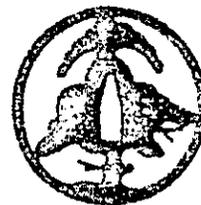


THE TO-KEN SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

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

PROGRAMME 93

SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER, 1976

Programme Editor

Clive Sinclair
61 Norfolk Crescent
Sidcup, Kent DA15 8

The Meetings are held at the Princess Louise Public House in High Holborn. To get there, from Holborn, Kingsway underground, cross Kingsway and the P.L. is 150 yards along on the left hand side.

December Meeting, December 5th: A talk on the comparison of feudal Scotland and feudal Japan by Mike Mortimer

January Meeting, January 3rd: Our resident pole-arms expert, Dave Parker, will be giving a talk on naginata and yari, so bring interesting examples along.

EDITORIAL

Once again the AGM has been and gone. As is frequent on these occasions attendance was minimal. No new nominations were received and it was agreed that the present committee should continue in office for the coming year.

Anyway, on to the future. We are almost at Christmas now, so I would like to take this opportunity of wishing you the season's greetings, and hope next year is a good one for collecting. As the holiday is so long this year, I have prepared a good edition of the programme to get you through those boring few days.

The November meeting was a film show about sword making and what follows, for you unfortunate enough to have been unable to attend, is a commentary on it. As it is a Japanese culture film, and not made for sword 'experts', some may find it fairly basic, but I think it is of interest anyway.

Katana Kaji - Japanese Swordsmith

From the earliest times Japanese smiths have forged swords in a way that has made them famous throughout the world. Present day smiths carry on the tradition to prevent it becoming a lost art since swords are no longer used for fighting.

In this film a modern swordsmith living in Nagano Prefecture, shows the progressive steps in forging a blade. He is Mr Miyairi, a blacksmith who, in 1935, decided to try his hand at sword-smithing.

The picture opens, showing students gathering straw which will be burnt to produce straw ash, a necessary ingredient in producing sword steel. To obtain iron of the same quality as was used in olden times, old iron kettles made from sand iron ore are purchased in the markets and junk yards. These are broken up into small pieces and melted in a charcoal fire to make the material called oroshigane or scrap iron. This is a simple refinement. Some smiths gather old iron nails from wrecked or burned buildings.

Even during the last war when inferior swords were being made for the army, Mr Miyairi continued his studies in making swords in the old way. He is now considered one of the most celebrated of about 200 smiths making swords in the old traditional manner. He is rated as a "Living National Treasure" in Japan.

The broken pieces from the old kettles are piled on a sort of spatula made of ball steel or tanahagane, then wrapped in paper that has been dipped in clay mud to hold them together while they get hot enough to forge, and to prevent oxidation and sealing. The straw ash is sprinkled over the mud coating to act as a flux.

The swordsmith begins work at 5 o'clock in the morning.

The students are hammering, the speed and force of which, are paced by Mr Miyairi with a small hammer. Exact regulation of the hammering is very important and requires great concentration.

The bellows forcing air into the forge controls the amount of heat and is operated only by Mr Miyairi. The seat near the bellows is called the Yokaza or side seat, where the most skilled worker is to sit, which indicates the importance of pushing the bellows.

The preparation of the various kinds of steel used in a sword is called underforging. The kind now being forged uses scrap iron to make kawagane - skin steel which forms the outside laminations of the blade.

To produce a sword which will never break or bend and will cut

well, requires a lamination process using three or more kinds of steel. Besides the Kawagane skin steel, there is a slightly softer shingane or core steel in the centre of the blade, and a very hard tool steel to form the edge which must remain sharp in rough usage. This is like a cold chisel edge

Now we see the Kawagane being forged repeatedly, in a pulling and folding method that purifies the steel while containing carbon with it to produce the exact hardness desired for each kind. The number of times it is folded determines the carbon content and hardness. Powdered charcoal is added to the mud coating and is worked into the steel in the hammering.

When this has been accomplished, it is drawn into a bar and cut into short lengths. When a supply of each kind of steel has been prepared the sword smith is ready to start on the sword.

Since the earliest times a holiday in honour of the bellows has been celebrated on November 8th every year, which consists of a feast of rice, boiled with red beans, for the family and students. This is a welcome respite for the students, who have spent long hours cutting charcoal into small even pieces or pounding straw.

On this day of rest, Miyairi takes pleasure in going out with his family to the Chikuna river, or hunting persimons in the mountains.

Most of the work for the students at first is charcoal cutting, to produce pieces of the exact size deemed most efficient. It is made from pinewood they have cut in the nearby mountains and burned themselves.

Now we have come to the start of the actual sword forging. The edge metal, core steel and skin pieces are assembled and bound together to be heated and forged into one piece, which may take many heatings and forgings until the smith is satisfied they are well stuck together. After this the blade is extended by hammering to the full length of the sword. This is called sunobe - rough extension. It is quite difficult to extend the sword in this manner without the laminations becoming separated. A mark is put on the handle to indicate the edge side, so there will be no mistake. When fully extended the handle is cut off and the tang is formed.

Next the point is cut on an angle and forged, which is called boshi-zukuri.

Now with repeated heating and hammering the edge is thinned down, bringing it to its final rough sword shape. It has taken about 15 days from the beginning of the underforging to this point.

Now the sword shape is further refined, by scraping with a draw-shave and filing. Even these tools have to be made by Mr Miyairi, as store-bought ones soon wear out.

Now comes the hardening of the edge. If the whole sword were hardened it would be too brittle and likely to break in battle, so the blade is coated with clay which is then scraped thin along the edge, to permit the edge to get hot enough for hardening without the body of the sword getting too hot. In scraping the mud off the edge the pattern can be varied and this produces the beautiful temper lines, so characteristic of Japanese blades.

When ready, the blade is held over the fire until the proper heat has been attained and then plunged into cold water. In order to observe the colour properly this is done in a darkened room in the evening. This is the most critical moment in the swordmaking for a slight amount too much heat can ruin the blade. These temperatures, and even the temperature of the water it is plunged into, are the closely guarded secrets of each smith. A slight reheating and second plunging in water serve to slightly reduce the hardness of the edge, makes it tougher and is called tempering.

Next, any warping or correction of curvature is taken care of and the smith does a rough grinding to expose possible flaws. If OK, the tang is finished and a pattern of file marks added. The hole for the handle peg is punched or drilled, and the blade is sent to the polisher.

Mr Fujishiro the polisher has been at his trade for 30 years like his father before him. The beauty of a sword depends mostly on the work of the polisher, as it takes a great deal of skill to bring out the fine points and colour of the steel.

After confirming the workmanship and beauty of the blade, Miyairi engraves his signature.

Mr Miyairi's object in making swords is not to produce a weapon for killing, but to perpetuate an art that produces objects of great beauty.

