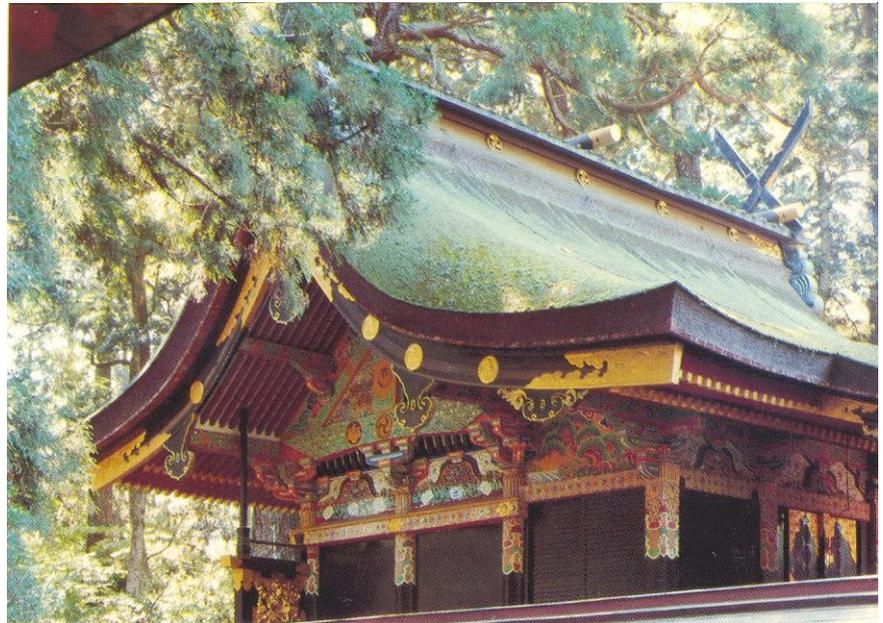


Conversations with Yahagi sensei

Senior Priest at the Kashima-jingu - Report by Roald Knutsen

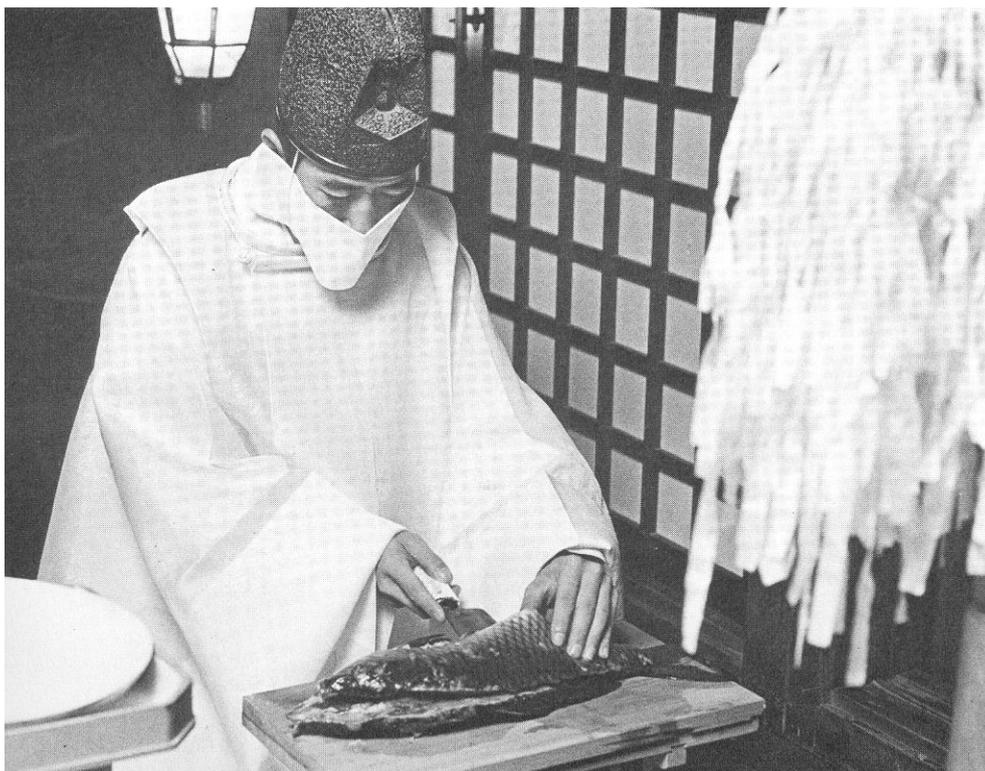
The Kashima-jingu is famous for the decorative painting and gilt embellishments to the honden, the residence of Takemika-dzouchi-no-kami, foremost amongst the warrior deities. This deity is present in all proper Bujutsu dōjō.



