

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



Hon. President: B. W. ROBINSON, M.A., B.LITT.

Secretary: H. M. HUTCHINSON, 141 Nork Way, Banstead, Surrey

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PROGRAMME 88

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EDITOR - Clive Sinclaire

61 Norfolk Crescent,  
Sidcup, Kent  
DA15, 8HW.-

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS:-

Monday November 3rd 1930 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 down the road on the left hand side.

The meeting will be about 'peonies', a subject that is constantly used in sword furniture etc., so bring along all your glittering tsuba. There will also be an ancillary discussion on "Swords that are not swords", as some very interesting objects often appear to be swords but are, in fact, something completely different.

Monday December 1st will be a talk by John Anderson on the subject of Mon. As there is very little in English on the subject it should prove of use to all. Once again bring along anything with a Mon on it as they appear on almost everything from swords to sandals.

Monday January 5th will be a discussion with some of our newer members in mind on different sword mountings. Chris Allen and myself will be 'doing' it, but come anyway.

Monday February 2nd the subject has not been decided at this stage, but there will be a free (no commission) auction as well as a talk.

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The last meeting (October) was a belated A.G.M. and the committee was elected as follows:-

Chairman	-	J. Anderson
Vice Chairman	-	C. Nunn
Treasurer	-	C. Allen
Secretary	-	M. Hutchinson
Swords to Japan	-	D. Parker
Prog. Editor	-	C. Sinclair
Adviser	-	M. Mortimer
Adviser	-	J. Weekes

As you can see, you now have a new programme secretary. Please send any correspondence to me, Clive Sinclair at:-

61 Norfolk Crescent,  
Sidcup, Kent  
DA15 8HW

The committee as a whole, understand that there are many new members who are looking for guidance and who wish to learn. All I can say is that if you have any questions, queries or comments to make, please let me know and we will see what can be done. It is your society, and until we know what you require from it, we will be unable to help.

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

I am afraid that we have found it necessary to increase the annual subscriptions. This is due, of course, to the huge postal increases over the last year or so, that we are unable to absorb any further. The new rates are as follows:-

Corresponding Members	-	£3 per annum
Attending Members	-	£4 per annum

We will be implementing a new system of payment, and all subscriptions will be due on March 1st 1976. This will mean that some members are in arrears and that others will be in credit. Malcolm Hutchinson will be contacting everyone in arrears and those in advance will be due the difference for 31.3.76 - 31.3.77.

I am sorry if all this sounds very "civil servant-ish", but it should make life easier for all of us.

Member Gene Mathews has written to tell us of a lecture he will be giving to the East Midlands Metallurgical Society, on the metallurgy of Japanese swords. It is on November 13th in the lecture theatre of the Edward Herbert Building, Loughborough University, Loughborough, Leics., and starts at 1930 hours. It is the kind of thing that is of use to both the expert and novice in the arts of the Japanese sword, and should not be missed if at all possible. For those unable to attend we hope to be printing a transcript in a future programme.

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We also hope in our future programmes to give you regular auction room reports and Colin Nunn will be warning us of the evils currently being perpetrated, by some of the larger rooms.

Just in case anyone has not heard, if you are buying swords (or anything else) via an auction room, be sure that you fully appreciate the buyer's commission system, as a bid of, for example, £150 may now really mean £165 if the auction room is charging 10% buyer's commission. Just another complication, to an already complicated life.

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The following article by Martin Lorber comprises notes of lectures at the Newport Beach, California Token Kai Shinsa on 3-9 June 1974. We have had it in our file for a year and we regret our delay in publishing it.

KOIZUMI Tomitaro (Juyo judge): Gimei (forgeries)

The beginning of annotated forgeries is in a book dated 1316 which lists known forgeries as of that date. The older (pre-Meiji) fakes centered mainly upon the greater masters of the Koto period principally because of their fame. Recently (Meiji and after) even mediocre smiths were copied, especially during the Showa period because the great names of the Koto period were being very closely studied, causing fakes to be more readily spotted. However, with the amount of academic material available on lesser smiths being much less, the possibilities of passing a fake of these blades remained good, especially as a goodly number of signatures are not illustrated. A faker to whom I spoke once said in essence that what difference does a fake signature mean if the original signatures are not listed?

Fakes can be divided into three categories:

1. Those the result of a true objective of faking blade and signature.
2. Those existing blades similar in age and characteristics to the object and with a false signature added, e.g. orikaishi mei (folded over signature), plugged in mei, altered signature, removal of original nakago and welding on of one with a real signature (the latter a popular means after World War II).
3. Those existing blades, either mumei or with removed mei to which are added an appraiser's lacquer signature or a gold inlay signature or an appraiser's gold signature.

