

Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu; the ryu outline by S.G.Drossoulakis

The Japanese sword arts

The arts of the sword as we know them today probably began with Iizasa Choisai the founder of the Tenshin Shoden Katori Shinto Ryu. This school included the use of many weapons from sword and stick to spear and throwing knives. One part of its curriculum was the fast draw and instant use of the sword, either in self-defence or as a pre-emptive strike. Hayashizaki Jinsuke Shigenobu (1542-1621) like Iizasa Choisai is reputed to have received a divine inspiration, which led to the development of his art called Muso Shinden Jushin Ryu Batto Jutsu; Batto means simply to draw a sword. The significant factor common to both of these schools as with many other sword schools which concerned themselves predominantly with the drawing of the sword, was that the art was practised purely as kata.

MJER lineage and history (1550 – 1927)

Founder: HAYASHIZAKI JINSUKE SHIGENOBU (c. 1542-1621), Regarded as the founder of Iaido, because of his overwhelming influence on the art. He lived in Oshu in Ashikaga Era. In order to avenge the assassination of his father, Hayashizaki Jinsuke at the age of 14 years old, was retracted in to Hayashizaki Myojin shrine, where he prayed and trained for one hundred days. During this time he received divine inspiration about the art of the sword. He called this school Shinmei Muso ryu and with it he avenged his father. Later he named his school the *Muso Shinden Jushin Ryu Batto do*. His art is also noted in the **Honcho Bugei Shoden** as Muso Hayashizaki-ryu; Junshin-ryu.

2nd Headmaster: TAMIYA HEIBEI SHIGEMASA (late 1500s-16??), he studied under Jinsuke later in life as well as others. He was the sword teacher to the first three *Tokugawa Shoguns*, Iyasu, Iemitsu & Hidetada. He is the founder of the Tamiya-ryu, noted in the **Honcho Bugei Shoden, Bujutsu Musoroku** (later sokeship of the ryu passed to Tsumaki family).

3rd Headmaster: NAGANO MURAKU KINROSAI (JUROZAEMON) (dates uncertain), a military man and student first of Jinsuke and then of Tamiya. He developed Iai as a major part of the curriculum of the *Muraku Ryu*, which he founded in his own right.

4th Headmaster: MOMO GUMBEI MITSUSHIGE (dates uncertain).

5th Headmaster: ARIKAWA SHOZAEMON MUNETSUGU (dates uncertain).

6th Headmaster: BANNO DAN'EMON NO JO NOBUSADA (HANAWA) (dates uncertain) regarded as having an important influence on subsequent headmasters. He served Hideyoshi and taught among others Hasegawa Eishin.

7th Headmaster: HASEGAWA CHIKARONOSUKE EISHIN (HIDENOBU) (c. 1610), considered as the central figure in the development of the Muso Jikiden Eishin-ryu. He studied under Banno in Edo (today Tokyo). He transformed Iai techniques, being responsible for positioning the sword (katana) blade up through the obi (belt) and devising the *Eishin Ryu* set of forms. He named his school as Musho Shinden Eishin Ryu Batto Heiho, Muso Hasagawa Eishin Ryu, Muso Jikiden Ryu. His performance was said to be *muso* (without equal). This word now forms part of the name of the Ryu

8th Headmaster: ARAI SEITETSU KIYONOBU (dates uncertain), this man taught in Edo, after the departure of *Eishin*. He was thought to be a one time *Ronin* (masterless samurai).

9th Headmaster: HAYASHI ROKUDAYU MORIMASA (1661-1732), he studied Shinmei Muso Ryu under Arai and Shinkage Ito Ryu kenjutsu under *Omori Rokurazaemon Masamitsu*, a ronin; Omori, who had been a direct disciple of *Eishin* but was expelled by the later for personal reasons, had developed his own very distinctive style of sword-drawing art, the *Omori ryu*, in a set of forms beginning from seiza. Development of these forms was

influenced by Ogasawara ryu school of etiquette. Omori taught Hayashi Rokudayu his art and when the latter became Soke, he incorporated these forms into the ryu, thus having three main streams in the ryu, Shinmei Muso Ryu, Hasagawa Eishin ryu and Omori ryu. He also introduced reishiki (etiquette) into training. In 1675, he brought the art to Tosa, in the service of the Lord of Tosa, so it was then called as **Tosa Iai**. The art flourished in Tosa and was protected by the province, as it was regarded as an art form to be preserved.