Thirty-three years or so ago, I spent three months studying at the *Kashima Shintō-ryū* dōjō in Ibaraki-ken, on the Pacific coast about sixty miles east of Tokyō. Apart from the Kobujutsu practiced daily with a group of remarkable *bugeisha* under the ægis of the headmaster, the late Yoshikawa Koichirō *sensei*, I was able to have several valuable discussions on the background to *ko-ryū* Bujutsu and Budō with a senior *gūji* of this ancient and important shrine, Yahagi *sensei*. These conversations were greatly aided from time to time by an American friend and *Kendōka*, Jeff Dann, then completing his Ph.D. studies and dissertation on the development of early-modern *Kendō* at the famous Mitō Tōbukan Dōjō of Ozawa Takeshi, *ku-dan Hanshi*. Jeff had the advantage of having been brought up closely with the Japanese community in Hawaii and was, as a result, completely bilingual. From some points of view I am not certain who was the most fortunate of us as a couple of years at the Tōbukan dōjō would have proved invaluable to myself, I am sure. As it was, the Kashima experience, coming as it did when I had completed nineteen years in *Kendō*, certainly greatly extended, and deepened, my understanding of the *Bugei* tradition and put into its proper perspective the trials and tribulations of modern Budō.

Yahagi *sensei* was, and I hope still is, an erudite scholar of Shintō and, by extension, the extraordinarily rich cultural roots that characterize the Japanese outlook. He was also a swordsman of the Kashima Shin'ryū, a fact that gave his views considerable relevance to the martial tradition. Above all, he was approachable and valued the enquiries of we two inquisitive foreigners. Some of the subjects we covered are set out briefly below and are worthwhile thinking about for those members who like to look deeper than the Kendō surface.

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Yahagi-sensei ceremonially preparing fish as an offering to the deities

I began by asking him his opinion on the roots underlying that rare *ko-ryū kata* of Iai, the **Shiten-ryū Hyō-e Kyōme-no-waza**, entrusted to me by Kamō Jisaku *sensei*. I was particularly interested if there was any connection with an ancient sword ritual mentioned in some old records as *the 'Sword-dance of Kashima'*. Yahagi *sensei* was not certain if the link could be directly made although it was quite possible in that the *Ō-kami* at Kashima-jingu from the most ancient times, was the 'Earth-Deity', Takemika-dzouchi-no-kami, originally thought to be a chieftain 'general' who 'pacified the recalcitrant spirits' residing in the eastern Kantō. The actual foundation of this shrine may have been far back in the 'Age of the Gods' predating the first permanent shrine buildings of the late-sixth or early seventh century. This belief is reinforced by mid-twentieth century archaeological investigations just inside the main *torii* gateway that uncovered a number of building foundations dated by pottery to the mid-Yayoi period¹ suggesting that the ancient legends contain a significant probability of truth..

The sword movements in the *Shiten-ryū* *Iai-jutsu* were formulated as late as the early seventeenth century but are clearly linked to formal ‘cleansing’ rituals. While the moves exhibit a strong esoteric symbolism they also conform to the Shintō rites of *ō-harai*, purification, intended to quieten or pacify discordant spirits. Yahagi *sensei* went on to explain that there was, indeed, an ancient tradition of ‘*Kuni-muki-tsurugi*’² where, in the pre-‘Sun Goddess’ days the *ō-harai* took the form of sweeping motions with the long sword. Asked further about this, he explained that the horizontal sweeping of the blade was intended to ‘cut off the heads of those recalcitrant spirits who refused to submit (to General Takemika-dzouchi) as they rose up, crying ‘*Wa! – Wa!*’’. By ‘spirits’ is meant that some of the gathered tribal chieftains made to attend the general in the sacred land of Kashima were by no means ‘pacified’. Those who would not agree to the new suzerainty were separated and executed.³

The great ‘Jar-mound’, one of the sacred sites, near the Kashima-jingu and believed to contain the severed heads of the rebellious chieftains who resisted the annexation of their lands in eastern Japan by Takemika-dzouchi-no-kami in around the 4th or 5th century.



The *Ō-harai* rite usually takes the form of a leafy wand or bundle of leafy twigs from the *sakaki* tree (Latin: *Cleyera ochracea*) being waved too and fro over the head of a person being cleansed. This is mostly thought to be a purification ritual but the true meaning is the ‘quietening’, ‘pacifying’, or ‘calming’ of their spirit(s). The concept comes from the same original source. The connection between the use of the straight-bladed sword and the *sakaki* branch is clear. It is also a fact that one of the functions, in the medieval period, was for the head of the Yoshikawa family of swordsmen at Kashima to carry out certain ritual duties at the shrine. Such duties, in a number of recorded cases in other warrior clans were connected to ‘purification’⁴.

This special and, according to Kamō Jisaku *sensei*, ‘perfect *Iai-jutsu kata*’, took the conversation on to the meaning of the white *hachimaki* cloth worn in some *ko-ryū* traditions.

There are three main origins, Yahagi *sensei* explained as follows: The first is that poor fighting men, who were unable to purchase armour, would roll pieces of metal in the cloth strip and bind it to their heads so that the strengthened part would offer some protection in a fight. The second is that the spiritual meaning is symbolic; that to secure the white

hachimaki around the head signifies determination and purity of purpose. Thirdly, it was thought that the virtue contained in the clean cloth would cleanse a person of illness.

