

NAKED BLADE

A man in a white gi is shown in a dynamic pose, holding a bamboo sword (shinai) with both hands. He is looking towards the right. The background is dark, and the lighting highlights the texture of the bamboo and the folds of his gi.

抜刀術

— A MANUAL OF —
SAMURAI SWORDSMANSHIP

TOSHISHIRO OBATA

NAKED BLADE



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—A MANUAL OF—
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TOSHISHIRO OBATA

Published by

dragon books



A black and white ink wash painting. On the left side, a vertical sword hilt (tsuba) is partially visible, rendered in dark ink. The rest of the image is filled with bamboo stalks and leaves, depicted with varying shades of grey and black ink, showing the texture and movement of the plants. The background is plain white.

The true way of fencing is the craft of defeating the enemy in a fight, and nothing other than this.

Miyamoto Musashi 1584-1645



Acknowledgements

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*Photographed at the Nichiren Temple by
kind permission of His Grace Bishop Fujiwara.*

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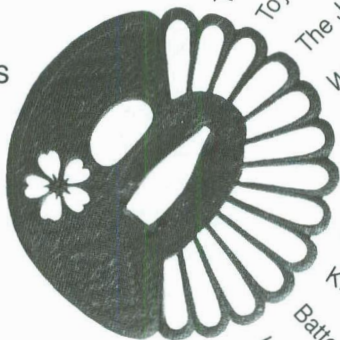
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Unlike kendo, the modern sportive form of Japanese fencing, or the companion art of sword drawing known as iai-do, Batto Jutsu is the original art of unsheathing the incomparably sharp Japanese sabre, and in one continuous movement, cutting down an aggressor. To the feudal Samurai, mastery of the martial arts including Batto Jutsu, was an absolute necessity, as it was the means by which he performed his primary function of service to his master. As such, the Samurai caste and their knowledge of the martial ways, constituted the rule of law for over one thousand turbulent years of Japanese history.

The beauty of Toyama Ryu Batto Jutsu, lies in its spartan simplicity and deadly effectiveness; devoid of artificial or theatrical postures, it is simply an efficient, practical and blindingly fast way of mortally wounding an opponent in a single decisive act of self defence. Its destructive power is devastating, as can be seen from the skilled swordsman's ability to cut cleanly through all manner of tough materials even iron and steel. The precise combination of technique, power and correct angle of blade engagement (hasuji) that makes these prodigious feats possible however, can only be learnt in a traditional school where the old methods, based on actual combat experience are still followed, and the true method of cutting therefore, fully understood.

Technique however, is but half of the equation for without a suitable sword, obviously the art of swordsmanship is as nothing. Many of us have been raised in the

belief that the Japanese sword is an 'objet d'art' a precious relic to be preserved and revered. What we have not been told is that there are two types of swords, those made for collectors, or 'art swords' and those for use. To the swordsman only the latter is an acceptable weapon.

Suddenly, even the most educated of us become aware of a gap in our knowledge we were not previously aware of. How do these swords vary from those housed by museums, few of which ever saw the sun rise over a battle field. Do they differ in weight, length, curvature from those we have always believed to be the examples of the very pinnacle of the swordsmith's art?

This and other questions that are frequently asked about the Japanese sword, are answered in the contribution to this volume by a friend and colleague of the author, Yasuhiro Kobayashi the noted modern smith. Tō-shō Kobayashi, after long and arduous research, has succeeded in forging swords in the original manner of the Koto period (old sword period approximately 950-1530) that are at once beautiful, and exceedingly strong and sharp. He contends that, just as a fine violin is not valued for its appearance alone, no sword can fairly be judged without its cutting ability being evaluated. To prove his point he subjects his own blades to brutal tests of their strength and cutting power on steel hawsers, large nails and iron helmets.

To the collector of Japanese swords, schooled in the belief that no blade should

be handled, let alone used to cut, this may seem almost sacrilegious. However the practical martial artist will undoubtedly welcome such a pragmatic approach to swords and swordsmanship, from one so eminently well qualified to write on the subject.

Toyama Ryu Batto Jutsu, as presented by author Toshishiro Obata, a master swordsman of the highest calibre, is the living art of his samurai ancestors preserved for the twentieth century, through a combination of the efforts of a few dedicated individuals and the capriciousness of history. As such, it is a fascinating record for the modern martial artist giving as it does an insight not only into the techniques of the feudal Samurai, but also into his attitude to martial training, and indeed, life itself.

It is with considerable pleasure, that we present this first work in English on Toyama Ryu Batto Jutsu, the sword art of the Imperial Army.

Publisher February 1986



*The author as he appeared in the cinema production "Ghost Warrior"
(by kind permission of the distributors)*

Close to Japan's longest river, the 'Tone-gawa' in the shadow of Joshu-Sanzan mountain, lies the birthplace of Toshishiro Obata, a modern day master of the ancient art of swordsmanship. Raised in the clean air of Gunma prefecture in the centre of Japan's largest island of Honshu, Toshishiro was introduced at a very early age to the martial arts by his father who was proficient in Ju Ken Jutsu (bayonet fighting) and Maniwa Nen Ryu (a composite martial arts involving weapons as well as unarmed grappling techniques). From that time until this, by studying under the greatest living masters, he has acquired a proficiency in the arts of the Samurai that is remarkable for one so young.

From Gunma, an area that for centuries had produced fighting men as notable as the Kamakura patriot Nitta Yoshisada, as well as the founder of the Shinkage school of swordsmanship, Kami Izumi Ise No Kami Hidetsuna, the young Obata set out in 1966 to study Aikido in the vast metropolis of Tokyo. 'Study' is an inappropriate word as in fact he became the 'Uchi Deshi' (literally house student or live-in apprentice) of Grand Master of Aikido Gozo Shioda, founder of the Yoshinkan School. A position that while prestigious is recognised as one that only the toughest can hope to endure let alone enjoy, as he did.

Gozo Shioda's brand of Aikido is fast, powerful and direct, well suited to the young man from Gunma. The Yoshinkan has its roots in the original teachings of Morihei Ueshiba and is much favoured by the Japanese Police because of its superior effective-

ness in practical situations. It was at this time that his interest in classical swordsmanship began to develop, and therefore in addition to his full time duties at the Yoshinkan, he embarked upon his study of Yagyur Ryu under the 21st headmaster of the school Yagyū Nobuharu, as well as Ioriken Ryu under Uchida Tetshinsai, adding the Kashima Shin Ryu system to his repertoire a little later.

To complete what can only be described as a comprehensive and well rounded education in the classical martial arts, he also studied the methods of the Ninja. Under the guidance of Yumio Nawa, Japan's leading authority on Ninjutsu and advisor to the Government TV network NHK, he trained in the original techniques of Ninjutsu, (as opposed to the modern synthetic) which even now are still largely unknown outside of Japan.

His interest in classical swordsmanship did not blossom however until he attended a large gathering of martial arts enthusiasts in Tokyo, at which the most senior martial artists were invited, to demonstrate their skills. At this prestigious event he witnessed a demonstration that would ultimately change his life, and the direction that he had until that time followed in pursuit of martial arts excellence. The man whose demonstration had such a profound effect on Obata was Nakamura Taizaburo, senior instructor of Toyama Ryu, founder of Nakamura Ryu as well as an acknowledged and highly graded expert in kendo, and juken-jutsu. Swordsman Nakamura's style was so powerful and direct, one could not



fail to be impressed by it. In the author's own words, "while swordsmen of other schools performed in a slow and rather unreal fashion, Nakamura Sensei would stride up to a huge makiwara and in an instant draw his sword and cut it cleanly through without fuss or theatrical gestures."

Toshishiro immediately became a student, and despite the very high standards set by Master Nakamura, progressed rapidly in Toyama Ryu and within a relatively short time had earned 5th Dan Renshi as well as 6th Dan Kenshi Nakamura Ryu, to add to 4th Dan Menkyo Kaiden Ioriken Batto Jutsu and 6th Dan Aikido. So as to emulate as closely as possible both in scope and excellence, the studies of his Samurai ancestors, he also studied and became proficient in Samurai style horsemanship, Japanese archery and use of the spear as well as many of the Ryukyu Kobudo disciplines. The end result of the efforts of himself and his teachers is only too evident from the fact that for three consecutive years he was Ioriken-Ryu All Japan Tameshigiri (test cutting) Champion, and for two consecutive years Toyama Ryu All Japan Champion.

To support himself while he continued his studies, and to further his knowledge of other martial arts, in 1971 he joined the

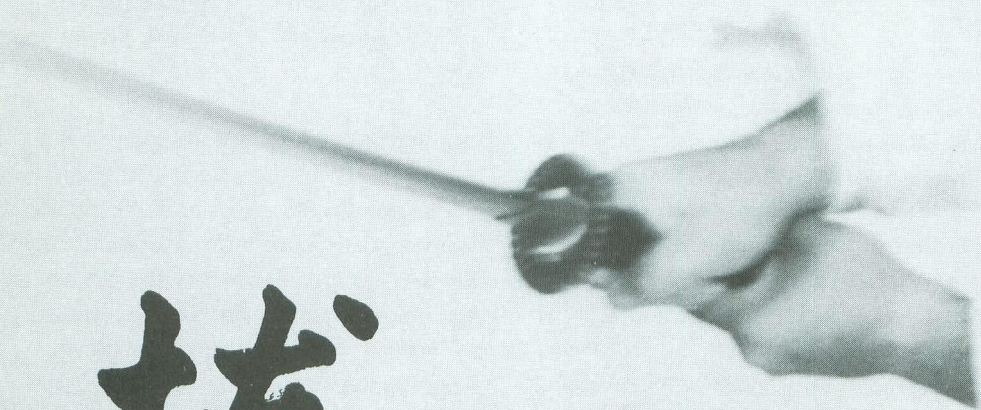
Tokyo Wakakoma (Samurai Co-ordinating Arts Organisation) under Hayashi Kuni-shiro, and subsequently acted as Samurai arts action co-ordinator for many cinema and television productions, appearing in many of those that he worked on. Since leaving Japan, he has acted as advisor for a number of Samurai adventure movies, notably "Sword Kill" in which he played a leading role.

Founder of his own organisation in the United States for the study of traditional martial arts, and the ways of the Samurai, he is conducting long term studies into the 'Ki' of Aikido as well as martial strategy and tameshigiri. In addition to this, his first book in English, he has in preparation manuscripts on the weapon arts of Okinawa, the real and unsubstituted methods of the Ninja and a second book on swordsmanship.

It would be difficult to imagine a person better qualified to present this unique, previously unpublished knowledge of Toyama Ryu Batto Jutsu to the public at this time.

**TOYAMA-RYU
BATTO JUTSU**

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Since interest in the martial arts of Japan first developed in the West, it has always been assumed that the true art of swordsmanship died out around the time of the Meiji Restoration, or perhaps shortly afterwards when the wearing of swords by the Samurai was forbidden. Indeed, some historians would suggest that following the battle of Sekigahara in 1600, practical swordsmanship went into a decline during the peaceful Tokugawa years, from which it never recovered. The conclusion being therefore, that the art of practical swordsmanship died long before the late 19th century.

Fortunately for this and future generations, neither is true. In 1875, as the Meiji era began and Japan stood on the threshold of its modern industrialised future, the Toyama Gakko was established under the new order and proved subsequently to be just the vehicle to preserve and carry the age old art of swordsmanship into the twentieth century.

Founded to train military personnel in swordsmanship, as well as other military disciplines, it used as its basis for 'Gunto Soho' or military sword method, the most effective techniques of the then living master swordsmen, all of which were performed from a standing position. This combination of techniques from various old schools, notably the Omori Ryu, and their adoption by the army, led later to the foundation of the Toyama School of swordsmanship in 1925.

Other schools of swordsmanship still in

existence at the time of the Meiji Restoration, did not fare so well however. As the age of democracy dawned, training halls that had originally only taught the old methods to Samurai, turned to the mass market now afforded them to survive in the absence of their former patrons. By 1870, several well known dojo in Tokyo area, the Chiba, Saito and Asari training halls were teaching an easier less vigorous form of swordplay to their customers. Thus Kenjutsu for the Samurai, evolved into Kendo for the commoner, and as a result much that was good became lost.

Kendo, with its emphasis on healthy exercise and competition between all classes of society, demonstrated to both the Japanese people and the world, Japan's desire to embrace the new democratic ideals and become a member of the family of nations. To the Samurai this must have seemed nothing short of revolutionary. While they had for countless generations occupied a uniquely privileged position in society, it was one that their ancestors had fought and frequently died for, and they therefore felt justified in occupying it.

Disobedience to a superior or an infraction of the rules of etiquette could still result in death at one's own hand, and clan obligations meant that they could be called to fight to the death for a cause in which they did not believe or even understand. As a result of this acceptance of rank in exchange for the obligation to serve unto death, the Samurai in Japanese literature is often compared with the blossom of the

cherry, so much admired by the people of the Island Empire. So fine and noble, and yet so fleeting, here for but a moment, then swept away at the whim of nature.

To the Samurai, the loss of rank, swords and distinctive hair arrangement must have seemed like the end of the world; it was not accepted without complaint. During the 1860's various foreign officials were cut down by rebellious Samurai clans. On December 9th 1867 for example, on the day of the restoration of the Mikado to full sovereign power, a French officer and ten soldiers were assassinated by members of the Tosa clan, who did not, and would not accept the new political order. Eighteen of this group were sentenced to death by 'hara-kiri'; eleven carried out the sentence in the presence of distinguished foreign observers, among them Lord Redesdale. Seven were subsequently reprieved.

As the old ways declined, so the new proliferated. 1873 saw court officials obliged to wear European dress while on duty, as well as the adoption of the Gregorian calendar. Japan was changing so fast that the Samurai, once they had laid aside their swords, and cut their hair, had few choices of occupation to follow. The army, or trade were the only ones that seemed appropriate. For many however, this was no choice at all, the reduction in rank from Samurai to Akindo or merchant class, the lowest of the ranks of Heimin (common people) must have been a horrible prospect, to say nothing of the drop in income from between 200 Koku* of rice for a Gokenin (Samurai soldier) to 9990 for

for Hatamoto (upper echelon of Samurai). They therefore chose military life, and applied their talents to building the new army of the Emperor.

Kendo was by now a widespread and popular sport. Many modifications in technique and equipment had been made which, although making it available to the public at large, all but removed the few genuine relics of practical swordsmanship that had previously remained. The leather covered bamboo practice sword, originally used by followers of the Yagyu school to minimise serious injury during training, was modified and adopted as the standard weapon thus preventing correctly executed cuts from being performed. Techniques were reduced to a bare minimum to simplify training and make Kendo more interesting: the conversion of art to sport was thus completed.

This change from classical art to popular sport was so rapid that scarcely thirty years after the Meiji Restoration, Douglas Sladen was prompted to write in his book about Japan published in 1904; "Fencing is a favourite exercise among all classes", and goes on to describe how the combatants "batter each other with untiring energy", and that "each pass is accompanied by theatrical attitudes and expressive gestures". He concludes; "Notwithstanding all this armour, severe blows, unless warded, inflict considerable pain, and occasion loss of temper, which sometimes results in fierce hand to hand grappling in which case, the one who first tears the mask from his adversary is deemed the

**Koku: the unit of value in medieval Japan, equivalent to approximately 132 lbs of rice.*

victor". Conclusive proof if any were needed of the deterioration of both the activity itself and the manners of those who practised it.

Elsewhere, other parallel changes were taking place. The highly effective, if somewhat dangerous techniques of ju-jutsu were in the hands of Professor Kano, the noted educationalist, being moulded into a form that would be acceptable to the new Japanese educational system which he called Judo. This as we know became in the course of time, an Olympic sport losing what remained of its effectiveness as a fighting art in the process.

In the spartan confines of military academies, Kenjutsu did however manage to survive. In the Rikugun Toyama Gakko both the techniques and the spirit of the Samurai were kept alive in the most practical way as author Hillis Lory recounts in the 1943 publication; "Japan's Military Masters – The Army in Japanese Life". Under the chapter heading "The Officer Japan's Modern Samurai" he tells us; "From the point of view of the infantry, the Toyama School of Physical Training, must be mentioned. Younger officers, particularly non-commissioned men and first and second lieutenants are chosen by their regimental commanders to attend. Instruction is given in different groups according to rank. Bayonet fighting, Japanese fencing, ju-jutsu and Japanese wrestling are included in addition to the usual courses of physical training schools".

He continues; "Great stress is placed on

physical endurance, and the student is taught specialised feats such as swimming a river under full pack and holding his rifle above the water. One graduate, an Olympic swimming champion, swam out into Hong Kong harbour with several other expert swimmers, and keeping their guns and ammunition dry they exploded by rifle fire British laid mines so Japanese transporters could sail into Hong Kong harbour free of this danger."

For evidence of the practical effectiveness of the Toyama school sword techniques in particular, we have only to refer to an American publication entitled "The Jap Soldier", published in 1943 it would appear for the benefit of U.S. Army officers anticipating an encounter with their opposite numbers on the battlefield. It states; "Japanese officers still favour the old fashioned sword. You will see them leading their troops with swords waving, just as in the old fashioned movie thrillers. Shoot these officers as quickly as you can, for those swords can slice a man from collar-bone to waist in a single clean slash".

This respect for the swordsmanship of Japanese officers was probably based on eye witness accounts in the field, and their transmission back to those responsible for producing training manuals. It may however be due in part to the startling success of the Nanpo Kirikomitai (from kirikomu-to cut, fight one's way into, make a raid on) or "Southern Special Attack Force" that was active in Manchuria during the last war. This elite group went into battle armed with swords alone against

infantry equipped with modern weapons, and despite the odds caused severe damage both physical and psychological to the enemy.

One of the instructors of this group has stated that once they were within approximately ninety feet of the enemies lines, and the small arms fire directed against them became less accurate, the advantage would seem to shift in their favour. When the enemy caught sight of expert swordsmen bearing down upon him and obviously intent upon their task of overwhelming his position despite the odds, he would waiver and fall into disarray allowing the attack group to close the remaining distance without too much difficulty. At close quarters, the trained swordsman's advantage was overwhelming as they so dramatically proved.

For men who have faced an enemy at a sword's length, Kendo and laido must seem decadent indeed. But this is not intended as a criticism of these activities as such, only the presumption that they are martial arts. Master swordsman Taizaburo Nakamura an expert in Kendo as well as the leading exponent of the Toyama and Nakamura styles of Kenjutsu, has very clear views on the matter. He maintains that until showmanship and competition are removed from Kendo, and the practice of test cutting instituted it cannot be regarded as serious martial training. For without the essential exercise of tame-shigiri, a student cannot even begin to comprehend how a sword should be used, let alone improve his swordsmanship.

Until now, even in Japan, Toyama Ryu Batto Jutsu has remained little known outside of military circles. As a result it was able to avoid the pressure exerted by the occupying US forces at the end of the Second World War, in their efforts to turn 'unacceptable' martial arts into 'acceptable' sports that the occidental mind could more easily understand. As such it has remained a practical and effective martial art. For those seeking the way of the Samurai, the path lies here. The techniques are combat effective, yet dignified; ruthlessly efficient yet graceful, we are indeed fortunate that they still exist.



Yasuhiro, the master of fire iron and stone, at his forge.

To the people of the Empire of Japan, the sword has a significance so profound as to be almost incomprehensible to people of other lands. Part of the Imperial Regalia (sanshu no jingi) the possession of which is a necessary prerequisite for ruling our country, it signifies courage and power, characteristics much admired by the people of this nation. Since the earliest times, a fine sword has been considered a most appropriate offering for an act of religious devotion, combining as it does in the minds of the Japanese people, the qualities of rarity and great value. Add to this its ability to destroy evil which gives it a stainless purity, and you have literally a gift fit for the gods.

For families of the Samurai caste, fine swords were heirlooms of the greatest possible value, to be used during one's

lifetime and passed on with honour to one's heirs. Some fine swords that have been handed down through countless generations of Japan's oldest families are literally national treasures, as is the case with the "Kogarasu-Maru" (little crow) made by Amakuni some time in the eighth century A.D. that was originally a treasure of the great Heike clan. This, together with the "Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi" (gathering clouds of heaven sword), which forms part of the Imperial Regalia, are now in the care of the Atsuta Shrine.

Some swords are even considered to have particular traits or characteristics. Swords by the brilliant but demented smith Muramasa Senzo (Setshu? b. circa 1341) while of the very highest quality, are thought to be thirsty for blood and capable of driving their owners to acts of violence.

Blades by certain other smiths are thought to bring happiness and prosperity. Suffice it to say that to the Japanese Nation, the sword has been an object of spiritual, religious and national significance since time immemorial.

Muramasa blades were greatly feared by the Tokugawa family, and with good reason. Kiyoyasu, the grandfather of Tokugawa Ieyasu died from wounds received from a Muramasa blade wielded by Abé Yashichi, and both Ieyasu and his father Tokugawa Hirotada were injured by them. If confirmation of the curse were needed it was not long in coming. Nobuyasu, the eldest son of Ieyasu, was suspected of plotting with the Takeda family to destroy the allegiance between Oda Nobunaga and his father, and as a result was ordered to commit 'hara-kiri'. An instant after he plunged the dagger into his abdomen as punishment for his suspected treachery, his Kaishaku, the master swordsman that stood ready at such times to deal the final mighty blow removed his head with one of these peerless blades that in the words of a novelist were forged with "hammer blows from the heart of madness". The Tokugawas so hated the blades of this troubled genius that whenever possible they had them destroyed. However, their quality was so high, and the demand for them so great, (especially amongst the enemies of the Tokugawas) that elaborate measures including signature erasure and/or alteration were practised to ensure their survival.

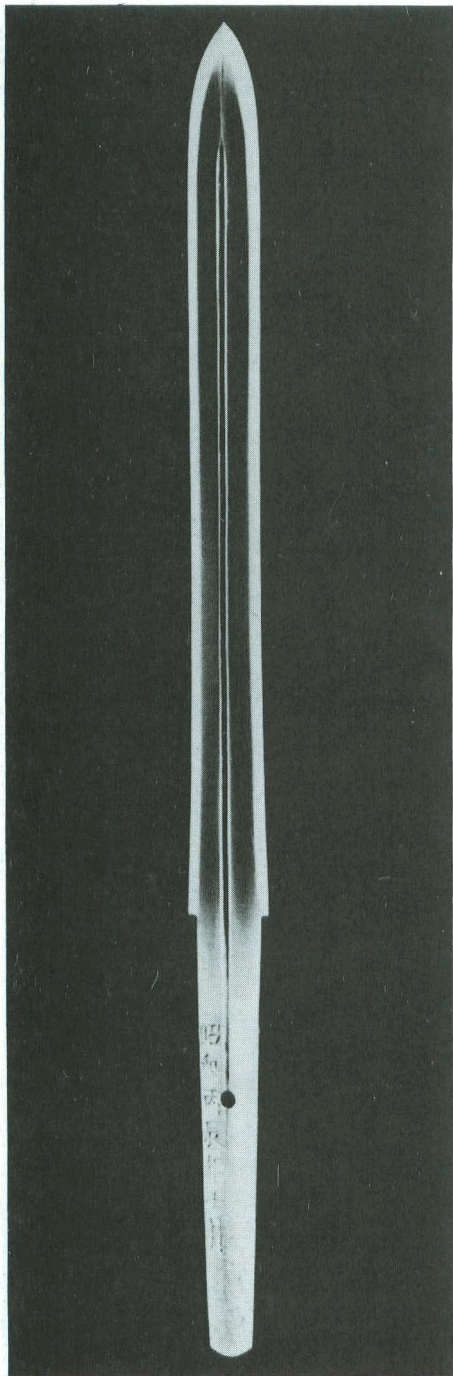
The swords that seem to have been in general use during the Jokoto period (prior to 800 AD) are of the straight type, single or double edged and poorly tempered. There seems to be no standard design, they vary between two and four feet in length, and their only common feature is the fact that they are all slung from the waist by cords, and used with a stabbing action. Historical evidence suggests that they were made by Chinese and Korean smiths working in Japan, as well as native artisans.

