

The Tataro Operation

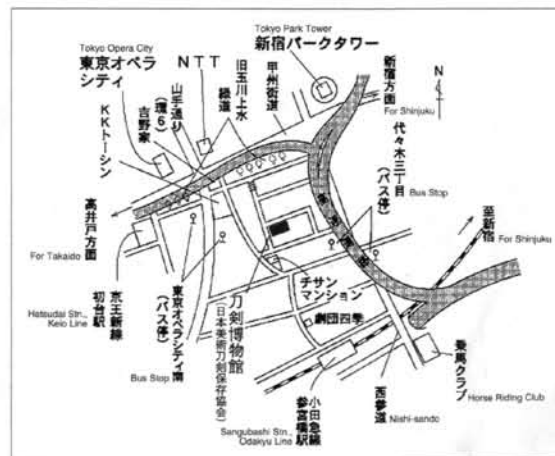
The NBTHK restored the inactive antique Yasukuni tataro facility in Izumo City, Nita County in Shimane Prefecture. This is a traditional Japanese tataro which was used to make traditional Japanese steel or "tama hagane" which is required to make traditional Japanese swords. This tataro was closed in Showa 20 (1945) at the end of WWII, and it is now called the Nittoho tataro (i.e. the tataro for the conservation of Japanese swords). The tataro is a very important steel making technique which has been in use in some form in for over 1000 years in Japan. The tataro uses satetsu (iron ore found in a sand form) and pine charcoal, and produces a very pure steel high quality steel called "tame hagane" which is an important and necessary material required to make traditional Japanese swords. Since Showa 52 (1977) the NBTHK has been operating the tataro, under a grant from the Japanese government in cooperation with the Hitachi Kinzoku (metal) company. This is an effort to preserve and study this traditional steel making technique and to provide tama hagane to Japanese sword smiths and to traditional craft artists all over Japan. This effort is also intended to preserve and maintain a valuable Japanese cultural resource. The head of the tataro operation is called a "murage", and the Japanese government has named the tataro murage an intangible cultural property. The Japanese government has also provided an award which recognizes the NBTHK's efforts to preserve important Japanese cultural assets. The Nittoho Tataro is located next to the Torigami Mokutan-sen factory, at 529 Oro O-aza, Izumo city.



Photos : Nittoho Tataro factory and tataro operation

The Token Hakubutsukan

- Hours:** Daily, 10 am to 4:30 pm
- Days:** Open six days a week Tuesday through Sunday.
Closed Mondays, for the end of the year, and for the New year's holidays.
Occasionally, the museum will be closed for maintenance or for special occasions.
- Admission Fees:** 525 yen. Admission fee for members and students is 315 yen
Elementary school and middle school students are admitted free, and for groups of ten or more people, the group fee is 315 yen/person and the guide is admitted free.
- Access:** The Hakubutsukan can easily be reached from major train stations in Tokyo. The most convenient ways to reach the museum are:
- 1) By train: Exit the Odakyu Line at the Sangubashi station. Use a local local train, and exit at the 2nd stop from Shinjuku. The NBTHK is about a 10 minute walk from the station.
 - 2) By train: Exit the Keio Shin Sen (the Keio New Line) at the Hatsudai station. This is the 1st stop after Shinjuku station. The NBTHK is a about a 10 minute walk from the station.
 - 3) By bus:
 - a. From the Shibuya Station's south entrance, take the Keio bus No. 51(Shinjuku station west entrance terminal bus). Exit at Yoyogi 3 chome, and walk about 5 minutes.
 - b. From the Shibuya Station's south entrance, take the Keio bus No. 63 or 64 (for the Nakano station terminal) or 66 (for the Asagaya station terminal), exit at the Tokyo Opera City south station and walk about 7 minutes.
 - c. From the Shinjuku Station west entrance, take the Keio bus No. 51(to the Shibuya terminal), exit at Yoyogi 3 chome, and walk about 5 minutes.



Address The association and the museum's address is :
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Tel: 03-3379-1386 to 1388
Web Home page: [http:// www.touken.or.jp](http://www.touken.or.jp)

Nippon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai

The Association for Preservation and Appreciation of Japanese Art and Swords
The society is often referred to colloquially by its initials, as the "NBTHK"
The location and some of the activities of the NBTHK are briefly described here.



