

KENDO forum

by Musashi of the
Shinto Ryu

Last month on these pages I sketched something of the organisation of Kendo in the United States and particularly in California. The various *dojo* are extremely well conducted on the formal Japanese lines peculiar only to the arts of *Budo*. On January 11th, the Oakland *Dojo* held a *hatsu-geiko*, or "first practice of the New Year", and Mr. Shimoda, 6th *dan*, and Mr. Hazard, 4th *dan*, were invited up from Santa Barbara (a six hours' drive) to take part. The following account is taken direct from Mr. Hazard:

"The assembled *yudansha* numbered two 5th *dan*, three 4th *dan*, three 3rd *dan*, one 2nd *dan*, and two 1st *dan*. Mr. Shimoda proceeded to fence all the *yudansha*, except myself, and several of the top *kyu* holders as well in the next three hours (8—11 p.m.). At the end all stopped to watch the brilliant practice of Mr. Shimoda and Takao, 5th *dan*, a graduate of Kokushikan University. Not since I left Japan have I seen such precision in motion or such beauty in form (*kata*)—I except demonstrations by Mori Sensei (8th *dan*). We all watched in silence and admiration . . . Mr. Shimoda prefers a closer than usual *maai* and is murderous in in-fighting, being equally facile at *hiki-men* or *hiki-do*. After the *keiko* all formally paid their respects to Mr. Shimoda (in the Japanese fashion). The *keiko* was followed by refreshments and much stimulating and animated analysis of the various cuts and parries until the small hours".

On the 29th January, a Tuesday, Mr. Shimoda and Mr. Hazard went to Los Angeles for the monthly *yudansha practice*. There were thirty 3rd *dan* or above present, including Mori Sensei. Mr. Hazard had six bouts with *yudansha* plus ten or twelve with the *kyu* grades. Amimiya, 5th *dan*, and a 23 year old 4th *dan* fresh from Japan, both gave him a sharp lesson which Mr. Hazard tells me he was able to pass on to several of his peers! It was his good fortune to end the evening with one of the two *kakari-geiko* granted after the practice by Mori Sensei. Prior to these *kakari-geiko* Mori Sensei and Shimoda Sensei fenced together. This was a *keiko* of Titans.

The British Kendo Association is pleased to announce the following promotion: The Council of the All Japan Kendo Federation after considering reports from Mr. Nakamura Kishiro, 7th *dan*, and Mr. Takizawa Kozo, 7th *dan*, on their visits to the Shinto Ryu Kendo Club, have granted advancement to the rank of *Renshi* to Mr. Roald Knutsen. This is an unprecedented honour; a most unusual step to encourage Kendo in England. How unusual can be judged by the normal requirements for promotion into the three teaching degrees. Normally for advancement to *renshi* the candidate should be in the grade of 5th *dan* for a minimum of three years and not less than 23 years of age. The *kendoka* must have a distinguished style—it is recognised that some fencers may

be superb competitors in tournaments but that their style may leave much to be desired. He must have teaching potential in the true meaning of the term, must be experienced at organising and officiating at tournaments, and have published on Kendo. The other two teaching degrees are *Kyoshi* and *Hanshi*. Those holding a teaching degree, that is *renshi*, etc., take precedence over all others of the same *dan*, but are junior to all of the next higher degree. That Mr. Knutsen is a *Kendo Renshi* at 3rd *dan* degree, the first European to achieve this, is a matter for the warmest congratulations and a source of pride for his own club and the London Judo Society.

New Kendo Clubs. Enquiries about Kendo in the Norwich area

should be sent to Mr. Eric Pleasants at the Norwich Judo Club, Central Youth Hall, Duke Street, Norwich, where kendo is well established.

Mr. Victor Cook, 3rd *Kyu* Kendo, has formed a club in Portsmouth; details from him at 126 Methuen Road, Eastney, Portsmouth. Sunday courses at the Shinto Ryu in London are to take place at intervals under Mr. Cook's organisation.

Up to the Lake District now! Mr. David Bingham, of 11 Howgill Houses, Burneside, Kendal, Westmorland, can give all the required information of his group.

The Shinto Ryu Kendo Club would also welcome enquiries from intending *kendoka*; beginners can start at any time



The Japanese artist Hokusai made many drawings of samurai during his long career. Some of the most interesting are contained in the remarkable series of sketchbooks called the *Mangwa*. Here is a line drawing of one of these studies where a warrior armed with a wooden sword—*bokuto*—is about to be thrown. This was probably sketched in the *dojo* of some feudal lord at the beginning of the 19th century.