It is generally agreed that the first swords of the type that became the standard weapon of the Samurai, were made by the smith Amakuni at some time during the 8th century AD. The adoption of the efficient curved cutting edge was a massive step

forward in the weapon technology of the period, which coupled with the improvements in tempering techniques, culminated seven centuries later in the golden age of swordmaking between 1394 and 1427 when swords of a quality rarely equalled, and never surpassed, were made.

From the beginning of the Koto (Old sword) period in 800 AD when the curved cutting blade replaced the straight stabbing one, to a time just prior to the dawning of the Sengoku Jidai (period of the warring provinces 1467-1574) swordsmiths concentrated on improving the standard weapon, and its form therefore changed very little. However, when massed infantry engagements replaced the mounted cavalry skirmishes of previous ages, the heavy Tachi type sword worn edge downwards as best suited the mounted warrior, who drew his sword with a distinct upward movement to clear it from its scabbard and avoid cutting his mount, was replaced by the shorter lighter Katana, worn edge upwards, and thrust through the sash.

This seemingly insignificant modification in the manner in which the sword was worn, was in fact the beginning of an entirely new method of combat that would have a dramatic effect on the way future generations of Samurai waged war. With the sword firmly secured in the waist band edge up, the Samurai could draw and cut forwards in one rapid movement, and thereby defend himself without the need to first draw the sword and adopt an offensive posture. From this time onwards,



Kenjutsu (the use of the already drawn sword) and Batto-jutsu (drawing and simultaneously cutting with the sword) became separate but parallel disciplines, and recognisable systems or schools were established for both.

During the Sengoku Jidai, the absence of a strong central government and the subsequent power vacuum, encouraged the provincial warlords to fight among themselves in continuous and bloody attempts to enlarge their respective territories, and thus their wealth. The demand for weapons was insatiable, and to fill it smiths literally began mass-producing inferior weapons by using for the first time, steel purchased from a central source, and new, much faster forging methods that speeded up production at the expense of quality.

Where previously a smith would make his own steel from iron sand or ore, then with great care forge and temper a fine blade, now ready made, sometimes imported steel would be overheated to facilitate quick forging. The resultant sword while beautiful in appearance, would lack the strength and sharpness of earlier weapons, an example of a pretty face hiding a worthless heart. This decline, heightened by the importation of certain western forging techniques to further increase production, continued with but

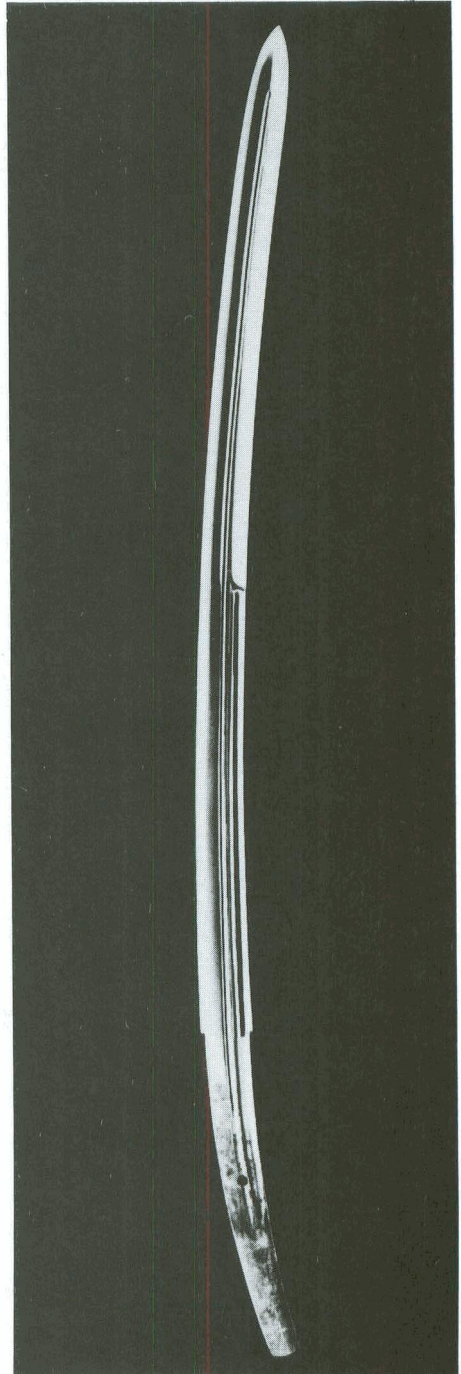
'Ken' straight double edged sword (Moroha Zukuri) by Yasuhiro, of the type in use prior to 800 AD.

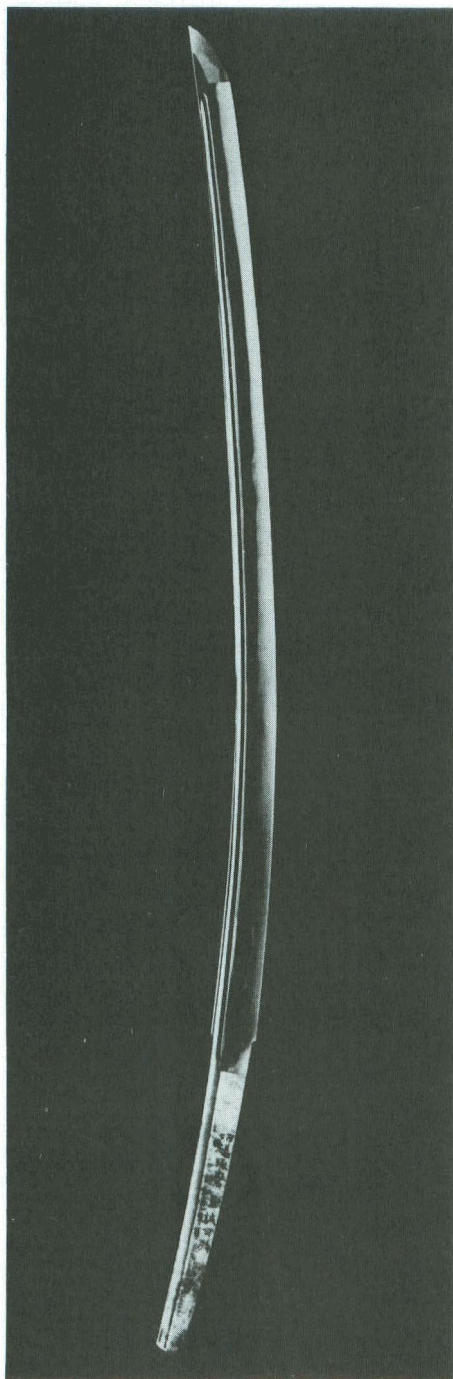
few exceptions until the wearing of swords was prohibited by the edict of 1876. History would soon stage an event that would make this process inevitable.

When the smoke cleared over the battlefield of Sekigahara at the conclusion of the bloody battle of 1600, the casualty count revealed an overwhelming victory for General Tokugawa Ieyasu, and the foundation was laid for a period of peace that would last almost three hundred years. The swords, so hastily made in the frenzy of armanent production leading up to the great battle, became the accepted standard by which all others with a few exceptions, would thereafter be judged. In the two and a half centuries that followed, rarely was a sword drawn in anger and therefore there was no method other than cutting the bodies of dead criminals, by which to judge the cutting ability, as well as the strength of a sword.

The sword constructed by encasing a soft core of metal in a hard jacket of steel that become popular during the years preceding Sekigahara, due to the ease and speed with which it could be made, I view as an abomination. It survived only because it was visually beautiful and the peaceful years of the Tokugawa Jidai lead to ignorance of swords and swordsmanship. Smiths, apprenticed as they were at a very early age, and deprived of for

An exact copy by Yasuhiro, of the sword known as "Kogarasu Maru" the original of which was made around the year 800 AD by Amakuni. Formerly a treasure of the Heike clan, its significance cannot be underestimated as it heralded the introduction of the curved blade that would become the standard weapon of the Samurai.





what I will call for want of a better name, a formal education, slavishly followed the example of their teacher, and so this mistaken practice continued. With written records almost non-existent, due to a combination of illiteracy and an almost paranoid desire to keep forging methods secret, there was no incentive in the absence of battle field testing to experiment and improve.

The true beauty of a sword is in its sharpness, strength and then appearance, only when these three elements are combined into a weapon that will perform well in the hands of a swordsman, can it be called beautiful. Swords that chip as soon as they contact a hard object, or that when used as intended and sharpened regularly, reveal, as the outer hardened steel is removed by the sword polisher, a low grade soft core, are not true Nippon Tō (Japanese swords). They do not deserve therefore to share the fine reputation established by the blades of the master smiths, that were produced using the traditional methods.

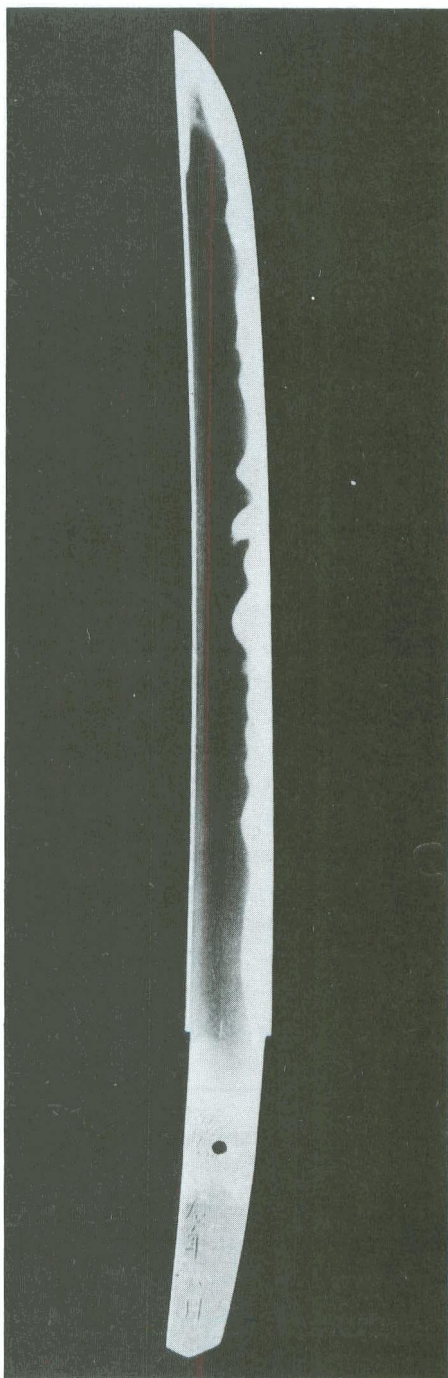
During forging, these swords were heated to temperatures in excess of 1500 degrees centigrade, which although making them much easier to 'work' as the metal becomes more malleable and ductile with heat, makes correct tempering difficult if not impossible. But worse, it allows elements such as phosphorous, sulphur and manganese to readily mix with the steel,

Tachi style blade by Yasuhiro of the type used during the late Heian, Kamakura and early Muromachi periods. Tachi are mounted to be worn edge downwards.

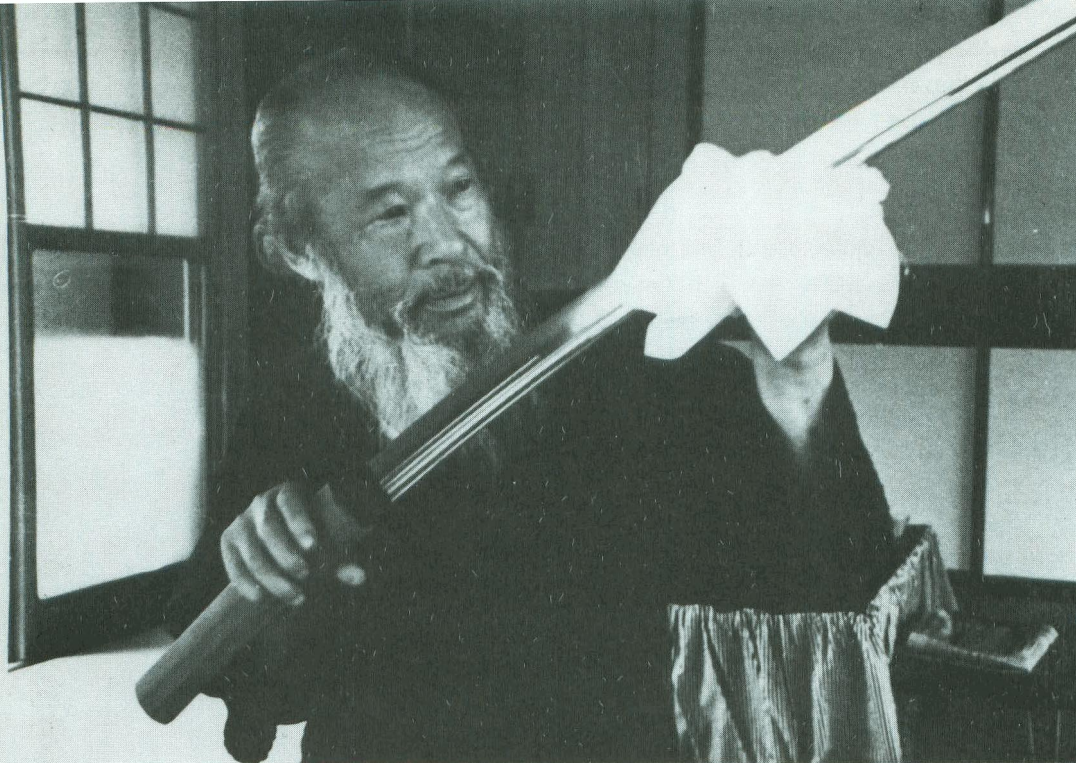
thereby adulterating it, and markedly reducing its quality. Although these swords often demonstrate great ascetic beauty in the grains and patterns that appear on the surface of the steel as a result of skilfull polishing, they are not as strong, tough or sharp as swords made in the traditional manner.

To prove my case, if there were a need to do so, I cite an incident that illustrates the decline in quality of Japanese blades during the Shin-To (new sword) period, that I feel was a national disgrace. When the Emperor Meiji died in 1912, General Nogi, in a final act of loyalty to his master, committed suicide. His wife, in order to follow her beloved husband, also ended her own life by plunging a dagger made by a well known smith into her breast. Subsequently it was found that, where the blade had encountered bone as it entered the brave woman's body the blade had chipped.

From my own lengthy research, I have found that the key to forging fine swords, is to use only the finest steel (kotetsu), and limit the temperature of the forging process to a maximum of 1350 degrees centigrade. In this way, when the steel is beaten and folded, it is kept free of adulterations and its strength is therefore unimpaired. I discovered this from my study of blades made by smiths such as Muramasa which are only adulterated with



'Hirazukuri' style tanto or knife by Yasuhiro.



Tō-Shō Kobayashi a seeker of ancient truths.

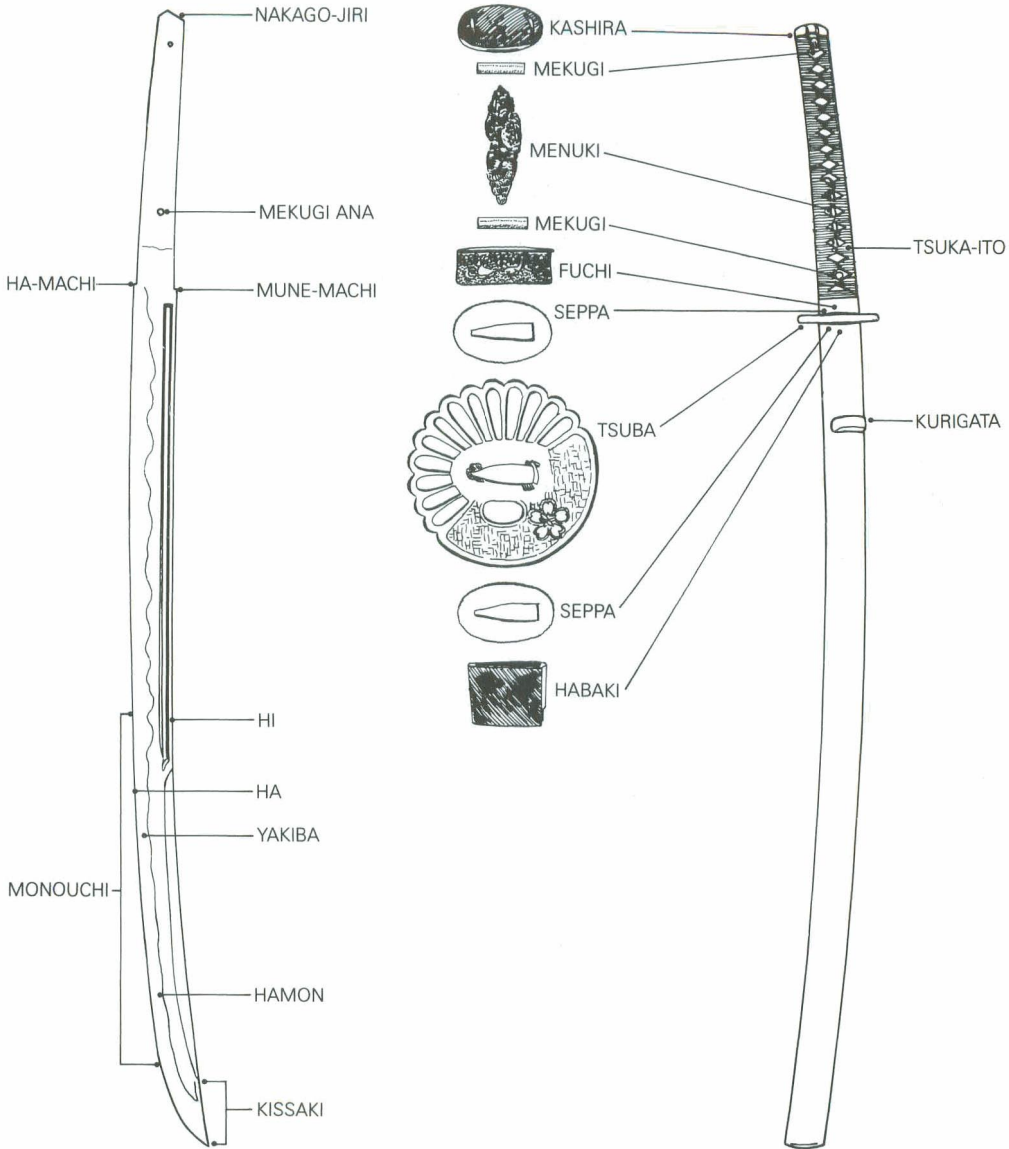
phosperous to the extent of .003%, while modern steel, created by twentieth century man's technology, is adulterated with a minimum of .02%. By careful choice of raw material, low temperature forging and the inclusion of .85% carbon, and of course the necessary skill and patience, the old swords can be recreated. I feel that I have succeeded in proving this in the most practical way possible.

These days, only the Toyama, Ioriken and Nakamura schools actually perform tameshi-

giri (test cutting), and so only they understand the true method of using a sword. Exponents of these schools have used my blades to cut sheet steel, nails, steel hawsers, military helmets and many other hard objects, without them being damaged. This is the only way to test the practical value of a sword, by putting it into the hands of a skilled swordsman, and getting him to use it. Only by swords being forged in the old way can the true art of iron fire and stone be kept alive; I hope that what I have discovered may make this possible.

Yasuhiro Kobayashi was born in the third year of the reign of the Emperor Taisho (1914) in Yamanashi-Ken, Japan. His early business career was interrupted by the Second World War, during which he served, first as an intelligence field operative in China, then after returning to Japan and re-enlisting, as a member of the Imperial Army in China.

Returning in 1946 to a Tokyo devastated by bombing and fire, he started a refrigeration business, that rapidly prospered until it employed fifty workers, and boasted of clients as illustrious as the U.S. Army. In 1960 he began his study of the swordsmith's art under the Tō-shō Akimoto, to whom he was both student and sponsor. In 1969 he qualified, receiving his licence one



year later, and left his thriving business to return to Yamanashi-Ken in order to establish his forge.

His swords are known for their extreme strength and sharpness, and their closeness in style and quality to the finest swords of the Koto period. For Tō-shō Kobayashi, an ounce of fine steel is rarer

and more precious than an ounce of gold.

The sword used by the author throughout the production of this book, was made for him by Tō-Shō Kobayashi. It has completed more than three hundred demonstrations of cutting bamboo, straw and wood without suffering any damage to its edge.

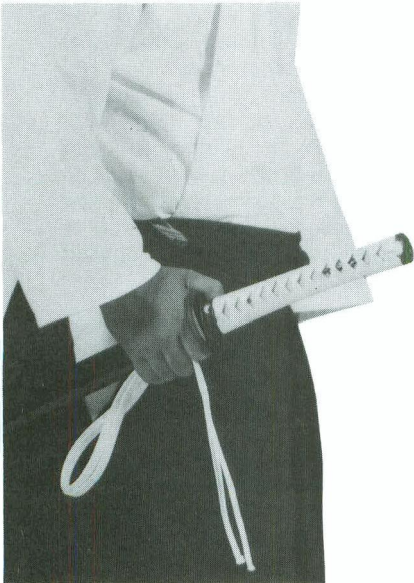
WEARING THE SWORD





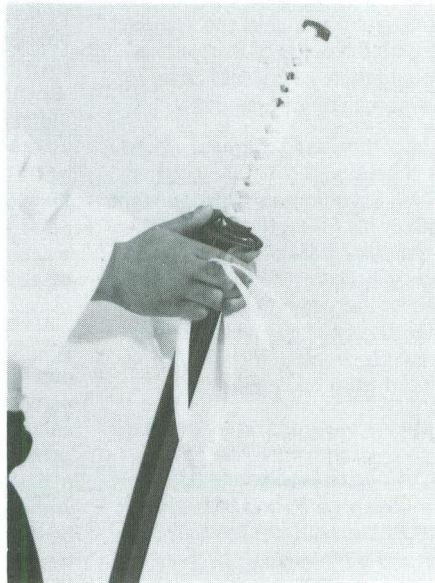
1. Holding the sword in the right hand demonstrates a peaceful intent as it cannot readily be used without first transferring it to the other hand. To change to the left hand prior to training...