10th Headmaster: HAYASHI YASUDAYU MASANOBU (d. 1776), he was the adopted son of *Rokudayu*.

11th Headmaster: OGURO MOTOEMON KIYOKATSU (d. 1790), he studied under Hayashi and perhaps Omori as well. Following his death the Ryu split into two *ha* or branches, named after two highly skilled students who developed their own styles. The first being known as **Tanimura**, his style was more closely associated with the *Tosa Iai* and eventually developed into the Muso Jikiden Eishin-ryu. The other was known as **Shimamura** and introduced considerable changes. Shimomura-ha developed, in the 20th century, into Muso Shinden-ryu.

12th Headmaster: HAYASHI MASU NO JO MASAMORI (d. 1818 OR 1815), he was the great-grandson of *Rokudaya*, the 9th soke. This explains that the split probably developed along lines of talent and seniority versus family inheritance, since Hayashi was much younger than Maysuyori Teisuke Hisanari, of Shimomura Ha.

13th Headmaster: YODA MANZAI YORIKATSU (d. 1809).

14th Headmaster: HAYASHI YADAYU (SEIKI) MASAYORI (d. 1823).

15th Headmaster: TANIMURA KAME NO JO YORIKATSU (d. 1862), he is responsible for the development and elaboration of *Tanimura-ha*.

16th Headmaster: GOTO MOGOBEI MASASUKE (d. 1898), he further developed Tanimura ha and along with *Oe Masamichi*, he made significant contributions to the art.

17th Headmaster: OHE MASAMICHI SHIKEI ROSHU (1852-1927), he is probably the most influential person in contemporary MJER. Oe sensei received instruction in both *Tanimura-ha* and *Shimomura-ha*, being for a time the 15th generation Soke of the Shimomura-ha. Oe sensei reorganized the curriculum of the ryu, by establishing a three level system, with Omori ryu as Shoden (first level), Hasegawa Eishin ryu as Chuden (second level) and Okuden Iai as the third level. Great innovations were made in training methods and composite techniques, in the form of *Hayanuki* and the *Bangai* forms, were included as part of the curriculum. He also incorporated in the curriculum paired forms, *Tachi uchi no kurai* and *Tsume no kurai*. He officially named the school **Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu**. He trained many excellent swordsmen, many of whom had their own ideas about the techniques and developed their own *Kai-waza* (alternatives). His students include, Mori Shigeki (his students include Yano Masaoki and Iwata Norikazu), Suzue Yoshishige, Yamamoto Takuji (both had as students Takeshima Shisao, Saito Tadashi, Oka Jikichi and Iwata Norikazu), Koda Morio, Matsuda Eima, Nishikawa Baisui, Moroyoshi Kenkichi, Hokiyama Namio (Oe's successor as 18th Soke of MJER Iaido), Nakanishi Iwaki, Yamamoto Harusuke (*Harusuke ha MJER*), Fukui Harumasa (he became later the 19th Soke), Nagao Kagefusa (his students include Oka Jikichi), Masaoka Ikkan Kazumi (*Masaoka ha MJER*), Yamanouchi Toyotake Hoken (Yamanouchi ha MJER), Takemura Shizuo, Takaoka Den, Yamazaki Kenkichi, Chono Tsutomu, Nishikawa Goshui.

Oeh Masamichi soke issued five Kogen no Maki / Menkyo Kaiden to respective students. The recipients were Hogiyama Namio, Masaoka Kazumi, Yamanouchi Toyotake Hoken, Yamamoto Harusuke and Yamazaki Kenkichi. As a result of that, after his death there was a breakage in *Soke* succession, resulted in the formation of certain *ha* in the practice of **Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu**, some of them claiming Sokeship of the ryu.