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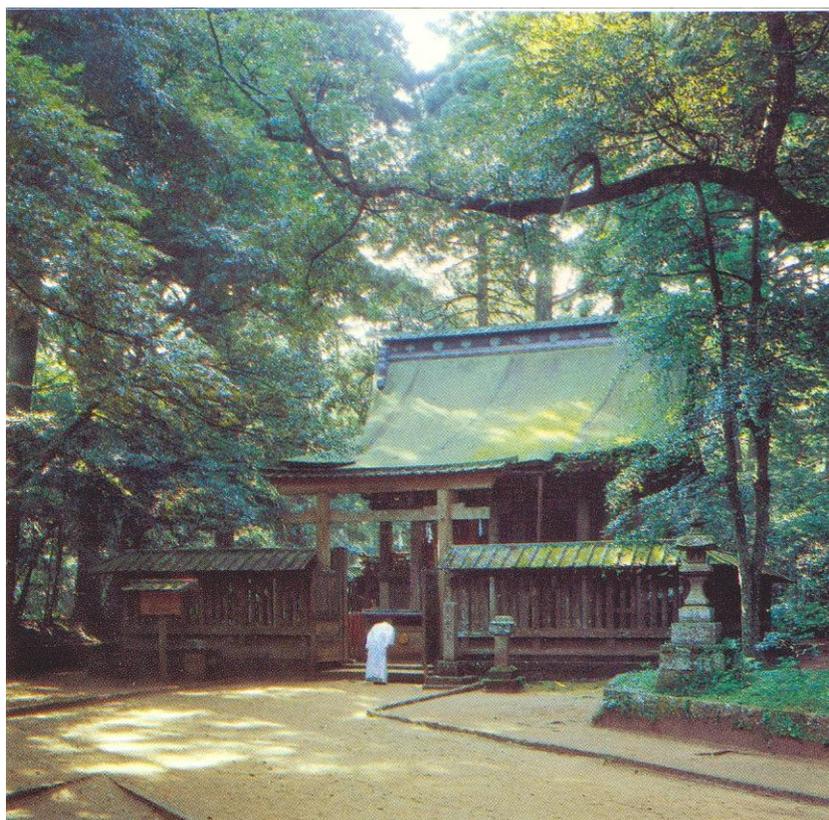
Returning to the question of the various types of *kami* in relationship to the *dōjō* and Shintō shrines, Yahagi sensei explained that while there are four main types of *kami*, there are no real differences between them; they represent varied aspects of the same entity. Some are derived from the 'Earth-deities', some from the 'Heavenly-deities', chiefly associated with the Sun deity, herself; others are 'military-deities', and yet others are the spirits of ancestors. Some are, therefore, regarded as powerful by the population as a whole, others are tutelary guardians of just a family or small community. Some clearly derive from tribal deities, ancestral or imagined, whilst others have the deity status by virtue of being regarded as a deceased patriarch who lived long ages ago.

If there is a division between the types of *kami* then it is to be found in the *ara-no-mitama* and the *nigi-no-mitama*; the former being the wild, uncontrolled, forceful 'spirit'; the latter being the quiet, controlled, peaceful 'aspect of the 'spirit'. Here we find the dualism that pervades Shintō and possibly the very early influence of Chinese Taoism, of course. The term '*mitama*' refers to something that contains the spirit of a deity, whereas '*kami*' is a more general term. '*Mitama*' may be an object that is associated with or belonged to the *kami*, or it may be metaphysical – a perception or feeling of association.

The *dōjō* is much the same as a shrine only smaller in scale and more focussed on a particular *kami*, especially in the classical Bujutsu and more modern *ko-ryū* Budō where the *kami* are usually Takemika-dzouchi-no-kami and Futsu-nushi-no-kami. These two are considered to be brother *kami* although the latter might be an separate aspect of the former. It is these two *kami* who preside over traditional *dōjō* and whose attention is requested at the start of every practice. In those traditional *dōjō* where these two *kami* are present, it is always the former who is considered the principal deity.



A memorial stone commemorating the stay at Kashima-jingu, in about 1674, of the famous Edo period poet Bashō. The stone is inscribed with one of Bashō's haiku.



A priest bowing respectfully in front of the shrine built by Hideyoshi in the late-16th century to house the Ara-tama, or 'Wild-spirit', of Takemika-dzouchi-no-kami.

At the shrine, those paying their respects never clap their hands or make any of the more usual ritual noises in front of the dedicated *ara-no-mitama* building where the turbulent spirit is housed. It follows that in the *dōjō* the calm *nigi-no-mitama* is present. If the wild spirit is aroused, it may be very difficult to control (pacify). Before the *honden* where the calm spirit resides, and in the *dōjō* in front of the *kamidana*, we can clap our hands loudly to attract the *kami*'s presence, and make all the considerable sounds of Kendō, because the deity is directing us to seek self-control through developing skills and awareness.