(side view of the photo above) It is essential that the blade is locked in its scabbard by your thumb...



2. ...move the sword to the front simultaneously raising the left hand to meet the right.

(side view of the photo above). ...so that it cannot fall accidentally, or be grasped by an opponent and used against you.



Wearing the Sword



3. After the transfer of the sword with its tying cord to your left hand, lower it to your left...

Apart from being his badge of office, principal weapon and constant companion, the Samurai believed his sword to be almost a living entity that was capable of reflecting in its pearly lustre his own character. Just as the blade shone with the polish imparted by the toil and expertise of the master sword polisher, so through constant training in the martial ways, coupled with the study of the classics, the Samurai sought to make his soul shine as with the honest reflection of fine steel.

From an early age, the young Samurai would wear a knife or short sword constantly so that he grew up being accustomed to weapons. Around the date of his fifteenth birthday, the ceremony of 'genpuku' would be performed and as a boy officially became a man and had his hair dressed in the distinctive fashion of the adult Samurai, he would wear for the first time the long sword. From that time forth it would never be far from his reach.

Wearing the sword was and is a serious matter, not to be treated lightly. The possession of a sword by one not entitled to do so in previous ages in Japan, could and sometimes did end in immediate execution. The Samurai could take life without question or fear of

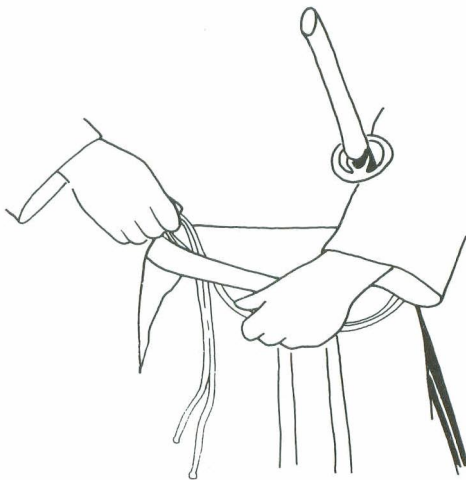


4. ...until it rests comfortably by your side.

punishment, on the other hand they would frequently take their own life if guilty of breaking the Samurai code of conduct. A case of great power being balanced by enormous responsibility.

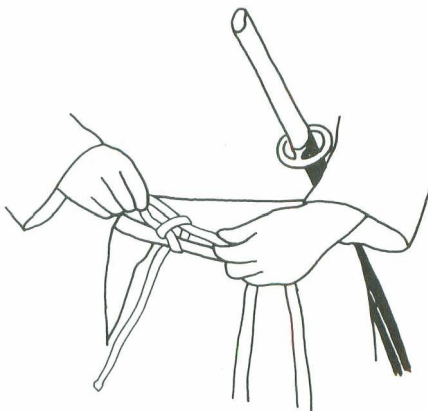
Remember, when you slide your sword into your sash, and tie it to your hakama cords, you are performing an act that every Samurai that ever lived performed on every day of his life. You are uniting yourself with the spirits of thousands of brave fighting men who, whether they did so prior to facing death, or just to greet the dawn of a new day, took up their swords and did just as you have just done. It is only fitting therefore that every time you arm yourself, you do so in a reverent and respectful fashion.

The Japanese sword is a fine but dangerous weapon. It can easily kill or seriously injure and must be treated at all times with respect. As with all things that possess great power, it can be used for good or evil, help or hinder, right wrongs or cause them. The sword is the man wielding it, reflecting his goodness or evil without prejudice. Train hard and with sincerity, so that your reflection is one that the world can respect.

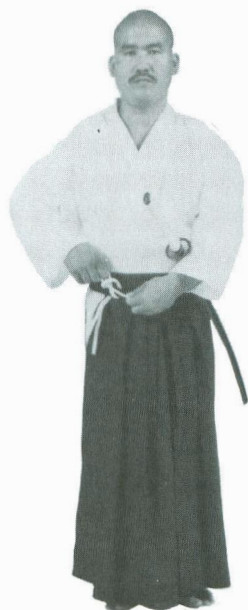
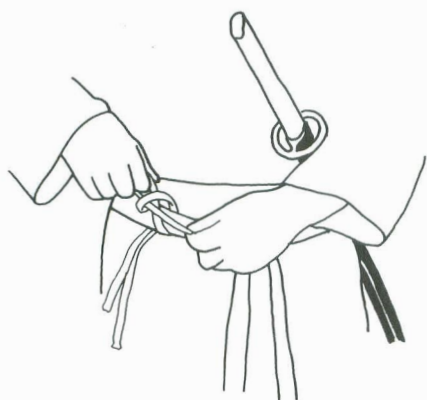


1. To secure the sword safely in position after you have thrust it through your sash or 'obi'. Form a loop in the 'sageo' and pass it under the hakama tying cords.

2. Then, make another loop of the 'dead' end and pass it through the loop you formed first.

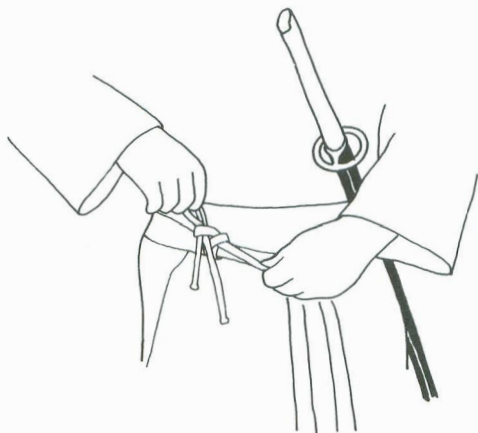


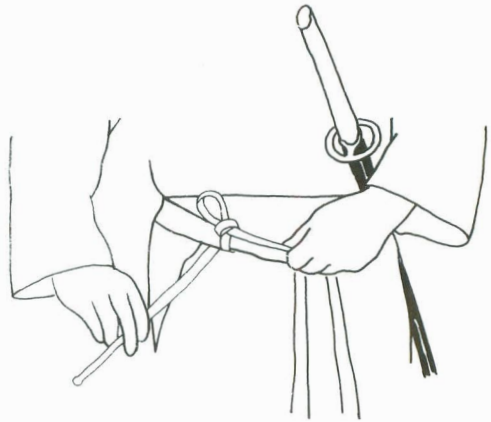
Wearing the Sword



3. Pull to tighten, then...

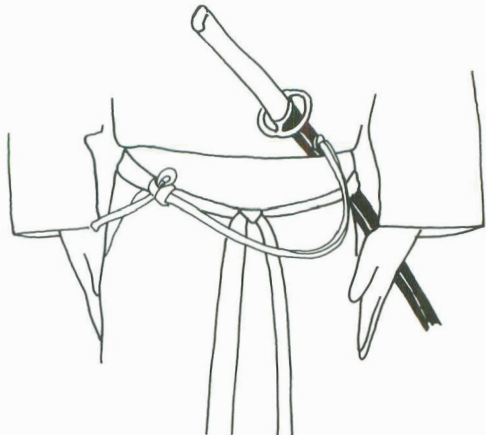
5. ...and making another loop, pass it through the loop last formed and pull it tight.



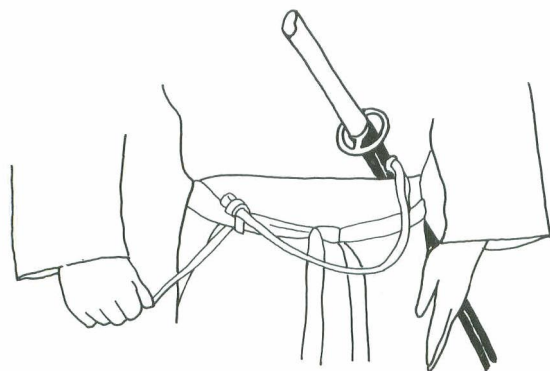


4. ...take the free end...

6. Sword tied securely in position.

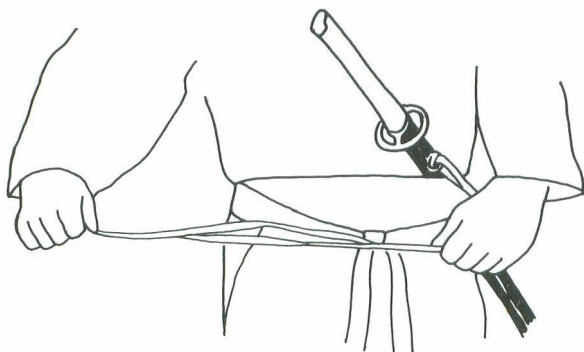


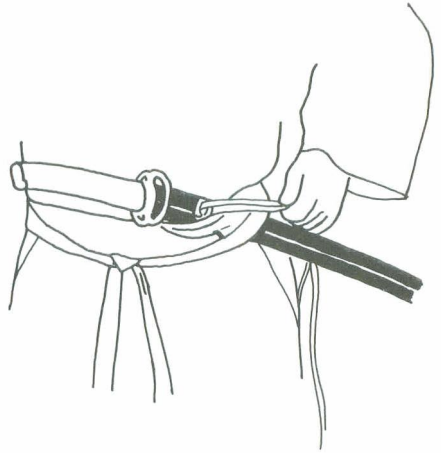
Wearing the Sword



7. To untie the knot securing the sageo to the hakama cords, grasp the free end...

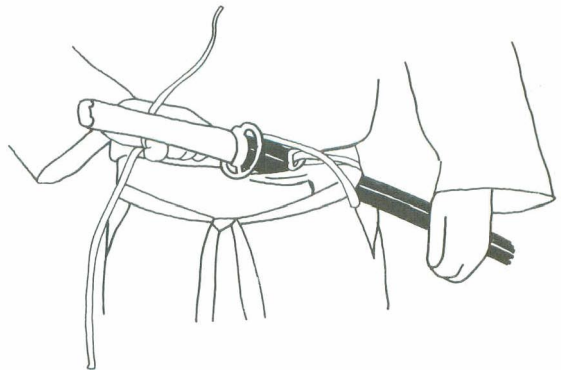
8. ...and pull it firmly to your right.



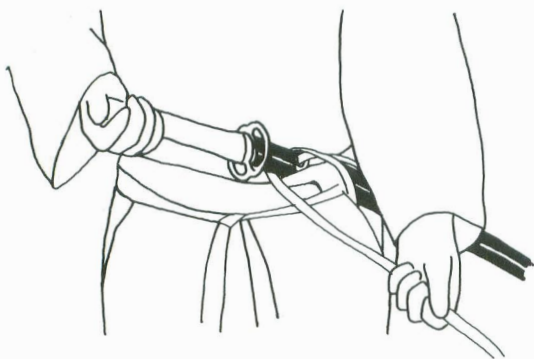


1. The sword may be secured in a different fashion by grasping the sageo where it hangs from the 'kurigata' or sword fixing knob, and passing it over and behind the scabbard.

2. Then passing it forward and upwards over the front of the scabbard...

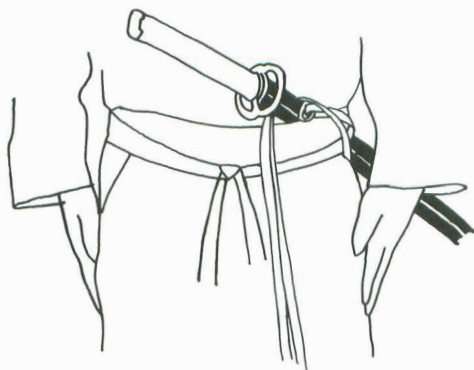


Wearing the Sword



3. ...to hang loosely at the front.

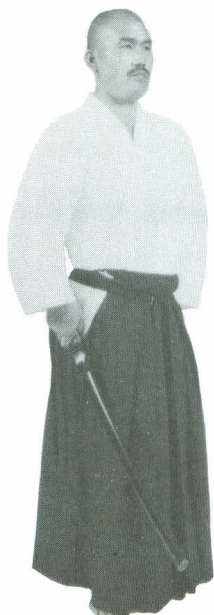
4. Ready position with the sword tied in the alternative way.



THE FORMAL BOW



The Formal Bow



1. Stand to attention with the sword in the right hand, cutting edge downwards, and your palm on the 'tsuba' or hand guard to lock the sword in its scabbard.

The bow to the martial arts is what the sunrise and sunset are to the day. It marks the beginning and the end, the waxing and the waning, the splendour of youth and the wisdom of experience. Prior to training, the formal bow dedicates the ability and energy of the performer to the work in hand. It is a request for help from the myriad powers of the universe, a sign of respect and serious intent as well as a request to the sword not to harm its user.

Just as the Swordsmith in making a sword combines the elements of iron, fire, water, wood and clay, so the performer seeks to combine his strength and skill in the performance of his chosen art. Yet, just as the Swordsmith before forging a fine sword, bathes himself and calls upon the spirits to aid him in his work, so the performer must seek to add to his physical prowess and determination that intangible but powerful quality called spirit, that can turn a bar of crude iron into a fine sword, or an untrained youth into a manly warrior.



2. Bow at the waist (to the senior or 'kamiza' side of the practice hall).

When training is done, comes the time for thanks and reflection. As we pause, tired and hopefully full of contentment after hard training we should think as the old day dies and the sun sets, of those that have gone before. Just as one day precedes another, they built the foundations upon which we stand, and constructed the path that we now follow. It is with thanks that we bow to them, to the powers of the universe too immense for man yet to understand, and to our teachers and fellow students who help us along the difficult path of Budo.

Those of us who follow the old ways, do so in the certain knowledge that what we study are effective methods of combat acquired at great cost in pain and suffering by generations of fighting men that have gone before. What they learned by repeatedly risking their lives has been passed down to us to do with, what we will.

We are grateful for all these things, we are grateful for our existence, that is why we bow.



3. Return to an upright position.



4. With the left hand, rotate the scabbard to bring the cutting edge upwards...

5. ...then re-position the right hand so that the thumb is over the handguard to lock the blade in the scabbard.



6. Move the left hand back to its original position and stand to attention.



The Formal Bow



7. Bow to the instructor...



8. ...and return to the upright position.

11. Holding your sword horizontal, honour it with a bow from the waist, then...



12. ...return to the upright position, and start to lower the sword...





9. Raise the sword in front of you grasping the butt or 'kojiri' in your left hand...



10. ...and continue to raise it to eye level in a reverent manner.

13. ...to the position it occupied prior to the bow.



14. Guide the butt of the sword into the 'obi'...



The Formal Bow



15. ...pushing it firmly in until it is...



16. ...resting in the correct position for tying.

17. Perform the final salute by sliding the hand along the hilt and lightly cupping the pommel 'kashira' with the palm. This action is performed every time the sword is placed in position or re-sheathed.

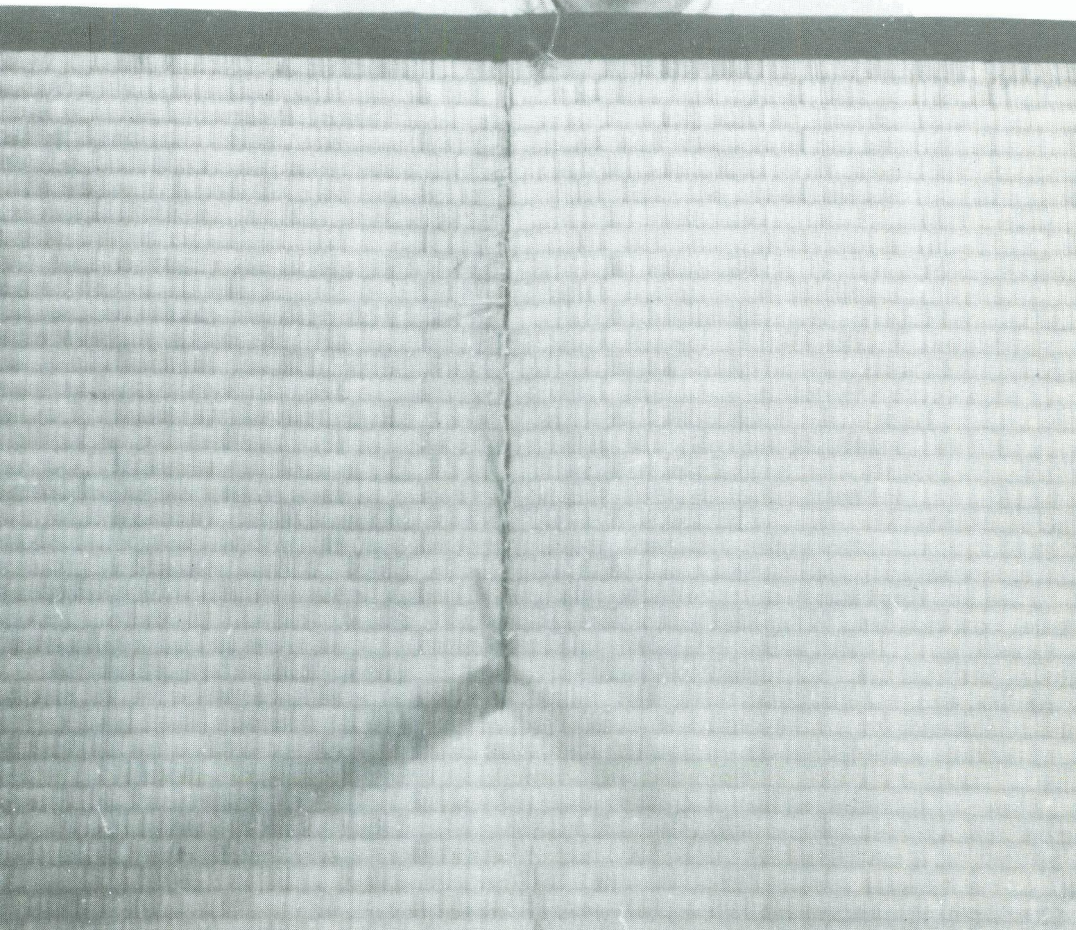
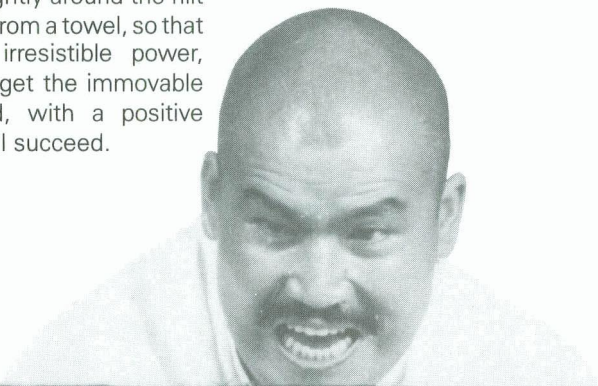


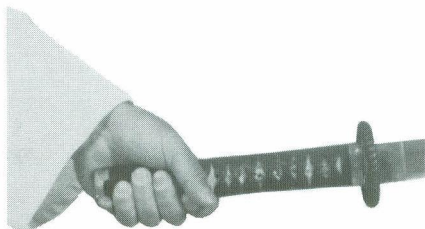
18. After tying the sword as shown in the previous section, stand to attention.



TENOUCHI: THE GRIP

The strongest technique will not succeed if your grip is weak, either the sword will be deflected from its chosen path, or it may even break. Channel your energy, skill and spirit through hands that are wrapped tightly around the hilt as if to wring water from a towel, so that you become the irresistible power, rather than your target the immovable object! Strike hard, with a positive attitude and you will succeed.



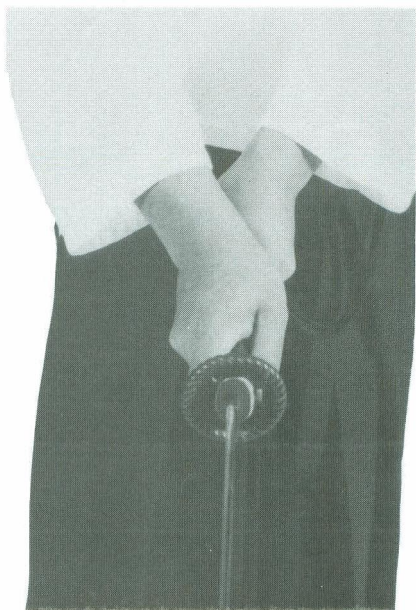
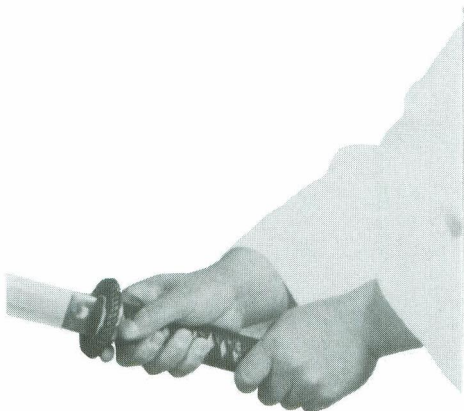


1. Grasp the hilt firmly in the left hand...

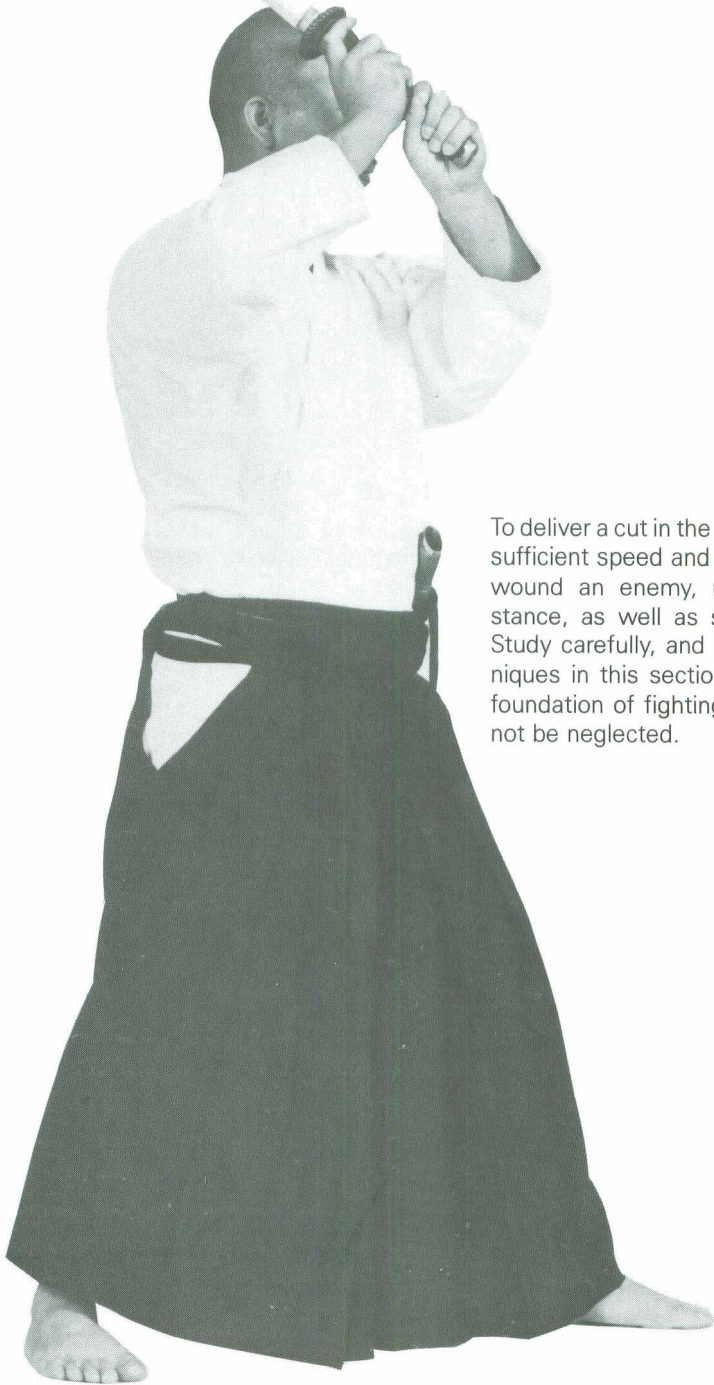
2. ...and take hold with the right hand just behind the sword guard.