MJER lineage & history outside ZNKR, (1927 – today)

Hokiyama-ha Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu Iaido – Seittokai & ZNIR

18th Headmaster: HOGIYAMA NAMIO, (1891 - 1935) a *deshi* (follower) of Oe Sensei. Consider to be the man who followed the teachings of Oe closely. He observed closely the fight of Oe with cancer and he has received the "seal" of the ryu, therefore this line is considered as the "orthodox" Oe's line (Seittokai).

19th Headmaster: FUKUI HARUMASA (1884 - 1971), another *deshi* of Oe, who developed many new interpretations.

20th Headmaster: KONO HAKUREN MINORU, (1897 - 1974), he had also studied under Oe; he worked closely with *Hogiyama Namio*, in trying to ensure the teachings of Oe Sensei were adhered to. He assumed as MJER Soke after the WWII, being the first Soke from outside Tosa and Kochi prefecture. After taking over as Soke he changed his name from Minoru to Hakuren (his "iaido" name then). He took the style beyond its traditional realms of Tosa and Kochi to Osaka and the rest of Japan, through the Yaegaki kai organization. Following the reformation of Zen Nippon Kendo Renmei (ZNKR), in early 50s, he tried to incorporate Iaido into ZNKR, with no success, due to the fact that at that time ZNKR was not interested. As a result Kono Soke formed the *Zen Nippon Iaido Renmei*, (ZNIR) in 1954, which encompasses many ryu apart from MJER; however the MJER Soke is the Chairman of ZNIR.

21st Headmaster: FUKUI TORAO (1915-2000) a follower of the teachings of Fukui Harumasa. A lesser split took place when he assumed as Soke, in 1975, therefore he was clever to select the person to succeed him as Soke before his death.

22nd Headmaster: IKEDA TAKASHI SEIKO, took over as Soke after the death of Fukui Torao Soke, in 2000, being selected by him before his death. He is also the Meijin (Chairman) of ZNIR and the Seittokai Eishin Ryu Association.

Masaoka ha Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu Iai Jutsu - Jikishin kai

18th Headmaster, MASAOKA IKKAN KAZUMI, considered as one of the best swordsmen. He was member of the ZNKR and he was in charge of the first Iaido Committee, which formed the initial Seittei kata. He died of heart attack during a kendo practice. May be himself never claimed a Sokeship or independent line (-ha), that to be claimed later by his students and followers.

19th Headmaster, NARISE SAKAHIRO

20th Headmaster, MIURA TAKAYUKI HIREFUMI (1922 -) he began his study of Muso Jikiden Eishin-Ryu Iaijutsu in 1959 under Narise Sakahiro, who later became the 19th grandmaster of the style. He also received instruction Masaoka Kazumi Sensei. Initially a ZNKR, Osaka Division member, he founded the Nippon Kobudo Jikishin Kai in 8 June 1975, concentrating in the teaching of MJER only and claiming this line of Sokeship.

Yamauchi ha Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu - Komei Jyuku Iaijutsu

18th Headmaster, YAMAUCHI TOYOTAKE, a descendant of the Tosa Lord, he studied under Oe Sensei and he published a work called the "Detailed Theory of Iai". He considered his -ha as the real retainer of the Tosa Iai tradition.

19th Headmaster, KONO KANEMITSU he founded the Meibukan dojo in Toshima Ku (Tokyo), thus expanding the ryu in the Kanto area.

20th Headmaster, ONOUE MASAMITSU

21st Headmaster, SEKIGUCHI TAKAAKI KOMEI, he has incorporated special interpretations of the art, especially in regard of the (very big and heavy) size of the sword used in practice -keiko.

MJER lineage & history within ZNKR, (1927 – today)

Following Oeh sensei death, **UNO Mataji** sensei took over the Kansai area Eishin line and taught several people, without himself claiming to be a "soke" of the ryu. Many Kansai Eishin-ryu schools developed on their own following Uno sensei, but without adhering to a soke line. Much of this was probably influenced by the structure of the All Japan Kendo Federation, whose members incorporated iai training under its aegis. Many kendo instructors, also been MJER laido instructors, developed the ryu within the ZNKR. Two main lines of MJER were developed within ZNKR, Tosa ha and Osaka ha, both represented by senior instructors.

