

# SAMURAI DAYORI

## BEGINNING OF KENJUTSU AND MUKUSHIN-RYU

### CHAPTER 1 : Beginning of *Kenjutsu* ( *heihou* )

When did '*Kenjutsu*' start in Japan? It is difficult to point it out correctly. But if there were weapons, there should be a technique to use them.

Bronze swords were imported from the Asian continent in *Yayoi* period (0 ~ 300) and iron swords appeared in *Kofun* Period ( ~ 700). From these facts, we could imagine there were some techniques to use those swords in early time of Japanese history. There might be some kind of style around 7th century. However, it must be quite different from later in the history because those ancient swords were a straight shape without *Sori* (curve).

Probably it was around middle Heian period (792~ 1194) that the straight swords became curved swords of *Shinogi-zukuri*. Once the so-called "*Nihontou* (Japanese sword)" appeared, it was a natural result that the techniques were developed to fit them.

It is hard to know each technique now. In the book '*Heike story*' written in *Kamakura* period (1192~1333), we can find 5 names of technique ( *Kumode* - Spider hands, *Kakunawa* - a square rope(?), *Juumonji* - a cross, and *Mizuguruma* - a water wheel)

When these techniques would be polished and put together, it could form a *Ryu*(style), but those kind of things appeared later than the middle of *Sengoku Jidai* - War period (1467~ 1600). *Ryu* (style) of *Kenjutsu* reached 718 styles in the end as far as we can count in documents now.

The three biggest originated styles '*Shintou-ryu*', '*Kage-ryu*' and '*Nen-ryu*', also '*Chuujou-ryu*' were born around this time. The founders of these style were '*Iishino Chousai*', '*Aisu Ikousai*', '*Jion*' and '*Chuujou Hyougoukami*'. *Kenjutsu* was formed by these geniuses, and I can say all *Kenjutsu* style belong to them.

The distinctive feature of the technique of style that started in *Sengoku Jidai* is always the way of *Kacchuu-kenjutsu*(or *Kaisya-kenjutsu*). This was developed for the fight with *Samurai* armor suits (*kacchuu*). *Kamae* and foot work are completely different from other styles which developed later. *Kaisya-kenjutsu* was supposing that swords couldn't cut armor. The techniques were mainly cutting the parts out of armor, poking(*tsuki*), striking to make the enemy fall down and kill. With this reason, the attacking points and the way of strike are also different from the late styles.

Another distinctive feature is it is not only for the sword but also the other weapons like *Yari*, *Bou* and *Naginata* and *Taijutsu* or *Juujuutsu*. One of the reason is *Bujutsu* (martial arts) was not divided in each category yet at this time, but

more than that, the sword was not a powerful weapon on real battle fields. *Kenjutsu* was not limited to the way of swords. It had to be an overall martial art for a close fighting.

Our *Mukushin-ryu* originated from '*Chuujou-ryu*' which was one of origin's of *Kenjutsu*.

At this time *Kenjutsu* was called '*Heihou*' [兵法] 兵-soldier. However the founder of *Chuujou-ryu* '*Chuujou Hyougoukami Nagahide*' called '*Heihou*' [平法] 平-peace. "There is the way of peace by stopping. There is the thing getting into the heart deeply on the meaning of peace. This is the most important undisclosed matter of our style." These words were written in the book '*Chuujou-ryuu Heihou Kuketu* - oral instruction of secrets'. As the defense is the principal on one-on-one fighting, the focussing the peace of country is the spirit of *Chuujou-ryu*. That is condensed in the letter of 平.

-----continue to Chapter 2 (next issue)

Mukushin-ryu 15th souke, re-founder 1st  
Ohashi Kenshin

## MUKUSHIN-RYU SWORD

In *Mukushin-ryu*, they don't use sharp swords. Instead of sharpening the swords they file down the edge (*ha*) and make it dull. The reason is the sharp edge would get damaged after a few fights with soldiers in armor on the battle fields. A sword with a nicked edge is useless. They could break easily. In *Mukushin-ryu*, they use the sword without edge from the beginning of fight. They don't cut by the sharpness of blade. They cut by the technique.

The sword with a filed down edge is called '*Habiki Katana*'. That is the one *Ohashi souke* uses. Unfortunately he didn't bring his own sword this time and we couldn't have a chance to see him cut bamboo with that. But many of us have seen it, and some had the opportunity to cut with the dull guntou in Japan when the class visited in 2004.

I believe everybody who attended the lesson with *Ohashi souke*, *Suzuki shihan*, *Otsu sensei*, *Sakai sensei* and *Oshima sensei* had a great time and experience with them. They all are serious for martial arts and friendly, kind and funny at private time. They are truly warmhearted people. What they did for us and what we got from them were priceless. Keep training hard and impress them by showing how much you improve when we see them next time.

