

kendō-iaí-naginata

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Takami Taizō - A Remarkable Teacher (Part Two)

by Roald Knutsen

Sempai and I were in Tokyō in 1970, staying with Ben Hazard-*sensei* and his wife for the first week of a three-week tour to take part in the 2nd World Goodwill Kendō Taikai. Takami-*sensei* and his sister invited us to dinner at her restaurant at Toride a few miles north-east of the city. Apart from that interesting experience, three hours sitting *seiza*, Takami-*sensei* took the opportunity of explaining how he gained a couple of two inch scars, one on each side of his left forearm but not quite opposite each other.

It was during the War when he served as infantry officer facing the Russians across the upper reaches of the Yalu River in a non-shooting stand-off that lasted years. Takami-*san* spent three long and boring years on the Japanese bank commanding a company of men and ranking as a Captain. To pass the time, he regularly instructed his men in the Eishin-ryū Iai and once, when demonstrating the Ōmori-ryū forms he explained to the novices the skills of *chiburui*, shaking off blood, and the *nōtō*, re-sheathing the blade.

Unfortunately, his concentration was momentarily disturbed and he returned the blade rather fast as a warning to his men that at their level the move must be made relatively slowly. He missed the mouth of his service scabbard and thrust the blade straight through his forearm and out the other side! Rushed off to the field hospital, the army doctor nearly passed out but the sword was withdrawn and it was found that the blade had severed neither arteries nor major veins. The scar's message was not lost either on any of the young students - or on myself! This anecdote against himself was typical of the dark humour that soldiers engage in.



In the previous Journal, I referred to Takami-sensei's early training. This will give you some concept of what it meant to be born to senior warrior rank when many older former-*bugeisha* were still alive, albeit in their 70s and 80s. The training that he underwent cannot have changed much, even allowing for a softening in the late Edō period, for many centuries. Still in his 'teens, he was instructed in *Bajutsu* (Horsemanship) both with saddle and bareback, riding skills that included the use of *naginata*, *yari*, *tachi* and *yumi*. Naturally, there were long hours of Kendō, Iai-jutsu and Sō-jutsu. Additionally, Takami-sensei told me that he was also taught how to swim a castle moat and climb the sloping walls in an assault! (I don't know what that art is called). Finally, (?), he also practiced *Yadome*, cutting down arrows shot directly at him – the arrowheads padded, he was pleased to say. These several skills were not just in his experience; Arai Shigeo-sensei, also the grandson of a senior retainer of the Yonezawa clan, was similarly trained in the 1920s.

I recall Iai training under Takami-sensei very clearly indeed. This was in the middle dōjō of the London Judō Society in Vauxhall and I was put through the first three levels of the Hasegawa Eishin-ryū with constant repetitions to get things right under the sharp eyes of this master. This training culminated in showing the Iai at the Crystal Palace Sports Centre at an international Judō match, and later at the Royal Albert Hall. In those days I was also admonished to accompany my Iai-waza with proper *kiai*.



Ko-dachi-no-kata at Charmouth, Dorset

When, at length, Takami-sensei flew back to Japan, he left nearly all his luggage behind to be forwarded and took in its place a box full of smooth *Lias* stones from Lyme Bay – all with holes right through à la Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth. We have often wondered what the Japanese Customs made of these when he arrived at Haneda airport? We arranged a three week holiday in a large rented house in Charmouth in June 1962 and several Kendō students came for the first week or ten days.

The house had beautiful gardens and a big lawn for private *kata* practice. We were only about five minutes walk down to the sandy beach or on the open cliffs and trained down there for early morning *keiko*. In between the Kendō and Iai two or three times a day, and for the remainder of our stay, Takami-sensei took our two older children fishing in the River Char. They caught him live flies and he hooked no less than fifty-two trout. Whilst we lived like lords, I am sure that privately one or two thought: 'Oh, no! Not trout again!' Only one member refused the delicacies – because he was a doctor. 'I can't eat them because they came out of a country river. You've no idea what was in the water . . .' None of the rest of us suffered, I can tell you.

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Sen-Nen-Ya by Pat Knutsen



One of the pleasures of travelling in the company of older Japanese *kodansha* is the shared interest in history, particularly in the rich warrior background. The past is always strongly present in these descendants of the samurai.

