items also weren't found attractive by our discriminating audience. As a non-profit making Society we could not charge commission on the transactions but generous donations given by several happy vendors have helped to offset expenses - a warm thank you to those concerned".

So ended our auction - many people already asking for another. Amongst the swords at the meeting Andy Ford had a freshly polished Bizen Katsumitsu Katana of typical Muromachi shape. The polish had brought out all the considerable activity and the blade had been awarded a white paper. Another man in the papers, both green this time, who closely guarded two beautiful tanto blades in shirasaya was Don Bayney. Please bring them again Don. I'd like to do them justice.

I saw again much too briefly an elegant Muromachi blade belonging to Ted Newman. It was mounted in a Same saya and looked very desirable. Lastly, your Prog.Sec. was nursing a small katana with a Bizen blade, very much shortened but in my highly biased judgment, exuding quality. The mounts are very striking. The fuchi kashira in very finely punched diaper pattern. The tsuba in either silver or white brass with plum blossom design and the saya was in brick red polished lacquer with blossom and grass sprays in gold.

CLUB MATTERS FROM OUR SECRETARY Andrew Ford

At the March meeting I stood on my soapbox and had a little shout about the collection of members' dues. At the moment the Society spends an inordinate amount of money in sending reminders all over the world in order to get you, the members, to pay your dues. I realise of course that the vast majority just forget at the crucial moment and the remainder have no idea when they should pay their dues at all; hence the reminders. On sending reminders a fair percentage then pay; but some do not and a second reminder is sent, this generally clears up all but a few who fall by the wayside. So all I am saying is that all you good people out there can make a real contribution to the Society by doing just one small thing - PAY YOUR DUES BY BANKER'S ORDER. Anyone who does not know when his subscription is due I will be pleased to enlighten, also I can provide Banker's Order forms for anyone who requires them. Remember saving the Society money will enable us to keep the annual dues at their current rate longer, which must be in your interest. The current rates are: U.K. corresponding membership £2.00 per annum.

U.K. full membership -	£3.50 per annum.
U.S.A. sea mail	\$6.00 per annum.
U.S.A. air mail	\$10.00 per annum.
Europe	£2.00 per annum.

Banker's Orders should be made out to the To Ken Society of Great Britain and paid into account number 912735 at Barclays Bank Ltd., 160 Piccadilly, London W.1. The branch code number for the Bank is 206759.

No doubt my pleas in this matter will cause the usual tremendous wave of apathy, with everyone hoping that someone else will do something about it.

Will Office Service Decorfix of Croydon who very kindly sent me a subscription kindly stand up to be recognised, as I don't know who you are; a letter would be greatly appreciated.

I am sorry to have to announce the passing of another member, Lester E. Brandt of Tacoma, Washington.

Members please note that my address is 171 Stanley Park Road and not 17 as was reported in some recent Bulletins.

THE SHARPNESS OF JAPANESE SWORDS by Mr. K. Sayama

Our good friend, Mr. Sayama has sent this interesting article. I hope that it is the beginning of an era of help from our Japanese friends:

"After the War, the Japanese Swords have been called "Artistic Japanese Swords", however, the real purpose of swords should be "How the Swords can cut well without breakage and bending of the blades" and the swords which cannot cut well, cannot be called as "swords" any more.

Some one says "If the swords are beautiful, it is quite all right and sharp cutting edges are not necessary". If so, swordsmiths need not temper and forge the blades over and over again by their hard work until they get complete sharp and tough cutting edges, but if the manufacture of beautiful swords is the only purpose for Japanese swords, they will make the blades with ordinary steel without tempering and forging, or with soft silver or copper, and they will make some beautiful carvings on the blades instead of repeating such toilsome work.

In the fifteenth century, the Honnami Family have introduced very nice polishing newly, and they have become very famous as experts for the polishing of blades, and also for the appraisal of Japanese swords, and the present dressing (ornamental) polish has been taken up by them since then. However, before that time, the polish of blades has been very poor and it was just similar to "Shira Togi" (frosting polish) and the people did not

know how to appreciate Kin-Suji (a thin, radiant line of dark spots on the tempered line area of the blade), Inazuma (zig-zag Kin Suji is called Inazuma - lightning), Chikei, Utsuri, etc. appeared on the surface of blades from the artistic viewpoint.