Harusuke ha MJER line

The main exponent of MJER Tosa ha within ZNKR is represented by the Harusuke ha line of MJER. **YAMAMOTO HARUSUKE (1894 – 1979)**, developed his –ha within ZNKR, being member of the committee which further developed Seittei lai in 70s. His principal direct student was **YAMASHIBU YOSHIKAZU** hanshi 8 dan (1922-1993), while **HARUNA MATSUO** Kyoshi 8 dan (1926-2002) and **OSHITA MASAKATSU** Kyoshi 8 dan continue this line of instruction..

Osaka ha MJER and the Yaegaki Kai Although MJER did not leave, officially, Tosa (actually Kochi Prefecture) until Kono sensei taught it outside Tosa, it is worthy to note that, in 20s, there was a dojo in Osaka, which members wanted to study lai, so they asked Hogiyama Namio to teach them. Hogiyama helped to choose the new name of the dojo, this one being **Yaegaki Kai**.

When Hogiyama Namio died, Fukui Harumasa took over as MJER Soke (both men were from Kochi, Tosa) and the teaching duties went to him as well. Around this time Kono Hakuren found out that they were teaching in Osaka and he changed job, so he could move to Osaka and study. Eventually he was named the next soke, the first from outside Tosa. Kono sensei taught also at the Osaka Yaegaki kai

A student of Hogiyama sensei, at the Yaegaki Kai, and a later student of the 20th Soke KONO Hyakuren, was **SAKAMOTO Kichiro**, a rather tough policeman, also the head Kendo teacher of the Osaka Prefectural Police Department. In the 50s he took over the leadership of Yaegaki Kai and later he started his own dojo, the *Shum Phu Kai* in Osaka. Sakamoto sensei attained Kendo 8th Dan Hanshi, laido 9th Dan Hanshi, before passing away in mid 90s. Today (2009) the senior member of *Shum Phu Kai* is **FUKUDA Kazuo** sensei, laido hanshi 9dan, head of ZNKR Osaka laido division.

Sakamoto sensei, at an invitation, taught MJER laido in Shimizu, Shizuoka prefecture, establishing there the **Shizuoka Yaegaki kai** and the **Shimizu Yaegaki Kai**, with Fukazawa sensei, Kendo 7 dan, laido 5 dan, as its instructor. **ODA Katsuo** sensei, laido 8 dan Hanshi, Kendo 7 dan Kyoshi, student of Fukazawa sensei, took over Shimizu Yaegaki Kai after the death of the latter and is today its head. In Japan today (2009) there are Osaka Yaegaki kai, Shimizu Yaegaki kai, Shizuoka Yaegaki kai and Izu Yaegaki kai.

The Dai Ken Kyo laido group. This group practices MJER Osaka ha laido and is headed by **IKEDA Teruo** sensei (laido 8th dan Hanshi, Kendo Kyoshi 7th dan).. The group has strong connections to the police force with all of the main teachers being retired police officers or active policemen. All the main teachers of the *Dai Ken Kyo* were previously students of SAKAMOTO Kichiro (Kendo 8dan Hanshi, laido 9dan Hanshi).

MJER TECHNICAL POINTS

All traditional martial arts practice begins and ends with the rei, or bow. In Eishin-Ryu laido, there are three major bows: the standing bow to the kamiza of the dojo (where objects or pictures representing the traditions of the art are kept), the seated bow to another person or to the teacher, and the seated bow to the sword. During bowing, the sword is held in the right hand - a "safe" position denoting that, as actual drawing will be much more difficult to accomplish, the fighter is making no threat. To hold the sword or scabbard in the left hand is a "live" position indicating attack - as is any posture which leaves the sword handy to be drawn by the right hand.

On a sword rack, the handle of a display blade should point left. A slovenly school will rack up its blade with the handles pointing any which way

MJER Techniques - waza

The techniques - waza of Musō Jikiden Eishin-ryū are broken down into sets based on skill level and characterized by the principal starting position of the waza. The majority of the study is focused on these **solo waza**.