The first is the most difficult to execute because of the need of a qualified smith. This was also done during the Koto period as well as by 2nd and 3rd grade Osaka Shinto smiths. Similar situation with shinshinto occurred with smiths who had famous fathers and grandfathers whom they faked. The 2nd and 3rd categories were principally done by "greedy merchants".

In the late 17th/early 18th century, professional mei inscribers were recorded as working in Osaka and according to shinto records, Osaka merchants sent 5,000 to 10,000 loads of swords to Edo where they were done up and sold. A late Tokugawa/early Meiji smith, Naomitsu (Kajihei) kept records of his own fakes; this record, Kajihei Oshigata Shu, published by the Osaka sword club when Mr. Wakayama's father was president and now difficult to find, was later discovered and the publication exposed a number of fakes in numerous collections and one blade, very similar and possibly the same one illustrated in that book appeared at the shinsa.

One great copier was Gassan Teiichi (grandfather of Sadakuzu) because the times were hard at that period and it was a way to make a living.

Those fakes made during and after Meiji are very skilful and well-executed, principally because of the advent of photography and modern reference books, such as Fujishiro Oshigata. The faker will take an exact copy from Fujishiro or other book and reproduce it exactly. However, the yasurime is the most critical point; the signature can be faithfully copied, but the yasurime is almost impossible to copy because swordsmiths usually made their own files and the resulting raspings would be different. Close attention must be paid to this and if

a false signature has been added (after another has been removed), one side of the nakago will necessarily be thinner and flatter and this, together with vague yasurime near the machi, should be a good indication that something is suspect. Also one will note that fake signatures taken from Fujishiro Oshigata, Shinto Meisakushu, etc. will be in a ratio of 1:1 with the illustration.

Having watched modern fakers at work, I have seen the following procedures. An oshigata will be taken from a real signature or a tracing of an oshigata will be taken and trace-impressed with red carbon paper onto the nakago to be faked and finalised with a pencil. This will not give a true impression and a comparison with the original source will be made and touched up with red ink which will also indicate the chisel strokes. Using this and the proper size of chisel, the faker will start copying. The ageing is then added and the blade marketed; this is the modern method, but human error is almost always found somewhere. In most cases, to avoid a direct copy, the faker will alter a nengo year number or a month number. Since ageing is attempted overnight, a natural colour is difficult, but possible today. To make it completely uniform over the nakago is almost impossible but can be done well in small areas and the entire nakago (including the area between the yasurime and the machi) will be rusted in the process (often using acid) and when the blade is polished, small spots or pocks can be seen in the area under the habaki. Check the area and if the yasurime is mismatched or the area has spots, the blade is a fake. Also, the habaki area is rusted much or if there is very even rust, one must be careful.

A folded over signature should be sabi on both areas and matching; if it is broken at the jiri, it is usually a later addition. Replaced nakago in the old days was done by two types of cuts: Figs. (1) and (2) in which the rivets were usually visible. Fakes can be detected by finding the joint line with its filling as used in modern fakes (fig.3). Skill is required not to add air to the mass by the use of a welding rod as this will produce a bulge; plus, if the rod contains more iron, it will accordingly rust differently. After World War II, the method of welding and the carbon content was also different. I have been told by a professional faker that a method of disguising the iron content difference is to use a mixture of iron from the nakago and shavings from the blade itself.

Because of the modern welding and tempering techniques used, the hamon may well disappear at the machi and yasurime will be added to cover the missing hamon and the mei will necessarily be below this area and if it looks odd, check it as this type of faking is becoming more and more numerous in recent years. It has been found that cobalt 65 rays are the best way known to date for detecting these. Gold inlay fakes began principally 20-30 years ago at the price of \$2-3 per character, now about \$20-30. With the old Honnami inlays, a perfect refiling of the yasurime area would be made, but modern attempts do not try to remove a large area, but only the actual area of the character. Under a microscope, a new mei will often have rust by the character itself and uninterrupted yasurime.

Blades without a boshi have little value. Before the War, the techniques of replacing the boshi would leave a gap between the original and new temper lines; this was caused because the heat used in the new boshi would be kept away from the old hamon. Now, through technical advances, the gap has narrowed noticeably. To test a real temper, it should shave a brass rod whereas a fake one will not. One must look closely at the new boshi, as this may well not match the original smith's characteristics as, fortunately, most fakers are not well versed - but not always. There was a tale in Japan that a famous faker bought a good blade in the country only to realize later that it was one with a new boshi which he himself had faked ten years earlier.

The meeting was then opened to questions

Dr. Compton mentioned that Mr. Honnami had found tattooed yakiba on some of his blades. This was answered, that with a natural tempering, under strong magnification, the blade will show minute differences in height, not unlike a chain of mountains; on a needled yakiba, it will be indented, rough and give off different reflections. Another is to use acid. The secret of spotting needle touch-ups, is to hold the blade upside down with the boshi pointed towards oneself. And as a false boshi can be done in 30 minutes, it will look very good at first, but will begin to show with age.