In *dōjō* where Takemika-dzouchi-no-kami presides, the *double handclap* is used in the formal *kamiza rei*. Before the *rei* is made the hands are raised to chest height and the palms brought sharply together twice, to give two distinct claps. As the second clap is completed, the right palm is slid slightly upwards before the Kendōka resumes his upright posture in *seiza*. After the *rei*, the handclaps are *repeated* with the same formal timing. The same formality is gone through at the end of training in the final *kamiza rei*.

Yahagi *sensei* added that all these spiritual aspects of a particular *kami* represent natural behaviour which we should learn to blend. He pointed out that this notional separation of the *mitama* took place in far distant times and the reason for doing so is now lost. Even a scholar would find it almost impossible to explain the reason. The fact remains that they are separated.

In contrast to the brother generals enshrined at shrines at Kashima and Katori, respectively, both being regarded as the doyen of warrior *kami*; the powerful deity, Susano-wo, is depicted in the ancient myths as wild and uncontrolled. Various tasks were

ordered with the aim of quietening him, mostly with little success. He is regarded as a deity bringing storm and tempest, or causing earthquakes although he is not the earthquake deity, but does not have the character of a true warrior.

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Shintō is an immensely complicated entity, if it can be termed that as the word implies some degree of unity. Talking with a scholar like Yahagi *sensei* was a rare chance since few priests have his depth of understanding coupled with the ability to clearly communicate his knowledge. On a later visit, in 1982, he invited four of us to go within the sacred area that fences off the *honden* so that we could examine the painted boards below the eaves of the shrine; a real honour, it must be said. In 1987, he gave me an introduction to the head *gūji* of the Suwa-taisha in mountainous Nagano-ken and while there I was given a long and detailed tour of the main shrine. This famous shrine is thought to mark the place where Takemika-dzouchi-no-kami 'calmed' many tribal chieftains, some now *kami*, during his military expedition of pacification from Izumi in the west to Kashima in the east. There is little doubt of the close connection between the two centres and probably was a reason for the links between the Kashima-ke and the Takeda lords which seem to go back many centuries.

With the surviving records so scanty in Shintō following the severe Meiji period reforms separating Buddhism from Shintō in the late-nineteenth century, one senior *gūji* I met at the Kumano Hongu-taisha commented that since Shintō was largely based on natural phenomena, understanding rested with one's inner feelings and intuitive response. Many of the ancient rituals of all types have been carefully preserved, so far as anyone can tell, but the true meanings have, in many cases, been lost.

How very like Kendō where experience, hard-gained and only with a receptive mind, leads the student towards the same intuitive inner goals.

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The Kendō Reader by Noma Hisashi

Chapter Fifteen: Men-waza (Men Technique)

Men technique is the basis from which all other techniques are derived. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 10, by practising the correct way to strike *men* one will also achieve the correct method of striking all other targets. The same can also be said for development of the actual techniques themselves. *Men-waza*, as the term implies, is the technique of striking directly to the *men*, it is *the* fair and square attack.

The *men* is a target that offers the most chances for attack, and at the same time, it is the target most difficult to strike. Compared to *kote-waza*, *men-waza* is a very positive and thoroughgoing technique, but, whereas *kote* may be attacked with a reasonable certainty of

success, an attack to the *men* requires a much greater degree of daring. Consequently, if one regards Kendō from the point of view of the characters of those who are practising, though there are exceptions to the rule, generally, the people who adopt *men-waza* for their particular speciality are individuals who are possessed of an abundance of determination and forthrightness.

Shōmen: *the direct and straight strike to the men.*

When the opponent's stance is weak and his *men* is open for attack, without a moment's hesitation and with full abandon, (spirit), strike *men* with a large and strong blow.

Kote-o-semete-men: *threatening kote – strike men.*

Plying the point of the opponent's sword with full spirit, make as if to strike *kote*. This will draw the opponent's attention towards defending his *kote* thus revealing a weakness at his *men* which one attacks immediately.

Tsuki-o-misete-men: *appearing to thrust tsuki strike men.*

With full spirit make as if to thrust *tsuki*. The opponent will attempt to parry this and reveal a weakness at his *men* which one immediately strikes.

Dō-o-misete-men: *appearing to strike dō strike men.*

As with the threat to *kote* explained above, draw the opponent's guard down towards his *dō* and strike *men*.

Semekomi-men: *drive in to strike men.*

Overwhelm the opponent with force of spirit and launch in to the attack as his position disintegrates, immediately strike *men*.

Harai-men: *sweep aside the opponent's sword and strike men*

When the opponent's defence is strong and an opening does not present itself, sweep his sword aside to the left or right and immediately strike *shōmen*.

Debana-men: *strike men at the onset of his technique.*

Just at the moment the opponent appears to launch his attack immediately strike *men*.

Hikihana-men: *strike men at the moment of his retreat.*

Just as the opponent moves to the rear, leap in to strike *men*.