SHODEN, (OMORI RYU, SEIZA NO BU) Techniques of moving out of the seiza or seated position and into attack or defense. Exercises:

1. 前 Mae
2. 右 Migi
3. 左 Hidari
4. 後 Ushiro
5. 八重垣 Yaegaki
6. 受流 Ukenagashi
7. 介錯 Kaishaku
8. 附込 Tsukekomi
9. 月影 Tsukikage
10. 追風 Oikaze
11. 抜打 Nukiuchi

CHUDEN (EISHIN RYU, TATEHIZA NO BU). These kata begin from the tate hiza or half-seated with one knee raised, position. These are among the most challenging of Eishin-Ryu laido forms:

1. 横雲 Yokogumo
2. 虎一足 Tora no issoku
3. 稲妻 Inazuma
4. 浮雲 Ukigumo
5. 嵐 Oroshi
6. 岩波 Iwanami
7. 鱗返 Urokogaeshi
8. 波返 Namigaeshi
9. 瀧落 Takiotoshi
10. 真向 Makkō

OKUDEN I WAZA, (ANCIENT OR SECRET SEATED FORMS). These are the advanced forms of laido, based on the art of Hayashizaki Shinzuke, starting from tate hiza position:

1. 霞 Kasumi
2. 脛罎 Sunegakoi
3. 戸詰 Tozume
4. 戸脇 Towaki
5. 四方切 Shihōgiri
6. 棚下 Tanashita
7. 両詰 Ryōzume
8. 虎走 Torabashiri

OKUDEN TACHI WAZA (ANCIENT OR SECRET STANDING FORMS). This is the second part, I waza, of the advanced forms of iaido, based on the art of Hayashizaki Shinzuke, starting from a standing position:

1. 行連 Yukizure
2. 連達 Tsuredachi
3. 惣捲 Sō Makuri
4. 惣留 Sō Dome
5. 信夫 Shinobu
6. 行違 Yukichigai
7. 袖摺返 Sode Surigaeshi
8. 門入 Mon'iri
9. 壁添 Kabezoe
10. 受流 Ukenagashi
11. 暇乞其の一 Itomagoi Sono Ichi
12. 暇乞其の二 Itomagoi Sono Ni
13. 暇乞其の三 Itomagoi Sono San

BANGAI NO BU Bangai (番外, lit. 'extra') are additional tachi waza. These waza are not koryū since they were created by Ōe Masamichi, along with the *Hayanuki* exercise. Bangai no bu (番外之部) contains the following waza, performed from a standing position.

1. 速波 Hayanami
2. 雷電 Raiden
3. 迅雷 Jinrai
4. Shiho giri (Akuma barrai) developed later by Yamamoto Harusuke sensei

Paired Waza (Kumitachi)

Musō Jikiden Eishin-ryū paired waza (*kumitachi*, 組太刀) are often taught only to advanced students after years of study. Some of these sets are rarely seen outside of Japan. There is a high incidence of grappling, striking, and disarms in these paired sets. Some waza begin with swords drawn; others begin with swords sheathed and employ *nukitsuke* (drawing) techniques; some waza use both long (*ōdachi*) and short (*kodachi*) swords. Typically these forms are practiced using bokutō; however, they are also practiced, at high levels, with kendo-yo swords

Tachi Uchi no Kurai Tachi Uchi no Kurai (太刀打之位) is the first kumitachi waza set in Eishin-ryū. Both practitioners use a single long sword. The techniques are performed from a standing position. There are two versions of this set: the original set of 10 waza (Tachi Uchi no Kurai) and the revised set of 7 waza formulated by Ōe Masamichi (also known as Tachi Uchi no Kata). These two sets contain similar techniques.