The whole view of the NBTHK building including the Japanese Sword Museum

The NBTHK's mission

The Japanese sword is the pride of our nation, and an important art in steel since ancient times, and these swords are unique to Japan. In a Japanese sword we find our spirit and great artistic works from our ancestors. We respect this and feel that we have an obligation to protect our cultural treasures, and at same time we have to promote knowledge and recognition of the Japanese sword, not only among the Japanese people, but among people around the world. In addition, we feel that we have a responsibility teach about the Japanese sword, and to understand and preserve Japanese swords. After WWII, our association helped to preserve Japanese swords and the craft of Japanese sword smiths, both of which almost disappeared during during the US occupation and confiscation of Japanese swords in the immediate aftermath of WWII. Because of these events, in February of Showa 23 (1948), the secretary of The Japanese Ministry of Culture provided permission to build an institution to help preserve and protect Japanese swords. In May of Showa 43 (1968), the Token Hakubutsukan was constructed by the NBTHK and was funded by the members and donations.

Our association's mission is the conservation and exhibition of Japanese art swords, and to preserve swords and to improve sword making crafts which are active today such as forging, polishing, and sword mounting, because these are an important cultural heritage. The NBTHK also secures the materials which necessary for sword making, and at the same time supports research and investigations into sword making and related crafts, and tries to support and guide the public's appreciation of Japanese swords. The NBTHK's mission is to promote Japanese culture and to conserve Japanese cultural history, technology and assets.

The NBTHK's Primary Efforts

1. Appraisal of member's swords and sword related items, and to provide certificates to indicate the quality and provenance of swords and related items. The certificates are ranked as Hozon, Tokubetsu Hozon, Juyo, and Tokubetsu Juyo, and the NBTHK maintains a record of these certificates.
2. Operating and managing the Japanese sword museum, the Token Hakubutsukan, which is unique in Japan.
3. Organize meetings for appraisal, and to provide lectures and educational activities centered on swords and sword related items. NBTHK staff members travel to branch offices all over Japan in support of these efforts.
4. Operating the tatara to produce tama hagane which is necessary for traditional sword making, and to support and maintain this traditional technology.
5. Provide guidance and suggestions for forging, polishing, and mounting, and improve techniques for conservation and sword repair, and to support sword related craft people.
6. Publication of a monthly magazine "Token Bijutsu" and the occasional publication of illustrated books about swords.

The NBTHK has about 6000 members in Japan, and 80 branches around Japan, and members outside of Japan in America and Europe, who are interested in the study of Japanese swords. The Token Bijutsu is provided to all members members who a pay a yearly membership fee.

The Token Hakubutsukan Collection and Exhibits

The Token Hakubutsukan owns swords, tousingu (sword mountings and sword furniture), Japanese armor and kinkou (soft metal) work, and a total of 190 items. These items were purchased by the NBTHK or were donated. Among the swords owned by the NBTHK, there is a National Treasure tachi signed by Nobuyoshi, a National Treasure tachi signed by Kuniyuki(Rai), a National Treasure tachi signed by Kuniyuki(Taima), a Juyo Bunkazai (Important Cultural Property) tachi signed by Nobufusa, and a Juyo Bijutsuhin (Important Art Object) tachi signed by Sanakage, and there are many items which have been recognized and certified by the Japanese government.



National Treasure Tachi Signed:Nobuyoshi

Mounting for the Nobuyoshi Tachi with gold and cord ornaments, and in chrisanthemum crest design

There are also other swords, which owners have asked us to keep and exhibit, and some which have been loaned to us for study and exhibitions. The Token Hakubutsukan is in a unique situation to specialize in the study of swords and sword related items, and is working to protect Japanese swords and to popularize these swords. In addition to exhibitions held inside of the NBTHK's museum, swords are loaned to other organizations for exhibitions.

In the museum, there are exhibitions of "Koto and Shinto Meitoten" ("famous koto and shinto period swords) for the purpose of illustrating the history of the Japanese sword, and to exhibit the beauty of these swords which changed in each historical era. In addition, there are exhibitions of special items related to swords.

One of the missions of the NBTHK is protect traditional techniques and to help improve these techniques for the future. In collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, there is a yearly "Shinsaku Meitoten" which is an annual competition and display of newly made swords made by currently active smiths. Prizes are awarded for the best work, and include the NBTHK Chairman's prize. There are also polishing competitions and other sword related craft competitions.

The Token Hakubutsukan library has 1200 sword related historical manuscripts dating from the Muromachi period and these are hand written manuscripts. In addition, the Hakubutsukan has Edo period manuscripts from daimyo families, and twice a week, with permission from the staff or director of the museum, these can be examined and copied.

To promote these programs, the second Saturday of every month there is a teirei-kanshokai meeting which members can attend, and learn more about the appreciation and appraisal of swords, and improve their knowledge of swords.



Sword Guard in Chokaro openwork design Signed:Yasuchika



Important Cultural Property Tanto Signed:Kaneuji