3. A distance approximately equal to the width of two fingers should separate your hands.

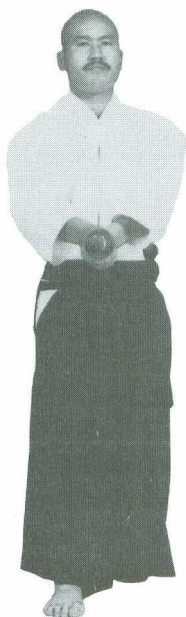
4. A strong twisting motion as if wringing water from a towel is exerted when cutting, to keep the grip strong and the blade at the optimum cutting angle to the target (i.e. correct hasuji).



KAMAE: THE STANCES



To deliver a cut in the heat of battle with sufficient speed and power to mortally wound an enemy, requires a strong stance, as well as skill and courage. Study carefully, and practice the techniques in this section as they are the foundation of fighting ability and must not be neglected.



This is the basic 'mid-level' stance with the weight placed evenly on both feet, and the shoulders, waist and hips in the same plane.

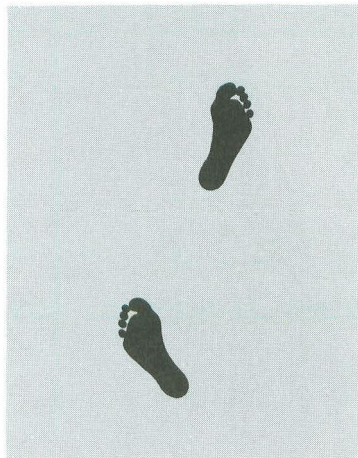


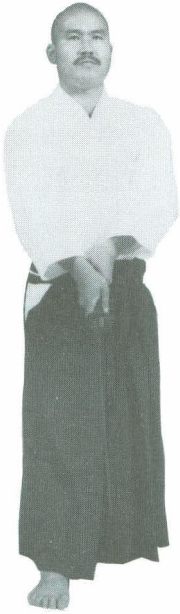
The distance between your heels should be approximately twice the length of your foot.

The tip of your sword is aimed at your opponent's throat.



Feet position for Chudan-Gamae





'Gedan' or lower position, the weight is evenly distributed over both feet.

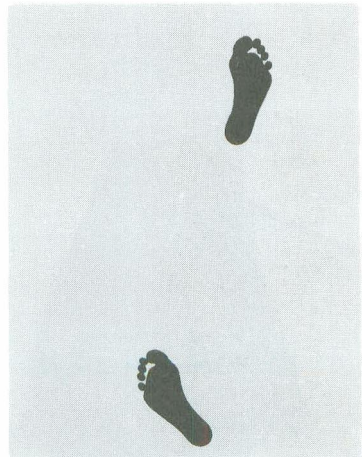


The distance between your heels should be about 3 foot lengths.

The sword is held so that the point is between twelve and eighteen inches from the floor.



Feet position for Gedan-Gamae





In 'waki-gamae' the sword is held to the side and the weight is evenly distributed between both feet.

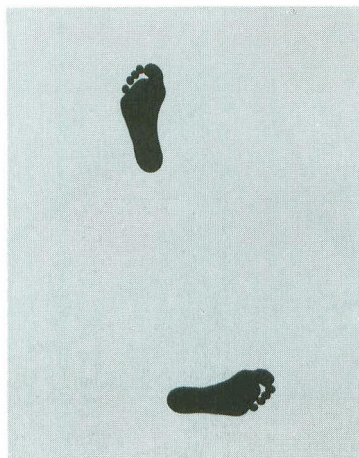


'Waki-gamae' can also be performed on the left hand side.

In both variations of the stance, the heels should be between two and a half and three foot lengths apart.



Feet position for Waki-Gamae





Hasso-gamae is a strong stance assumed just prior to action.

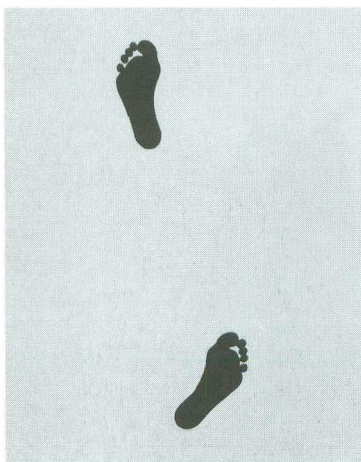


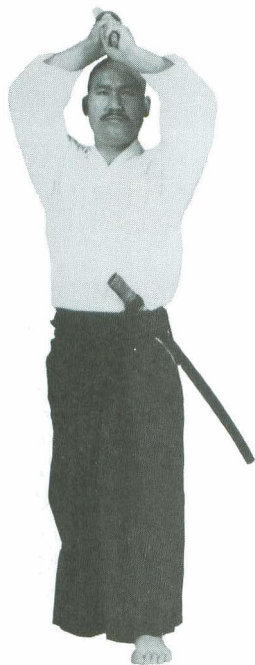
As you close with your opponent, the blade is brought closer to the head, ready to strike.



The weight is evenly distributed between both feet, the heels of which are approximately three foot lengths apart.

Feet position for Hasso-Gamae





'Jodan-gamae' upper posture as viewed from the front.

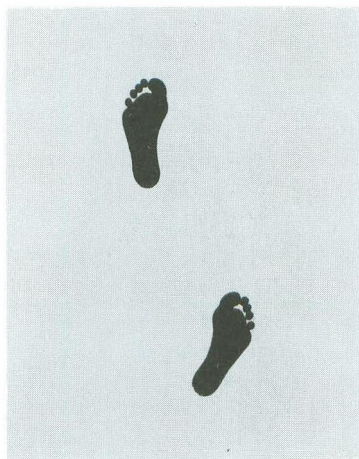


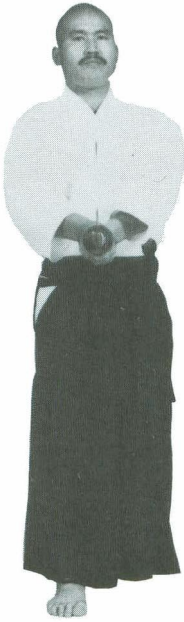
Side view of right 'jodan-gamae', the weight evenly distributed between both feet.



Opposite side view showing how the left hand is positioned about one fist length above, and in front of the forehead.

Feet position for Jodan-Gamae





1. The kamae exercise starts with 'chudan-gamae' from which, while the right foot keeps the same position...



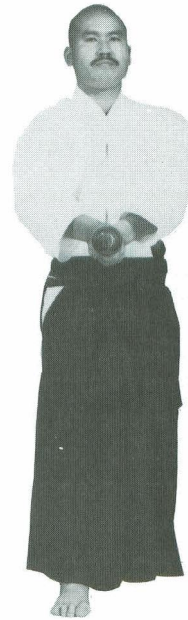
2. ...the left foot slides back and the blade is lowered into 'gedan-gamae'.

3. Step back with the right foot into 'waki-gamae', keeping the left foot stationary...



4. ...then move the right foot forward slightly and raise your blade to assume right 'hasso-gamae'. Keeping your left foot in the same position...



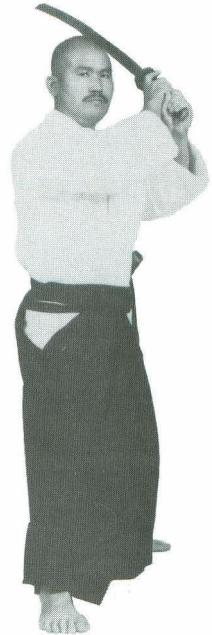


5. ...slide the right foot forward slightly, and raising your sword take up a right 'jodan-gamae' stance. Then step forward with the right foot...

6. ...into a right 'chudan-gamae' or mid-level stance, then keeping the right foot in the same position...

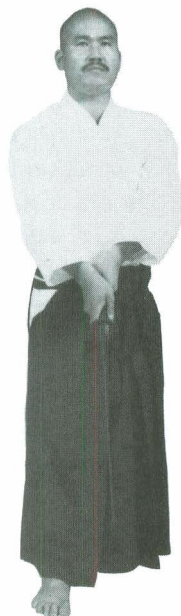
9. ...then maintaining your right foot position, as you swing your sword over to your left, at the same time move your left leg back until you are standing in a 'waki-gamae'.

10. Slide the left foot forward slightly, and raising your sword take up left 'hasso-gamae'...



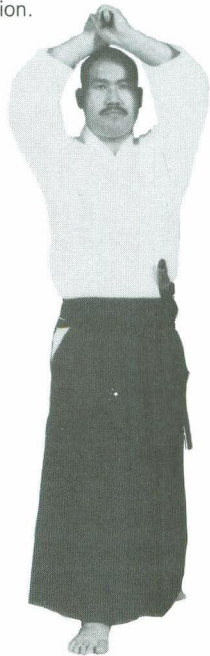


7. ...step through with the left foot and raising the arms, assume a left 'jodan-gamae'...

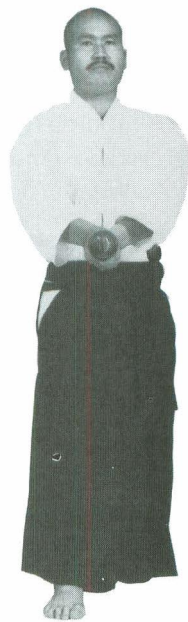


8. Slide your left foot to the rear at the same time lowering your blade into 'gedan-gamae'.

11. ...from which the left foot is slid forward a little more, and the arms raised into the 'jodan' position.



12. To complete this exercise, the left foot is slid back to assume the basic 'chudan-gamae' stance.

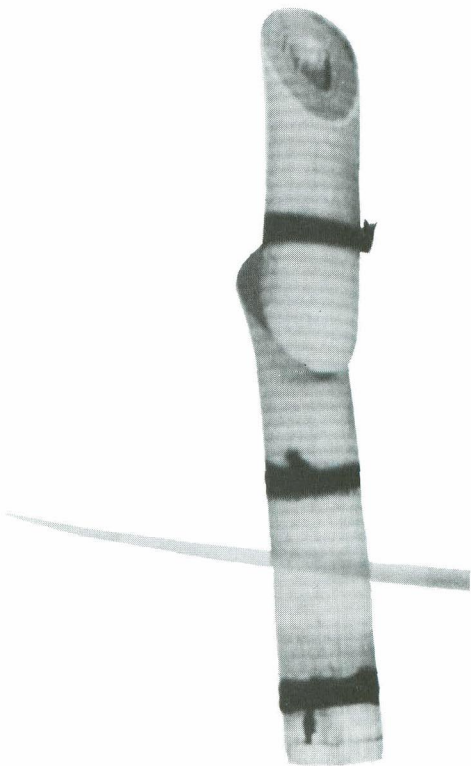


KIRI-KATA: CUTTING TECHNIQUES

Toyama Ryu is above all else a practical style of swordsmanship that as we now know, has been used 'in action' as recently as forty years ago. As such it places great emphasis not only on the way that cuts are made, but also the circumstances under which they are made. For example, almost any fit person with a year or two of training and armed with a sharp sword would be reasonably successful in cutting a test target with 'kesa-giri' from 'hasso-gamae' stance. Asked to do so with 'kiri-age' upward diagonal cut from 'waki-gamae' and the story would be a very different one.

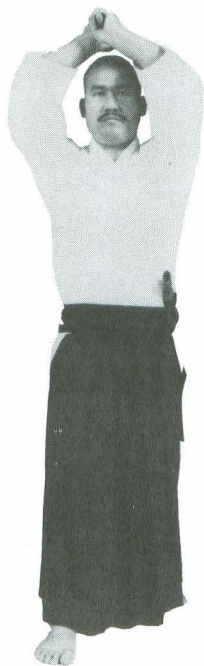
The Toyama Ryu swordsman is expected to cut, and cut effectively in any situation, with any technique from any stance, yet still achieve the same, successful result. He must therefore not only be strong and highly skilled in each technique, but also understand 'hasuji', the correct positioning of the cutting edge to the target and be able to stand strongly while delivering the cut so that power is not lost. In addition, he must have the ability to concentrate the accumulated power of his mind, body and spirit into his blade at the precise moment of impact, regardless of what is going on around him.

This level of ability is only ever the result of long term serious training, yet the benefits it offers by way of improved health, increased vigour and spiritual calm, to say nothing of the personal satisfaction of being able to do something really well, are to be recommended and the effort is therefore, well worthwhile.





LEFT



1. From a right 'jodan-gamae', step forward with the right foot...



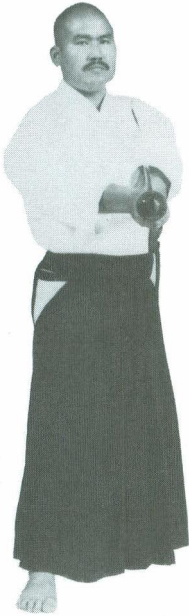
2. ...and keeping your arms fully extended, begin the downward diagonal cut.

1. In left 'jodan-gamae', step forward with the left foot...

2. ...and begin the downward cut.

RIGHT





3. Care must be exercised to make sure that the blade is at the correct cutting angle so that it does not bend, or break on contact with the target.

4. To keep control, and prevent the sword from hitting the ground, allow the elbows to touch the body thereby creating a 'braking' effect.

3. The target is cut with the top one third of the blade or 'monouchi'.

4. Do not allow the wrists to twist, and on the completion of the technique, stop the sword by allowing your left arm to contact your abdomen, and your right forearm, your side.



LEFT



1. This dynamic cutting technique starts from a right 'waki-gamae' stance...

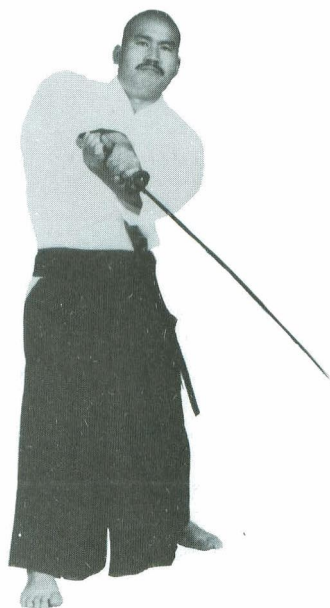


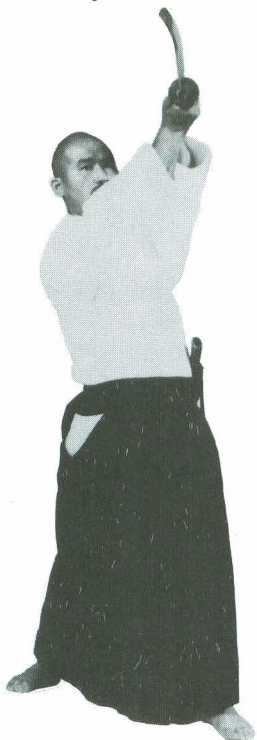
2. ...from which you slide the left leg forward as you start the upward diagonal cut...

1. From a left 'waki-gamae' stance...

2. ...slide your right leg forward as you begin to cut...

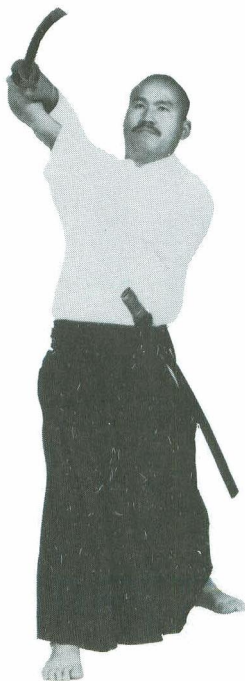
RIGHT





3. ...keeping your eyes firmly fixed on the target...

3. ...keeping your eyes firmly fixed on the target...



4. ...strongly twist your hips at the moment of impact to maximise the cutting power of the technique.

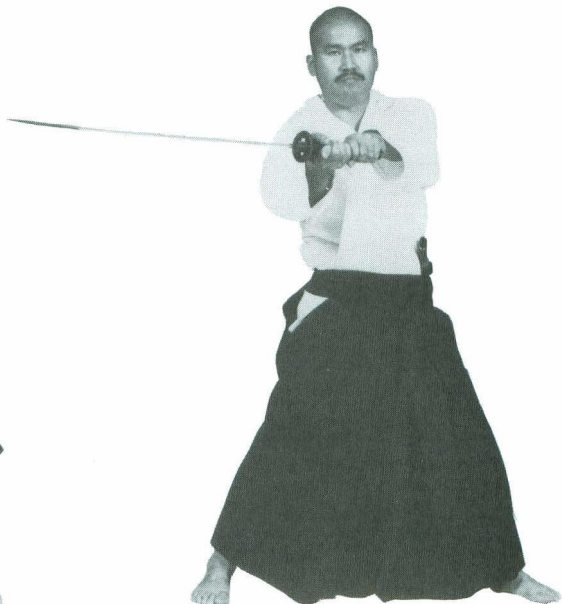


4. ...follow through strongly with the hips.

LEFT



1. From a right 'waki-gamae' stance, raise your sword to waist level and transferring most of your weight to your right leg...

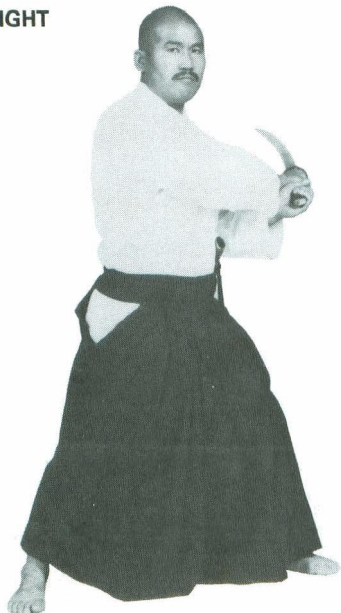


2. ...start the horizontal cut as you simultaneously slide your left foot to your left.

1. From left 'waki-gamae', raise your sword to waist level as you shift your weight to your left leg.

2. As you make a horizontal cut to the right, your right foot slides across in the same direction.

RIGHT





3. Shift the majority of your weight to your left leg as the cut proceeds, strengthening the grip of your left hand.

3. Keeping your eyes on the target, your body weight shifts to the right leg and your right hand becomes the strongest.



4. Maintain your balance at the completion of the cut by not 'over doing' the swing. Your right heel should be kept on the ground.

4. As you complete the cut, take care not to lose your balance by over extending your swing.





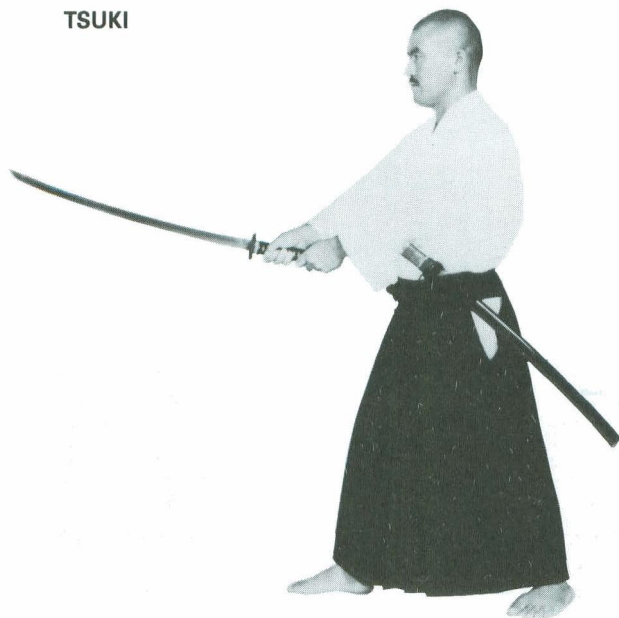
1. With your feet approximately three foot lengths apart, raise your sword to the 'jodan' position, then arching your back slightly...



2. ...strike downwards fully extending your arms...

1. From 'chudan-gamae' stance...

TSUKI





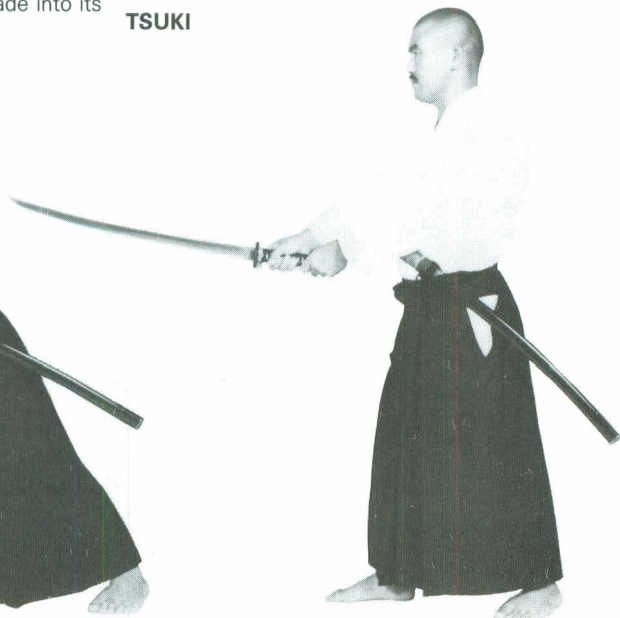
3. ...at the same time lowering the hips by bending slightly at the knees to lower your centre of gravity, and thus add power to the cutting action.

4. Prevent the sword striking the ground by contacting the abdomen with the elbows.

2. ...lunge forward, channelling the entire power of your body through your shoulders, arms and wrists to drive your blade into its target.

3. Step back with your rear foot to extract the sword.

TSUKI



BATTO-JUTSU: DRAWING & CUTTING



Batto Jutsu – the simultaneous draw and cut of the Samurai swordsman, is an important discipline for students of the sword, and should be studied carefully. In the interest of both efficiency of technique, and safety of both you and those you train with, it is *essential* that you learn to draw the sword correctly, as well as re-sheath it. New students should spend at least one year training with an un-edged sword (iaito) so as to become reasonably proficient before they take up a true sword in earnest.