Tachi Uchi no Kurai (Koryū) This version of the set contains the following 10 techniques

1. 出合 Deai
2. 附込 Tsukekomi
3. 請流 Ukenagashi
4. 請込 Ukekomi
5. 月影 Tsukikage
6. 水月刀 Suigetsutō
7. 絶妙劍 Zetsumyōken
8. 独妙劍 Dokumyōken
9. 心明劍 Shinmyōken
10. 打込 Uchikomi

Tachi Uchi no Kurai (Kata devised by Ōe Masamichi) This version of the set contains the following 7 techniques:

1. 出合 Deai
2. 拳取 Kobushitori
3. 絶妙劍 Zetsumyōken
4. 独妙劍 Dokumyōken
5. 鐐留 Tsubadome
6. 請流 Ukenagashi
7. 真方 Mappō

Tsume Ai no Kurai (詰合之位) is the second kumitachi waza set in Eishin-ryū. Both practitioners use a single long sword. The set includes the following techniques, performed from tate hiza and standing positions:

1. 発早 Hassō
2. 拳取 Kobushitori
3. 波返 Namigaeshi
4. 八重垣 Yaegaki
5. 鱗返 Urokogaeshi
6. 位弛 Kurai Yurumi
7. 燕返 Tsubame Gaeshi
8. 眼関落 Ganseki Otoshi
9. 水月刀 Suigetsutō
10. 霞劍 Kasumi Ken

The following kumitachi sets are very rarely taught, and are often assumed to be no longer practised.

Daishō Zume (大小詰) is the third of the kumitachi sets. Long and short swords (daishō) are worn. The set contains the following techniques, which start from tatehiza.

1. 抱詰 Dakizume
2. 骨防 Koppō
3. 柄留 Tsukadome
4. 小手留 Kotedome
5. 胸捕 Munatori
6. 右伏 Migifuse
7. 左伏 Hidarifuse
8. 山形詰 Yamagatazume

Daishō Tachi Zume (大小立詰) is the fourth of the kumitachi sets. Long and short swords (daishō) are worn. The set contains the following techniques, which start from a standing position.

1. 𠄎捕 Shimetori
2. 袖摺返 Sode Surigaeshi
3. 鐔打返 Tsuba Uchikaeshi
4. 骨防返 Koppōgaeshi
5. 蜻蛉返 Tonbōgaeshi
6. 乱曲 Rankyoku
7. 移り Utsuri

Daikendori (大検取) is the fifth kumitachi set and contains ten waza. The first four waza are kodachi (shidachi) vs. ōdachi (uchidachi), while the next six are ōdachi vs. ōdachi. These techniques are only very rarely taught.

1. 無劍 Muken
2. 水石 Suiseki
3. 外石 Gaiseki
4. 鉄石 Tesseki
5. 榮眼 Eigan
6. 榮月 Eigetsu
7. 山風 Yamakaze
8. 櫓橋 Sorihashi
9. 雷電 Raiden
10. 水月 Suigetsu

Techniques Added By Kōno Hyakuren Kōno Hyakuren, the 20th sōke of Musō Jikiden Eishin-ryū, added two sets of additional waza, called Dai Nippon Battō Hō (大日本抜刀法), based on techniques from throughout the system, but performed starting in a standing position. Their purpose was to teach sword techniques to the cadets at the Imperial Naval Academy. As these waza were added in the 20th century, they are not considered to be koryū. Eishin-ryū lineages without a connection to Kōno Hyakuren do not generally practice these techniques. Therefore these waza are only included in some lines of transmission.

Dai Nippon Battō Hō, Kihon

1. 順刀其の一 Juntō Sono Ichi
2. 順刀其の二 Juntō Sono Ni
3. 追撃刀 Tsuigekitō
4. 斜刀 Shatō
5. 四方刀其の一 Shihōtō Sono Ichi
6. 四方刀其の二 Shihōtō Sono Ni
7. 斬突刀 Zantotsutō

Dai Nippon Battō Hō, Oku These waza begin using the Okuiai walking pattern.

1. 前敵逆刀 Zenteki Gyakutō
2. 多敵刀 Tatekitō
3. 後敵逆刀 Kōteki Gyakutō
4. 後敵抜打 Kōteki Nukiuchi

Auxiliary Arts In his book *Musō Jikiden Eishin-ryū Iai Heihō Chi no Maki*, Masaoka Kasumi states that there were once two auxiliary arts practised alongside Tosa Eishin-ryū.