Strangely, in the last programme we had a poem on tsuba and here's one about a sword. Fred Stride supplied it and wrote the short preamble.

Poems about Japanese swords in the English Language are rare. When one is by a Nobel prize winning poet, W.B. Yeats, it is of great interest. Presumably Yeats was given the sword by Sato-san in the late 1920's, as far as I am able to deduce. A.S.

MY TABLE

Two heavy trestles and a board,
 Where Sato's gift, a changeless sword,
 By pen and paper lies,
 That it may moralise
 My days out of their aimlessness.
 A bit of an embroidered dress
 Covers its wooden sheath.
 Chaucer had not drawn a breath
 When it was forged. In Sato's house,
 Curved like a new moon, moon luminous
 It lay for five hundred years.
 Yet, if no change appears
 No moon, only an aching heart
 Conceives a changeless work of art.
 Our learned men have urged
 That when and where 'twas forged.
 A marvellous accomplishment,
 In printing or in pottery, went
 From father unto son
 And through the centuries ran
 And seemed unchanging like the sword.
 Soul's beauty being most adored,
 Men and their business took
 The soul's unchanging look;
 For the most rich inheritor
 Knowing that none would pass Heaven's door
 That loved inferior art
 Had such an aching heart
 That he, although a country's talk
 For silken clothes and stately walk
 Had working wits, it seems
 Juno's peacock screamed.

In order to help some of our newer members to understand how styles developed, I have written the following on one of the five major schools of the Koto period, the Soshu-den. My thanks to Alan Bale who gave it the once over and added a few extra bits.

The Development of Soshu-den

The Soshu-den was one of the famous Gokaden (five schools) of

the Koto period. I thought it might be of interest to make a few notes on some of the smiths. What follows may be a little sketchy, I am afraid.

Blades of the mid-Kamakura period, of the type called Ikubizaki-tachi had a short stout point with a groove running up past the yokote line (fig 1). They had "Niku" or meat (fig 2), that is to say thickness of the blade above the edge; it is said that these blades, when used against the leather armour of the mongol invaders in 1280, did not cut well. The Soshu-den blades that developed as a direct result of this had a wider mihaba, thinner Kasare and lacked "Niku" (fig 3). They were of a more complex construction and had a longer kissahi, all features of which enabled them to cut better (fig 4). The longer Kissaki (point) meant that if the blade chipped it could be reshaped whereas on the Ikubizaki-tachi chips usually went through the hardened edge of the boshi.

Kunimitsu is attributed with founding the school. The only known examples of his work are dated between 1293 and 1321. Most examples are of short swords, of superb quality displaying incredible skill in the workmanship and the few long swords are of equal, if not superior quality.

All his blades have a surface grain of dense mokume mixed with fine lines forming straight or wavy parallel layers. His temper lines are of suguha or chu suguha, and all display both kinsiji and sunegashi in abundance.

Born in 1250 and living until 1312, he lived at Kamakura in Sagami province. His personal name was Shintogo and his blades were signed simply Kunimitsu. The Soshu style was further developed by his very able student, Yukimitsu.

Yukimitsu blades, understandably showed great similarity to Shintogo Kunimitsu, although as well as suguha and chu suguha, there are also examples of his work with midare and hitaswa. All his signed works known to exist are tanto, and the one in the Compton catalogue is of finely grained itame-hada with thick ji-nie, and abounds with Yo and Kinsuji. Apparently it is difficult in many cases to tell the difference between some Yukimitsu blades and those of Yamoto-den. One clear difference is the presence of some amount of straight grain, somewhere along the ji-gane, on Yamoto blades.

Known as Goro Nyodo Yukimitsu, he was born in 1199 and died in 1280 although he is sometimes dated to the early 14th century, which seems more likely. He signed his blades "Soshu Kamakura (NO) Ju Yukimitsu", or simply just "Yukimitsu". He was the father

of possibly the most famous smith of all time, Masamune.

Masamune learned his art from both his father and Shintogo Kunimitsu. He is first mentioned in a book called Kiani Meizukushi in 1381. The vast majority of his authentic works are unsigned as Soshu blades were nearly always "Chumon-uchi", that is made to special order. There were as many factories in Sagami as there were in the late Muromachi period in Bizen, Mino and other provinces. As blades made by an officially employed swordsmith were usually not signed (as in the case of the Senju-in smiths of Yamato who worked for large temples) it has been suggested that Masamune worked for the Kamakura government and that is why his blades are not signed. Masamune's long blades were generally slender with small kissaki. It was left to his brilliant pupil Sadamune to develop the typical Soshu style of broad blade and long kissaki, which leads us onto the famous Masamune-jutetsu or ten pupils of Masamune. They were supposedly taught by both Masamune and Sadamune and were:-

RAI KUNISUGU of Yamashiro (1270-1347) grandson of Rai Kuniyuki.

MASABE KUNISHIGE of Yamashiro (1270-1347)

KINJU (KANESHIGE) of Mino (1232-1322)

KANEMITSU of Bizen, son of Osafune Kagemitsu (1280-1358)

SHIDZU KANEUJI of Mino but originally of Yamoto (1284-1344)

GO YOSHIHIRO of Etchu (1299-1325)

NAOTSUNA of Iwami (1280-1348)

CHOGI (NAGAYOSHI) of Bizen (1288-1370)

SA of Chikuzen, son of Jitsua and grandson of Sairen (1277-1356)

SAYEKI NORISHIGE of Etchu.

Sadamune was by far the most outstanding of all Masamune's pupils and he in turn had three outstanding pupils (Sadamune no santetsu). Most of the above smiths formed 'schools' of their own.

Another smith of Soshu-den was Norishige. He lived in Etchu province at the end of the Kamakura period, and studied under the founder Shintogo Kunimitsu. The school predominates in tanto, and Norishige made some particularly good pieces. His style is characterised by his peculiar jigane, which contains abundant chikei, which resembles pine tree bark. It is so unique to Norishige that it is known as Norishige's matsu-kawa-hada (pine-tree bark damask). His blades also have a marked uchi-zori (reverse bend towards the cutting edge) and a sharply pointed kissaki. This shape is known

as takenoko-zori (bamboo sprout-shaped curve) and is found exclusively on Norishige's blades, so if you are lucky enough to come across one you should have little trouble in identifying it!

These are just a few of the smiths of Soshu-den, which carried right on into the Shinto period. The schools of Masamune and the Tayena school were active, as previously stated, in the Kaamakura period which was followed by the Yoshino period (1334-1394) in which both SA and Chogi founded schools and the early Seki School made its appearance. The Soshu school carried through into the Muramachi period (1394-1467) and was joined by the Nobukuni and Tegai schools. In the period of internal wars Sengoku-jidai (1467-1596), not surprisingly we see a number of new schools starting. Working in the Soshu style were the schools of Shimada, Shitahara, Fuyuhiro, Seki, Hiroyoshi and of course, Soshu. After this, with the advent of the Shinto period, they began to lose their individual characteristics of the Gokaden, and apart from periodic attempts to revive the styles, they were lost forever.