The actual cutting technique that forms the second part of the draw/cut movement, must start only after the tip of the sword has



1. Grasping the scabbard at the top 'koiguchi', exert pressure on the hand guard 'tsuba' with your thumb without displacing the blade, then...



2. ...in a smooth movement, twist the sword to the left, at the same time unlocking the blade by increasing the pressure on the hand guard, and taking hold of the hilt with the right hand...

cleared the scabbard completely. Failure to take great care with this point, frequently results in severe injuries to the left hand of the performer as the sword will, if incorrectly drawn, cut through the scabbard and slice into the hand before he can stop it. Technique must be correct from the outset, as bad habits are difficult to lose, train slowly and deliberately in the beginning to teach your body the technique through repetition.

The cutting technique as the sword clears the scabbard is very different from that used by exponents of modern style laido. There is no feeble slice forward in Batto Jutsu, for one's adversary would be for the most part an equal in skill, and would not present you with a second chance. The first cut therefore had to at least very seriously wound him and prevent him retaliating for long enough for a second, final blow to be struck, or preferably kill him outright. This fundamentalist approach to

swordsmanship is very evident in Toyama Ryu Batto Jutsu, which is hardly surprising considering its origins.

The sword is drawn to clear the scabbard, a strong cutting movement is used to kill the adversary followed by a 'coup de grace' if necessary, then the sword is cleaned by flicking off the debris clinging to it (or more realistically by wiping on the victim's clothes), and the sword re-sheathed slowly, carefully and without theatrical gesture.

A samurai would judge the ability of an opponent by the condition of his 'koiguchi', the mouth of his scabbard. Cuts and other marks, apart from being a cause for shame were indicative of low level of skill and control, and therefore an easy opponent. How many modern exponents of the art of the sword can claim an unmarked koiguchi, even amongst those that use blunt swords!



3. ...smoothly and deliberately draw the sword...



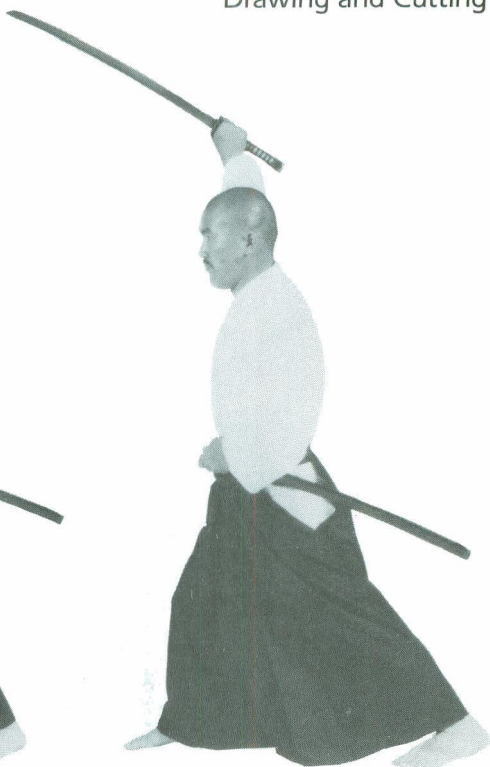
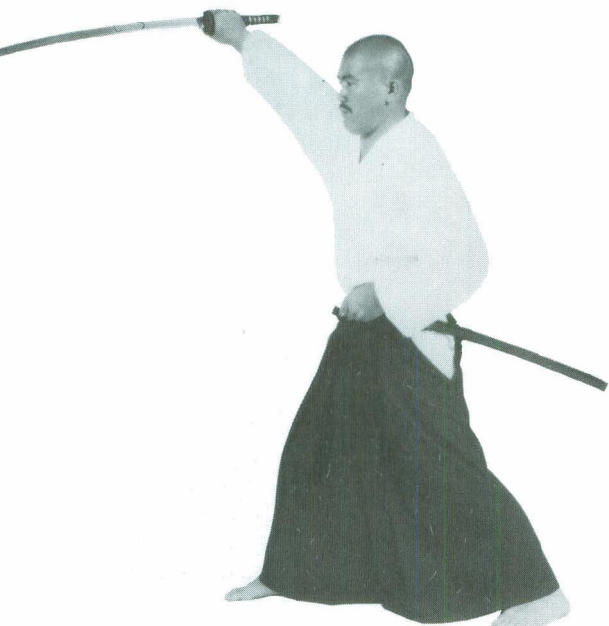
4. ...sweeping it upwards strongly in an arc...

1. Unlock the blade by turning it to the left and start to draw the sword...



2. ...as the draw progresses, with good control accelerate the blade until...



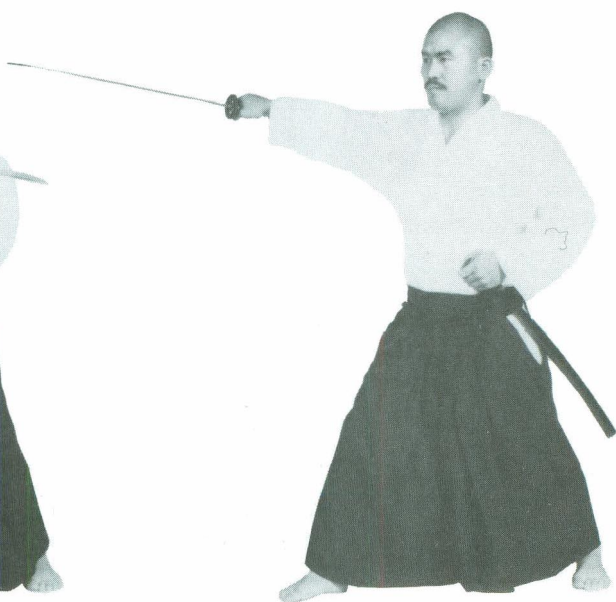


5. ...accelerating the blade as the draw progresses...

6. ...until with good control, you cut the target. During this action the scabbard is returned to its original position, in preparation for re-sheathing.

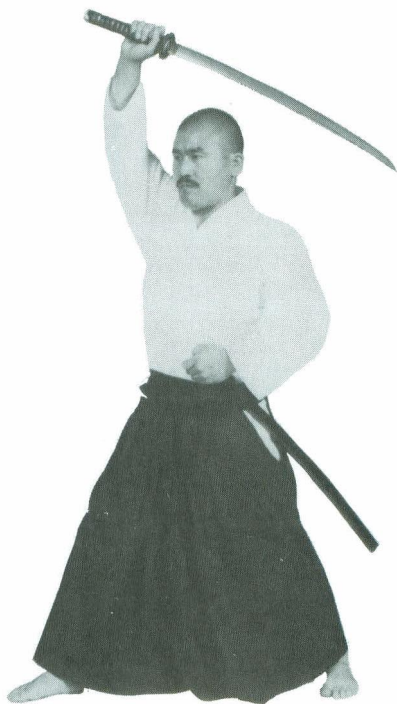
3. ...it clears the scabbard and allows you to cut forcefully forwards in a horizontal plane.

4. ...to describe an arc in front of your body.





1. Without twisting the scabbard, draw the sword straight out...



2. ...and as it clears the scabbard, raise it above your head...

3. ...and placing your left hand in its customary position on the hilt...



4. ...cut strongly downwards with 'kesa-giri'.





1. To clean the blade after it has been used on a target, raise it above your head as shown, then...

2. ...sweeping it downwards and away from you...

3. ...bring it abruptly to a halt with a sharp snap in order to fling any debris or fluids from the blade.

4. Even at the culmination of this action, which would normally signify the end of a successful engagement, the swordsman remains in a state of alertness (zanshin) ready for further action if necessary.





1. To sheath the sword after an engagement; from the last movement of 'chiburi', hold the scabbard at its opening 'koiguchi'...



1a. ...then laying the top one third of the blade on the web of skin between the thumb and forefinger...

3. Slowly insert the blade into the scabbard then as it slides home, take hold of the guard with your thumb.

4. Resume the position of attention then make a formal salute by placing your right hand on the pommel 'kashira'.





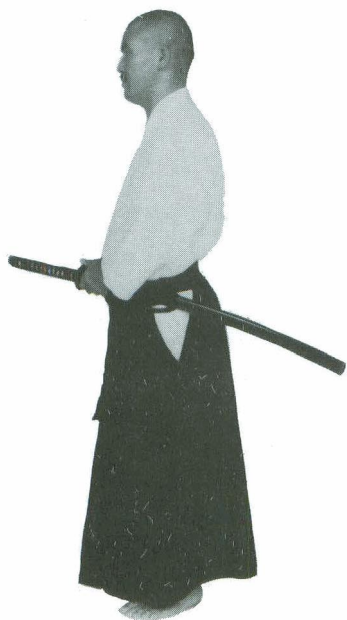
2. ...keeping the shoulders straight, draw the sword forwards...



2a. ...until the point of the sword drops smoothly into the mouth of the scabbard. Take care not to cut the wooden scabbard with the blade while doing this.

5. Return your right hand to your side.

6. Front view of final position of 'noto' or re-sheathing.

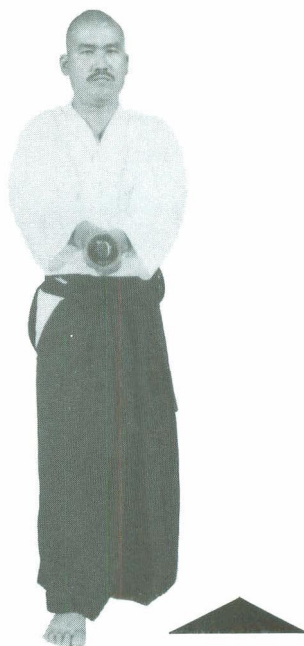


HAPPO-GIRI: THE EIGHT BASICS

八方斬り

Just as the art of calligraphy has its eight basic brush strokes from which all the many thousands of characters are formed, the 'happo-giri' or eight cuts of Toyama Ryu form the practical swordsman's basic arsenal. As the nucleus of the style it must be studied deeply throughout the swordsman's career, for within its seemingly simple movements lie the myriad combinations of sword trajectories that exist, more than any swordsman will ever perform in a lifetime's training.





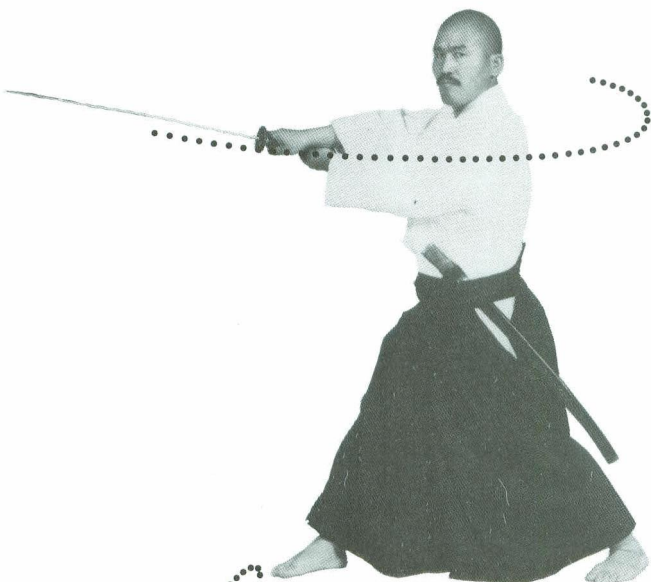
2. From the position of 'chudan-gamae' on the page opposite, step forward with the right foot and thrust your sword into your opponent's chest area...

3. ...then disengaging the target by stepping back with the left foot...

4. ...position yourself to perform...

5. ...a horizontal cut to your right...





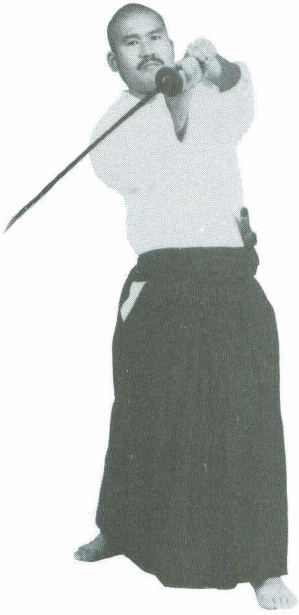
6. ...taking care to exercise good control so as not to lose your balance.

7. Assuming a right 'waki-gamae' stance...

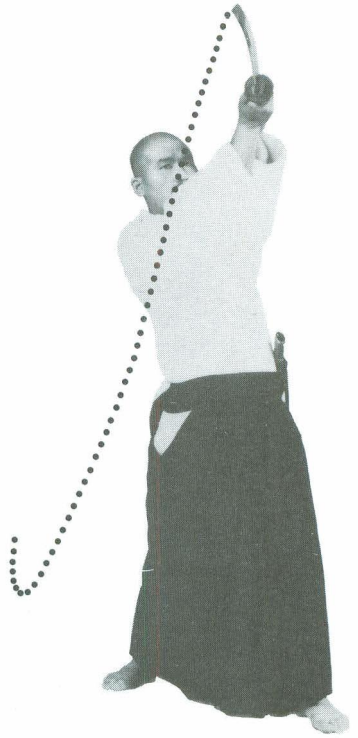
10. As you reach the 'jodan' position, slide the right foot backwards...

11. ...and perform 'kesa-giri' diagonal cut.





8. ...step forward with the left foot as you begin to perform...



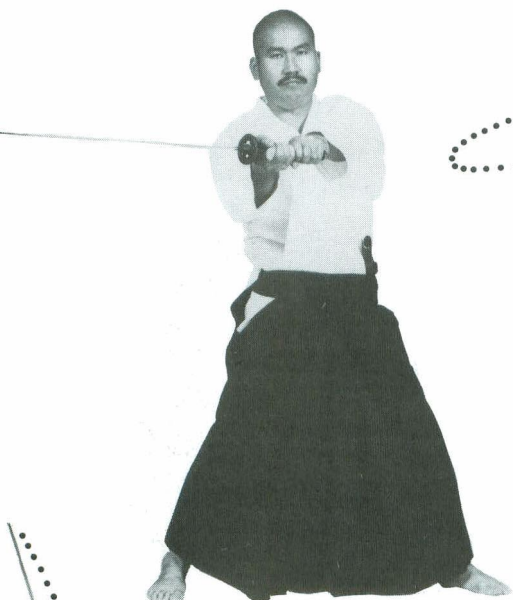
9. ...a left rising diagonal cut.

12. As the cut is completed...

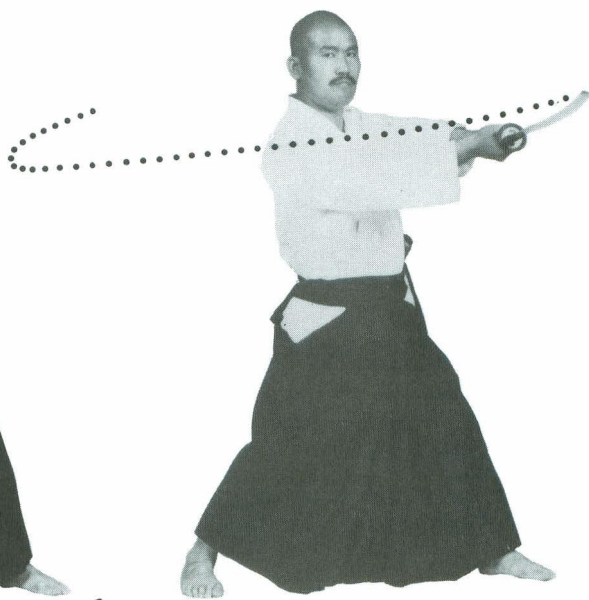


13. ...step to the left with the left foot and start a...

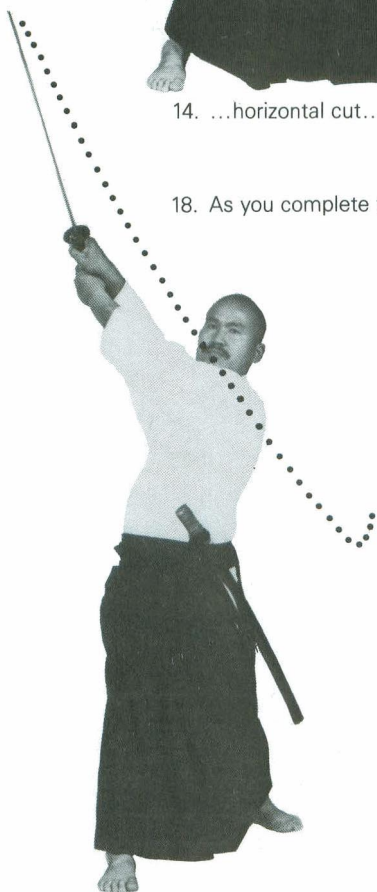




14. ...horizontal cut...



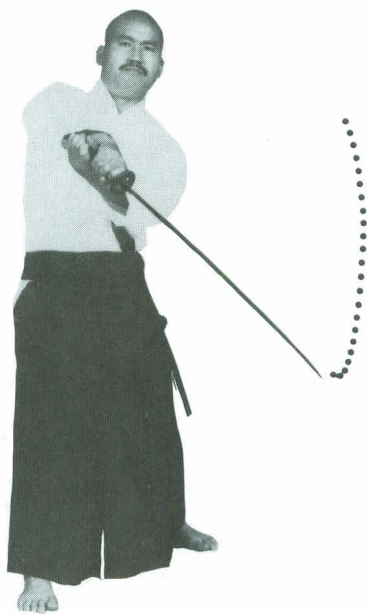
15. ...finishing with good control to your left.



18. As you complete the cut...



19. ...assuming 'jodan-gamae', step back with the left foot as you start to perform 'kesa-giri'.



16. Take up a left 'waki-gamae' stance...

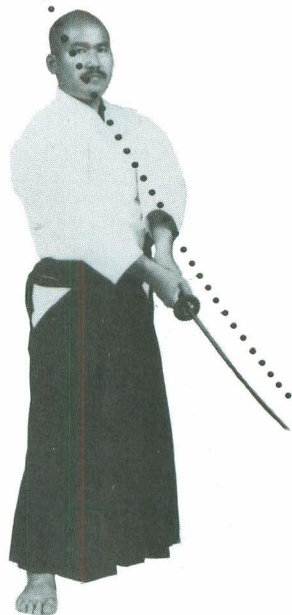


17. ...then step forward with the right foot as you perform an upward 'kiri-age'.

20. ...following through...



21. ...until the cut is completed.



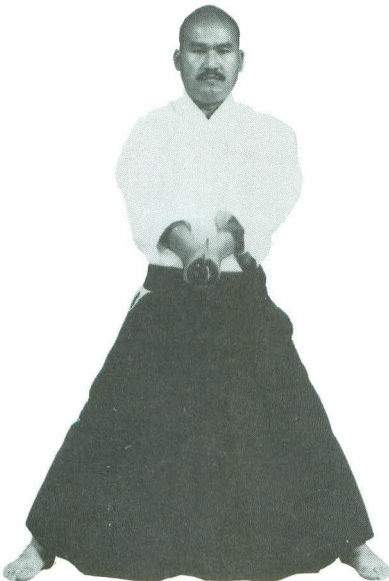


22. Raise the sword to 'jodan-gamae', arching your back slightly...



23. ...and start to cut downwards on the centreline of the body...

24. ...follow through, bending the knees to lower your centre of gravity and give more power to the cut...



25. ...until the technique is completed. From this position, step forward into 'chudan-gamae' to finish the exercise.



TOYAMA-RYU KATA

The pre-arranged exercises or 'Kata' of Toyama Ryu, are the method by which fluency of movement and correctness of form are taught. Evolved directly from battlefield experience they are practical and effective movements that are uncorrupted by modern fencing principles, unaffected by the politics of sport.

Whereas other more competition orientated styles of fencing, adopted training exercises that were quite literally designed by committees, the direct link with the past was strictly maintained by the Toyama Ryu as can be seen from the dynamic techniques contained in the Kata. Cuts are performed at full power, the movements are swift and deliberate as the performer twists and turns in a ballet of death. Little imagination is required to conjure up the picture of two Samurai locked in a fight to the finish on some medieval Japanese battlefield.

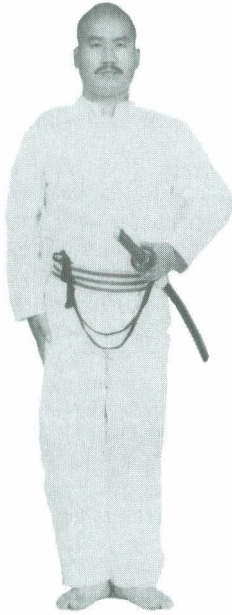
At first, the Kata must be performed slowly and deliberately so that, just as with sword drawing and sheathing, bad habits are not developed. Then with skill and fluency comes speed and finally power. When higher levels of ability are achieved, it is possible to imagine the attacks as they are made, the swordsman and his weapon reacting in complete unison, the blade always ready to strike with the correct cutting angle and with full force.

The Kata of Toyama Ryu are, to use a modern phrase 'combat effective' they are not a sequence of dance steps, nor does one win points for performing them. They were and are the way that fighting men are trained to perfection, the more seriously you study them the more powerful and effective your technique will be.

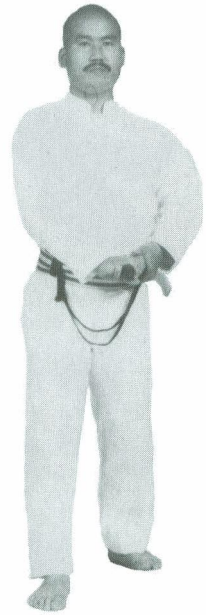
Kata 1 – Ipponme

You are facing an enemy when he suddenly reaches for his sword and draws. If your response is very fast, you will be able to cut him in the ribs with a rising diagonal cut, if on the other hand he is faster, cut at his forearms and hands as your sword describes a diagonal path. In either case, your first cut has probably only wounded him, so step forward immediately and finish him with 'kesa-giri'.





1. From the position of attention...

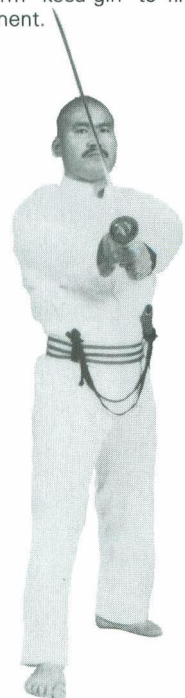


2. ...step forward with the right foot, unlocking the blade as you do so...