Itabashi-ryū Bojutsu This subsumed art focused on the bō, or long staff. It featured 5 kata of bō vs. bō and 8 kata of bō vs. sword. Only remnants of Itabashi-ryū remain.

Natsubara-ryū Yawara This subsumed art focused on grappling techniques in a variety of circumstances: standing, kneeling, from behind, etc. The school was divided into 6 sets with a total of 63 kata. Natsubara-ryū seems to be no longer extant.

There are claims of other arts as well, focusing on such techniques as torinawa (rope tying) and jōjutsu (short staff), however there is no evidence to support these claims.

There is an important point here. The syllabus of Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu you find 4 sets of iai kata and 2+ sets of kumitachi kata (depending on which branch you train in). If you look at them more carefully you will find out that they build on each other. The iai kata start with suwari waza from seiza, which almost isolate completely the upper body, so students can master the control of the sword before moving on to other things. The next two sets move on to waza from tate hiza position, which bring in a more mobile lower body, making them more complex. The last set iai kata are performed standing, with the maximum amount of body movement and potential for confusion.

The kumitachi sets work in a similar way. The first set works with the largest spaces and timing, the later sets with smaller distances and shorter timing. The first kumitachi set, Tachi Uchi No Kurai, is a great example of the efficiency of the teaching system, because it starts with both tachi and uchi being fairly inexperienced. Tachi will learn to defeat uchi in one situation, but a little later in the kata set, uchi will have learned to defeat the earlier technique, and tachi will have to have more advanced, subtle control and technique to defeat this improved uchi. And this goes on through all of the kumitachi set's waza. In this way tachi learns more and more subtle technique and mastery of the principles, and is taught to see the potential weaknesses of the various applications.

Koryu systems are really quite efficient, with their collections of kata growing only very slowly over the centuries. The kenjutsu section of MJER is only about 30 kata after 500 years. These are not huge curriculums to be memorized, but the most efficient means of teaching the principles that master teachers have been able to discover over the centuries.

STAGES IN TRAINING

Keiko. This means quite simply training or practice. This is the stage during which the essential movements are perfected by slow repetition, by breaking the kata down into its component parts, by understanding how the techniques work in a fighting situation. With this practice the swordsman begins to understand the principles of Metsuke (correct use of the eyes), Seme (pressing or pushing) in order to control the opponent, Maai (combative distance) and Ma (timing). This study takes about five years of regular practice. Overlapping with it, from about the third or fourth year, the swordsman will begin the practice of Tanren.

Tanren means to forge in the same way that a sword blade is forged, with hard work, and sweat, and many hours of dedication, folding together the hard and soft elements in the body, mind and movement, just as the sword gains its strength out of hard and soft steel. The student increasingly practices without concern for the correctness of the movements (though they must remain correct and effective) and repeats the kata uninterrupted with a feeling of Shinken Shobu (a fight to the death with a real sword). During this phase posture improved, movements become more natural, techniques become more effective because timing is better controlled and less predictable. As confidence increases and Kigurai (bearing, demeanour) develops, training moves into the phase called Renshu.

Renshu. Ren means to polish, to perfect by continued practice of both keiko and tanren. It also means to polish the spirit and character through the requirements of detail and interpretation; to demonstrate a compassionate nature that can pass on knowledge without egotistical pride and arrogance. This leads to the award of **Renshi** title, meaning a person whose performance and character is polished by training. After this stage the actions become slower and softer, appearing to a bystander to be less effective-but the technique comes from refined efficiency, not using force-until the moment the sword is actually cutting, remaining relaxed in body but constantly aware and prepared in mind.

Only after leaving all of these stages in the past and demonstrating the simplicity of the correct action and knowing all of these stages by direct experience, the student -who has by now gained 7th Dan- can receive Kyoshi (teacher grade).

Instead of epilogue

“No matter how much a students techniques improve, the tradition of the ryu must be passed onto the next generation without the interposing of individual premature conceptions, methods or techniques. It is rather sad to see the present-day circumstances of trying to modernise forms because of gradings and competitions. The safekeeping the originality of the Jikiden Ryu is the obligation of all Instructors and practitioners”.

from a letter by Kono Hyakuren, May 1935