

# SAMURAI DAYORI

## THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME 'KENSHIN'

"Kenshin" is not *Ohashi sensei*'s real given name. His name is *Yukio*.

About ten years ago, *Ohashi sensei* participated a martial arts festival in *Gifu* prefecture. He met a gentleman at a party of the festival. His name was *Tachibana Houten sensei*. He was one of the leading person of the martial arts association in *Kyoto* and famous as a skilled calligrapher. (The value of his calligraphy is about \$1,000 per letter.)

*Ohashi sensei* was told "You are very good. You did a great performance. I will give you 'sho'." 'Sho' means calligraphy or somebody's writings. *Ohashi sensei* thought he said 'shou'. 'Shou' means a prize or an award. He thanked him with wondering in his mind what kind of award he would get. *Tachibana sensei* told him to give his address to his secretary, so he did. The secretary said "it is very unusual for *Tachibana sensei* to want to give his 'sho' without being asked. He must be impressed by you a lot."

*Ohashi sensei* was glad to hear that but he was still thinking he would receive some kind of award like 'The excellent prize' or something like that. The festival came to an end but *Ohashi sensei* didn't get anything from *Tachibana sensei*.

After some months he saw *Tachibana sensei* again at the another martial arts festival. *Tachibana sensei* remembered he had told *Ohashi sensei* he would give him 'sho'. He said he had been thinking what word was good for *Ohashi sensei*. Now *Ohashi sensei* realized it was 'sho(calligraphy), not 'shou(an award)'.

Finally he received the calligraphy in a 24in x 14in frame by mail. It said "'KENSHIN' - The heart of sword." The reason *Tachibana sensei* chose this word was, in his words "you are very skilled swordsman but you are still be controled by sword and you try to against it and take a charge. You are fighting with your sword. You need to understand the heart (or mind) of sword well, then the sword will be part of yourself. "\*

*Ohashi sensei* got the permission that he could use *Kenshin* as his martial artist name.

There is *Ohashi Kenshin sensei* we now know.

\* We believe many things that not alive have their own spirits. Specially the things made by very high skilled people hands like swords, traditional dolls, pottery, black lacquer products ect. Spirits of makers give them lives.

## ABOUT JAPANESE SWORDS

*from Ohashi sensei*

Difference of Japanese sword from the cutting sword that we brought to *Ohashi sensei* in last summer.

The angle of the edge of blade

Nihon tou ----- 25 degrees.

Cutting swords --- 15 degrees

Thinner and sharper one seems to be better for cut.

This is true when you cut goza or makiwara. But it is too thin to cut bamboo. Thin edge cannot win the fiber of bamboo easily.

When you plan to sharpen your sword, please keep this in mind.

## RECOMMENDED BOOK

*MUSASHI*---by *Yoshikawa Eiji* (English version)

This is not a academic biography. It is the story of *Miyamoto Musashi* who has been called "a sage of swords" with mixed fiction and nonfiction.

*Yoshikawa Eiji* is one of the most popular author of historical fiction in Japan. This book has been made into movies and TV shows several times and is a best seller in Japan. This established the image of *Musashi* in Japanese even some parts are fiction.

It is a great story of swordsman's exciting life and you feel as if *Musashi* is right in front of you.

## INTERESTING FACTS

The *Tsuba* called *Musashi Tsuba* which is used as the *Mukushin* logo has another name. It is called *Namako-Tsuba*. *Namako* means a sea cucumber.

The last *Shougun*(15th) in Japanese history was *Tokugawa Yoshinobu*. His father, *Tokugawa Nariaki*\* raised him very strictly. One night he went to *Yoshinobu*'s bedroom after he went to sleep. *Yoshinobu* was an untidy sleeper like all children are. *Nariaki* thought "Samurai should be in a good posture all the time." He ordered to be placed two sharp razors on his pillow of both sides of *Yoshinobu*'s face. If he were to moved his head, he could cut his face. A maid took them off secretly after *Yoshinobu* felt asleep.