David Pepper said he had heard of rubbing mercury into a faked area to disguise it but Mr. Koizumi said he had never heard of this.

Q. What modern technical methods have been used other than radiography to detect fakes?

A. At present, the United States is far advanced in

modern technology and we in Japan do not really have these methods available to us, but hope to.

Dr. Compton asked if there was a way of reading 'ghost' signatures which are almost lost to the human eye?

A. Knows of nothing other than the practice of oiling and exposing to the sun.

Paul Allman asked if magnaflux can be used to detect the crystalline structure of the interior of a blade in order to pick up signatures, welds, etc.

Dr. Compton answered by saying probably so as a hidden Sosei Kikumaro signature was detected in this way.

Q. What is the acceptable manner to remove a fake signature?

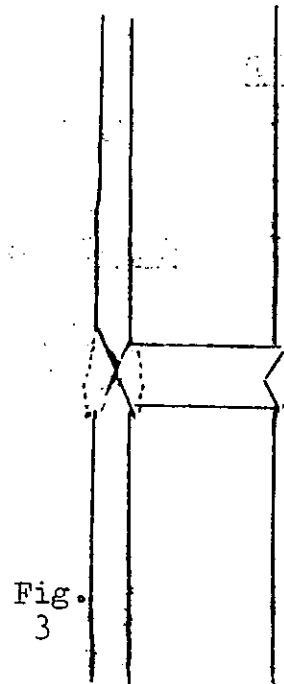
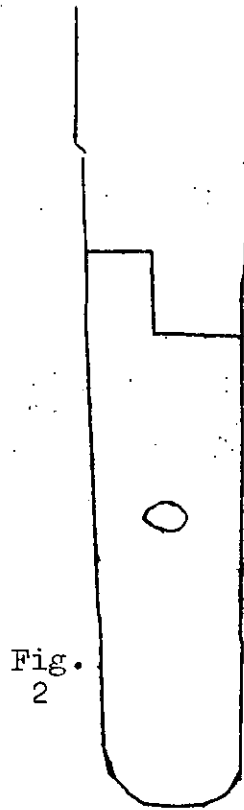
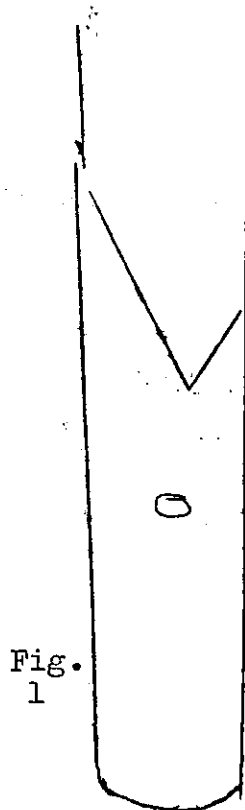
A. A swordsmith should fill in the signature, level off the excess and repatinate.

Q. Rumours have it that there are some people who can repair hagire.

A. If this is done, the area loses material and will always be noticeable. A perfect repair is just a rumour.

Q. What about later signatures on shortened blades?

A. Most are false, but a responsible swordsmith should say who shortened the blade and what original name was on it.



OSHIGATA

A reminder to members who may have difficulties in reading tangs through inadequate references, if they care to send an oshigata (a rubbing of the tang) to the programme secretary, he will send you all the available information on the smith or the inscription. Please remember to make a rubbing of the whole tang, both sides, and not just the inscription.

NEW MEMBERS

A.A. Tora 98 Roding Lane South, Redbridge, Ilford, Essex.  
 D.Gowland 52 Buckingham Road, Bletchley, Milton Keynes  
 J.R. Wiest 1236 McClellan Ave. No.1, Los Angeles,  
 California 90025, U.S.A.  
 G. Phebus 5903 Holton Lane, Temple Hills, Maryland  
 20031, U.S.A.  
 A.J. Cohn 324 Oak Lane, Richmond, VA. 23276, U.S.A.  
 M.R. Notis Dept. of Metallurgy & Materials Science,  
 Prof. Whitaker Laboratory Bldg.No.5, Lehigh Univ.  
 Bethlehen, PA.18015, U.S.A.

RESIGNED

C.W. Arnold First National City Bank, 336 Strand WC2R 1HB  
 (3rd)

CHANGE OF ADDRESS to:

C. Allen, 115 Sydenham Park Road, London S.E.26  
 C. Jackson Terrasse Appartement, Moulin de Valcluse,  
 Auribeau-sur-Siagne, Alpes Maritimes, France