In former times, the swords which can cut very well, were called as Excellent Swords. The Excellent Swords which have such nicknames as "Gun-Cutting Kanemitsu, Helmet Cutting Kanemitsu, Kagotsurube Muramasa, Sasano-Yuki Kanesada, Jizo-Kiri Kanemoto (Stone Guardian Deity Cutting Kanemoto), Stone Lantern Cutting Kotetsu" etc. have still been preserved until now. These swords proved very fine cutting in actual fighting at battlefields and such excellent swords have been called by the above nicknames.

During the Tokugawa era, a peaceful time has continued for a long time, and the Samurai (warriors) have lost a chance to test their own swords in actual fighting. Under these circumstances, the experts in testing the sharpness of blades have come out. The most famous people among the experts were Kaemon Yamano, Saheita Nakagawa, Asaemon Yamada and others.

They used to cut/prisoners dead bodies, which bones have become stiff when one day has passed after their death, and after the test, they carved their signatures on the tangs for future reference, and some of them recorded the result of their cutting test by inlaid work.

The top record was made by the following swords:

KANEFUSA - 7 bodies were cut off at one blow on 28th February in the 9th year of Enpo (1681). The name of the cutter was Juro Nakanishi.

YAMATONOKAMI YASUSADA - 5 bodies were cut off at one blow on 11th February in the 4th year of Manji (1661). The name of the cutter was Nagahisa Kaemon Yamano, 64 years of age.

Of course the cutters should be experts to cut off 5 or 7 dead bodies piled up at one blow, but such effect depends on the wonderful sharpness of Japanese swords only, which were produced by the repeated tempering and hardening of fine steel.

Besides the above, there is a record at the actual fighting that a horse's neck was cut off together with the reins by a narrow gentle sword of the Emperor Gotoba, and it is also reported that the neck of a cow was cut off by a sword made by Kaboku Ohmura. Long and heavy blades cannot always cut well, but the sharpness of blades is made by the technics of excellent swordsmiths using the fine steel.

Several years ago, the writer had the pleasure of seeing many treasures at the Art Museum Yomei Bunko, which is owned by the

Konoe Family, Head of Court Nobles. These treasures have been handed down from generation to generation by the Konoe Family.

Among the treasures, there were about 6 fine Japanese swords with nice mountings, most of which were beautifully made for Court Ceremonies; the blades were narrow and elegantly curved, but all of them were excellent swords. These were old swords, which were made more than 600 years ago, but the blades were sound and not tired at all, and these swords looked as if they have been made just now. Although the back of these blades were thick, the blades had sharp cutting edges and the swords could answer the purpose of both practical use and decoration.

Nowadays, in order to test the sharpness of swords, a rolled straw bundle, which has a piece of a green bamboo at the core, is used. Such one straw bundle is considered same as one dead body for the cutting test, and straw bundles are piled up according to the degree of test. The cutting test for Japanese swords are performed sometimes by the To Ken Society, but when the straw bundle is laid down sideways, it is very difficult to cut off the bamboo core, but if one cuts the straw bundle put lengthwise, it is easy to cut off the bundle diagonally.

Asayemon Yamada was a professional tester for the sharpness of Japanese swords under the Tokugawa Shogunate, and for many years he made tests on 10 swords made by the same swordsmith by cutting the prisoners dead bodies, and after completion of his tests, he called the swords made by 13 swordsmiths, which showed highest sharpness, as "Saijo Ohwazamono" (Highest Japanese Swords), and for the swords made by 22 swordsmiths, he called as "Ohwazamono" (swords which can cut very well), and for the swords made by 56 swordsmiths as "Yoki Wazamono" (swords which can cut pretty well), and for the swords made by 91 swordsmiths as "Wazamono" (swords which can cut well), thus he classified the swordsmiths in this way. As he has made the classification according to his actual test, his decision was most reliable. From his long years of experience, even if a sword has about the same sharpness as another sword, he said that there was some difference in the reaction according to the cutting quality of each sword.

The Emperor Meiji, who has grown up during the period of commotion at the end of Shogunate, was stout-hearted and broad-minded and he was very fond of swords. Among his chamberlains, there was Tesshu Yamaoka, who was the first class swordsman and a man of firm character.

One day a discussion was made about the sharpness of Japanese swords in the presence of the Emperor and it was a problem whether a Steel Helmet can be cut by a sword or not.

Yamaoka insisted that the sword can cut a steel helmet, while another chamberlain named "A" asserted that a Steel Helmet

cannot be cut by a sword. At last, the conclusion was made that their dispute should be settled by an actual test, and Yamaoka sent for his favourite sword, and the chamberlain "A" got someone to bring a steel helmet, which has been handed down from his ancestors.