\* *Tokugawa nariaki* wasn't a *Shougun*. He was a relative of *Tokugawa Shougun* family.

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## Q. Tell me anything about Yagyuu Jyubee

A. *Yagyuu Jyubee Mituyoshi* (1607-1650)

Style --*Yagyuu Shinkage-ryu*

He was a grandson of the founder of *Yagyuu Shinkage-ryu*, *Yagyuu Tajima-no-kami Muneyosi* (also called *Yagyuu Sessyuusai*)

His father, *Munenori* was the 5th son of *Muneyosi* and *Jyubee* was *Munenori*'s 1st son. *Munenori* was a martial arts instructor of the 2nd (*Hidetada*) and 3rd (*Jemitsu*) *Tokugawa Shougun*. He rose to a high rank as a politician in *bakufu* (government) too.

*Jyubee* started to show his innate talent of swordsman ship when he was a young child, but when he was 21 years old (1626) he made the 3rd *Shougun* angry badly. He was ordered to leave *Edo* (Capital of Japan, *Tokyo*). *Shougun* didn't forgive him until 1638. His younger brother *Yagyuu Matajuurou Munefuyu* succeeded to the instructor of *Shougun*.

While *Jyubee* was out of *Edo*, he traveled all over the country to perfect his skill in the martial arts with using the *Yagyuu* clans hometown\* as his base. In 1637 he wrote a book 'There was a man *Hiei* once' under the guidance of one of the most famous Zen priest *Takuan*. It was about *Yagyuu Shinkage-ryu*. He went over his book again and again with suggestions from his father *Munenori* and *Takuan* and finally finished rewriting his book and changed the title to 'The selection of the moon' in 1642.

He became the successor to the headship of house when his father passed away in 1648. In 1650 He vomited blood and died while hunting with a falcon.

## Valentine's Day

I hope everybody had a happy Valentine's Day.

In Japan Valentine's Day is for somebody in love or social things for grown ups. No exchange of cards between classmates in elementary schools as a school event.

In the old days and still now for many people, it was shameless that girls express their feeling to boys. Only on the Valentine's Day girls can do it with chocolate gifts. That was beginning of Japanese Valentine's day. Teenagers and young adults still do this today.

On the other hand it became social event for adults. Many people give small of package of candies to everyone they work with and friends. (It cost a lot! I had to buy more than 20 when I was working in Japan.) We call these a social duty chocolates. Chocolates are sent only from female to male still now.

I am pretty sure all of this chocolate thing was a plot of some candy company.

*Jyubee* is known as the one-eyed swordsman. This may be a fiction. There are also who think he was working as a secret agent of *Shougun* or his father during he was out of *Edo*. This could be a fiction also. There aren't any record left. Even it was true if he was an secret agent they didn't leave any documents. It is a secret. Is it right? One thing sure was he was certainly one of the best swordsman in history.

His 12 years out of *Edo* leave much to our imagination and even his death. Because of the way he died, some people say he had health problem and others say he was poisoned.

He is in the subject of many books and movies as the hero and you can find him as a supporting character in other stories too. Every story shows different situations of how he lost his eye.

One-eyed greatest swordsman with *Tsuba* on his lost eye, working as a secret agent. Don't you think he can be a cool character in stories? Yes. He is always so cool even when he isn't a main character. I am a big fan of *Jyubee's stories*, too. I wish there are more books and movies translated into English that you can enjoy.

\* *Yagyuu* clan's hometown---It is located near by *Nara* City. There is a Dojo that is famous in connection with *Jyubee*. You can visit *Yagyuu* family's cemetery or the minister of a *Yagyuu* clan's house that is preserved with weapons and household goods that *Yagyuu* family and people in that town used.

## EVERYDAY JAPANESE

**Hajimemashite**---How do you do?

Use this you meet somebody at the first time. Add "#### *desu*." after *Hajimemashite*. #### will be your name.

**Ohisashiburidesu**---Long time no see.

*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 Shougun instead of Shogun.*

Have a questions or request? Contact me at:

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