CGES.

(see article "Interview with Four Japanese Sword Experts" for further details of Masamune-jitetsu).

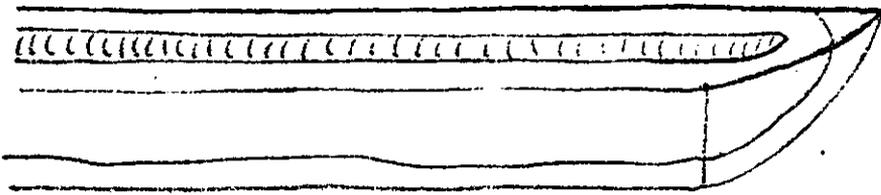


FIG. 1

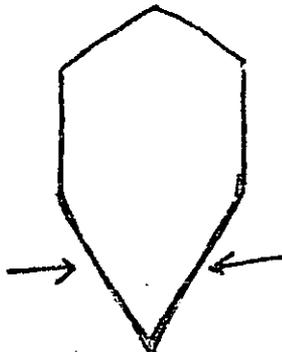


FIG. 2

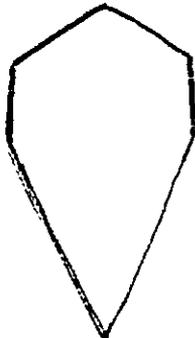


FIG. 3

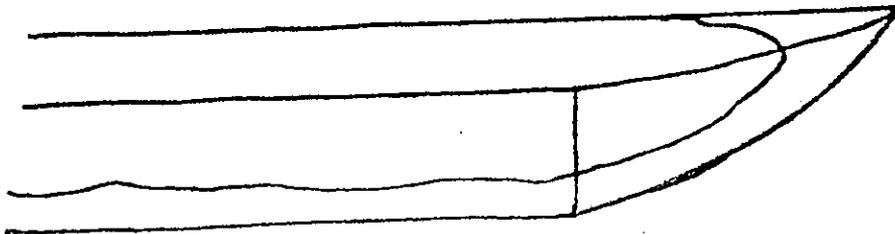


FIG. 4

"Newspaper Clippings"

Fred Stride has passed on the following newspaper clippings from the English language paper, the Japan Times. They are from the pre war period, when the militarists were endeavouring to instill martial spirit in the populace and revive the old samurai virtues. The Japan Times was a government sponsored paper and, as such, was always suspect of being a propoganda vehicle. The first two articles refer to the sword society that was founded at the Yasukuni shrine, first its conception and secondly the opening ceremony (also see programme 92, article entitled YASUNORI).

**SWORD LOVERS TO BUILD
OLD WORKSHOP AT KUDAN**

**War Minister Is Leading Figure
in Movement for Revival of
National Art**

With the object of reviving the art of Japanese sword manufacture in the classic manner, a swordsmith's workshop is to be erected in the compounds of the Yasukuni Military Shrine, Kudan, Kojimachi, in the near future. It is reported by the Nichi Nichi. The undertaking will cost ¥300,000, which already has been subscribed by Mrs. Mitani, a wealthy widow in Kanda, and a few other interested persons.

Together with the building of the workshop, an organization to be known as the Nihonto Tanrenkai or the Japan Sword Welding and Tempering Society, is expected to be formed, with military leaders as its nucleus, including the War Minister, Lieutenant-General Sadao Araki.

The manufacture of swords is expected to be carried on regularly and for this purpose the society, among others, will engage the services of Mr. Teiji Tsukiyama and Mr. Toshihiro Miyaguchi, both well-known swordsmiths belonging to the classical school. Mr. Tsukiyama, is a resident of Osaka, and belongs to a family of sword-makers, which is said to date back over 1,000 years.

SWORD SMITHS ART STARTED AT TEMPLE

Dedication of Ancient-Style
Shop at Military Shrine Is
Impressive Affair

ARTISANS ARE INSTALLED

Impressive Rites Mark Seating
of Masters and Their Dis-
ciples Before Altar

Establishment of the ancient art of the sword smith in the compound of Yasukuni Shrine atop Kudan hill was marked yesterday by the attendance of more than 60 army dignitaries and other notables at the dedication of an ancient-style structure according to Shinto rites.

In ceremonies taking place before the entrance to the building, the chief priest of the military shrine read an announcement of the opening of the unusual shop for the welding of Japanese swords after the olden fashion. There was a purification ceremony, offerings were placed on the altar, and a ceremony symbolical of the actual start of sword-welding there was held.

Part of the money used in erecting the structure, which has a roof of copper plates, came from Mrs. Takeko Koinine, widow of a wealthy lacquer dealer in Kanda. She contributed ¥1,600,000 to the army and navy in accordance with the will of her husband.

In a setting of large sacred trees decorated with paper strips of five different colors, War Minister Araki introduced Mr. Toshihiro Miyaguchi, 37, and Mr. Tokutaro Kajiyama, 53, well known masters in Japanese sword welding, and conferred professional names on them, Mr. Miyaguchi receiving the name of "Yasuhiro," and Mr. Kajiyama the name of "Yasutoku."

The masters were seated before the altar as the ceremonies began. Their four disciples were led into the place by Rear Admiral Koizumi and seated beside their masters. All the sword smiths were dressed in traditional costumes.

I think the following article is talking about a smith who worked through from Meiji period. He normally signed his works "Mino Seki ju nin Watanabe Kanenaga" and is listed in Hawleys KA 821 c.

SWORD-MAKER OF SAKI

By MARTIN S. HAYDEN

In a little town lives an old man whose name has been almost forgotten in the glory of his title, a title handed down through the centuries.

Sixty-five years ago his father named him Watanabe Kanenaga, but the name is known by but few today. To residents of other parts of Japan and to the few foreign travelers who visit his home he is "The Sword-maker of Saki;" to the residents of this Hie half-urban, half agricultural city he is "The Master."

To the Japanese the sword borders on the sacred. With an ancient mirror and a jeweled necklace, it is one of the three imperial treasures which are handed to a Japanese Emperor upon his ascent to the throne. The mirror is symbolic of the fact that nothing can be hidden from the ruler's eyes. The necklace was once owned by the Goddess of the Sun and is emblematic of the fact that from her the ruler of Japan traces his descent. The sword is the symbol of the power of the Emperor over foreign foes.

The Japanese maintain that their swords are the finest in the world. The ancient feudal warriors regarded their swords much as did the famed knights of King Arthur's Round Table and there are tales of warriors who rose to power on the strength of their weapons and sank to obscurity when their swords were stolen.