Yamaoka's sword was a strong sword, which length was 2 shaku, 3 sun, 9 bu, and the back of blade was 3 bu thick (1 Shaku = 0.995 ft., 1 sun = 1.491 inches and 1 bu = 0.119 inch) and this sword was made by a swordsmith named Masakuni Dotanuki, who lived about 376 years ago and was employed by Kiyomasa Kato, the Lord of the Castle in the Higo District.

Finally, just before the start of the test, Yamaoka told the chamberlain "A" "Are you confident that a steel helmet cannot be cut off by a sword?" The chamberlain "A" has answered that "The steel helmet should protect the warriors against swords, so how a sword can cut off the steel helmet" and he has repeated his assertion.

At last, Yamaoka has drawn his sword and said to the chamberlain "A" "In order to cut a steel helmet, a stand is required so that the helmet will not move. It will take time to get a helmet stand to this place now, so if you are confident that your helmet cannot be cut by a sword, please put on this helmet on your head for a short time, then I will cut out your helmet certainly".

The stubborn chamberlain "A" was greatly surprised at Yamaoka's words and he told Yamaoka "I will withdraw my previous statement, so please excuse me". He has made a humble apology to Yamaoka, and as his attitude was very funny, the Emperor and all the attendants burst their sides with laughing at a flash of Yamaoka's wit.

Later, they prepared a wooden stand and put the steel helmet on it. Yamaoka made a blow on the steel helmet by his sword and the steel helmet was cut off by about 7 inches down, and all attendants applauded him with hand clapping."

OUR CHRISTMAS QUIZ

I'm afraid that Vic Harris slipped off to Japan without me prising those answers out of him. Just to keep the pot on the boil, I reproduce John Harding's answers:

1. With a pin.
2. Because the Boshi was two shaku away from the Hamachi
3. A Mars bar.
4. Who cares.
5. A 'Divers type' chicken
6. Feltham High Street School of Fencing
7. Are they?

- 8. Clapped out retempered blades
- 9. The same as we all do - every time we go
- 10. If he can't tell a rock from a Tiger...!
- 11. Naru hodo!
- 12. Both queers

JAPANESE SWORDS AND PRINTS AT KEGAN PAULS

Peter Basdeo of Kegan Paul, Trench Trubner & Co., organised an exhibition of prints and swords from March 16th to April 14th. The theme of the exhibition was Kabuki Theatre prints under £20. There were 150 prints and of course the sword featured in many, and so some fine blades were included. Your Prog.Sec., Peter Cottis, Col.Smith and B.W.Robinson were at the opening preview as were Sir Frank and Lady Bowden. Kegan Paul produced a nice catalogue. Your strully, as always a dreamer, didn't put his name down for any of the prints on display and so lost the opportunity of acquiring one or two very attractive gems at extremely modest prices. Still they were worth looking at, but as always my taste veered towards the swords. There were 9 altogether and I had the opportunity to renew acquaintance with a very beautiful blade. This was the Nobuhide of B.W.Robinson. This blade had everything - a beautifully prominent hada, fantastic activity in the hamon and a wonderful horimono in russet iron with gold details. It was made for the Emperor Meiji and I would presume it to be Nobuhide's masterpiece. It certainly made me understand why many experts say you only need one blade. If it's like this, nearly everything else is mediocre. Not all the swords could be examined since at a public exhibition it would be asking for trouble, so some were in a glass case. The two dirks, an itomaki no tachi and a handachi katana. This handachi was magnificently mounted in solid gold mounts by Ichiryu Tomonaga and the motif was wave birds (chidori) swooping over waves. The scabbard in rich mura nashiji and everything in mint condition. The blade was in shirasaya and had a gold attribution to Nobukuni. Fine though the blade was, you couldn't but help compare it to the Nobuhide and I felt it wasn't in the same class. This sword was the only one for sale and at £5,000 was a snip for the average collector. However, for all its gold magnificence, I get the feeling that the mounts are on the verge of bad taste. The other sword that leaves a pleasing impression, was another handachi, which was very severe in black ishime lacquer and black leather tsuka ito. The fine Muromachi Bizen blade, though tired was just what I imagine a warrior and swordsman of sober taste would wear.