5. Placing both hands on the sword, step forward with the right foot...



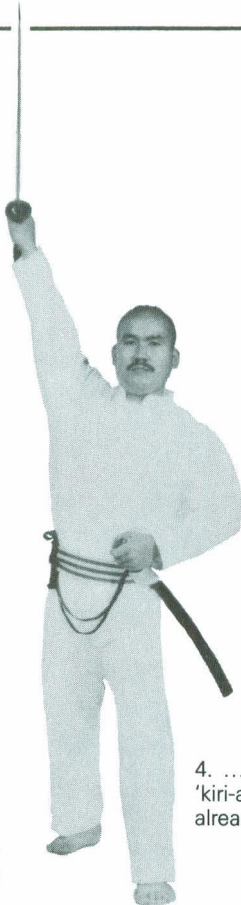
6. ...and perform 'kesa-giri' to finish your wounded opponent.





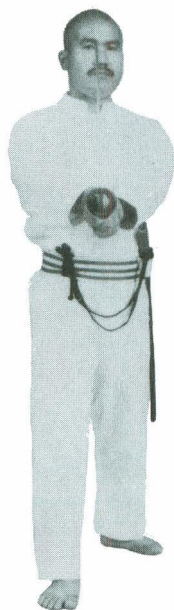
3. Step forward again towards your adversary, this time with the left foot as you begin to draw the sword...

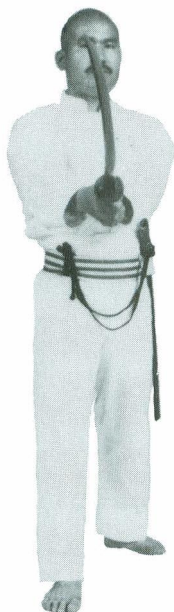
7. As you complete 'kesa-giri' and the enemy is despatched...



4. ...and cut upwards at your opponent with 'kiri-age' aiming at his ribs, or if he has already drawn his sword, his forearms.

8. ...slide your right foot forward and assume 'chudan-kamae', maintaining full concentration 'zanshin' as you pause for a moment...



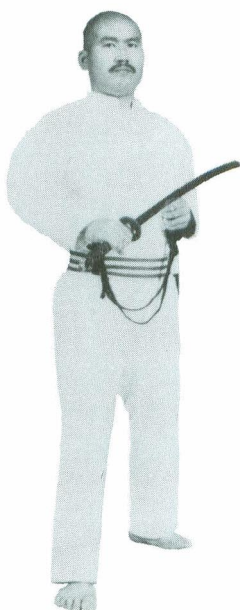


9. ...before raising your sword...

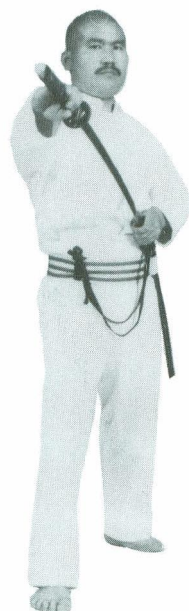


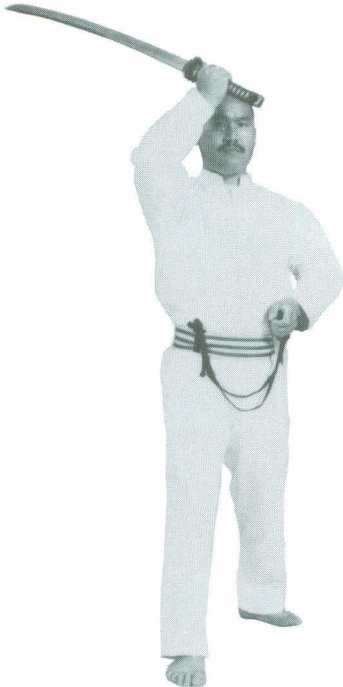
10. ...up and to your right...

13. Position the blade ready for re-sheathing.

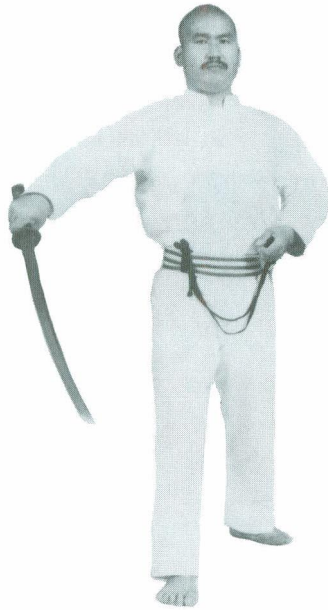


14. ...then draw the blade forward until the point enters the mouth of the scabbard...





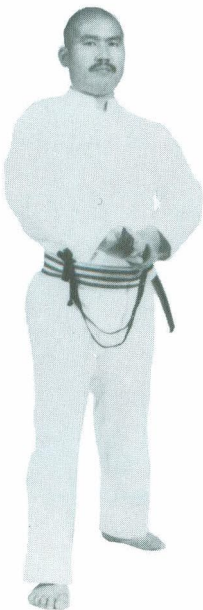
11. ...then into the centre, so that the hilt is close to your head in preparation for cleaning the blade, 'chiburi'...



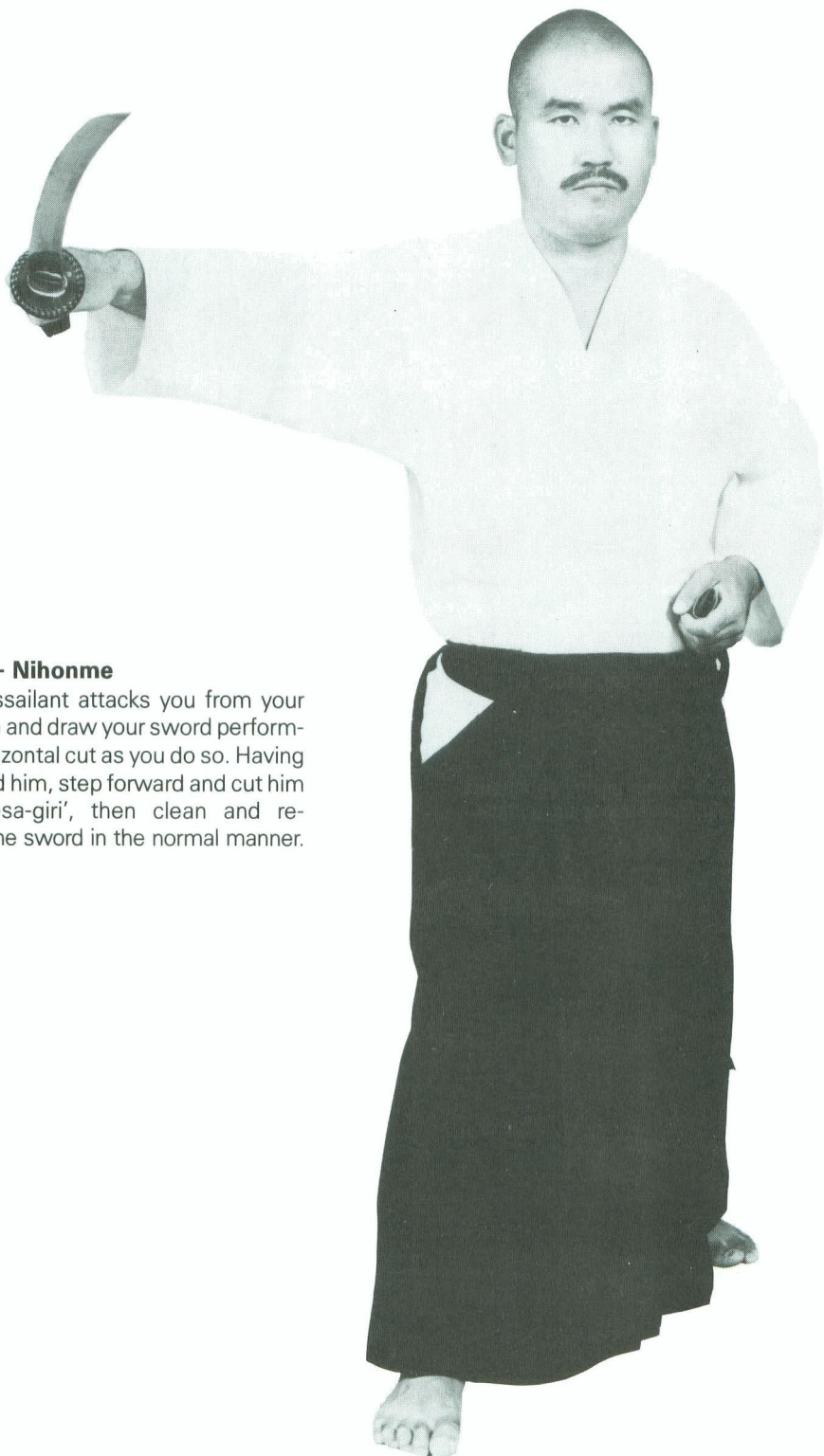
12. ...during which the blade is swung down and to the right, then snapped abruptly to a halt in order to fling any debris from its surface.

15. ...re-sheath your sword, and bringing the rear foot forward...

16. ...salute by placing your hand on the pommel, dropping it then to your right side to finish the exercise.

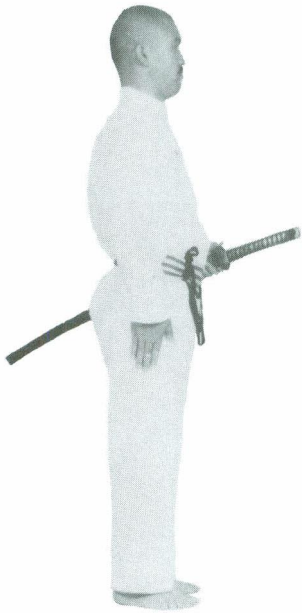


NIHONME

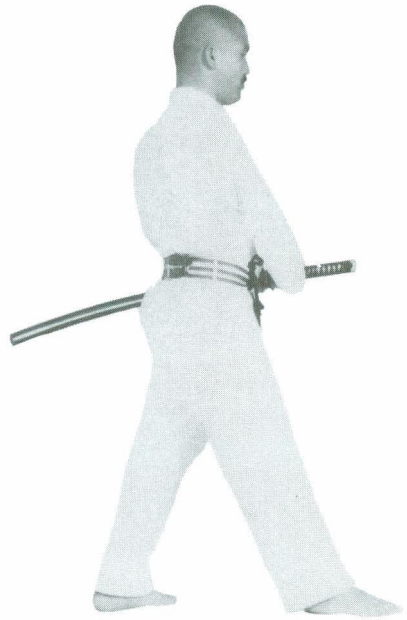


Kata 2 – Nihonme

As an assailant attacks you from your right turn and draw your sword performing a horizontal cut as you do so. Having wounded him, step forward and cut him with 'kesa-giri', then clean and re-sheath the sword in the normal manner.

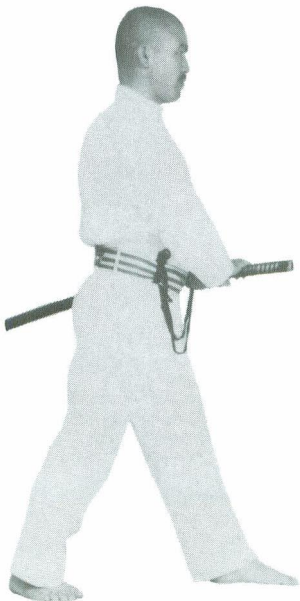


1. From the starting position...

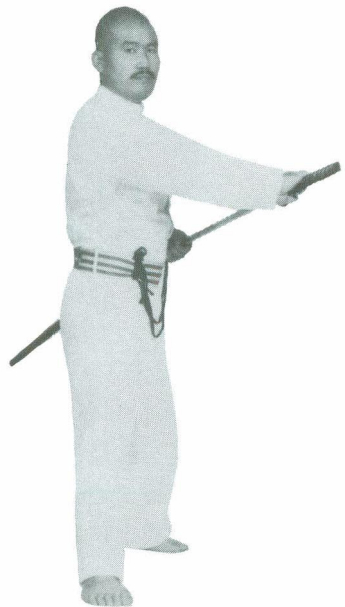


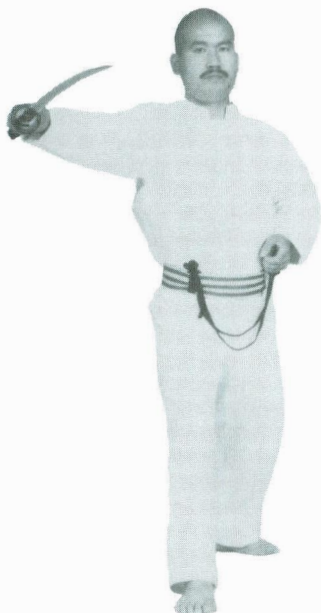
2. ...step forward with the right foot, taking hold of the sword...

3. ...then take another step forward with the left foot, unlocking your sword as you do so...



4. ...slide your right foot forward and turn to engage the enemy as you start to draw.





5. Execute a horizontal side cut at your opponent...



6. ...then raising the sword to a 'jodan' position...

9. ...you step forward into 'chudan-gamae' over the body of your fallen adversary maintaining full concentration.

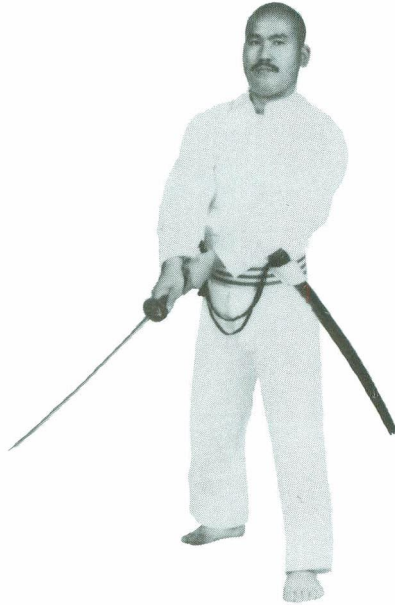


10. After a slight pause, turn the blade slightly...



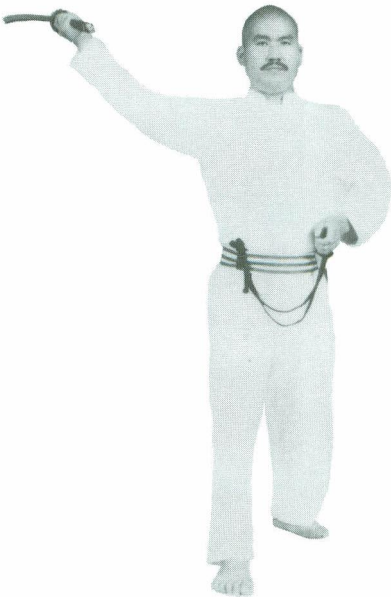


7. ...finish him off with 'kesa-giri'...

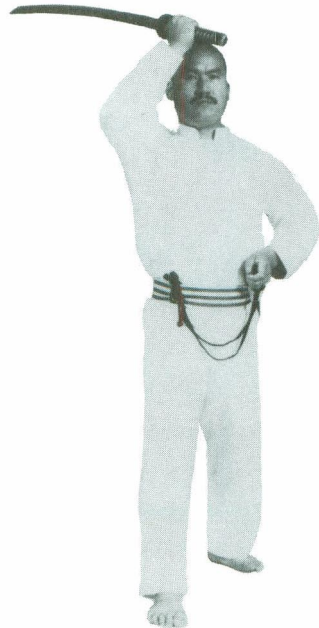


8. ...on the completion of which...

11. ...raise it to your right...



12. ...then bringing your right hand in close to your forehead...





13. ...strike strongly downward to your right, stopping the blade abruptly to throw off any debris.



14. Prepare to sheath your sword.

15. Place the blade into its scabbard...



16. ... then as you push it home, bring the left foot forward into the attention position, and salute by placing the right hand on the pommel of the sword.

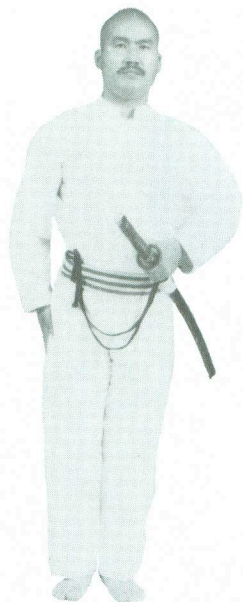


SANBONME

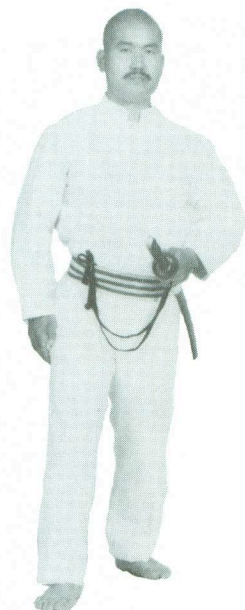
Kata 3 – Sanbonme

You are walking along normally when an assailant attacks you from the side. Evade his attack, drawing your sword as you do so and keeping it close to your body, lunge forward stabbing him in the chest. As he makes his last attempt to strike you down, block his sword with your own then cut him down with 'kesa-giri'.



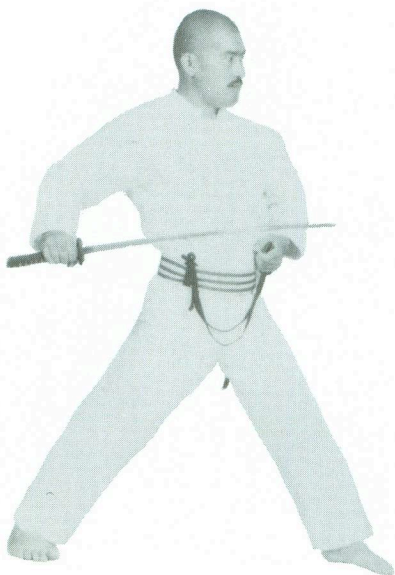


1. From the 'attention' position...

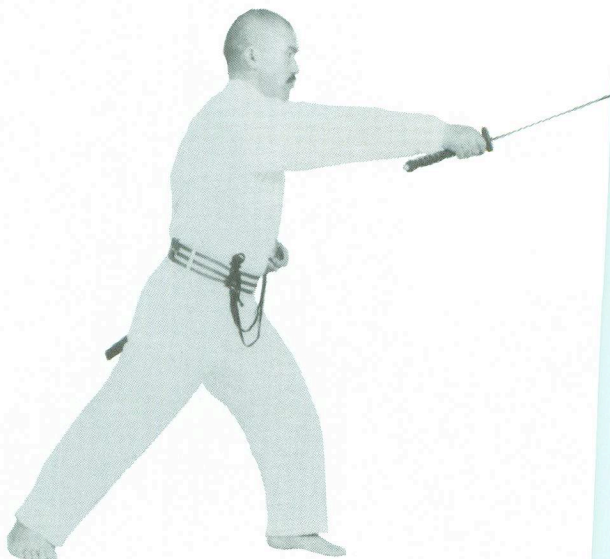


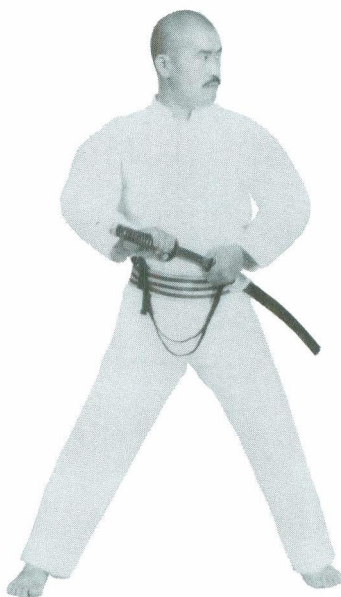
2. ...step forward with the right foot.

5. ...draw your sword keeping it close to your body as you turn your feet into a 'front' stance...



6. ...then slide your left foot forward as you thrust at your opponent.



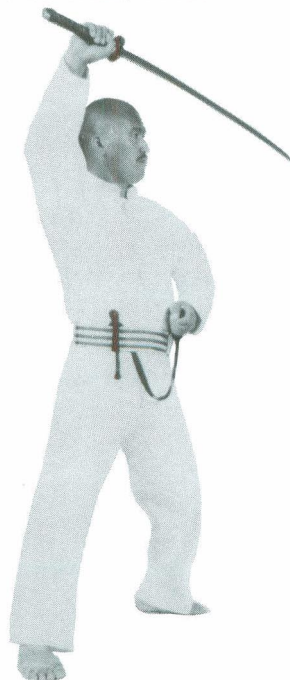


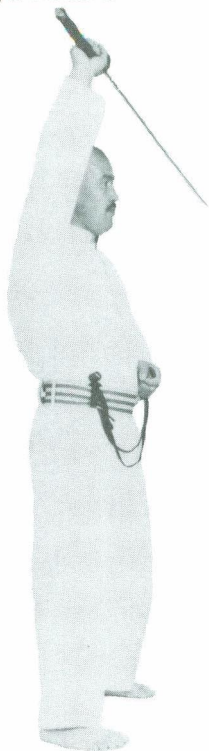
3. Take a further step forward with the left foot unlocking your sword as the enemy approaches you from your left.

4. Bring your right foot into line with your left, and sliding it to your right...

7. Disengage your sword from the target...

8. ...bring your right foot forward, and raising your sword...



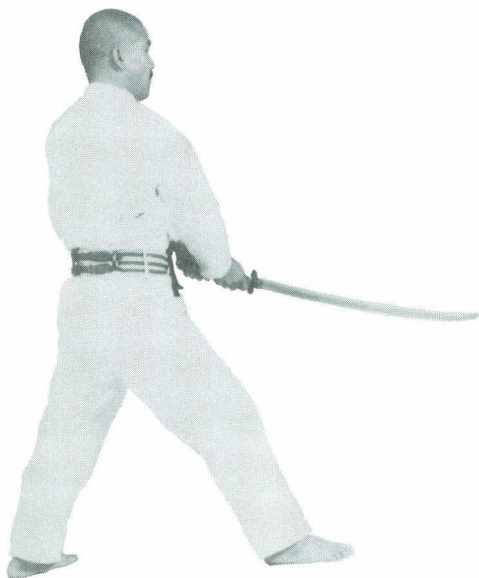


9. ...block your opponent's attack with the flat of your blade, keeping the cutting edge of your sword to the rear.