Back in 1982 – and one can hardly believe that it was thirty years ago – four of us spent three weeks in Japan on a hard '*musha-shugyō*'. Starting in Narita and Kashima-jingu, then on to the Kansai and eventually to Tagawa and Saga in Kyūshū, we practised almost every day, and often twice or three times! One of the several highlights, though, was a morning visit into the mountains behind Kōbe to visit a farmhouse that was once the home of middle-ranking *kozoku* retainers. *Kozoku* were warriors who had their own ancestral lands but owed their allegiance to an overlord, supplying fighting men in times of danger. In travelling just twenty miles or so into the hinterland, we were separated from the splendid modernity of twentieth century Kōbe by a gulf that could be as wide as four centuries, even more.

The farmhouse, though moved three times from its original site in this valley due to the river changing course and the construction of a small dam, stands pretty well where the first palisaded manor was placed to protect the border between the Miki clan's domain in Harima and Settsu province, now Hyōgo-ken, to the south. Although now known as '*The Thousand Year Old House*' it is a very rare survival of such a warrior residence and *tōride*, or fort. Built in the unsophisticated rural style of anything between the thirteenth and fifteenth century, it stands on the banks of a river, (that caused its various re-siting), but

the greatest care seems to have been taken to preserve its integrity exactly as it would have appeared at the end of the Tokugawa period. Whilst the embankments, once topped by a wooden palisade have gone, some vestiges have been kept in place. The only regret pointed out by Ozaki-sensei and Hashimoto-sensei, our hosts, was that a fine entrance gate with an archery platform above, a *yagura*, was lacking. Those of you who have seen Kurosawa Akira's film, '*Kumonosu-jō*', his splendid version of '*Macbeth*', will remember such a gateway.

The visit, like many such organised by older *sensei*, gave Lucy Pratt, Simon Crittenden, my husband and myself, a chance to 'sense' the real flavour of Old Japan, away from the teeming sightseers – a rare thing indeed!

From the architectural point of view, the *Sen-nen-ya* has a truly rustic interest. The principle posts to the structure were rough-hewn, each with the square corners chamfered

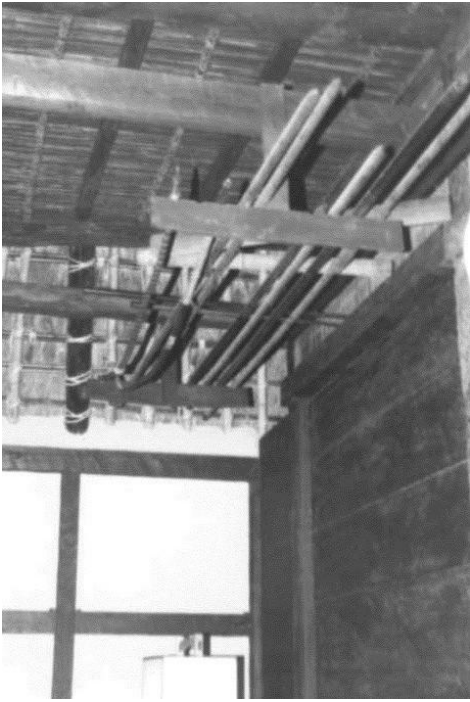


away to make these uprights appear octagonal, the custom during the Muromachi-*jidai*. Then we saw that none of the sliding partitions were the normal lightweight *shōji* where paper is stretched and pasted to a light framework. Instead, they were the older style *fusama* with more substantial wooden panels. The

floors of the *yashiki* were mainly planked whereas most peasant farmers in olden times lived on the bare earthen foundations.

A rack platform set in the roof of the main room supported a number of weapons as well as a couple or so hoes and rakes. I think that I recall two rattan-bound *war* bows and a *yari*, but the most interesting item was a fine red oak *bokutō* dating from at least the mid-Muromachi period. This *bokken* was longer and more slender than the modern ones and quite definitely curved like a slung *tachi*. This is clearly to be seen in the two illustrations.

After the second of the 'Restoration' wars in 1878 all samurai became 'gentlemen' virtually overnight, and were forced to give up wearing the two swords. As they were now 'gentlemen' they also became unemployed, losing their income, with the direct result of falling on hard times. Some, who had limited lands, reverted to becoming farmers, others entered commerce or the armed forces, but many were forced to sell valuable heirlooms, especially their now redundant arms and armour.



