

SAMURAI DAYORI

KIHON(BASIC) NO KAMAE

As you already know, there are 5 kihon no kamae. *Joudan*, *Chuudan* (or *Seigan*), *Gedan*, *Hassou* and *Waki*. In *Mukushin-ryu* they are called *Gogyou no kamae*. These are *Ten*(sky), *Shin*(heart), *Ji*(ground), *Ki*(tree), *Kin*(gold) and one extra-*Kasumi*(mist), (see *Mukushin-ryu* website). Each style has different names, but basics are all same.

However, *Gogyou no kamae* is a little different. There is no *Joudan no kamae*. *Ten no kamae* is the closest one but not same with common *Joudan*. Probably many of you already realized that it is lower than *Joudan no kamae*.

Because *Mukushin-ryu* was developed during War Era (around 1470's), most *Bugei*(martial arts) were based on fighting with *Yoroi Kabuto*(a suit of armor and helmet) at this time...they could not raise their arms high like *Joudan* with them.

For that same reason, *Shin no kamae* is not the same as common *Seigan kamae*. We still call it *Seigan Kamae*. There are many *Seigan kamae* and all are a little different by style. *Shin no kamae* is higher than common *Seigan* or *Chuudan*.

Joudan no kamae was developed by a proper successor of *Yagyū-shinkage-ryū*, *Yagyū Hyōgonosuke* in early Edo era. *Hyōgonosuke* was a grandson of *Yagyū Muneyoshi* and a nephew of *Yagyū Munenori*.(see vol.3 & 5)

Once *Tokugawa Ieyasu* settled his position as a ruler, there were no more big battle's and peaceful time came. Martial artists started to train without armor. *Kenjutsu* with armor is called *Kaisya kenjutsu* and without armor is called *Suhada kenjutsu*. You can say *Kaisya kenjutsu* is old style and *Suhada kenjutsu* is later style.

Mukushin-ryū is based on *Kaisya kenjutsu* but after the War era ended, many techniques were mixed with *Suhada kenjutsu*'s way.

RECOMMENDED MOVIES

Kagemusya (The shadow warrior)

---Director ; *Kurosawa Akira*

There is no sword fighting. But you can see many famous people of the War era. Also you see different styles of *Yoroi* and *Kabuto* (armor suits) This is a long movie and has some artistic atmosphere. Sit back and enjoy.

HOW TO TAKE CARE OF A SWORD AFTER BAMBOO CUTTING

---OHASHI SENSEI'S WAY

Wipe the blade with a wet cloth, then with a dry cloth.
Polish it with a deerskin/buckskin.
Oil the blade.

KODOMO NO HI (CHILDREN'S DAY)

May 5th is a national holiday of Japan. It is '*Kodomo no hi*'. The day is to wish children a healthy happy life. Also it is called '*Tango no sekku*'. *Tango* is not a kind of music or dance. Originally it was a Chinese word and means May 5th. *Sekku* means a seasonal festival

It was started as a day to clean out evil influences. We hung sweet flags and/or mugworts on the eaves of house and ate some special pastries. The Japanese name of sweet flags is '*Shoubu*'. It is same pronunciation with another word which means to give importance to martial arts. Because of this, May 5th became the day for boys(samurai). People started to decorate *Yoroi*, *Kabuto* or samurai doll and put up carp streamers (*koi nobori*) to wish the boys in the family to become great warriors. The reason of carp streamers is that we think carp are very strong fish which can swim against the stream.

After World war II it became a national holiday and called '*Kodomo no hi*' for all children, But we still celebrate that day with same way for boys (the day for girls is March 3rd.).

INTERESTING FACTS

There were many recycling business' in Edo era. One of them was gift recycling business.

When someone received a gift they didn't like need, they kept them in that gift box and sold them to the gift recycling guy a little cheaper than store price. They didn't have to go their shop. They came to your house. The recycler sold them to someone who needed to buy some gift for a profit, but still cheaper than stores. Something to decorate the house, tableware or clothing were not good to sell away. When the person who gave them visited your house, he or she expected to see those are used. Popular items were dried or preserved foods. You can say you already ate them!