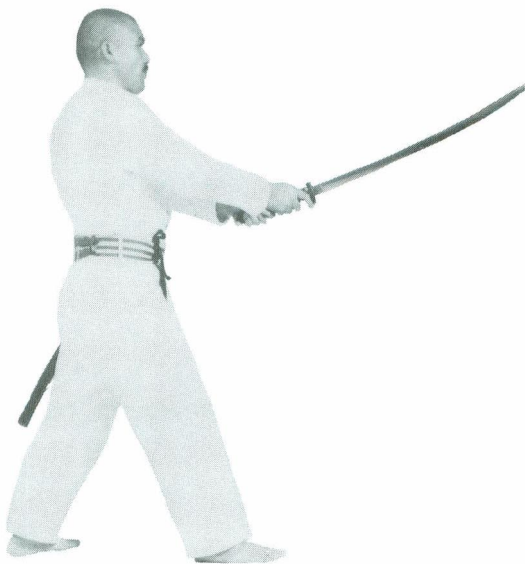


10. As your opponent's blade is deflected off your own, take hold of the hilt with both hands...

13. From the finishing position of the diagonal 'kesa' cut...

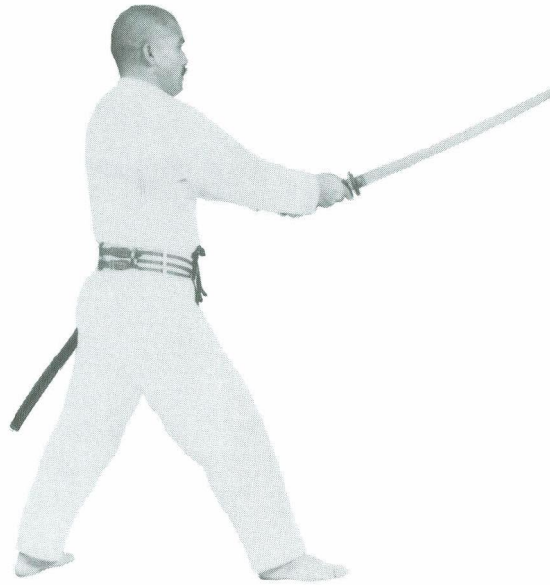


14. ...slide the right foot forward into 'chudan-gamae' maintaining full concentration over your fallen opponent.





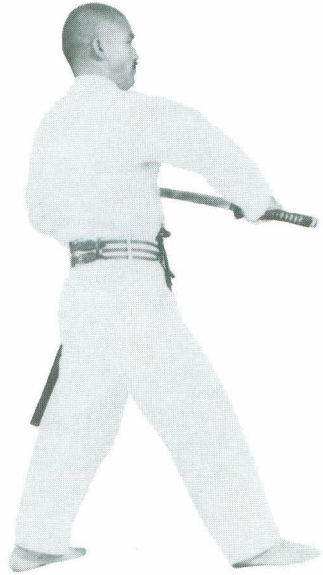
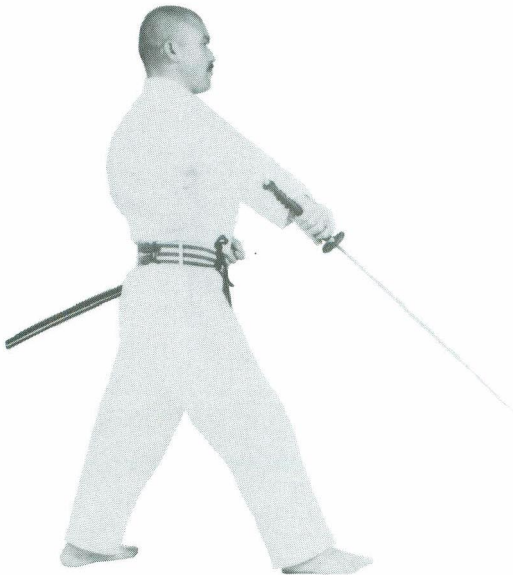
11. ...and stepping backwards with the left foot to give yourself distance...

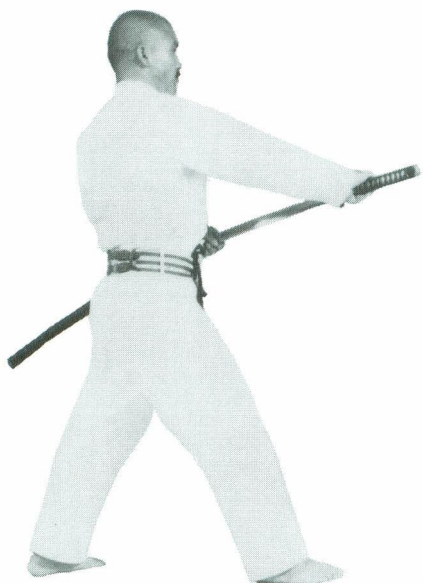


12. ...cut him down with 'kesa-giri'.

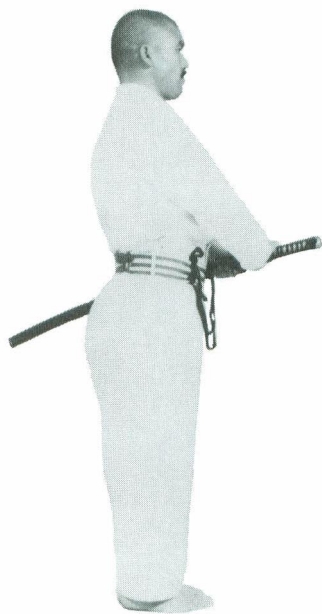
15. Perform 'chiburi' (literally 'blood falling')...

16. ...then placing the sword on the hand between the thumb and index finger...



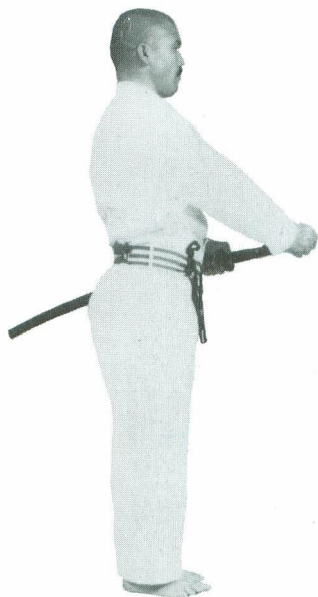


17. ...draw it forward until the tip drops into the mouth of the scabbard.

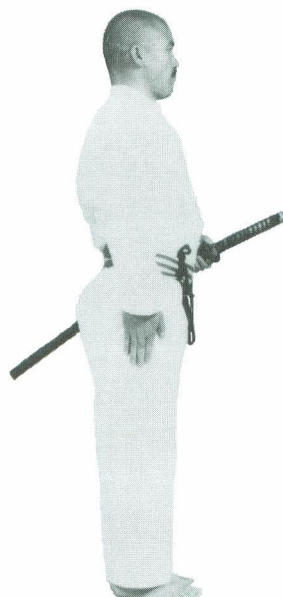


18. ...and push it smoothly but firmly home, moving the left foot forward as you do so.

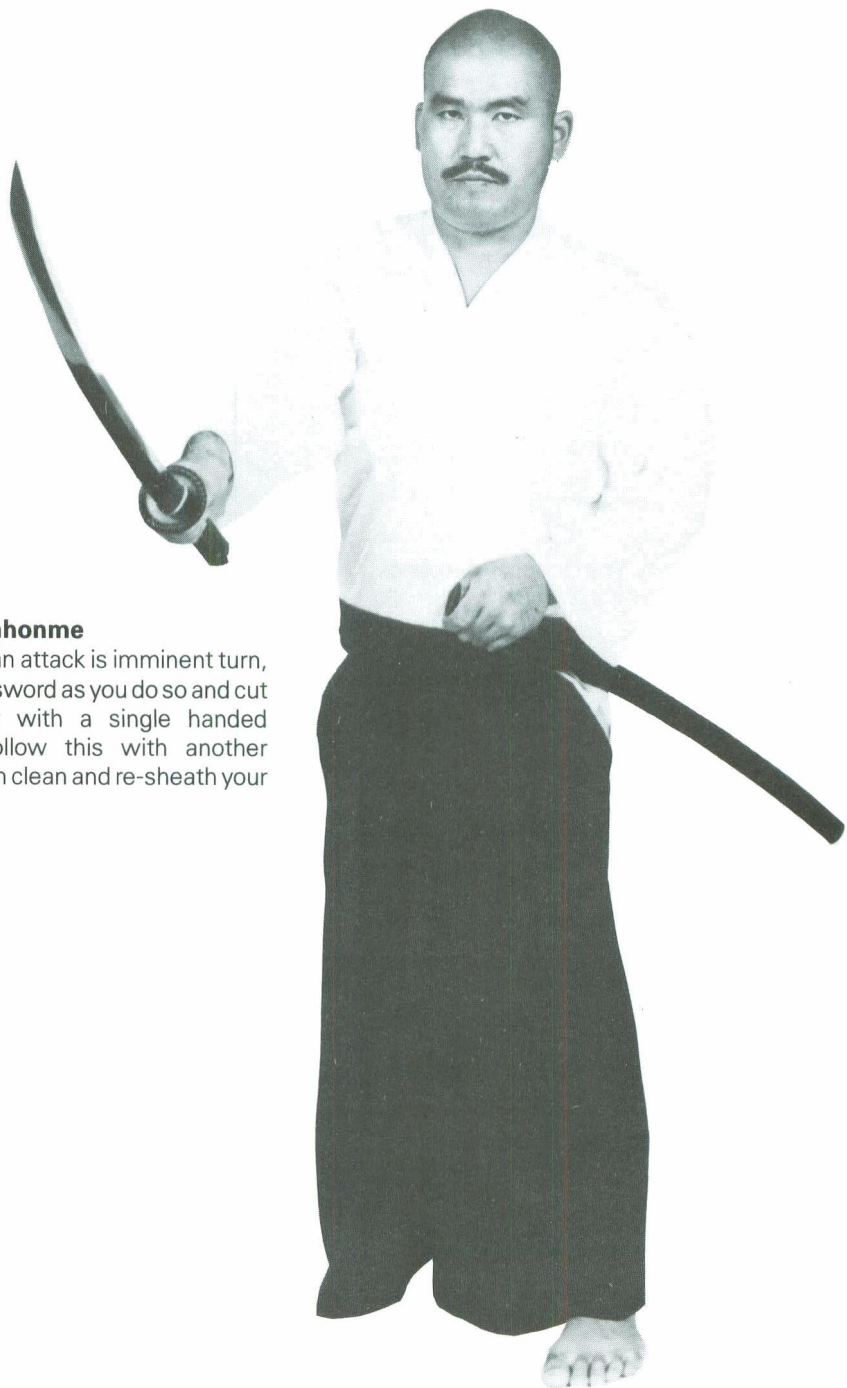
19. Place your right hand over the pommel in salutation...



20. ...then down to your right hand side to complete the exercise.



YONHONME



Kata 4 – Yonhonme

Sensing that an attack is imminent turn, drawing your sword as you do so and cut your attacker with a single handed 'kesa-giri'. Follow this with another 'kesa-giri' then clean and re-sheath your sword.

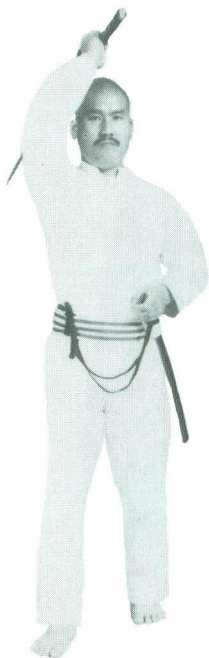


1. From the starting position...



2. ...step forward with your right foot, unlocking your sword as you do so...

5. ...then stepping back with the right foot...

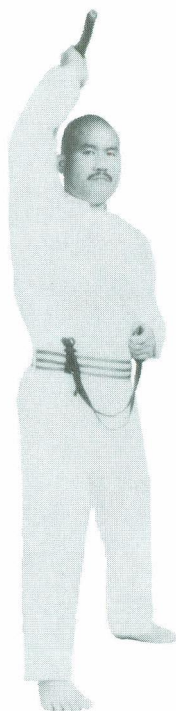


6. ...execute a single handed 'kesa-giri' against your adversary.





3. ...pivot clockwise on the right foot as you draw your sword...



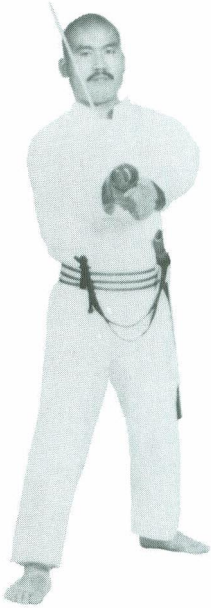
4. ...continue to draw in an upward direction as you complete the 180 degree turn...

7. Immediately following the completion of the 'kesa-giri'...

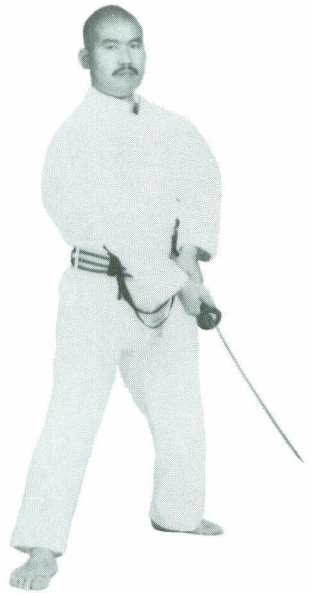


8. ...raise the sword to the 'jodan' position...





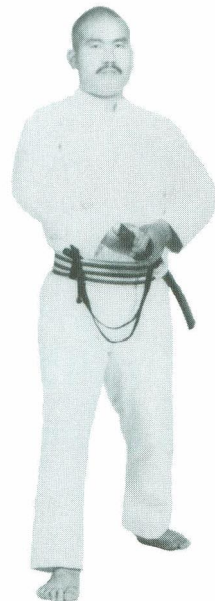
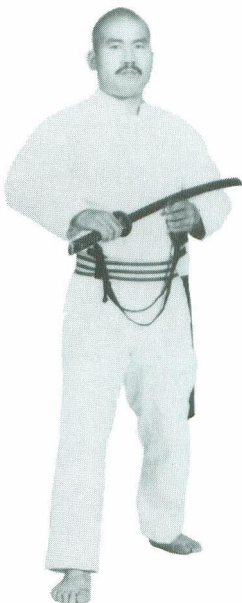
9. ...and perform another 'kesa-giri', stepping back with the left foot as you do so.

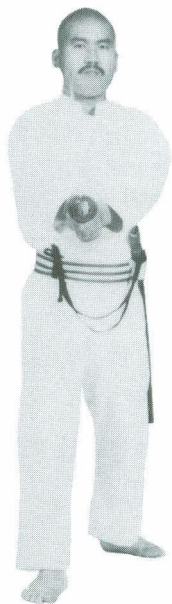


10. From the finishing position of the last 'kesa-giri'...

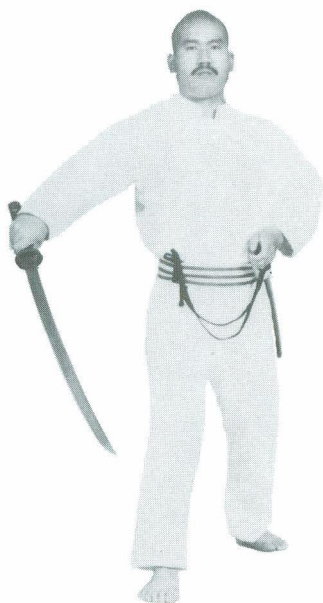
13. ...and start to sheath your sword...

14. ...pushing it all the way home...





11. ...step forward with the right foot into 'chudan-gamae'...



12. ...and perform 'chiburi' to clean the blade...

15. ...moving the left foot upto the right as the blade is sheathed, salute by placing the hand on the pommel.

16. ...before adopting the closing position.

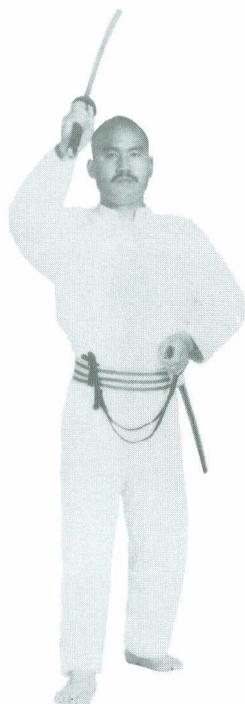
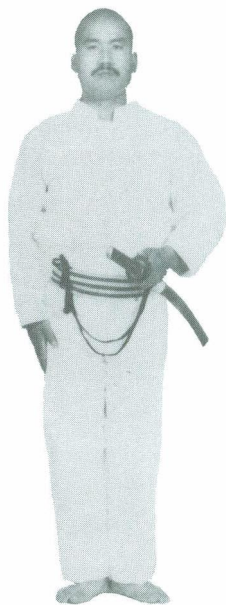


GOHONME



Kata 5 – Gohonme

This Kata teaches a response to a multiple attack by three swordsmen. As they approach you, draw your sword and adopt a single handed 'jodan-gamae' then when the distance is right, cut them down one by one as they rush at you.



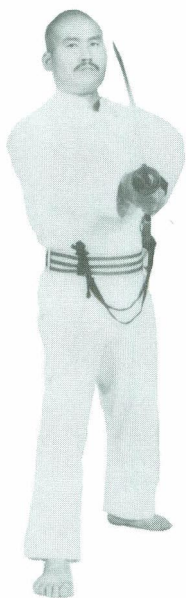
1. Faced with an attack by three swordsmen...

2. ...you draw your sword and adopt a single handed 'jodan' stance...

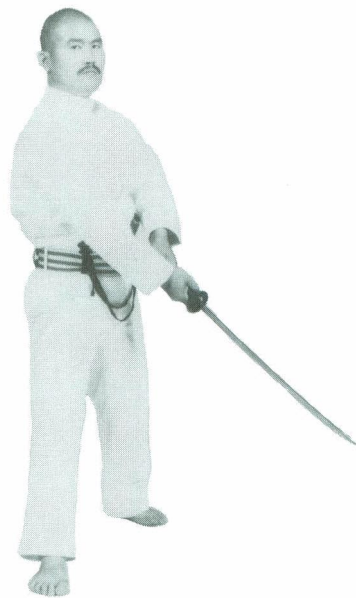
3. ...then stepping forward with the left foot, and taking hold of the sword with both hands...

4. ...step forward with the right foot...





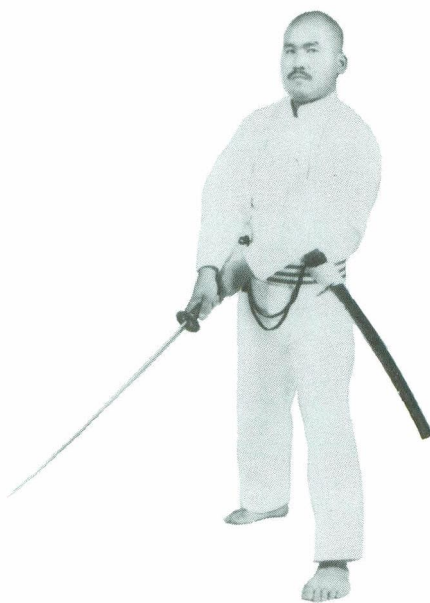
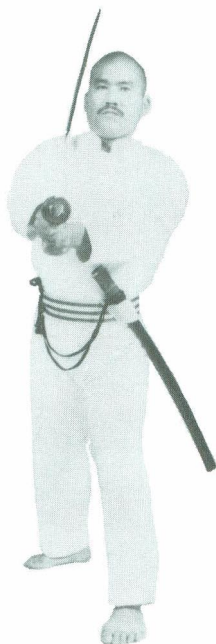
5. ...and cut down the first adversary...



6. ...with 'kesa-giri'.

9. ...and cut down the second swordsman with another 'kesa-giri'.

10. As you complete this cut, without pausing for a second...





7. Raise your sword...

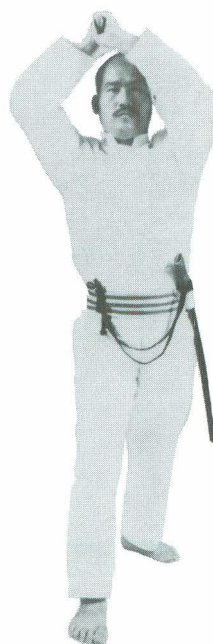


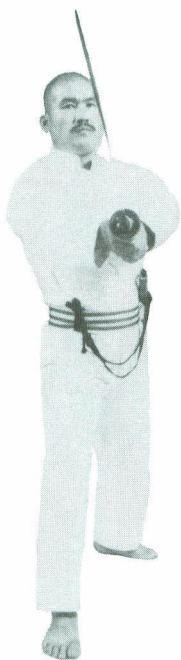
8. ...into a 'jodan' position...

11. ...raise your sword...



12. ...and assuming 'jodan-gamae' ...





13. ...cut down the remaining opponent with 'kesa-giri'.

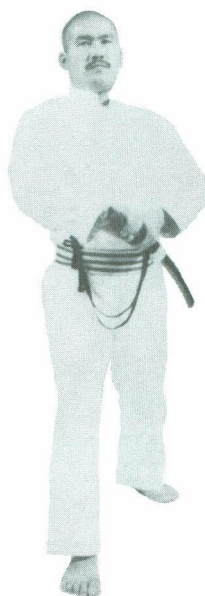


14. At the completion of this technique...

17. ...start to perform 'noto'...

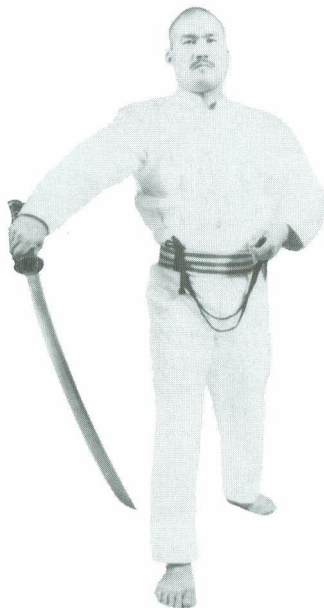


18. ...moving your left foot forward as you re-sheath your sword...



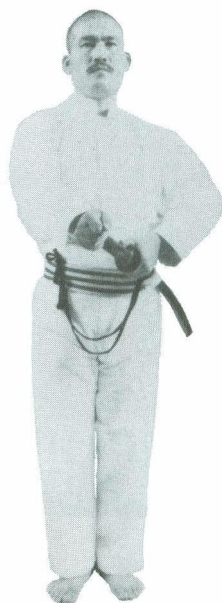


15. ...step forward with the right foot into 'chudan-gamae' maintaining full concentration in case any of your opponents still live...



16. ...then cleaning your blade...

