



## Sword-maker's skills recognized as cultural asset

### 武士刀老師傅榮登文化資產



87-year-old Hsieh Chin-chung of Chungho City, Taipei County, showing a picture of a sword ordered by film director Hou Hsiao-hsien on April 3, top, and inspecting the blade of a samurai sword, above.

PHOTOS: HO YU-HUA, LIBERTY TIMES

四月三日，八十七歲的台北縣中和市民謝錦鐘展示電影導演侯孝賢下訂的武士刀樣章（最上圖）、檢視武士刀刀鋒（上圖）。  
照片：自由時報記者何玉華攝

Hsieh Chin-chung, from Chungho City in Taipei County, has recently been recognized as the only person in Taiwan who possesses the rare talent for repairing and forging samurai swords from scratch. His unique status was acknowledged after meeting with specialists hired by the Department of Cultural Affairs, who registered him as an asset of the traditional arts. For Hsieh, who will turn 88 next year, this could be his greatest birthday present.

In the past, during a time when society wasn't yet open enough to accept the existence of such a skill, Hsieh did not dare to make his capabilities public. However, there are an increasing number of people who contact him to forge or repair swords for them. Even world-famous film director Hou Hsiao-hsien asked him to make a copy of a sword for his new movie, the original of which is kept in a museum in Japan.

Hsieh, who was born in 1923, said that he used to work in an ironware store owned by a Japanese man, which was where he learned to make swords. At that time he was a very conscientious sword-maker, which is why even today he can single-handedly make an entire sword, including sharpening the blade, decorating the grip and even making the scabbard.

Hsieh graduated from school when he was 14 years old, and was employed

by a Japanese ironworks. He followed his employer to Shanghai in China for business, and being the first of 11 children in the family, his only thought was to make money to alleviate the economic burden on his parents.

When he came back to Taiwan in 1946, he tried to do other business. He eventually set up a shop dealing with knives and scissors in Chungho City. He said he didn't think or even dare to make samurai swords because he feared the mafia underworld would constantly ask him to make weapons, and the political situation wasn't liberal enough. When Japanese nationals had to leave Taiwan after the retrocession, they weren't allowed to take their samurai swords with them, so they gave them to Taiwanese locals who had to hide them.

Because of the increasing demand for swords from kendo associations, in 1980 Hsieh applied for a license from the government and made swords for the first time since returning to Taiwan. But he was careful to keep a very low profile. By 2001, guns had gradually replaced swords as weapons so he started to make unsharpened swords for collectors. Only after he repaired two samurai swords belonging to Ho Yun-fang, an elderly resident of Chungho, did his reputation as a master bladesmith start to spread.

(LIBERTY TIMES, TRANSLATED BY TAIJING WU)

台北縣中和市民謝錦鐘身懷磨製、修理武士刀的好手藝，文化局邀請專家評審訪談面試後，認定全台灣可能找不到第二人有此技藝，將他登錄為傳統藝術類文化資產，將過八十八歲大壽的他，直說這是最好的生日禮物。

早年大環境使然，謝錦鐘不敢張揚磨製、修理武士刀的功夫，這幾年，慢慢有人探聽上門請他打刀、修刀，國際大導演侯孝賢也為新片籌備找上門，請他依圖打造日本博物館收藏的寶刀。

民國十二年出生的謝錦鐘說，小時候在日本人開的五金店工作，學會做武士刀，當時很拚、很認真，什麼都做、什麼都學，現在才能一個人獨力完成磨刀、刀柄上的編織、刀套等流程。

謝錦鐘十四歲公學校畢業後，受僱於日本人，跟隨老闆遷到上海發展，家貧又有十個弟妹嗷嗷待哺，身為老大的他，只想賺錢減輕家裡負擔。

民國三十五年回台灣後，做過其他生意，後來才在中和從事刀剪類利器的製造批發，他說，那時候沒有想到、也不敢做武士刀，一方面怕黑社會找上門，另一方面，政治氣氛不開放，當年許多日本人離台時，不能隨身帶走的武士刀，轉送給台灣人，也都被收藏起來。

民國六十九年左右，因為劍道會的需求，謝錦鐘才向政府申請核准，第一次製作武士刀，但仍相當低調；民國九十年後，槍取代刀成為武器，才開始做一些供人收藏，不開鋒口，也就是不鋒利的練武刀。他是在為中和耆老何雲坊修復兩把武士刀後，名氣才逐漸傳開。

(自由時報記者何玉華)