YOU-TOU MURAMASA (THE MYSTERIOUS SWORD)

There was a very highly skilled swordsmith named *Sengo Muramasa* (late 1300's - early 1400's).

His swords were called 'You-tou' (the mysterious sword) or, "the sword that would ruin the *Tokugawa* family". The rumor even said 'his swords didn't want to go back into *saya* without the taste of blood.'

When we say a swordsmith's name, it means not only swordsmith themselves but also their sword too.

In 1535 *Tokugawa Ieyasu's* (1st *Tokugawa* shogun) grandfather was killed by his retainer with *Muramasa*. It was an accident. In the night, somehow the horses got excited. at the camp of a battle field. *Ieyasu's* grandfather woke up and yelled "Somebody, take care of horses". One of the retainers who was half asleep thought he was an enemy, and cut him down.

In 1549 *Ieyasu's* father was killed by his retainer who lost his mind with another *Muramasa*.

In 1575 *Ieyasu's* first son was ordered to suicide by *Oda Nobunaga*. At this time *Ieyasu* was on *Nobunaga's* side and *Nobunaga* suspected *Ieyasu's* son was a double-crosser. *Ieyasu* could not go against *Nobunaga* to show his loyalty. He asked his son to die for his family. The sword which was used to assist him in performing *seppuku* (*harakiri*) by cutting off his head was *Muramasa*.

Then in 1600 during a battle, one of *Ieyasu's* retainers killed a famous warrior of the opposing side with a *Yari*(spear). It went through the *Yoroi*(armor). When *Ieyasu* went to inspect that great *Yari*, he cut himself. It was *Muramasa* again.

After this, *Ieyasu* prohibited his family and retainers from using *Muramasa*.

EVERYDAY JAPANESE

Shitsurei shimasu

Gomen kudasai

-----Both are used as 'Excuse me'. When you leave, visit somebody's house, or need to disturb other people. You can use these as 'Good-by' too.

There are many other way to say 'Excuse me'. These two are very polite way. It would be nice to say with a bow.

TSUJI-GIRI (A STREET MURDER)

So, you got a new sword that you had dreamed of for a long time. It was made by a famous swordsmith and it was very expensive, of course. All of your samurai friends are jealous. Everyone says the sword must cut well easily. You want to try your brand new sword, but it is a peaceful time. There are no more battles. Your job is at a desk. You don't have any reason to cut someone. You don't want to pick a street fight. The opponent might be stronger, or your sword might get damaged. You don't want that happen, do you?

Everyday you draw your treasure and look at it. Every time when you see it, your passion to try it grows. You think "I just want to check how my new sword works".

The day comes that you can't hold yourself anymore. You go out in the middle of the night. You pick the spot on the street not busy in the night but still few people might pass through. There are no street lights of course, but there is the moon in the sky. You hide yourself in the dark on the corner or in the shadow of something. People in the house of that street are asleep. Stray dogs are even asleep. Silence. You just wait and wait. Now you see a paper lantern getting closer. Yes, someone is coming. You don't hear any conversations. That person must be alone. Now he is passing the place you are hiding. You step out from the darkness and...

Now that poor guy is dead on the ground and you put your sword back into your *saya*. The paper lantern is on the ground and almost burn out. You are so excited on the way home. You draw your sword to clean and take care of it in your room. You can't take your eyes from the mysterious brightness of the blade. "This sword works excellent...this is a real treasure.", you think. You cannot forget the feeling of that moment. Then....

These people and the action are called *Tsuji-giri*. Of course, it is a crime, but it really happened sometimes. The reason to be *Tsuji-giri* was not only to try the sword, but also to try their skill or a certain technique that they had trained hard at.

I am sure you who are reading this now are not one of such people...are you?

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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