B.W.Robinson had lent some of his very fine series of Kuniyoshi prints - these are worth an exhibition on their own and

it was a pity that space did not allow Kegan Paul to display these properly. On the whole, a very worthy exhibition which helps to bridge the gap between us sword fans and the print collectors. Congratulations to Peter Basdeo.

THE JAPANESE WARRIOR MONKS (Part II)

From 1180 onwards the monks warlike activities become submerged beneath the chaos of the Gempei Civil War. Before we examine this period, however, let us look at the relationship between the monks and the great Taira Kiyomori. By the last quarter of the twelfth century Kiyomori was virtually ruler of Japan. He had himself taken the tonsure in 1168, and had studied Buddhism under Abbot Myoun of Enryakuji. So when trouble occurred with the monks Kiyomori was torn between a desire to crush any revolt and a considerable respect for what they represented. He also appears to have had a genuine affection for his "alma mater". The Heike Monogatari is very biased against Kiyomori, and in its account of the decline and fall of the Taira the fall is ascribed very largely to the wickedness of Kiyomori.

In fact Kiyomori seems to have taken pains not to offend the temple authorities. For example, in 1147 twenty of Kiyomori's retainers escorted a group of dancers to Gion. They were refused admission because they were carrying arms. A scuffle broke out and Enryakuji (of which Gion was a branch) complained to Kiyomori, who admitted the offence and paid the fine requested. But Kiyomori continually made the mistake of wooing the upper class "gakusho", while ignoring the sohei. He had been a gakusho himself.

The sohei were doubtful allies to have. They always looked after themselves, but loyalty ended at the temple gate. For example, Prince Mochihito fled to Onjoji at the start of his rebellion in 1180, where the monks were "exceedingly respectfully overjoyed".

In his desire to crush the rebellion Kiyomori resolved to attack Onjoji. The monks of Miidera, realising they could not stand alone against the Taira army, sent letters to Enryakuji and Kofukuji appealing for help. In spite of their entreaties the old rivalry between Enryakuji and Miidera was still evident. Kiyomori offered the Enryakuji a handsome bribe of 20,000 koku of rice and 3,000 bales of silk to remain neutral. To Miidera's letter they made no reply.

But Kiyomori's popularity was limited to Enryakuji. In their reply Kofukuji referred to him as "the dregs of the Taira" and pledged support. But in fact no help arrived from Nara, and the Miidera monks were left to face the Taira alone. Many deserted, and when Mochihito and Yorimasa left Miidera they had a force of only three hundred. These were staunch fighters, as the following account shows. Yorimasa's men had decided to make their

last stand on the left bank of the river at Uji. They tore up the planking of the bridge as a defence, and waited for the Taira army.

"....Then Gochin-no-Tajima....strode forth alone on to the bridge, whereupon the Heike straightway shot at him fast and furious. Tajima, not at all perturbed, ducking to avoid the higher ones and leaping over those that flew low, cut through those that flew straight with his whirring halberd. Thus it was that he was dubbed "Tajima the arrow cutter".

Another monk followed Tajima onto the bridge. This was Jomyo, from Miidera. He killed twelve Taira with arrows, and wounded eleven more. He then killed six with his naginata, when the blade broke. His sword blade broke on his ninth victim with that weapon. He was left with his dirk when....

"a retainer was fighting behind Jomyo, but as the beams were so narrow he could not come alongside him, so placing a hand on the neckpiece of his helmet, he shouted "Pardon me Jomyo, this is no good" and springing over his shoulder to the front he fought mightily until he fell. Jomyo crawled back again and retired to the Byodo-in, where he sat down on the grass before the gate, and stripping off his armour, counted the dints of the arrows that had struck him. There were sixty-three in all".

This account is fascinating in that not only does it give us an exceptionally vivid account of a battle, it also supplies much detail about the monks. It may be noted that they were wearing helmets, which is contrary to the popular impression.

But in spite of all the bravery the rebellion failed and the monks were not allowed to forget their unfortunate alliance. Taira Tomomori, one of Kiyomori's sons, led an attack on Miidera. About a thousand monks made a shield barrier, and held out for twenty four hours. Tomomori finally broke through and set the temple on fire.

Much worse was in store for Nara. Kiyomori was angered at the official attitude towards him, and hoped to renew his political alliance with the gakusho of Kofukuji. If this could be achieved the gakusho would perhaps be able to subdue their own sohei. But it was too late for diplomacy. The monks retaliated to Kiyomori's message by beating up the messengers and shaving their heads. As a personal insult the monks made a great wooden head which they called the head of Kiyomori, and played football with it in the courtyard.