The most renowned of the Japanese sword makers was Mogoroku of Saki, who lived 450 years ago. Mageroku had two assistants, and when he died he passed his title to one of them, who became known in Saki as "The Master," and who in turn trained a young man to take his place. So the art lived on.

Watanabe Kanega, "The Master" of today, lives in a house which is, if anything, a little less pretentious than the homes of his neighbors. His assistant explains that he could be rich, but that the old man considers himself an artist and attaches a sentimental value to his products.

Money in itself cannot buy his swords. Many times he has turned away prospective customers with money because he regarded them as unworthy of possessing a Saki sword. To others, penniless but worthy, he has often presented respect.

The visitor entering the workshop of "The Master" removes his shoes and dons grass slippers, for although the floor is earthen, it is the inner sanctum of "The Master" and must not be soiled.

Chairs are brought and the visitors are seated in a half circle around the furnace. When they are seated, a signal is given that they must rise and "The Master" enters, followed by his assistants.

Watanabe Kanenaga at 65 is a shriveled little man. For this ceremony of forging a new blade he is dressed in a flowing white linen robe marked with red on the sleeves and fastened in front with a red cord and tassels. On his forehead is a little boxlike wicker hat held by a cord in the back. He carries a small hammer.

His assistants are also in white and wear tall, peaked caps of lacquered wicker. On their feet are white socks and they carry sledge hammers. As "The Master" crouches before the fire, they stand at rigid attention.

With an old hand bellows "The Master" awakens the smoldering fire and heaps charcoal upon it. Then he inserts a piece of steel about as big as his two hands and covers it first with fine sand and then with burning coals. Finally, he draws the steel forth with a pair of tongs and places it on the anvil before him.

"The Master" strikes the first blow with his small hammer. Then the senior of his two assistants bring his sledge down and then the younger. The motion assumes a noisy rhythm—first the clink of the hammer, then the crash of the two sledges, then the hammer again. It continues until "The Master" signals that the iron is cold and inserts it once more into the sand and coals. Then the process is repeated.

For perhaps half an hour the writer and the other visitors watched the beating and pounding. They saw the lump of metal gradually flattened and then turned on its side and flattened again. A young Japanese who started to light a cigarette drew for his irreverence a nudge from his companion and injured looks from "The Master's" assistants. Finally "The Master" placed the piece of beaten metal in the corner and led his visitors outside.

Through an interpreter he explained to the foreigner that he and his assistants would work at the forge for ten more days on this new blade, pounding it and heating it. After this the manual labor of the assistants would be done and they would become students, sitting at "The Master's" feet as he ground and polished the blade. It is in this tedious work that the secret of Japanese sword making lies, and only "The Master" fully understands it.

It is a perfect system, and such a student as the Saki "Master," by employing it, is able to produce one perfect blade in every hundred tries. This goes to an honored man who has won his admiration (of whom Adolf Hitler was one). Out of the remaining ninety-nine, about ten are, as a rule, describable to "The Master's" opinion as "Good blades," and from these the sword collectors make their selection, often paying as high as \$1,000. The rest "The Master" considers unworthy to go forth as examples of his craftsmanship.

I think in the above article (written by an American) that for the town of Saki, you should read Seki, and the Mogoroku swordsmith referred to is probably the sho-dai (1st generation) Kanemoto. If my memory serves me right, this was his fore-name, and this just about ties up with the "450 years ago" bit.

How often have we looked in an old loft or cupboard, knowing the impossible odds, but just hoping that if not a national treasure, at least a clean shown blade would be there, just waiting to be "liberated" by us? Well the following piece illustrates that it has happened, albeit in Japan. It would appear that the writer is under the impression that Osafune is a smith's name, however I will not censor or speculate:-

RARE OSAFUNE SWORD FOUND

Takinogawa Resident Discovers Priceless Blade Of Bizen
Artisan Hidden Under Rented House

Whose sword?

That is the query confronting the Takinogawa police station in regard to a blade, in perfect condition, bearing the signature of Osafune of Bizen, a famous swordsmith of the Kamakura Period.

Mr. Hidego Uragami, Kami-Nakazato, Takinogawa, brought the sword to the police Thursday. He said that while sweeping under the floor of the rented house into which he had just moved, he had discovered the blade. Fencing experts at the police station crowded around to see the bright steel weapon. It is easily worth thousands of yen, they said, if not priceless.

But whose blade is it?

Mr. Uragami said he found it. The landlord, however, owns the land and the house, and he said nothing

about throwing in a costly sword with the gas fixtures and the city water. The police could, under certain conditions, confiscate the sword as a dangerous weapon. A previous occupant of the house might lay a claim to the blade, but if so, why did he hide it. Was it stolen?

After all the above parties have had their say or been investigated, the Committee for the Preservation of National Treasures of the Department of Education may declare the sword a national treasure and place a ban upon it.

Meanwhile, the Takinogawa police are rushing about in motor cars and telephoning—making a great to-do over a blade forged in the middle ages, with the due Shinto rites, by Osafune of Bizen, artisan under the

It seems that this newspaper runs regular articles under the general heading of 'Tales of Japanese Swords'. Here are a few examples:-

"Rosary-hanger"

Priest Nichiren, the founder of the Nichiren sect of Japan's Buddhism, went to the province of Kai, on his way to Mt. Minobu, in the fifth month (May), 1274. He had a devoted admirer in Sanenaga Hakki, who presented the priest with a sword, 2 ft. 7.7 in. long, made by Tsunetsugu Aoye. Generally speaking, no Buddhist priests wore a sword, but Priest Nichiren was so pleased with this sword, that he carried it, under his black robe of Buddhism, on his pilgrimages, his favorite rosary often hanging from its hilt.

Upon his death, which took place at Ikegami, Tokyo, in 1282, the sword was kept as a treasure of the Kuon-ji Temple on Mt. Minobu. During the era of Kanel (1624-1643), it is said, Lord Yorinobu Tokugawa of Kai province, sent a swordsmith over to the temple once a year to grind the sword lest it should become rusty. A few years ago the sword "Rosary-hanger" was specified by the Japanese Government as a national treasure.

"Hatcho-Nembutsu"

Magotchi Saiga was a brave soldier, who distinguished himself by killing Torii, the lord of the Fushimi castle, when Tokugawa laid siege to the castle in 1600.