A receipt preserved by this family who still own the *yashiki*, lists many of the objects that the last *kozoku* warrior sold to a dealer after *Bakumatsu*. Even now there is a feeling of deep regret in the family that so drastic a move should have been necessary. One of these heirlooms listed was a *nagamaki* (halberd) blade forged in 1350 by the famous smith, Hōjōji Kunimitsu, one of the three greatest pupils working as swordsmiths in Osafune, Bizen province, now Okayama-ken. Spearblades made by this smith are very rare indeed, possibly less than ten surviving, and, by the strangest coincidence, a blade by this great smith is the pride of our own collection. A lion's share of such prized possessions reached Europe and the USA very quickly after *Bakumatsu* but brought a mere pittance to their once proud owners. They are now worth unimaginably more. I, personally, find this very sad.

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Results of Shōdan Shinsa – 25 March 2012

The following members have been advanced to Shōdan rank under the authority of the Eikoku Kendō Renmei at the Shōdan Shinsa held at the Tunbridge Wells Dōjō on Sunday, 25th March 2012.

Virginie Bayle	Butokukan
Melanie Carr	“
Arran Crutcher	“
David Munn	“
Jessica Waring	“

Congratulations from all our Kendōka and our Japanese Kendō friends.



Lucy Pratt, yondan, in attack mode

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The Kendō Reader by Noma Hisashi (Translated by Phil Jupp)

Twenty-four: *Shiai mae no Kokorogake* (Preparation for Matches)

One must be both spiritually and mentally prepared to face any opponent or situation at any time or place. Consequently, one must make it one's daily principle of daily life to maintain a state of constant readiness, and remain aware throughout all one's chores and activities; in other words, daily life itself must be lived in an attitude of constant *shiai*.

To those who already possess this attitude very little need to be said about preparations for *shiai*; however, to remain aware and prepared from morning to night is an extremely difficult achievement. Therefore, it is perhaps not entirely superfluous to describe here the frame of mind needed for entering *shiai*.

Briefly, preparation for *shiai* should include:

1. Nurturing one's spirit to a condition most suitable for *shiai*.
2. Nurturing one's physical condition to that most suitable for *shiai*.

Of course, these are not merely the suitable preparations for *shiai* alone; one would hope that these conditions can be met continually, though just before *shiai* they are especially important.

Apart from a few exceptional individuals, for most of us it is necessary to set aside some time for bracing the mind and body and raising them to peak condition, but first of all, it is essential to repeat to oneself that one is going to enter a *shiai* and that all *shiai* are important.

If one confronts an opponent without the right preparation the result is likely to be stiffness, consternation, fear, and a lack of adequate tension. Also, one's agility will suffer, harmony will be lost, and many other problems will arise. In all things, unpreparedness must be avoided. Even for those of us with quite extensive experience one may be caught out through lack of preparation, so that from the moment one knows one is entering a *shiai*, the fact of the matter must be fully acknowledged in both mind and body.

If one is deadly earnest about gaining victory in *shiai*, and serious in one's attitude towards how to go about it, various ideas will come naturally to mind. One may even try praying to God, undergo purifications, or even wear an amulet, in order to prepare oneself spiritually.

As for myself, when I hear of a forthcoming *shiai*, from that moment on, I take time out each day to think seriously about it somehow. I do not think that this is time wasted. Again, on the morning before the *shiai*, in order to be as relaxed as possible one may try, for example, reciting poetry or singing songs.

Also, it is important to maintain control over one's personal habits, avoid excessive eating or drinking, and get plenty of sleep.

When arriving at the place of the *shiai*, take a good look around the *shiai* area and become familiar with it, take in the atmosphere and wait patiently at one's place until it is one's turn.

While waiting one's turn it may be that one loses concentration because of idle chatter, and so on, so take care to avoid this. Then, immediately prior to one's own match stand and limber up with some light exercise. When the start of *shiai* has been called take care with timing. If one hurries too fast one will soon become tired and suffer fatigue; and if one takes too much time one may lose composure. If one's opponent is unskilled do not make light of him, and if he is very strong do not fear him; give it everything you have got, be confident and be determined to win.