Nuki-men: *avoiding the opponent's strike to kote and strike men.*

As the opponent moves to strike *kote*, raise the sword to avoid this and strike *men* at the same moment.

Suri'age-men: sweep away the opponent's sword and strike men.

As the opponent makes a strike to *men*, sweep (brush) aside his sword up and away to the right or left using the *shinogi* (ridge of the sword), and strike *shōmen*.

Ojikaeshi-men: parry and strike men.

As the opponent moves to strike *men*, parry or deflect his sword to the right or left using a flick of the wrists and strike *men*. In order to strike, a sufficient step must be made to the right or left.

Maki'otoshi-men: screw down the opponent's sword and strike men.

Screw down the opponent's sword to the right or left and cast it down (or omit the casting down), and strike *men* as his sword is out of centre.

Nuki-yoko-men: avoiding the opponent's technique strike oblique men.

As the opponent attacks *kote*, release the right-hand grip and step to the left and strike his right *men* with an oblique stroke. Again, the technique can be made by stepping to the right and striking his left *men* using the right band to make the oblique strike. Either of these techniques can also be used against a *tsuki* attack.

Semekomi-yoko-men: drive in to strike oblique men.

Drive in to the attack making as if to strike *kote*, or lower the point of the sword as if to threaten *tsuki*, thus producing a weakness at the opponent's *men*. Immediately strike his right *men* using the single-handed technique, remembering to outstretch the left arm and strike with the correct *hasuji*. It is also important when making this technique to keep the right hand close to the waist or stomach, with the chest outstretched at the moment of striking.

Hanare'giwa-no-men: strike men upon retreat from *tsubazeriai*.

When close in with the opponent at the position known as *tsubazeriai*, take advantage of the opponent's moment of weakness and strike *men* as you withdraw. The opportunity to strike can be created by overawing him with spirit, catching him as he loses his balance or at the moment of separation.

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A warrior in the early Muromachi period contemplating his campfire. (About 1400)
(Illustration by the author in 'Tales of the Samurai')

Visit by Danish Kendoka

At the beginning of July whilst we were sweltering in the heatwave, some members might vaguely recall a short but very pleasurable visit by Lene, Kim, and Louise Jalbjørn from their traditional Kendō situated just north of Copenhagen.

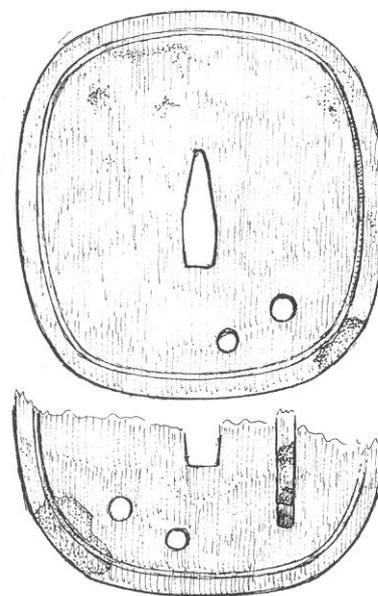
The Kendō this time concentrated on polishing kata form, part of our continuing programme of helpful guidance to our friends. It is hoped that we can detail a fuller report in the Winter Issue after a visit to Denmark by Pat Knutsen.

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A Swordsman's Tsuba by Roald Knutsen

Several years ago, the Butokukan Dōjō enjoyed a visit by two prominent Kōbe masters, Ozaki Nobushige *sensei* and Maruyama Satoshi *sensei*. At that time the former was *nanadan Kyoshi* and the latter the same but is now advanced to *hachidan*. Ozaki *sensei* senior was a noted expert of Japanese swords and during conversation over our polearms collection, commented that in his opinion the *tsuba* on my *katana* slightly detracted from the sword's proper centre of balance. He produced a plain iron *tsuba* (illustrated) and suggested that it might replace the original one. I have to say that the result was quite unexpected; the whole balance felt better and my technique measurably improved. Whether that was so or not is debatable but I am quite certain that the *Iai* forms were smoother and flowed in a way that I had not felt before the changeover.

In Ozaki *sensei's* opinion this simple unsigned *tsuba* was made for a *kenshi*, swordsman, probably in the sixteenth century. The plain field is pierced with two round holes which may have been intended to take a thin woven *sageo* for the swordsman to loop over his wrist in action, in a similar way that such knotted leather loops were employed by Western cavalymen. There was always a risk of losing one's grip after cutting, especially in mounted combat where many cuts are delivered as 'backwards' 'passing' slashes. The conviction that this *tsuba* was made for a master swordsman is reinforced by the 'apparent' damage to the upper edge (when the sword was in use). The smith cleverly made it appear that the *tsuba* had been struck by another weapon and some of the iron 'flaked' away. To use an old-fashioned phrase, this is a 'pleasing conceit'.

