

SAMURAI DAYORI

SPECIAL THANKS FROM OHASHI SENSEI

I would like to say “thank you” to each one who made origami cranes and prayed for my wife. It was a wonderful, heart-warming gift. She healed much faster than her doctor thought. We are very happy about her recovering and knowing there are so many people care about us. Thank you very much.

EARLY SHINAI (BAMBOO SWORD) AND IT'S INVENTOR

Shinai was invented by *Kamiizumi Iseno-kami Nobutsuna* (1508-?).

He was the son of a lord of a castle in a small domain. He had a famous warrior in his ancestors and he was a man of good lineage, but his family was just one many small clan in this War era.

When he was young he traveled about the country to perfect his skill in martial arts. He studied *Nen ryu*, *Katori-shintou ryu*, *Kashima-shin ryu* and *Kage ryu* by staying at each style's main *dojo*. He hid himself away in the mountains to develop his own style after he was given a master's rank of *Kage ryu*, then made his own style 'Shin (new)-Kage ryu'.

He became lord of the castle as his father's successor when he was 22 years old. At first he worked for *Uesugi* clan as his father had done, but *Uesugi* lost the battle against *Houjou* clan in 1546. *Houjou* started to expand their territory, but small domains' clans fought back with the support of *Nagao Kagetora* who would become an assistant of *Shougun* later, and they let *Houjou* withdraw from their area. At this battle *Nobutsuna* became famous as a great warrior and called “No. 1 Yari (spear) of *Kouzuke-no-kuni*”. *Kouzuke- no- kuni* was the name of his domain. After this battle he worked for *Nagano Narimasa* who was his brother- in- law. He was chosen the best martial artist of *Yari* again. He was not only a great martial artist but also very skilled commander.

In 1561 when *Nagano Narimasa* died and *Nagano Narimori* became a new lord, *Houjou* united with *Takeda* clan and started to invade *Nagano* and their retainers' area again. *Nagano* lost the battle and the lord committed suicide. *Nobutsuna* survived. *Takeda* clan's lord, *Takeda Shingen* showed respect to him as a great warrior even though he was an enemy. He ask *Nobutsuna* to work for *Takeda*.

RECOMMENDED BOOK

The Life-Giving Sword -- Yagyu Munenori

This book is about *Yagyu-Shin-Kage ryu*. *Yagyu Munenori* lived during the same period as *Miyamoto Musashi*, and was sword instructor to two consecutive shougun. The book teaches not only sword technique, but also a way of thinking, that can still be applied today.

Nobutsuna refused that offer but promised he would never work for any other clan but *Takeda*, then he started his journey to brush up his martial arts skill again in 1563. He was 55 years old. (Some historical research say it was 1566.)

He met *Yagyuu Muneyosi* (see Vol. 3) in this year. He was visiting the famous swordsman *Kitabatake Tomonori* and was introduced to *Muneyosi*. *Muneyoshi* was 35 years old. He challenged *Nobutsuna* to show his skill. *Muneyoshi* suffered a complete defeat. *Muneyoshi* used *Bokutou* (or *Bouken*) and *Nobutsuna* used *Shinai* which he invented .

This *Shinai* was different from the one we see now. Split bamboo in to four parts leaving *Tsuka* part. Then cover the split part with cowhide and paint lacquer all over that. After lacquer dries the surface become wrinkled. It looks like skin of a toad. With that reason this *Shinai* is called *Hiki Hada Shinai*. *Hiki* is from *Hiki-gaeru* which means a toad. *Hada* is skin. Also this is called *Fukuro Shinai* too. *Fukuro* means a bag. *Tsuka* part was unwrapped bamboo.

After *Muneyoshi* lost the match, he invited *Nobutsuna* to his village and asked to stay as his instructor. *Nobutsuna* trained him for 6 months. He left a homework to *Muneyoshi* and went back to his journey. The homework was to find the way to stop an opponent's sword without using your swords (mutou tori). A year later he came back and gave a test *Muneyoshi*. He passed the test and was given of a master's rank of *Shin-Kage ryu*. Later, *Muneyorshi* developed *Yagyuu-shin-kage ryu* from *Nobutsuna's Shin- kage ryu*.

Hiki Hada Shinai is still used at the *dojo* in *yagyuu* village.

SAKURA(CHERRY BLOSSOMS)

Japan is in the season of cherry blossoms between middle of March and April. It is the national flower of Japan. Not only because of that, cherry blossoms is something very special for Japanese. When we say just “flower”, it means cherry blossoms. In our history it has been loved by people all the time and there are countless poems about that flower.

When the season gets closer, you can see which area starts bloom when, which day is the most beautiful and when is the full bloom on the weather forecast of TV and newspapers everyday. They say “‘Cherry blossoms front’ is going up to north” like talking about atmospheric pressure.

Generally people say the best time is 80% bloom but not full bloom. Many Japanese people take a vacation trip just to enjoy the view of cherry blossoms of famous places. Also we have a picnic or party under trees in local parks, or just enjoy taking a walk.

Many companies have a party as a yearly event. Japanese companies year starts at April 1. Young people who just graduated schools or college in March join companies and have ceremony on April 1. First job for these young stars is to reserve the place for the cherry blossoms party with rope and sticks. It is a race with other parties at the popular place like Osaka castle. They go there in early morning, mark their territory and just wait all day until everybody comes with foods and drinks in that evening.

TV news and newspaper tell us which area’s cherry started to bloom and how crowded with people.

Flowers don’t last so long. The short-lived flower and that light color make us feel the transiency. Japanese people love the beauty of this flower and the transiency make this flower so special for us.

It is certainly beautiful when it blooms 80% or full. Also the moment of scattered by wind is so beautiful. It is breathtaking. We call this ‘flower storm’. Many warriors wish was to die a glorious death on a battle if they couldn’t win. In Japanese we say ‘be scattered like flowers’.

EVERYDAY JAPANESE

Tadaima---I’m home or I came back.

Use this when you come home or come back to people you know well.

This word is a short cut of “*Tadaima modori* (or *kaeri masita*)”.---I returned right now.

Translation of *Tadaima* is ‘right now’. But you still can use when you see somebody first time after you had been gone.

Okaerinasai---Welcome back.

INTERESTING FACTS

Common subjects of schools for Samurai’s sons in Edo era were Confucianism (a type of ideology from china and this was an important education to be a leader), writing (calligraphy), social study, reading (Chinese (read Chinese books or poems with Japanese language and Japanese), mathematic, medical science, astronomy, music and dance, customs and manners and martial arts.

When *Daimyou* (lords of domain) took a bath, if the water of tub was too cold or hot, he had to talk to himself loudly like “Too hot, too hot.” There was a servant in the same bathroom but his rank was too low to talk and to give orders directly. He needed to let his page know who was waiting in another room to order the servant in the same bathroom with his load.

THOUGHTS OF SAMURAI

Like a can ready to pounce on a mouse. I looked for a weakness in my adversary. You could cut the tension between us with a knife. Nervous sweat dripped from our brows as the moment of truth approached. At the same instant, we jolted into action. My sword hits the mark, cuts through his right ear, continues through his left jaw and severs his entire shoulder. He tumbles to the ground like a sack of potatoes, as I sheath my sword. To my dismay, three of my digits litter the floor. In Kenjutsu you must always remember that victory has its price.

-----Hosokawa Sensei (7th dan)

This article was from Phil Powell. He thought this was interesting and wanted to share with everybody. Thanks, Phil!

If you have anything you would like to share, I am happy to put on Samurai Dayori. Books, movies, website you found, or even your experience of practice.

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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