Saigo got a new sword, which he wanted to test. One moonlight night he went out looking for a man he could test his sword on. Soon a man came along the highway, innocently repeating the Buddhist invocation of Nembutsu or chanting "Namu-Amida-Butsu!" Saiga struck at him in what is called "surplice-way," as we call the way of killing a man from a shoulder slopeway down to the other side of the body. He was sure that his sword ran through the body, but the man walked on repeating the same invocation "Namu-Amida-Butsu" over and over again. Saiga followed him, till at a corner of the road the man dropped dead, his body parted in two. The man walked for eight cho (cho—about 169 meters) after his body was cut through. Hence the sword was called "Hatcho-Nembutsu," meaning "Chanting the invocation for eight cho."

The Lady of the Sword

"No ordinary play would do on such an occasion," said Tomomori Taira when the courtiers met together in the first month (January) of 1179 to congratulate the birth of the Emperor Antoku. "We are tired of card-play and fan-play. I have a new idea."

Tomomori had a large cabinet, apparently empty, brought in by two men and added:

"Here is an apparently empty chest. It contains something in it. I ask all the present to quote a 31-syllable poem each indicating what he or she may think this chest contains. The poem need not be your original one, but it can be quoted from some poets. The article in the chest shall be given to one who makes a good guess."

Over twenty poems were written on the tanzaku (a piece of paper for writing a poem on) and placed on the chest, and Tomomori read them one after another.

One lady quoted a poem on cotton from the Manyoshu, as the chest looked light. She failed. Another wrote a poem written by Yakamochi Otomo on "yellow-metal" meaning gold. This guess was no better. A third guessed that the chest contained a mirror, but she, too, was a failure. A fourth was a poem on a gem, but the chest contained no gems. In this way did Tomomori read on till he came to a poem, which read in effect something like the following:

"Over the old cottage,

Riding a tiger

Into an abyss,

To kill the shark and dragon;

How I wish I had a sword."

"This poem makes a right guess. Who wrote it?" said Tomomori.

A girl of 17 or 18 years stepped out to receive the price of a sword. She was the daughter of Koramine, priest of the Dazai shrine, Kyushu. "Now tell me, my little lady," asked the Emperor Takakura, who looked with interest at the poetic game from behind the Imperial blind or screen of bamboo. "What mad-sou guess the sword."

"I had a dream last night" the young court-lady said shyly. "In which I saw a sword decorated with a dragon carved on its hilt."

The young lady was subsequently called the Lady of the Sword. But in 1185, when the Emperor Antoku went to the bottom of the sea after the battle of Dan-no-Ura, she accompanied the young emperor to the other existence by committing self-immolation.

"Kanemitsu the bean-cutter" and
"Kanemitsu the rifle-cutter"

Kanemitsu was a swordsmith who lived in the province of Bizen in the thirteenth century. A farmer, who wore one made by him, carried a bag of red Indian beans on his back. The bag had a small hole, through which the beans dropped as he walked. So sharp was the sword that even

beans that touched the blade while falling was cut in two. Hence the sword was called "Kanemitsu the bean-cutter." A retainer of Kenshin Uyesugi demanded the sword of the farmer and it was later presented to Uyesugi.

Uyesugi had another sword also made by Kanemitsu. During the battle of Kawanaka-jima, which was fought between Kenshin Uyesugi and Shingen Takeda in 1547-1561 Uyesugi rode in the enemy's camp and killed with a single blow a gunner who happened to level his rifle at him. It was discovered, to the great surprise of the Kai clan belonging to Shingen Takeda, that Uyesugi struck the gunner's head off, cutting the barrel of his rifle half through to boot. His sword, which was made by Kanemitsu, the swordsmith, was on this account called "Kanemitsu the rifle-cutter."

"Fire-Flies"

In the second month (February), 1336, Takauji Ashikaga took refuge in Kyushu, where he was accorded with warm reception at the hands of the local chiefs, excepting Lord Kikuchi, the royalist, who turned a strong front against him. A decisive battle was fought at Tataru between Kikuchi and Ashikaga.

Three brothers of Daiguji (Shinto priest) of the Aso shrine fought bravely under Kikuchi. It was a losing battle for Kikuchi and the three fought desperately at a disadvantage. All was well-nigh over with the three brothers. So the two elder brothers persuaded the youngest, Korezumi by name, to retreat. The death of the three would have meant the extinction of their family, and in our feudal days nothing was regarded a greater disgrace upon a samurai than the extinction of his family was. With great reluctance, Korezumi obeyed. On coming to a quiet place, he took a rest on a stone, and looked at his sword, the blade of which, as nickel as a saw, eloquently spoke how desperate the battle. There Korezumi took a nap, and in a dream he saw numberless fireflies perching on the nickel blade of the sword.--When he awoke, however, the blade had been all mended, and Korezumi attributed the mysteri-

ous mending of his sword to the protection of the deity of the Aso shrine, of which his fathers had been the priests.

This sword, which was called "Fire-flies" on account of the incident, was made by Kunitoshi Rai, who died in 1344 at the age of 105 years, and it was specified as a national treasure of Japan a few years ago.

SURF RIDER

"I have outlived my honour" said Hidetsugu Toyotomi, the ex-Shogun, to his retainers upon his receipt of an order from the Great Taigo, his uncle, condemning him to death. "I have outlived my honour, not because I hesitate to die, but because I waited for his messenger. Had I killed myself before his arrival, I should have been suspected of taking my own life lest my suspected betrayal might be established. I accept the Shogunate command in order to establish my innocence."

Hidetsugu Toyotomi, suspected of having made a secret plan against Great Taigo, his uncle, had been confined on Mt. Koya, the Mecca of Japan's Buddhism. Only July 15, 1598, Great Taigo sent Masanori Fukushima carrying his Shogunate message condemning Hidetsugu to death. Several of his faithful retainers offered to commit self-immolation, but Hidetsugu discharged all his retainers, excepting three young pages, who insisted upon accompanying their ill-fated master to death. They were Sanjuro Oka, 18 years old, Shudono, 19 years old, and Mansaku Fuwa, 17 years old, and the ex-Shogun handed them three swords called "Yoshimitsu Awadaguchi," "Kuniyoshi Awadaguchi" and "Toshiro Shinogi," respectively, with which to commit suicide.

"I am coming soon after you," the ex-Shogun said to the three pages. "Go in peace, all of you."

"Excuse us for going before you" each of the three pages said. "We will prepare the way for your honorable arrival in the other life."

After witnessing the calm self-immolation of the young men, the ex-Shogun took up his sword made by Masamune, the best swordsmith Japan has produced and then turning to Lord Sasabe, he said:

"Now you assist me in my committing suicide."

In Japan harakiri is committed by cutting the front sideways and the kaishakunin or seconder cuts the head of the suicide off. When the ex-Shogun had cut his front sideways, he made a sign by raising his left hand to tell Sasabe to wait

until ~~the seconder~~ Hidetsugu cut vertically in
allows himself to fall → on his front, and then
Sasabe cut → his head off to complete

his suicide. Hidetsugu Toyotomi was twenty-eight years old when he killed himself.