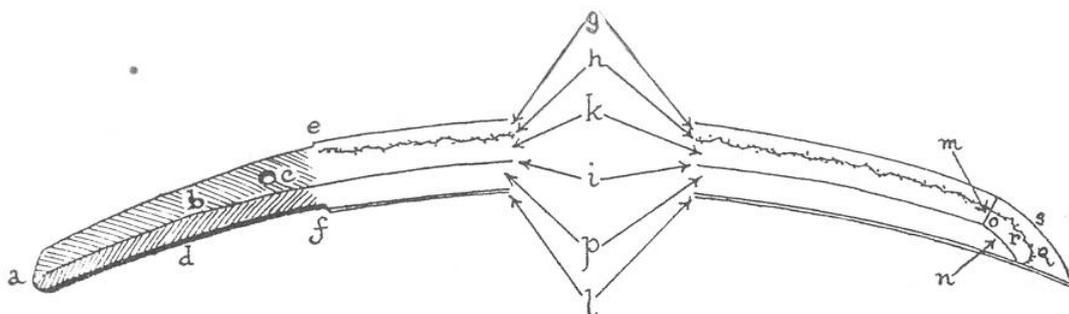


This gift was presented by Ozaki *sensei* in 1977; but nearly eighteen years later, and quite unexpectedly, an exactly similar *tsuba* was encountered and bought at the London *Tōken Taikai*, 1995! By an extraordinary chance this second *tsuba* was forged for the *wakizashi* that accompanied the *katana tsuba* above! The first one coming from Kobe and the second,

separated from its partner by more than a possible hundred-and-twenty years, turning up in England!

The *katana tsuba* measures 86 mm at its maximum diameter; the *wakizashi* measuring slightly less at 84 mm.

The Parts of a Katana Blade



The typical *katana* blade and its various parts:

(a) *shiri* – tang butt, (b) *nakago* – tang, (c) *mekugi-ana* – peg-hole, (d) *hitoye* – back of tang, (e) *ha-machi* – notch on edge side, (f) *mune-machi* – notch on back side, (g) *yakiba* – tempered edge, (h) *hamon* – outline of *yakiba*, (i) *shinogi* – ridge, (k) *jigane* – metal surface between the *hamon* and *shinogi*, (l) *mune* – back of blade, (m) *yokote* – short transverse ridge, (n) *ko-shinogi* – continuation of *shinogi* beyond *yokote*, (o) *mitsukado* – point of junction of *shinogi*, *ko-shinogi*, and *yokote*, (p) *shinogi-ji* – flat burnished surface between *shinogi* and *mune*, (q) *bōshi* – tempered part above *yokote*, (r) *kissaki* – the point-plane bounded by *yokote* and *ko-shinogi*, (s) *fukura* – edge of *kissaki*. Not shown: *habaki* – the collar fitted to the blade above the *tsuba*.

(With full acknowledgement and gratitude to the late Basil Robinson)

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Iai Renshu – A Curious Incident

Report by Chris Fox

At the end of May we had a most unexpected, but fortunately very rare, incident at the Butokukan Dōjō when one of our experienced students, Alf Friend, went to draw his Iai-tō and found himself holding only the *tsuka*, not the blade and *tsuba*! In the enquiry that followed, it was found that the *nakago*, or tang, of the Iai-tō had sheared off a short distance in from the *tsuba* and above the *mekugi*. This was a fluke occurrence, of course, and it was clear, on examination, that the casting of the blade must have been faulty despite this sword being in regular use for eighteen years. Smiles all round, but we were lucky that the blade did not draw and fly away out of control.

The following is a short article by Chris Fox on the *Mekugi* and containing some good advice. Chris writes:

The Mekugi

Probably the most important component part of a Japanese sword, and usually the most neglected, is the small peg, *mekugi*, that passed through the *tsuka* of a *katana* and holds the whole sword together. It is rarely given a second thought and it is only when the *tsuba* starts to rattle that one even thinks of dismantling the sword to perhaps add another *seppa* to tighten it up that the peg gets knocked out.

The hilt is custom made to exactly fit the shape of the *nakago* and if the smallest amount of movement develops through use an extreme amount of force is taken by the peg. When the sword is in use of course all the forces are trying to throw the blade forward, and the peg will, in time, start to bend. This is the reason to use bamboo as it will bend but not snap. ***Do not use any other wood***, and this is the time to replace it.

Traditionally, the *mekugi* peg is made from bamboo and in the days that the *katana* were used in earnest pieces of bamboo were hung over the kitchen hearth to 'cure' – harden – to produce *susutake* from which the pegs were shaped. The peg is tapered, so be careful when you try to remove it that you are knocking it out the right way! The peg should be put in from the *ura* side; this is the side facing in when the sword is being worn. The reason is because each time you take hold of the *tsuka* the peg gets pushed in – or, at least, is not pushed out.