Kiyomori still behaved with caution, and sent a force of five hundred men with orders to use no violence. The deputation was attacked by the monks. Sixty samurai were killed, and their heads displayed around the Pool of Sarusawa, opposite the Southern gate to the Kofukuji. Kiyomori immediately sent his son Shigehira with orders to subdue the temple mob.

What Shigehira's actual orders were we shall never know. He was certainly not one of Kiyomori's most attractive offspring, being given to fits of rage similar to the ones that affected his father. He had none of Tomomori's coolness. When the monks heard of his approach they all, without distinction (suggesting unity between the two classes) made ready to defend their temples and city. Ditches were dug and palisades hastily erected. From these flimsy barricades they faced the Taira army.

Shigehira's mounted bowmen were held off until dark by the determined monks. No cavalry charge could break through. It was then that the fateful order to set fire to the temple was given. Did Shigehira order the burning of Nara? It is probable that he hoped to burn down a few defended outbuildings, as in those days the main method of entry to a defended building was to set fire to it and slaughter the defenders as they rushed out. But he must have realised the danger, particularly as there was a strong wind blowing. It is certain that Kiyomori would never have allowed Nara to be burned. The Heike Monogatari gives the best account.

"It was the hour of the Dog (5 p.m.) and the wind was blowing strongly...Those who were too old to flee, and the unattached laymen, children and girls went up into the upper storey of the Daibutsuden. About a thousand of them crowded into the Daibutsuden and pulled up the ladders behind them so that the enemy could not follow, but the flames reached them first, and such a great crying arose that could not be surpassed by the sinners amid the flames of Tapanā, Pratāpanā and Avitchi, the fiercest of the Eight Hot Hells.

The Kofukuji, alas!... was burned. The Todaiji was destroyed also, and the colossal statue of Vairochana Buddha of copper and gold, whose domed head towered up to the clouds, from which gleamed the sacred jewel of his lofty forehead, fused with the heat, so that its full-moon features fell to the pavement below, while its body melted into a shapeless mass...surely never before had there been such a destruction...Even the dew of Mount Kasuga changed its hue and the wind howled mournfully on Mount Mikasa".

In all 3500 died in the fire, and countless art treasures were lost. 1000 monks died in the attack, and their heads were displayed on the gate or carried back to Kyoto. Months later, when some important services were due to be performed, not a single priest could be found in Nara.

The fire, on January 15th 1181, was the greatest tragedy of the Gempei War. One cannot agree with "Heike Monogatari" that Kiyomori was "greatly rejoiced" at the news. More likely he raged at Shigehira, for he knew that in the flames of Nara had

disappeared all hope of reconciliation with the gakusho, who had suffered more in the destruction than had the sohei. Leaving this sad legacy behind him, on March 20th Kiyomori died. Two years later we hear of Enryakuji allied with Kiyomori's former enemies.

For the rest of the civil war little is heard of the warrior monks. On August 11th 1183 Kiso Yoshinaka, rebelling against the Taira, entered Enryakuji, whose yamabushi had agreed to co-operate with them. They certainly sheltered him, but seem to have taken no active part in the subsequent battles that ended Yoshinaka's career.

The one notable exception to the general neutrality of the yamabushi is of course the most famous yamabushi of them all, Benkei. By 1184 his famous feat of carrying off the bell of Miidera had already passed into legend. In March 1184 we find him fighting beside Yoshitsune at Ichinotani and Yashima, and in 1185 at the great sea battle of Dan no Ura, which finally crushed the might of the Taira.

With this victory, Japan had a new, effective ruler, Minamoto Yoritomo. In his determination to be the absolute authority in the country he issued the "Sata", or "polite order" which included the paragraph:

"Concerning the affairs of the temples, their lands should be guaranteed in full, but it is not proper to admire the military valour of priests, and hereafter, by authority of Yoritomo's Sata, all temple arms and armour are to be confiscated, to be delivered to the troops of the government".

Yoritomo's next gesture towards the monks was one of great, if diplomatic, generosity. In fulfilment of a vow he began the restoration of the Nara temples. The best architects and craftsmen of the age were assembled and the Todaiji and Kofukuji began to regain some of their former glory. The magnificent "Nandaimon" gate of the Todaiji dates from this restoration. The monks also began to revive some of their dormant energy. In May 1196, twelve years after Yoritomo's sword hunt there was a short lived insurrection at Miidera. In 1220 the Kofukuji burned one of its own branch temples, and robbers attacked the peaceful Horyuji.