The sword with which Lord Sasabe completed the suicide of the ex-Shogun Hidetsugu was called "Surf-rider" (Nami-no-ri) from an incident which took place at a certain ferry. Two travellers had a quarrel over a trifle. One was a little more reasonable than the other, and did not care to waste his time. So he began to wade across the stream, paying little attention to the angry words of the other, who struck at him from behind. The man, however, waded on for some distance till he dropped dead, his body parting in two. Hence the name of "surf-rider."

The three swords with which the pages committed their self-immolation are still preserved as family treasures in the families of some local peers, though "surf-rider" has been lost.

"Muramasa"

The name of "Muramasa" wrought a dread to the family of Tokugawa. Even Iyeyasu, the founder of the Tokugawa dynasty, dreaded to hear the name of the sword.

On the fifth of the twelfth month (December), 1535, Yoshihiro Abo struck at Nobuyasu, grandfather of Iyeyasu, with a sword made by Muramasa. This was the first time that harm was ever done to the family of Tokugawa by "Muramasa." On the 9th of the third month (March), 1545, Hachiya Iwamatsu, a trusted retainer of Tokugawa, stole into the bedchamber of Hirotada, father of Iyeyasu, and ran his sword through the bed-cover to kill him. Iwamatsu acted under cover of drinking and his hand trembled, so that Hirotada escaped with a slight wound received on his thigh, and

Iwamatsu was killed on the spot. His sword, too, proved to be "Muramasa."

During the siege of the Osaka castle in 1615, Iyeyasu had a narrow escape when Yukimura Sanada struck at him and the sword Sanada wore was a "Muramasa."

Iyeyasu, offended with Nobuyasu, his own son, condemned him to death. Amakata, a Shogunate attendant, was sent to be the witness and seconder of the "suicide graciously granted" to Nobuyasu, for, to a samurai of old, suicide was regarded to be more honorable than execution.

"Amakata" Iyeyasu asked of the witness when he reported on the suicide. "Amakata, tell me how Nobuyasu died."

"Lord Nobuyasu killed himself nobly and admirably."

"But tell me again," Iyeyasu again asked, "what sword you used to complete his suicide."

"Please, my lord, it was, Muramasa," Amakata answered innocently.

"Strange, very strange," Iyeyasu murmured to himself. "My grandfather and father were both wounded with 'Muramasa' and now my own son is killed with 'Muramasa.' It was also a 'Muramasa' with which I hurt myself when a youngster."

The following article is taken from the Journal of the To-Ken Society Volume 1, No. 3:-

— An Interview with Four Japanese Sword Experts —

The following is a transcript of interviews with four Tokyo sword experts carried out by Mr. Ben Vincent of Kingston, Georgia, U.S.A., with the help of Mr. Teruo Nakanishi, who acted as interpreter and translator. The interviews were in fact undertaken separately, but, since substantially the same points were raised in each case, it has been thought desirable to combine them together as though all four men had been present at the same time, so that the reader can more readily draw comparisons between their various opinions and see where they agree or disagree.

The four experts interviewed were Mr. Takeo Honnami, Mr. Albert Yamanaka, Mr. Susumu Kashima and Mr. Kentaro Yoshikawa. Mr. Honnami is a sword appraiser and polisher of note. Eldest son of the famous polisher Hirai Chiba, he was adopted by the Honnami family as an heir. He has lived all his life amidst swords and studied under Honnami Ringa as well as his real father, who, incidentally, also taught Dr. Homma. Mr. Honnami is now 57. Mr. Yamanaka began his formal studies in 1947, but, as his father was a collector his interest goes much further back than that. He studied under Honnami Kosen and was the only personal student that this great master ever took. Mr. Kashima, one of the officials of the National Museum at Ueno Park, began the serious study of swords, as he says "very late in life", when he was 26 in fact! Although his father was a Kentei-ka he says he had no particular interest in swords until 1948 when he came to the Ueno Museum in an office job and came to appreciate the greatness of swords. He was taught by Junji Homma and Kanichi Sato as a personal pupil. Mr. Yoshikawa is one of the greatest living sword polishers. He has studied swords for over 35 years and his teacher was his father, Yoshikawa Tsunejuro.

Having thus introduced the "panel", we may now proceed with the interview:

Vincent: Many of the younger Japanese seem to have very little interest in swords. How do you feel about the future of sword collecting and study in Japan?

Honnami: For the Meiji, Taisho and early Showa periods I have watched the movements of the sword world in Japan. There is a difference between all these periods and today. There has been a ten-fold increase in the number of people who really love the sword and I am encouraged by this phenomenon. The younger generation have a strong interest in swords. For instance, the sword exhibitions that are held in various areas attract more young people than do exhibitions of any other form of Japanese art.

Yamanaka: The younger people seem to get discouraged because they have very few opportunities to see really good blades. The trend in the last ten or twelve years seems to be that if a man gets a really good blade he keeps it to himself and rarely shows it—and most of the good blades have been bought by the larger collectors. But there are still many good blades that we can see in Japan's museums and some private collectors are still glad to show a few of their blades. Apart from this the various government regulations requiring the police registration of blades, involving complications every time a blade changes hands—coupled with even greater complexity if the blade is of any great merit—say National Treasure or Kumenko-Kozai—all tend to make collecting rather difficult, and—ultimately—real interest depends on being able to collect to some extent.

Kashima: There is no need to worry. Many young people come to the museum and notice our sword exhibits as well as visiting blade exhibitions in other parts of the country. This creates an interest. Also swords are in our blood. As Japanese we realise that swords are not merely instruments with which to cut and we feel real affection toward Katana by reason of our Japanese heritage.

Yoshikawa: Before the war only the older people had a interest in swords, but now the younger generation is quite interested and Kentei-ka consider that sword collecting has a bright future.

Vincent: What are your views on sword collecting in Europe and America?

Honnami: I cannot comment about Europe, but I think that true sword lovers are mainly in the United States, there is even a branch of our NBTHK, so sword collecting must be very popular. I am sad, however, because in America there are no people who can teach using actual examples. It is difficult to learn to identify blades from pictures and descriptions in books. Real understanding comes much more readily from actual examples. So America needs a leader who can teach from examples. I hope to visit the United States sometime, and when this happens I would like to try to help American students of the sword.

Yamanaka: In Europe I would suppose that the prospects are good, because there should be as many Nippon-To in Europe as in the U.S.A. Europeans were in Japan

much earlier than the Americans and therefore there could be more swords. Everyone knows that there are more sword fittings in Europe than America—or there were, if Americans have not by now bought out most of the European collections. As for the U.S.A. there is no reason why it should not improve. There must be a lot of blades still "in hiding" and if the interest becomes great enough, these might turn up.