There are, of course, other materials used for making these pegs and these are usually found on better quality swords. These may be made of ivory or bone and set in a reinforcing ring of the same material; black buffalo horn is sometimes seen as a *mekugi* that has been lacquered black. There is another method sometimes seen on *tantō* and small daggers where two, usually copper, tubes that fit into each other are pushed in from each side and then a more or less standard peg is passed through. These copper tubes have decorative heads and are called *motagi* or *mofutagi*.

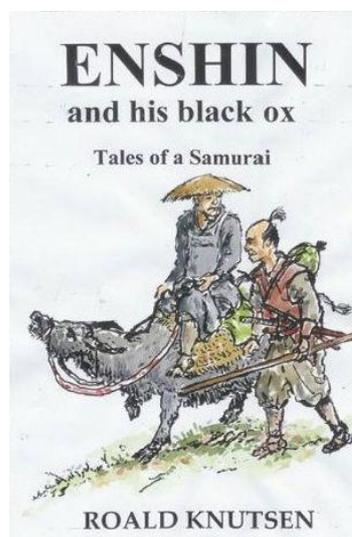
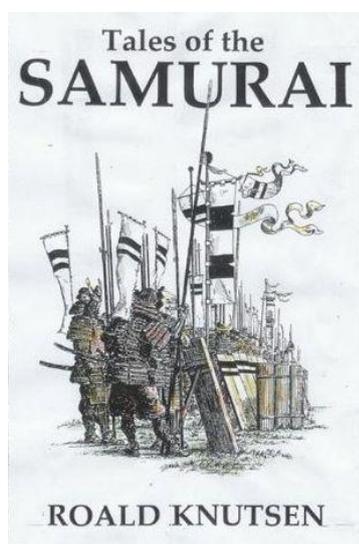
I suggest that you dismantle your *katana* at least once a month and examine this tiny part of your sword. Replacing it if you feel necessary. If you are not sure then seek advice. This also allows you to look at the rest of the sword, the *nakago*, and so on. Make certain that the tang is in good order *but never attempt to clean the tang with anything abrasive such as emery paper or a file even if it is rusty*. This only applies to older live blades and not *Iai-tō*. New pegs can be made successfully from pieces cut from the end of old *shinai*, but making sure that the taper on the peg suits the different size *mekugi-ana*, holes, in the hilt.

Editorial Note: In view of the fault in Alf Friend's *Iai-tō nakago*, it is urged that all students check their swords very carefully. Look for any hairline blemishes across the casting. Blades can be replaced but will cost in the region of £270, we are informed. However, remember this was a freak occurrence and may never happen again.

Renmei Sales – A reminder

Here we are with the Autumn Issue and the year is advancing inexorably towards – horror of horrors – Christmas! So we would ask you to seriously consider if some kind aunt or uncle, even partner, might buy you something from the delectable items listed below. Your patronage really helps swell the Renmei coffers for the good of all members.

Also you might be interested to know that the two collections of short warrior stories by your Editor may well be published in paperback in the USA on or around the 10th January coming. These stories, fictional maybe, but nonetheless a ‘flavour of Old Japan’ up to the middle of the war-torn Age of War period in the sixteenth century, are entitled respectively: ‘*Tales of the Samurai*’ and ‘*Enshin and His Black Ox*’, Some of the tales are whimsical, others seriously strong, and yet others contain, as you might expect, stirring action.



Books

NIHONGO – A Japanese Approach to Japanese Japanese textbook.

Pub. ‘The East’, Hardback. Excellent if you are studying the language.

Simple, direct, and useful.

Was £20.95

Offer £12.95

THE ANCIENT SAMURAI Excellent history of ancient Japan

by a Japanese historian, Sugawara Makoto. Pub. ‘The East’. Hardback.

Very readable and highly recommended for reference.

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Offer £15.50

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An excellent survey of many different aspects of Japanese Culture from ancient times onwards. A valuable addition to the bookshelves of all serious students.

Pub. ‘The East’, Hardback.

Was £24.50

Offer £15.50

BUDŌ – From a Swordsman’s Perspective by Roald Knutsen.

Highly recommended to all ranks wanting to be informed about the real

background to Budō, especially the classical Martial Arts and the more modern Ways. Global Oriental. Hardback and Signed. £30.00

JAPANESE SPEARS by Roald and Patricia Knutsen.

A survey of the halberds and yari from ancient times to the close of the feudal period in 1878. Fully illustrated with a number of famous weapons and line drawings.
Global Oriental. Hardback and Signed. £30.00

SUN TZU and the Art of Japanese Medieval Warfare by Roald Knutsen.