But the days of the terrible yamabushi were over, for the time being at least. The only serious incident during the Kamakura Shogunate (in 1236) serves to illustrate how effective the Bakufu were compared to the Heian Court. There were a few outbursts during the years of war that constituted the Muromachi period, but no serious challenge was offered to any ruler until the time of Nobunaga. It must be remembered that Enryakuji had emerged subdued, but relatively unscathed, from the Gempei War. The yamabushi were beginning to flex their muscles again, and in the

upsurge of the warrior feeling, they were joined by new monastic allies, the Ikko sect.

The Ikko sect derived from the Amidist (Buddha-calling) teaching of Shinran (1173-1262). Its main evangelist was Rennyo (1415-99). He made himself unpopular with the other Buddhist sects, including the Tendai of Enryakuji, who burned his home in 1465. After six years of wandering and teaching he settled in Yoshiaaki. The sect grew so prosperous and strong that in 1486 they were able to banish the local constable, and defeat a bakufu force sent against them. Within a hundred years the Ikko sectarians were masters of all Kaga province.

Nobunaga realised the danger from the Ikko monks when they sent help to his enemies in 1570. The Ikko stronghold was the impregnable fortress cathedral of Ishiyama Honganji. Helped by Enryakuji they fought Nobunaga for a period of years. Repeated attacks on the Honganji failed because of the support it received from outside. Changing his strategy Nobunaga attacked the allies of Ishiyama Honganji in Nagashima, helped by the heavy musket fire of pirates from Ise enlisted to his cause. They were defeated, as were the monks of Kii and Enryakuji, of whom more later. The Ishiyama was left isolated, and after a "suggestion" from the Emperor prompted by Nobunaga, surrendered in 1580.

But although the affair with the Ikko monks had come to an honourable conclusion, Enryakuji was not so fortunate. On September 11th 1571 Nobunaga gave orders for the complete and final destruction of the temples of Mount Hiei. His argument in support of this "final solution" is summarised as follows:

"I am not the destroyer of this monastery. The destroyer is the monastery itself. I have devoted myself to restoring peace. Those who would help rebels, are themselves traitors. If they are not destroyed now they will become a peril to the nation. Therefore not a single life should be spared".

The assault began on September 29th of the same year. Nobunaga first burned the town of Sakamoto, at the foot of Mount Hiei, (most of the townspeople had taken refuge in Enryakuji) and took special care to destroy every subsidiary shrine of the Mountain King, to show his scant respect for what Hiei had represented to Saicho's Courtiers. His 30,000 men deployed in a ring around the mountain, and at the sound of a conch trumpet they began to move slowly towards the top, burning and shooting all that stood in their way. By nightfall, the main temple of the Mountain King had gone up in flames, and many monks unable to resist the attack had leaped into the fires. Next day, Nobunaga sent his musketeers out on a hunt to find all those who were hiding on the mountain, whom they shot indiscriminately.

The casualty list of the frightful slaughter probably reached 20,000 and marked the complete and bloody end to the age of the warrior monks. How appropriate are the words of the Heike Monogatari's lament for an earlier, though much less complete, destruction of Hiri:

"No longer was the flower of the Tendai fragrant, and the moon of its clear doctrines was clouded....No longer do the vast buildings tower aloft, cleaving the blue heavens with their three storied bulk... The Buddhas are adored but by the mountain blasts; their golden statues are wetted by the muddy raindrops; the moonbeams streaming through the chinks in the roofs are their sacred lamps, and their lotus seats are encrusted with the diamond dew of dawn".

Enryakuji temple, once the protector of the capital, never regained its past glory. Today, it is a lonely and mysterious place. It is still difficult to get to, and in a wet Japanese mist it bears an atmosphere of sorrow and remoteness. Fingers of white mist curl around its dripping buildings like shades of departed yamabushi.

What real power did the monk armies wield? As a military force, they were more of a nuisance than a serious threat, made to seem more forbidding by over-reaction on the part of the authorities. Indeed, their descent on Kyoto seems more like a present day student demonstration than a military invasion, except that they are slightly better armed. But in a superstitious age they were a considerable influence, and it took a determined man like Nobunaga, to whom the monks spiritual powers meant nothing, to finally make an end of them."