Kashima: Until rather recent times real appreciation of the Japanese sword has been found only in the limited area of Japan. In the future I want others to know of the beauty of the sword—to know what beauty the sword has, and for that reason I am thinking of writing a book on the sword for foreign beginners.

Yoshikawa: I get the impression that most foreigners are content to look at the signature on a blade and accept this as being the true, authentic maker. They will never learn about swords if they do not study authentic examples. They must also study under the right person. In both America and Europe, since the war, quite a few people, many of the younger generation, have become interested in swords. If only they had good teachers they could study academically and correctly—but there are no good teachers.

Vincent: *Could you recommend any books that you feel would be helpful to foreigners who are studying or collecting swords?*

Honnami: I do not know about any—but what about Mr. Yumoto's book?

Yamanaka: As far as I am concerned I do not think there are any books in English with which one can truly follow the sword.

Kashima: I am sorry, but at this time there are no books published for foreigners. I am really very sorry and I think that we will have gradually to begin to include English "subtitles" in our books. So far only very small books have been published in English. There has been no book with detailed text and illustrations and nothing exists in English to compare with the major Japanese works on the subject.

Yoshikawa: There are no good books for foreigners, that is, there are no books with an academic approach. We are planning to publish one in two or three years, but we are now looking for a translator. We are connected with Mr. Junzo Sato. He could be our translator. Although there are a few non-Japanese books about swords, I cannot recommend them.

Vincent: *Is there any special advice that you would like to give to foreign collectors?*

Honnami: I have never been abroad, but I can imagine your problems. Try to get a blade with an origami and try to get the advice of the people at NBTHK.

Yamanaka: Yes—there is much advice but this advice is very hard to follow. People in the West cannot study swords as they should be studied, so they just collect swords and read whatever information they can get, and, as far as I know there are only two books in English: Yumoto's and what Robinson has translated of Honnami Kōson's work. Apart from this, I think it is becoming more and more difficult to collect swords in the West as interest increases and prices rise, effectively cutting out many who have a true love of swords but cannot compete financially.

Now consider fakes. A sword is a fake only when it has someone else's signature other than that of the man who really made it. If the sword is o-suriage mu-mei, then there is only one man who made it and it is up to us to determine who that was. If a poor sword has been trumped up to be a good sword because it looks like another man's sword; if the original signature has been filed down and another one put on, only then is it a fake sword. Fakes have been produced, I believe, from as early as the beginning of the Kamakura period, and to this very day they are still being made. Now no one would trouble to take a sword of no account, surely it would have to be a "big name", and so we find that practically all the big names without exception have fakes. There is the belief in Japan that the better blades, such as Kotetsu, Kunihiko, Masamune, Go Yoshitomo, Mino Kaneuji, early Osafune blades, early Yamashiro-den such as Sanio or Awataguchi, are mostly fakes. Personally, I would think it safer to say that as much as

50% of these blades would be fakes. If one comes across a "big name" blade, chances are it will be a fake, so if one has not studied and does not know how to differentiate, the best thing to do is to leave it alone. If the price is low, of course, little harm can be done, but the vendor himself may well not know its authenticity and may in good faith be asking a high price. So there is only one way to protect oneself: study, without honest study you will never learn. Almost all students of swords become in the beginning Tengu. A Tengu is a mythical being in Japanese folk-lore who has a nose about one foot long which is always stuck up in the air. Japanese call art collectors who do not know, but who profess to know, "Tengu". These are the people to whom you cannot tell anything: they will not study. So—see that you do not ever become Tengu.

Yoshikawa: Americans send me swords to be polished. Then they get angry when I do not polish them because they are no good. They are very anxious to find a polisher. I appreciate these anxious people. We Japanese on the whole do not understand such anxious people, but we must try to understand these people because they like swords very much. Foreigners need to be taught in a more academic way. Taught in the right way, there are many interesting things to learn about swords.

Vincent: *Have you ever studied sword mounts?*

Honnami: Of course! Not only the blades, but also the Koshirae must be learned if one is to be an apprentice. Today many Daimyo (sic) families own very fine swords. I study their property to study the mounts; that is to say the menuki, fuchi-kashira, kozuka, etc. So I think that I am next to none in this field because I have studied such excellent mounts.

Yamanaka: Yes. Under Amiya or Kokura Omura Soyemon.

Kashima: There has been an interest in blades for many years, but lately the study of sword furniture has increased in popularity. So I have been studying about sword fittings more and more these days. Recently I published a book which relates my personal views about Tsuba. I want to study Tsuba, not only for their enjoyment, but for their history at the same time. As to my teacher, those who specialise in Tsuba are gradually disappearing so I consult Mr. Sato, of the National Museum, whenever I have questions. The study of Tsuba is not yet as systematic as the study of swords, so that I need to consult a specialist occasionally.

Yoshikawa: I have studied all things connected with swords.

Vincent: *As polishers, what part of the polishing process is the most difficult? Are there any schools or makers that present special problems?*

Honnami: When you polish a blade you have to understand the characteristics of the smith as well as its age. You must polish to bring out the special characteristics of each smith. When you use the polishers' stone to remove rust, it is very important to take only the rust away without removing any steel. This is the most important thing and it is also the most difficult. As to your second question, there is no school that is more difficult than any other. If a blade is Soshu-den, I polish it as Soshu-den. If it is Yamashiro-den, then I polish it like Yamashiro-den. If it is Bizen-den, then I polish it as such. You see, a polisher must not only physically polish blades, but he must have a good eye for katana, that is he must be a Kentei-ka.

Yoshikawa: The most important part of polishing swords is not to over-polish. We must avoid grinding down a blade. Another thing is that polishing is different with each generation and a polisher must understand each generation's method of polishing. I have the technique of Nikudori, which is important to fine polishing. So I consider it a point to not over-polish and to understand Nikudori. I would not say that any particular school or maker presents special problems. It is most difficult to polish Mei-To because a polisher cannot improve Mei-To. If smith and polisher are both good, then the sword will be great, but if the smith is good and the polisher not good, the sword will not be great. This is the importance of polishers.

Vincent: *What is your feeling about the name or legend of the sword maker Amakuni? Do you think he ever existed?*

Honnami: Well, the early books tell us there were such men, named Amakuni, Amakura, Amafuji. I think Amakuni had something like ten or more students, but since there are no swords today which, without trace of doubt, can be said to have been made by Amakuni, this is a very difficult question to answer. Probably there was a man named Amakuni who made swords, but there are certainly no swords existing today, which, to my eyes, can be said to be true Amakuni. I think that this is the opinion of many sword experts too.

Kashima: There is no blade signed Amakuni, but the Imperial Household has kept, for centuries, a blade that has been considered to be the work of Amakuni. However I cannot say anything about it yet.