An unusual study illustrating, with a full discussion, the influence of this ancient Chinese military philosopher's 'Art of War' on the theory of the classical martial arts.
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TENGU by Roald Knutsen. Global Oriental. Hardback. (Forthcoming, probably Spring, 2010). This will be the first study tracing the historical origins of the Tengu from Central Asia, through Korea, to Japan, and these creatures' great importance to the development of the Arts of War, the Bugei, in mediæval Japan £ TBA

JAPANESE – ENGLISH DICTIONARY OF KENDŌ Published by the Zen Nippon Kendō

Federation (Zen Nippon Kendō Renmei).
An extremely useful reference handbook defining a pretty comprehensive range of terms and concepts found in the weaponed arts, not just Kendō itself. Each page presented in double column, Japanese text and English, in a clear and concise manner. Just over 7x5 format. £12.50

Special Items for Gifts

KENDŌ MUGS Silly, but ideal for your home or workplace! (Japanese) £5.75

KENDŌ FIGURES (Japanese). Novel ornaments. £9.95

KEY RINGS for KENDŌ - The 'ultimate' gift : MEN or DŌ £2.95

SPECIAL MUGS made in Japanese style to our commission by Nic Hillyard, an excellent potter at Axminster in Devon. Very limited in numbers left. Attractive brown design only. For Ō-cha (or Earl Grey tea), but without a handle. £4.50

Sundries for Kendō and Iai - (Prices on application to your Dōjō leader)

Clove Oil, Uchigo, Spare Shinai fittings, Bokutō, Shōtō, etc.

To order any of these items, please contact the Renmei through your Dōjō Leader. The Renmei will let you know the post and packing cost to be added before despatch.

Notes

¹ The ancient pre-Yamato period is generally reckoned to be from around 300 BC to 300 AD. If Takemika-dzouchi was originally an actual military commander linked in all the ancient chronicles to the first 'land-taking' he may well have flourished around 100 AD. Of course, nothing is certain.

² '*Kuni-muki-tsurugi*' may be translated as 'Land-quarterming-sword' or 'Heavenly-clustering Cloud-sword'. (This is not confirmed). Takemika-dzouchi-no-kami may also be regarded as a 'Sword' deity, besides the chief *kami* of warriors and swordsmen in particular.

³ A little out of Kashima-shi on the north-eastern side stands a huge tumulus mound known as the 'Jar Mound'. Within this it is believed are buried the heads of the discordant 'spirits'. This myth may indicate a rationalisation of the destruction of enemies in an ancient battle for supremacy somewhere in the environs of Kashima. This imposing mound is, of course, very sacred and has never been opened. It stands to the height of a six storey block, if I recall correctly.

⁴ Purposefully sweeping the long sword blade horizontally to right and left has a clear meaning for purification. In the *Shiten-ryū Kiome-no-waza- Iai-jutsu* this sweeping motion is replaced by the pronounced circling of the sword past the left shoulder and ear of the swordsman. A variation of the *Kasumi-tō* ('Mist-Sword') for at the beginning of the third *okuden* level of the *Hasegawa Shigenobu-ryū Iai-jutsu* has a double sweeping action – right to left and to the right again – before the final *kiri-oroshi*. This form is said to have been suggested by the 'grass-sweeping' actions of Prince Yamato-dake far back in the mythological period when he was threatened by grass fires set by his enemies around his night shelter. This part of the account inspired a devastating sword form against multiple opponents, the cutting slashes being made at knee level when kneeling, or belly level when standing. The prince's sword, a straight double-edged *ken* blade, is still preserved in the Atsuta-jingu, Nagoya-shi, Aichi-ken, it is claimed, and is named 'Grass-mowing Sword', *Kusanagi-no-tsurugi*. (see Note 2 above). It is one of the Three Imperial Regalia. The early Chronicles tell us that this weapon was recovered from the tail of the slain Yamata-no-Orochi 'dragon' by Susanō-wō beside the Hi-no-gawa (River of Blood) in Idzumo province, This was during the early 'Land-taking' period around the fourth century. It was then named '*Ame-no-murakumo-no-tsurugi*' ('Heaven-clustering-cloud-sword'). It was about thirty-three inches in length. During the second half of the seventh century it was stolen but returned some years later to the Emperor's keeping. Two replicas of this famous weapon were successively lost during the Gempei War in the late twelfth century and afterwards. As a further footnote, whilst on the subject, the Atsuta-jingu authorities, unlike those at every other major shrine, are regarded as 'unhelpful', even 'evasive', to all enquirers into such matters.

⁵ We are constantly informed that the Internet is the 'be-all and end-all' of almost life, itself, but like anything else it is also like the 'curate's egg'; only good in parts'. In references to the Kenseikai it seems somewhat disrespectful on the part of those posting their 'publicity claims' on Google that no one has acknowledged that the great *sensei* of that dōjō up to the time of his passing in 1981 was Kamō Jisaku. Additionally, and equally disrespectful, the Iai of the *Musō Jikiden Eishin-ryū* was first taught here by Takami Taizō-*sensei* at the request of Ozawa Takashi-*sensei*, *ku-dan Hanshi*, in 1965, and that Roald Knutsen, his main student, went on under the tutelage of Kamō-*sensei* to be awarded *menkyō-kaiden*, mastery of this tradition. Numbers of our students practiced these forms *before* 1970! Perhaps one of our readers would like to put his head above the parapet and post a suitable correction for all to see. Rubbish and half-truths are one thing, but they are simply poor *reigi* – if the term is known at all!