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THE LLOYD COLLECTION - SHIKKAKE NORINAGA

Having heard so much about the Norinaga in the British Museum, I 'phoned up Mr. Lawrence Smith asking to see the blade. The method is to get yourself a student's card, which involves filling a simple form and getting someone of repute to vouch for you. That done, I 'phoned through again and sure enough at noon, there was the sword laid out on a thick cotton wool base in the Oriental Dept. Student's Room. Strictly one should not touch but they kindly allowed me to hold the blade by the tang and raised just above the cotton wool to manoeuvre the hamon into a good viewing position. As guardians of the public treasures you certainly can't argue with such precautions by the Museum. An assistant let me borrow his Anglepoise lamp which made the world of difference and I was away. Norinaga was the son of Norihiro, also working in the Shikkake style in the late 13th century and his blades have Juyo ratings. Subsequently a number of smiths of the same name followed him until the school died out in the early 15th century. These smiths worked in the Yamato tradition, and it was surprising what a copybook Yamato blade the Lloyd example is. The blade is O-suriage with 2 mekugi-ana. There is a red lacquer attribution katana mei to Norinaga. The blade is extremely healthy, and thick, about $\frac{3}{8}$ inch I'd say and the tang even thicker. If the tang thickness is the thickness of the original blade these swords must have been massive, not at all like the much thinned down examples we occasionally find. The hada was a pronounced Masame-itame, the masame running into the yakiba. The hada had a beautifully "clear" appearance with a slight blueish tinge. The Shinogi was very wide with some slight ripples possibly showing through. Masame runs all along the top of the shinogi. The sori is shallow now, the curve straightening towards the kissaki. The kissaki was long and narrow, larger I thought than was normal. The burnishing gave the impression of 2 inches of kaeri, but when the boshi was examined you couldn't see such a turnback. It was difficult to make out details of the boshi because of the polish, but it appeared to be Kaen. The hamon was hoso-sugu-ha with Ko-nie in the masame extending up into the ji hada. It was exactly as Vic Harris said "fluffy" in feeling. The hamon was far from straight however. It was full of ashi and interruptions all along the blade. The old shirasaya had a saya gaki and the end of the tsuka was also lacquered Norinaga. A splendidly quiet blade I thought. Apparently, Mr. Lloyd didn't give tuppence for swords, he just acquired them - he certainly gave me some pleasure.

JAPANESE SWORDS by Ogasawara

I've enjoyed my copy of this book despite some obviously glaring errors and others which my lack of expertise overlooked. I would think that the text was translated into English by someone

who knows English extremely well but who certainly doesn't understand swords and their nomenclature in the west. Thus Chogi hamon becomes Clover-tree blossom and shakudo becomes red copper in some manner. Sa becomes "hidare", a bad error. There were two other points that I query. Munechika's "Third day moon sword" got its name from its shape according to the text. Surely its name came from the Uchi-no-suke in the hamon. The text cites a Tanetsugu blade (Pl.22) as typical of Heian and early Kamakura shapes. It looked most untypical to me of the blades illustrated, and these all seemed to be very similar in shape. But this book is in English and is a must for all of us. Just to read about the swords and blades illustrated is rewarding. I didn't know that the Chain sword mountings were normally presented to temples. And if you don't think the coloured illustrations of the Umetada Myojiu and Jirohisa tsubas are not worth the money alone, I'd be very surprised.

BOOK NEWS FROM ALAN BALE

Alan has just sent these corrections to the Ogasawara's book:

- P.14 read Mikazuki Munechika
 P.15 " Dojikiri Yasutsuna
 P.19 " Otenta Mitsuyo
 P.31 " Okadakiri Yoshifusa
 P.32 Mountain Gold should probably read Yamagane
 P.34 for Nagafune read Osafune
 P.42 " " " "
 P.46 " Hidari read Sa
 P.60 Inscription in Gold inlay: (By) Go (Yoshihiro) shortened by Honami (Kotoku) Tensho 13 (1585) Possessed by Inaba Kanuemon-no-jo. Known as 'Inaba Go'.
 P.72 Both by Hayashi Matashichi

Alan has a very fine book in stock:

TOKEN TO KATCHU by Sato & Ozaki. 10½" x 14", slip case, 250 pp comprising 64pp of colour plates of armour, early Koshirae and fittings, 68pp of black and white plates of National Treasure and Juyo rated swords. Other illustrations in the text: 6pp listing of plates in English. The plates are of superb quality the best yet seen. Price £7.00, postage 37p Inland, 70p foreign. Available from Alan Bale.