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## JAPANESE CHARACTERS

There are three different type of letters in Japanese language to write and read - *Kanji*, *Hiragana* and *Katakana*.

Ancient Japan didn't have any letters to write. *Kanji* came from China to Japan in early 1st century. At this time, China was called Han-漢. *Kanji* in *Kanji* is 漢字. 漢 is from Han, and 字 is letters. Kan is a Japanese pronunciation of 漢.

We had used only *Kanji* to fit our oral language for long time. Some characters were chosen by meaning and changed phonetically, and some were chosen by close sounds to Japanese. But *Kanji* chosen by sounds didn't have much rules. People picked whatever they wanted. For example the sound 'i' was written 伊, 夷, 以, 異, 移, 射 or 五.

Maybe there were more 'i'. Sentences of those time are so hard to read for us now.

In the early *Heian* period (794~ 1194), *Hiragana* and *Katakana* were developed based on *Kanji*. *Hiragana* was made from the cursive style of *Kanji* and *Katakana* was a simple part of *Kanji* character. *Kanji* 以 became *Hiragana* い and *Kanji* 伊 became *Katakana* イ. *Hiragana* was called 'women's hand' sometimes because they were used mostly by females when they were developed. It doesn't mean females used only *Hiragana*. They mixed *Kanji* and *Hiragana* to write poems and letters. This way is easier to write and read and looks more beautiful. Of course, men uses *Hiragana*, too. It depend on what they wrote. If it was official document, it was all in *Kanji*. If it was personal letters, dairies or Japanese poems, they mixed both too.

*Katakana* started being used to help to read Chinese poems with Japanese grammar. Now we use *Katakana* to write mostly for the words of foreign origin, the mimetic words and the onomatopoeic words.

Each *Kanji* has some meaning. *Hiragana* and *Katakana* are simply phonic letters.

Most *Kanji* has a few different way to sound. How do you know which one is right? It depends on what word or letter comes before or after. Here is an example. 空手 *kara-te*, 空 *sora*, 青空 *ao-zora*, 空しい *muna-si-i*(しい are *Hiragana*) and 無空 *mu-kuu-shin*. One *Kanji* 空 has five different way to read. Or you can write all in only *Hiragana* like からて, そら, むなしい and むくうしん if you don't know *Kanji*.

Japanese children learn *Hiragana* first. Next step is *Katakana*, then *Kanji*. There are 46 letters of *Hiragana* and *Katakana* plus some variation like は *ha*, ば *ba*, ぱ *pa*. Can you see how 'ha' changes? (Used to be 51 *Hiragana* but few were not used often anymore except old fashion way.) I am not sure how many *Kanji* we use now. Some of them were modified to be easy to write and read but it is not wrong to use old style. The dictionary I have now has 6,355 letters and 45,000 words that are used each *kanji* in one word.

## ZANSHIN

*Ohashi souke* explained about *Zanshin* during *Mukushin-ryu* test. But I don't think I did a good translation. I would like to explain what he meant again on this newsletter.

There are 2 types of *Zanshin*. If you see in Japanese letters it is easy to understand each meaning.

First one is 斬心. 斬 is cutting and 心 is a heart, a mind or a spirit. This is a fighting spirit.

Next one is 残心. 残 is staying, leaving, saving or keeping. You still keep a fighting spirit.

Have 斬心 before you draw your sword. Without this, you just swing around a sword. But do not put too much tension on yourself. You still need to have relaxed and flexible body and mind.

After your fight (or each *kata*), have 残心 before *Chiburi* and *Noutou*. Your enemy might be able to get up and fight back. Keep your eyes on your enemy. You still need to be ready to fight.

## INTERESTING FACTS

Until Edo era, common soldiers were mostly farmers. They were summoned when their lords or masters were going to have a battle. With this reason the lords tried to avoid the planting and harvest seasons to plan the battle.

## RECOMMENDED BOOKS

*The Japanese sword A comprehensive guide*  
-- *Kanzan sato*

A very good introduction to the history and appreciation of the Japanese sword over the last 1500 years. It contains many photo's and detailed examinations of some of Japan's most famous swords.

## THE 1st ANNIVERSARY OF SAMURAI DAYORI!

I can't believe I could make 12 Dayori, without skipping a single month.

Next issue will be the 1st anniversary version. well. I would like to hear from everyone what you think about this newsletter. What kind of articles do you want see in the future? How you liked the recommended movies and books, if you read or watched them, or your own recommended stuff. Please, please send me your email or just let me know when you see me at Dojo. It will help me to write each articles.

*In this newsletter:*

*Japanese names are written by Japanese way. Family name comes first, then given name.*

*Japanese words are written close to Japanese pronunciations and writing, ie. Noutou instead of Noto or Shogun instead of Shogun.*

Have a questions or request? Contact me at:  
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