Yoshikawa: Amakuni is a traditional swordsmith. Before Amakuni almost all smiths were naturalised Japanese, that is they were not born in Japan. There was a desire for native Japanese to make better swords than these immigrants, so the first Japanese to better the quality of these other makers was given the title Amakuni. This Amakuni signature is not that of a real person; it is a traditional name, so for this reason there are no actual swords Amakuni. It is just a legendary story.

Vincent: Do you believe in the Masamune-no-ju-tetsu? Were all these men actually pupils of Masamune?

Yamanaka: If you look at any of the "Ten Students" swords, each has some of the characteristics of Masamune. Since they are about the same time as Masamune, or a little later, for both these reasons you could say that they had studied under Masamune. On the other hand maybe they did not. Take Sa; Sa's blades are entirely different from any of the other nine, and, for a smith who was supposed to have studied under Masamune, according to how you look at it you can either recognise Masamune-like characteristics, or, taking another point of view you can see that there are none. Myself, I think that he could very well have studied under Masamune, because the steel of Sa's blades very much resembles the steel of some of Masamune's better works.

Kashima: These ten "pupils" lived in many different parts of the country. I do not think that all of them were the pupils of Masamune, but I can say that some of them made swords like Masamune because they wanted to make blades in the style of Masamune, and some of them made swords in Masamune's style because they actually studied under Masamune. Mino no kuni Shizu Saburo Kaneuji I consider was a pupil in the period of Nanbokucho. I think that he has a very close resemblance to Masamune. Chikuzen Samonji (Sa) is almost as similar in style as Kaneuji. Many people consider men to be pupils by their style, others through data of various sorts. So some smiths under these criteria can be considered pupils. We do not know when the story of ju-tetsu started. Probably it began at the end of the Edo period so, by now there are many vague parts. One way of looking at it is to say that there were smiths at this time who were inspired by Masamune's style and chose to follow it, thus giving the appearance of having been his pupils.

Yoshikawa: Masamune developed his own method of sword making and promoted it throughout Japan. People talk of the "ten disciples", but actually the direct line from Masamune is only two or three men. These two or three men are recognised directly by their styles. They are Sa, Rai Kunitasugu and Kaneuji. The others are just those who adopted Masamune's Soshu-den style, which was very popular at that time. The name "Masamune no ju-tetsu" came into being at a later time.

Vincent: Can you give us your feelings on the relative merits of Kiyomaro and Suishinshi Masahide?

Yamanaka: I do not think that Suishinshi could even come close to Kiyomaro. I also think that it would be wrong to compare the two. Their skills are not to be compared. Kiyomaro has left Masahide far behind.

Yoshikawa: Both are great swordsmiths. Kiyomaro's technique is better than Masahide's, but Masahide did much with the theory of sword making. His student, Naotane, followed these theories and made koto-style blades.

Vincent: Is there any particular metal worker that you hold in high esteem?

Yamanaka: Aside from the Goto family, who are in a special category, there is only one man who is really outstanding, this is Yokoya Somin, to whom there is no equal. After him come Nara Toshinaga and Joi. Many believe that Yasuchika is considered to be the equal of the latter two, but I do not think that he comes close to them. After these you can name any of the better smiths and they would fall in about the same level. Around the Meiji era there were two outstanding men, however, Kano Natsuo and Shomin. Natsuo is very good and very popular. Shomin is liked by many but there is very little of his work around. For one thing Shomin worked for one man and all of his work went into this man's collection—I know where it is, but I must not say—and this shows that he had great skill, though not so great as Natsuo. Some people think that Goto Ichijo is good, but I don't agree. He is far inferior to Natsuo. The Goto family, probably up to the tenth, are all good, very good, but the later tend to become average. To sum up: early Goto, Yokoya Somin, Toshinaga, Joi and, later, Natsuo and Shomin. The rest of the well-known smiths can be classified as one.

Vincent: About how many blades are there in the National Museum? Are they available for public study, or only to specialists?

Kashima: About 2,000. We will show them to anyone who asks to see them. They can be studied by anyone, not just a few specialists.

Vincent: How many blades are regarded as National Treasures? How many such are missing?

Kashima: About 120. Not many National Treasure blades are missing, only one or two, but there are about forty or fifty swords that are considered to be Important Cultural Objects that are lost.

Vincent: You have seen many excellent swords; which stands out, to you, above all others?

Honnami: The National Treasure, the Dojikiri Yasutsuna, from the Heian period, which is thought to be the oldest Nippon-to in Japan. I polished it and it impressed me greatly and I am still impressed by it.

Yamanaka: To this day I have seen no blade which has "knocked me for a loop". I know there is such a blade, but I have not seen it. The very famous blade of the Ikeda family, the O-Kanehira, did not impress me too much. I have seen the famous Dojikiri Yasutsuna and I was not impressed at all. Most of the Masamune blades have not impressed me very much. I understand that there are three or four blades in the Imperial collection (I have not seen them as yet) that are very outstanding.

Kashima: When I began to study swords here, my attention was attracted by a famous blade by Bizen Osafune Kagemitsu. I like this blade very much and even when I see it now it reminds me of the day when it first attracted my attention. For the rest of my life this will be an unforgettable experience.

Yoshikawa: A tachi which I once polished because it had a little rust on it, made a great impression on me, it was by Ko-Bizen Masatsune. This blade was from the late Heian period and its steel was very hard. I like these old blades because they seem to have the hardest and strongest steel. Later the metal seems weaker. When we discuss a sword's value it depends on the sword's material.

OSHIGATA

A reminder to newer members, who may have difficulty in reading inscriptions on swords, through inadequate references, if they would care to send a rubbing of the tang, both sides and not just the inscription, to the programme editor (address on the frontispiece) I will endeavour to research it. Please enclose a stamped, self addressed envelope.

STOP PRESS

A limited amount of books are available on the Japanese sword show in California back in the summer. They contain the transcripts of all the lectures given and cost £6.50 (inc. postage), and may be obtained from the programme secretary. As they must be got from the USA they may take a little time to arrive but don't panic!

Can Anyone Help a Collector?

We have received a request from Mr John Grimmett for help in obtaining a wakizashi by the smith Sada Kujo (Hawley SA 206). Mr Grimmett says that Sada Kujo came from Hizen province not Iwami as given in Hawley.

The address is:

4253 Walnut
Baldwin Park
CA 91706 USA

Index for the Nihonto Newsletter

Mr Ron Hartmann, editor of the Journal of the Sword Society of the United States has written to tell us that he has prepared a very complete index of Yamanaka's Nihonto Newsletter. It is an alphabetical listing of provinces, schools, groups, articles, selected smiths etc. by volume, number and page number.

The indexes are available at US\$6 post paid from Mr Hartmann, 5907 Deerwood Drive, St Louis, Missouri 63123, USA.