

The history of Iaido

Iaido is generally considered to have originated with Hayashizaki Jinsuke Shigenobu who resided in the Bushu area of Japan in the late sixteenth century.

Jinsuke named his sword drawing method the 'Shimmei Muso Ryu', though it was also known by a number of other names the most common now being Jushin Ryu.

Even at this early stage of Iai's development though, there is speculation that Jinsuke's teachings emphasized Iai as a defensive application and it would therefore seem that an element of spirituality was present from its inception.

After Jinsuke's death his teaching continued through a line of successors [known as the Jinsuke - Eishin line, Hasegawa Chikaranosuke Eishin having been the 7th headmaster in the line and was very influential in the subsequent teachings], some of these successors forming their own traditions in the process, until the early twentieth century when large changes were made to the practice of Iai both in terms of its practical application in society and its syllabus.

A number of people were instrumental in these changes, but foremost among them were Nakayama Hakudo and Oei Masamichi Shikei.

It was at this time that the name Iaido became more commonly used and that the idea that Iai could be used as a method of unifying a person's spirit, thoughts and actions really started to come to the fore.

Hakudo and Shikei pulled upon a number of different influences to formalize a system which would be suitable for those interested in the serious study of Iai and also made available a sized down system of

representative kata for those with a more passing interest, predominantly people who practiced Kendo.

In doing this Hakudo and Shikei set the trend for how the practice of Iaido was to develop and also established what were to become the two most commonly practiced Koryu both in Japan and abroad, namely the Muso Shinden Ryu and the Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu.

The next major development came about in 1966. After the second World War more and more Iai Jutsu, Batto Jutsu traditions were changed to Iai -Do and Iaido came under the control of the Zen Nihon Kendo Renmei, the AJKF.

It was decided to form a committee of representatives from various Iai Ryuha to develop a system which would allow people practicing kendoka to better understand the essence of Classical swordsmanship and in 1968 seven representative kata were put into full circulation in Japan under the title of the 'Zen Nihon Kendo Renmei Seitei Iaido Gata', the term 'Seitei' meaning 'fixed system'.

From that time on 'Seitei Iaido' has become the most popular form of Iai practiced worldwide and it is the Seitei system which forms the basis for all examinations for rank and teaching qualifications in Iaido within the EKF.

In 1977 three more kata were added to the original seven and in 2000, 2 more were added.

#