And here's news of another:

The price of Sukashi Tsuba by Kokubo (Kenkichi) has been increased to £3.40, postage 21p, foreign 25p. This now has an index in English to the plates. Any member who has previously purchased this book can get an index free by sending a S.A.E. to Alan Bale.

JAPANESE MILITARY SWORDS by R.Gregory

Ron has asked me to print a correction to his book. On the page opposite the two character MON are two stamp designs which are named as UNKNOWN. These designs are normally found stamped high on the tang and are about 3/16" diameter. The middle one is the Showa stamp of cherry blossom design with the character for Sho. The other is the Seki Arsenal stamp.

(Incidentally, Ron has sent me some information on the surrender of swords at the end of World War II, including that of General Itagaki. I will publish these in the next programme).

LETTER FROM K.Willoughby

I feel I must write a short letter concerning the opinion of fellow member Dave Butler on the subject of sword collectors and martial arts players. Quote "Collectors looked down on students of the martial arts etc". I myself came to know and admire the Japanese sword through the sport of Judo and know of at least two members of the To Ken Society who have done likewise. The serious student of Nippon To would forget the fact that the sword was first and foremost a weapon for killing and while also being a work of art, necessitated its owner being proficient in the use of it. i.e. Sword play! Having been a member of our erstwhile society for some years and also a martial arts admirer I must concur with John Anderson's view that I have never heard any disparaging comments about "players" from "collectors" or vice-versa. Any collector who visited the Nenriki Dojo at the Elephant & Castle some time ago, and saw the Japanese Sensei's performing "Iai" and "Kendo" would question the use of the word "playing" with swords!

HIZEN TADAHIRO & TADAYOSHI

Member Nowell of 226 Manchester Road, Denton, Lancs, specialises in these families of smiths and would appreciate any information, tang rubbings or photos on any or all of these smiths. Come on lads, see what you can do!

KODZUKA BLADES

Laurie Allen of 2 Clayton Street, Ryde, N.S.W.2112 Australia, requires a few odd kodzuka blades. If any members could supply him with his needs, please contact him. Even one would help!

MUSASHI YASATSUGU

Graham Curtis of "Ashlea", Cane Lane, Grove, Wantage, Berks collects Musashi Yasatsugu and family. Can anyone supply tang rubbings, details of blades in members collections, biographical

details, in fact anything at all which sheds light upon the blades produced. (Unwanted old blades would be welcome!)

LETTER FROM MEMBER JACKSON

As one of the more isolated members of the To Ken Society I find great difficulty in obtaining information on Japanese swords and have few sources of reference to which I can turn. It occurred to me that the Society might have a list of reference books that I could try to get through the Newcastle Library. Alternatively, could you give me the name of a member who deals in such books?

May I mention that I took your advice and tried to see the swords in the Laing Gallery. Like most museums they are stuck for space and the swords are stored away in cupboards and chests but the staff were very helpful. Last Saturday, I saw about 20 from their stock which, from the assistant's description, must be over 50. It was like being in Aladdin's cave!

Finally, may I comment on the item in Programme No.67 about two potential members who chose instead the Arms and Armour Society. As you know I have attended two meetings and although I do not consider myself a particularly good mixer, I was made to feel very welcome and would like to record the fact. What is disconcerting however, is the amount of jargon that is talked. It is difficult to "join in" if you don't know what the other people are talking about. Most newcomers don't know but don't like to admit it. I myself find that the books at my disposal do not allow me to interpret all the Japanese words used in the Programme. Unfortunately, I cannot suggest a good solution. I think it would be of immense help to new members if the older members of the Society got together, and produced a comprehensive "dictionary", preferably illustrated, of technical terms. It would be an invaluable addition to the literature on Japanese swords and could well prove a source of income to the Society.

PROG.SEC'S COMMENT

I'll endeavour to get the list of books, small though it is, for the next Programme. On the point of the dictionary, this is a problem. We have published one but of course newcomers don't have these. However, for those who attend the meetings, if any of you would like to learn simple basics, collar Fred Stride and he will be happy to give any help. For the others, I think the book list will be of some help.

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

enclosing 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.....£3.50.
U.S.A. and elsewhere.....\$10.00

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, 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.

NEW MEMBERS

The Society has much pleasure in welcoming the following new members:

Joel Rogers, Esq.,
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