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An Awful Warning – a soldier's sad fate

In the burial ground of Winchester Cathedral stands a well-inscribed tombstone warning all young men, and especially soldiers, of the perils attendant on drinking too much small beer* on particularly warm days. Whilst this memorial stone has no apparent relevance whatsoever to our pursuit of Kendō, a number of our *yūdansha*, usually to be found sporting hoary old beards, have twice before over the years wished for the inscribed text which follows to be published . . . just in case the need should arise.

*In Memory of
Thomas Thetcher
A Grenadier in the North Regt
Of Hants Militia who died of a
Violent Fever contracted by drinking
Small Beer when hot the 12th of May
1764, Aged 26 Years*

*In grateful remembrance of whofe univerfal
Good will towards his Comrades, this Stone
is placed here at their expence, as a fmall
teftimony of their regard and concern.
Here fleeps in peace a Hampfhire Grenadier
Who caught his death by drinking small Beer.
Soldiers be wife from his untimely fall
And when ye're hot drink Stronger or none at all.*

*This memorial being decayed was reftored
By the Officers of the Garrifon A.D.1781*

*An honeft Soldier never is forgot
Whether he die by Mufket or by Pot.*

*This Stone was replaced by the North Hants
Militia when difembodied at Winchester
On 26th April 1802 in consequence of
The original Stone being destroyed.*

*And again replaced by
The Royal Hampshire Regiment 1866*

This interesting, if sad, memorial in Winchester Cathedral yard, lies about thirty yards up the slope from the West Doors a short distance away from the Refectory under a clump of trees. It is always worth a sobering visit. The only valid excuse for including this in the Journal is that any curious military pieces always intrigue certain *yūdansa*.

- *Small Beer*, so Simon Crittenden, *rokudan*, informs us – and he knows about these things – is the second ‘runnings’, (brewing), of the yeast used for at least four hundred years and still to be found, but . . .

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Shakespeare in Draeger by Steve Phillips

Readers of Donn Draeger’s seminal 1970s trilogy *Classical Bujutsu* (1973), *Classical Budo* (1973) and *Modern Budo and Bujutsu* (1974) will have noted his occasional use of quotations from plays by Shakespeare at the start of certain chapters. This is something that I had had in mind in general for some time before attempting a more detailed consideration.

There are four quotations used in this way. Perhaps unlike more transparent references, use of quotations from Shakespeare may be more challenging to some extent given that the context and meaning or, possibly, potential varied meanings may need to be understood. Draeger was a professional academic as well as an accomplished Bujutsu practitioner and so it would surely be inappropriate to assume that his choice and use of Shakespearian quotations was random or superficial.

Since the author provided no play and line references alongside the quotations used, some reading search with a collected works volume is needed to supply the play, act, scene and line references shown below in square brackets. I consider each quotation use in the order in which they appear within the trilogy.

Classical Bujutsu; chapter 4 - *Bladed Weapons*

‘They bleed on both sides’ [Hamlet, v.ii.314]

The remark is made by Horatio, observing the climatic sword fight between Hamlet and Laertes in which both will die as a result of Laertes’ poisoned blade. Part way through the action, Horatio observes that both have been cut. Since he has no knowledge of the poison intrigue, the remark in the context of the play must be read as a commentary-style observation that the fight continues and that both sides are wounded and so doing equally

well, or badly. We can, perhaps, see this as a quotation used simply to refer to the concept of combat with blades, and move on.

Classical Budo; chapter 6 - *Classical Weapons Systems*

‘And sheathed their swords for lack of argument’ [Henry V, 3.iii.21]

The line comes from perhaps the best known Shakespeare passage considered here – Henry’s rallying cry before Harfleur that begins “Once more unto the breach..”. Once into his stride in his speech to his men, Henry refers to their lineage as flowing from men capable of fighting from dawn to dusk – until, that is, there was nothing left to fight over. It is perhaps instructive that the author then begins this chapter with the words “From Kenjutsu to Kendō”. Use of the quotation here could be seen as referring in the first place to the great quantity of swordmanship taking place in the period in question but perhaps also, intriguingly, to the outcome of the period in the sense of the development of a form with different aims to those of kenjutsu.

Modern Budo and Bujutsu; chapter 5 - *Kendō*

‘Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them’ [Othello, I.ii.59]

Swords are drawn at the meeting of Othello and Iago with Brabantio and Roderigo. The line is spoken by Othello, intervening to prevent a sword fight from proceeding. It is tempting to continue the speculation begun in considering the previous quotation. A plain English version of this line might be simply “Put your swords away”. Additionally, “for the dew will rust them” could be taken as meaning that the place or time is wrong for swords to be drawn. The question arises of what meaning the author intended by use of this quotation with specific reference to Kendō. Possibly, that Kendō is an activity chronologically preceded by and therefore to be distinguished from actual sword combat, something that takes place when real swords have been put away. This meaning would support the more general *bujutsu/budō* comparison and explanation made so specifically within the trilogy. A more profound possibility, and so necessarily more debatable, follows in that the intended meaning of the use of this quotation may be that the core purpose of Kendō is not to be regarded as directly related to sword use - real or simulated - and that this thought, since fundamental, is placed at the starting point of his examination of the subject.

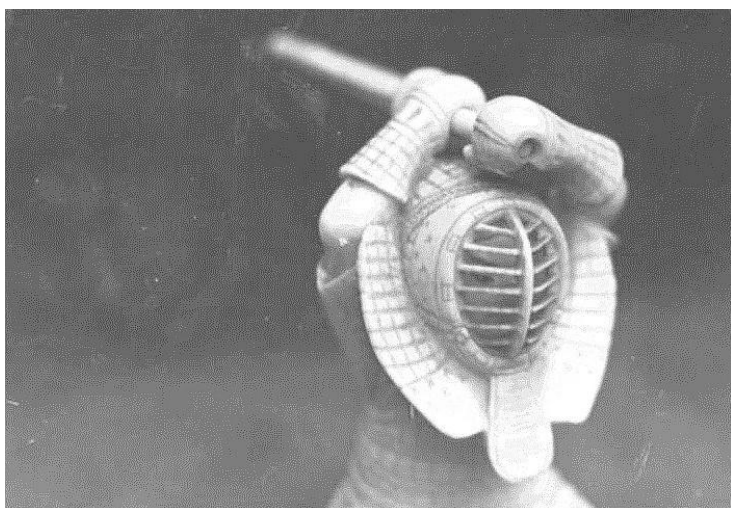
We therefore have three quotations to consider, placed in an order such that they can be seen as moving from straightforward description to, debatably, more involved subjects. Had we only three such quotations from Shakespeare to consider - one per volume and all in relation to sword use - it would be tempting at this point to speculate that their meaning, choice and order placing had been carefully considered so as to reinforce the account of development of *jutsu* and *dō* forms made within the trilogy, as well as to refer specifically to the individual chapter content. That possibility may nonetheless hold true but its potential neatness is effectively weakened by the final use of Shakespeare.

Modern Budo and Bujutsu; chapter 9 - *Shorinji Kempō*

'Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, but use all gently' [Hamlet, III.ii.4]

Hamlet instructs the actors who are to perform the play within a play designed to trap Claudius into some sign of guilt over the murder of Hamlet's father. He urges them to perform naturally and in an unforced way. This is, of course, advice that might suit well any of the martial disciplines examined in the trilogy and some in depth knowledge of Shorinji Kempō would be needed to make a specific judgement on its use here. It may be, however, that the author placed this quotation here deliberately since this is perhaps one of the disciplines that on first sight might be considered particularly forceful, and so perhaps unnatural, to the uninitiated.

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Kendō in Ivory

Although we have depicted this ivory Kendō figure two or three years ago, full length but quite small, here is a close up of his *jōdan-no-kamae* and *men*. The ivory was probably carved around the middle of *Bakumatsu*, possibly 1870-'78, though it may be a little later. The basis for this is the noticeably different shape of the *men-shikorō* (neck guard flaps), to the form of the more modern ones, current for the past hundred years at least. This feature is interesting in consideration of the *shikorō* shown with great care on another ivory figure of an old Kendō *sensei* who wears the *mon* of the Miura clan. On that figure, the flaps are given a cut-away indentation that allows the *men-himō* to be firmly secured without strongly pulling in the flaps. It is unfortunate that an actual *bōgu* we have dating from the first half of the nineteenth century is missing all the *men* padding, flaps included. Sketches of *Kendōka* practising in *gekken* armour found in Hokusai's *mangwa* sketchbook illustrate the more commonly found 'wrap round' flaps.

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