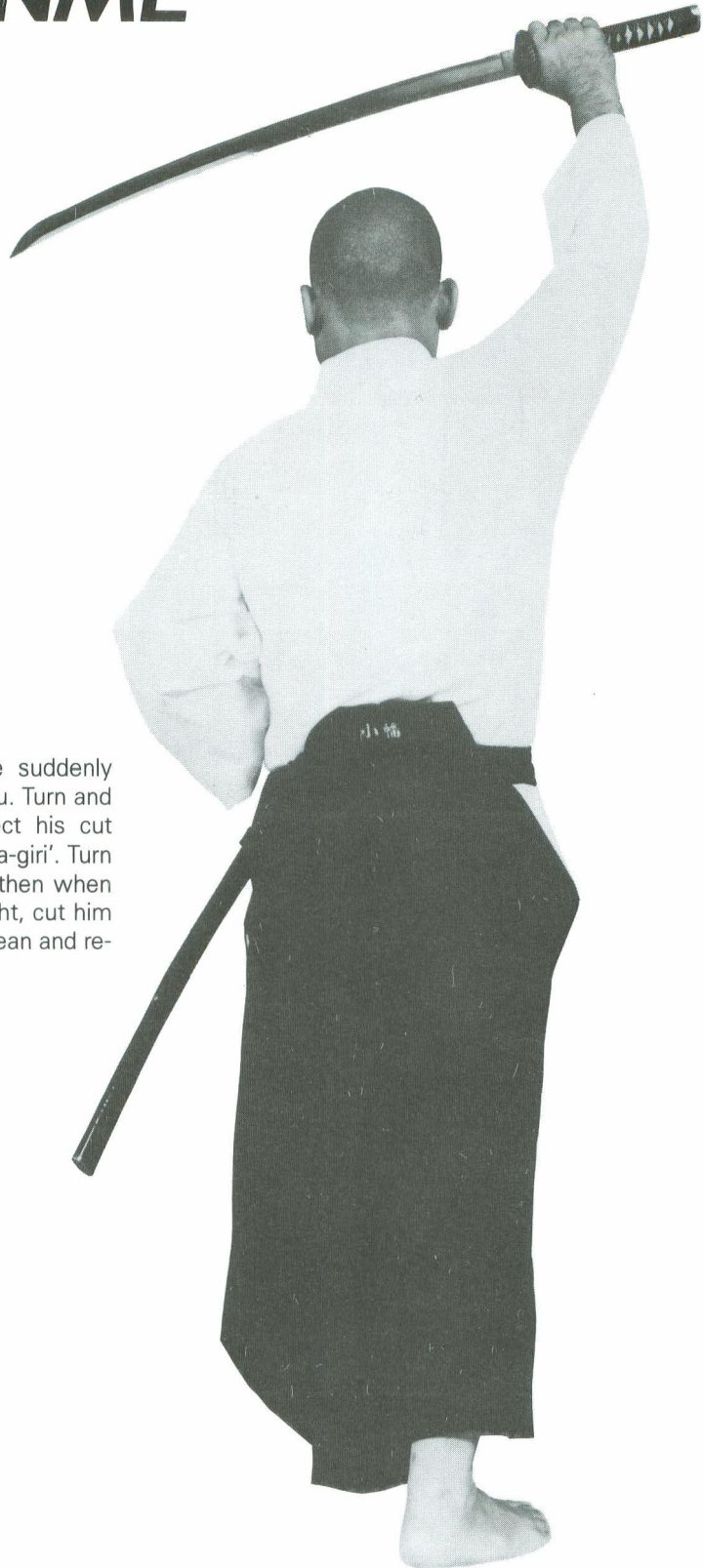
19. ...place your hand on the pommel in salute...



20. ...then drop it to your side as you assume the finishing position.



ROPPONME



Kata 6 – Ropponme

Facing an enemy, you are suddenly aware of another behind you. Turn and drawing your sword, deflect his cut striking him down with 'kesa-giri'. Turn to face the first opponent, then when the distance and time is right, cut him down with a straight cut. Clean and re-sheath your sword.



1. From the starting position...

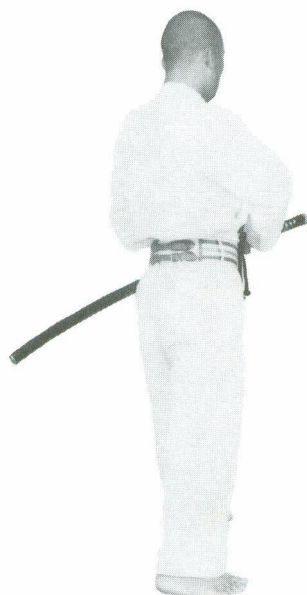


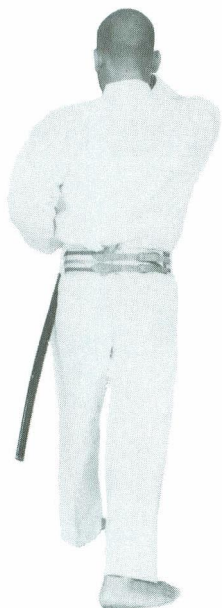
2. ...step forward with the right foot to meet the adversary in front of you...

3. ...then as you take another step with the left foot and start to draw, you hear someone behind you...

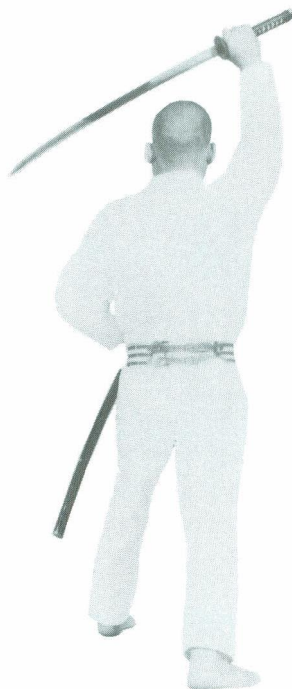


4. ...pivoting anti-clockwise on your left foot...





5. ...draw your sword...



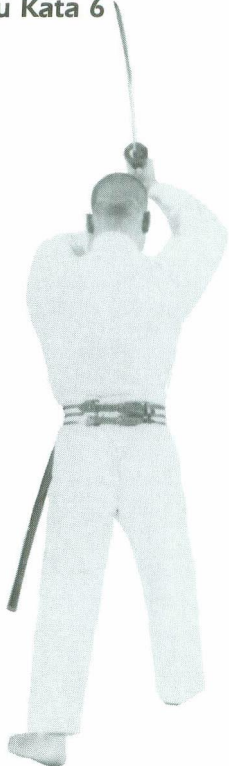
6. ...and deflecting this opponent's attack with your blade...

9. Turn anti-clockwise to face the front once more...

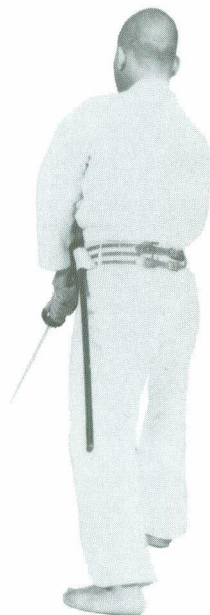


10. ...and raising the sword...





7. ...from 'jodan-gamae'...

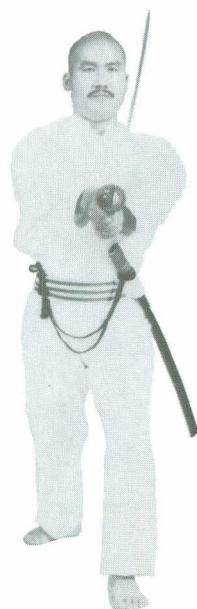


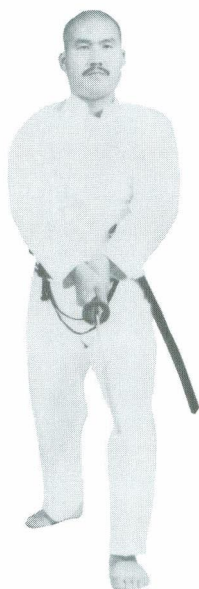
8. ...follow through and cut him down with 'kesa-giri'.

11. ...assume left 'jodan-gamae' in preparation for striking down the first adversary...

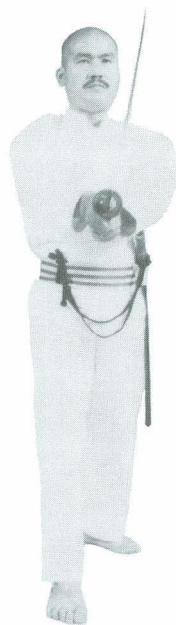


12. ...with a straight cut...



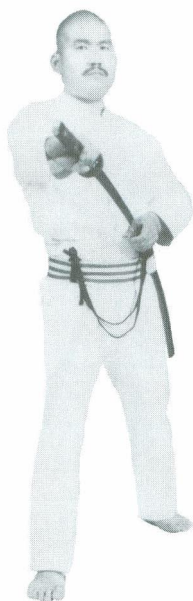


13. ...finishing in a low, 'gedan' position.

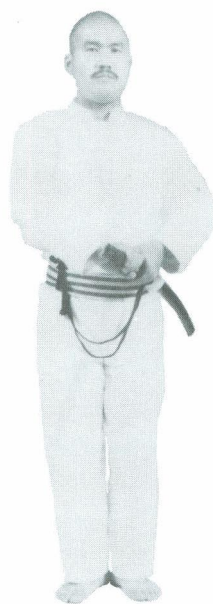


14. Step forward with the right foot into 'chudan-gamae' pausing for a moment in 'zanshin'...

17. ...draw the sword forward and carefully place the tip into the scabbard...



18. ...before pushing the blade home as you move the left foot up to the right...



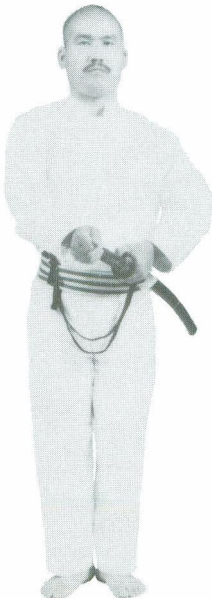


15. ...perform 'chiburi' to clean your blade...



16. ...then placing the sword between the thumb and index finger...

19. ...salute by placing the right hand on the pommel of the sword...



20. ...before dropping it to the right side as you finish the exercise.

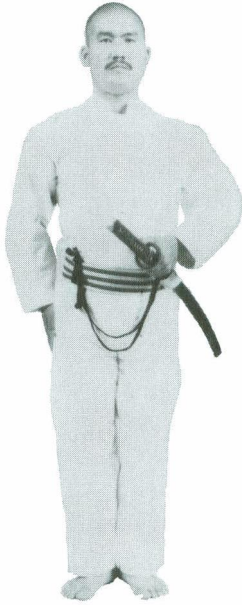


NANAHONME



Kata 7 – Nanahonme

Facing three swordsmen who have spread out to weaken your defence, draw your sword and cut down the one on your right. Without pausing, follow up by attacking the enemy on your left, then as the one who remains starts his attack, thrust your sword into his chest before he can take action. Disengage the target, clean and re-sheath your sword.



1. Faced with enemies to your front, left and right...



2. ...step forward with the right foot as you take hold of the sword...

3. ...then with your left as the blade clears the scabbard...



4. ...immediately cutting down the adversary on your right with a single handed 'kesa-giri'.



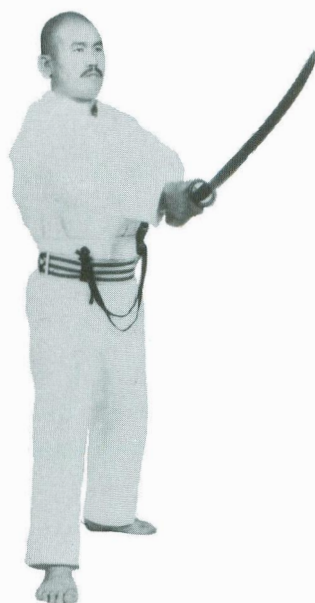


5. As the cut is completed...

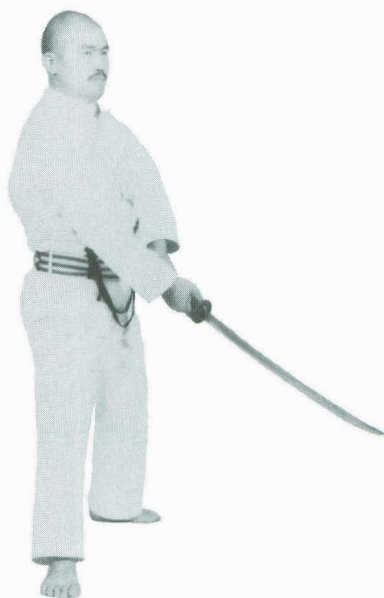


6. ...raise the sword...

9. ...'kesa-giri'...

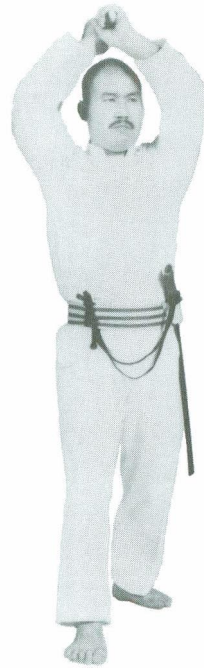


10. ...having mortally wounded the second opponent...





7. ...into a left 'jodan-gamae'...

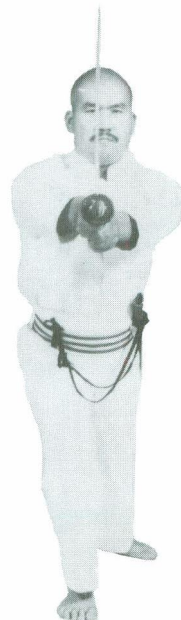


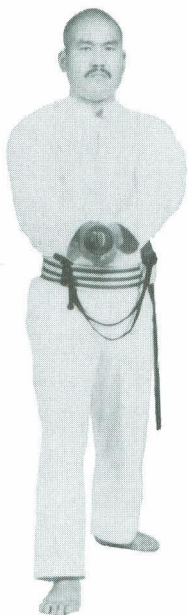
8. ...and moving the right foot forward, perform...

11. ...slide the right foot forward, and raise the sword into 'chudan-gamae'.



12. As the remaining enemy attacks you, lunge forward and thrust your sword into his throat...





13. ...then step back into 'chudan-gamae'...

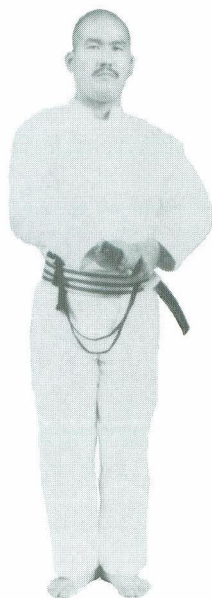


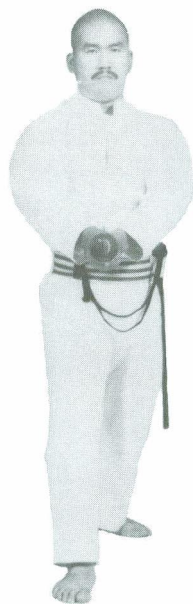
14. ...moving your leg forward, raise your sword into 'jodan-gamae' as you confirm that no further threat exists.

17. ...start to re-sheath your sword...



18. ...moving your left foot up to the right as you complete the move.



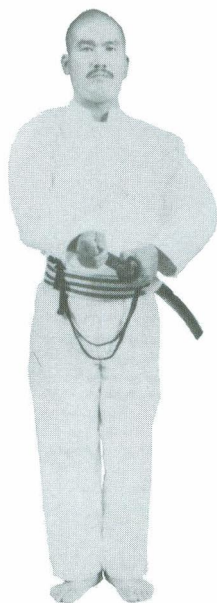


15. Step back with the left foot into 'chudan-gamae' watching your fallen opponents vigilantly...

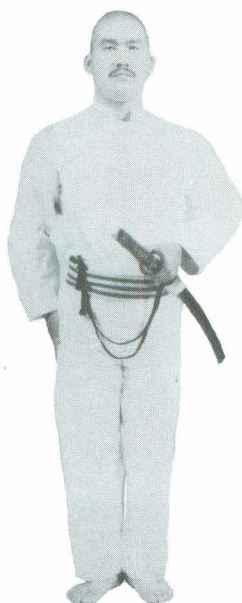


16. ...then cleaning your blade...

19. Salute by placing your hand on the pommel of the sword...



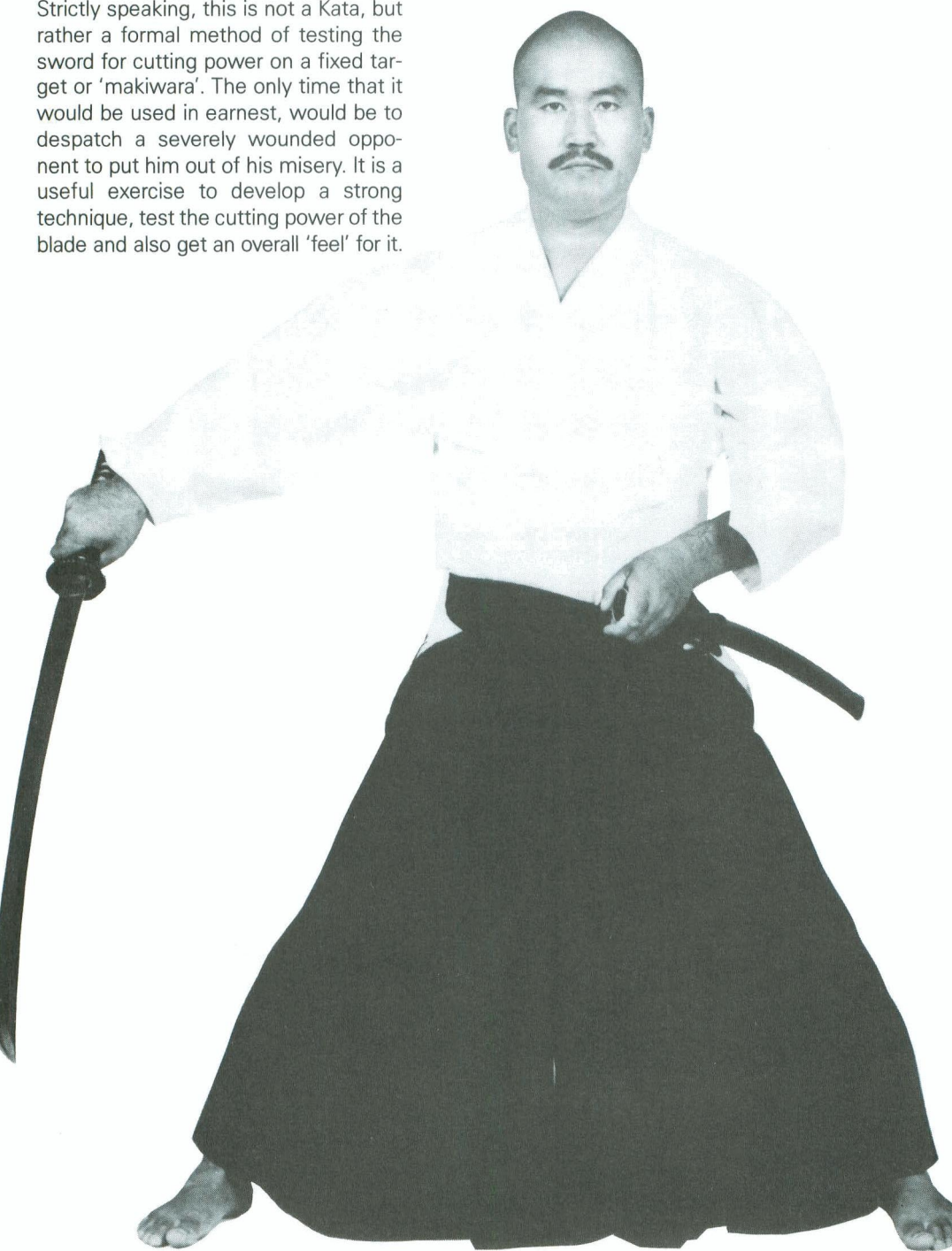
20. ...then finish the exercise by standing to attention.



HAPPONME

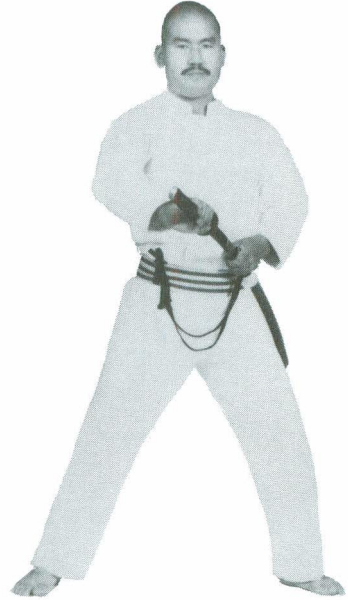
Kata 8 – Happonme

Strictly speaking, this is not a Kata, but rather a formal method of testing the sword for cutting power on a fixed target or 'makiwara'. The only time that it would be used in earnest, would be to despatch a severely wounded opponent to put him out of his misery. It is a useful exercise to develop a strong technique, test the cutting power of the blade and also get an overall 'feel' for it.





1. From the starting position...



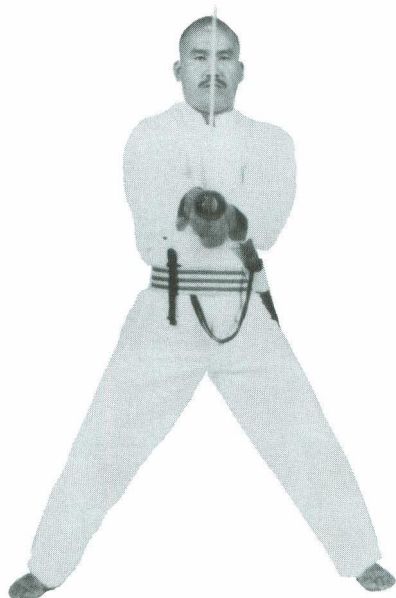
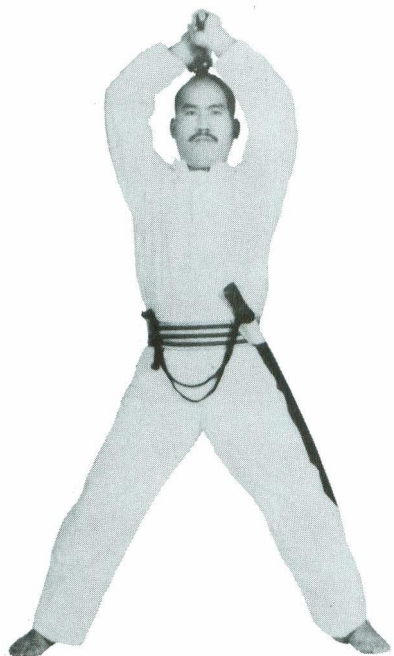
2. ...move your right foot sideways as you slowly draw your sword.

3. Take up the 'ready' position...



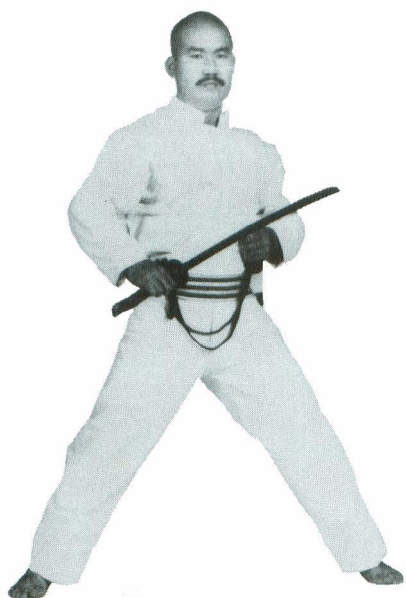
4. ...then circling the sword around...

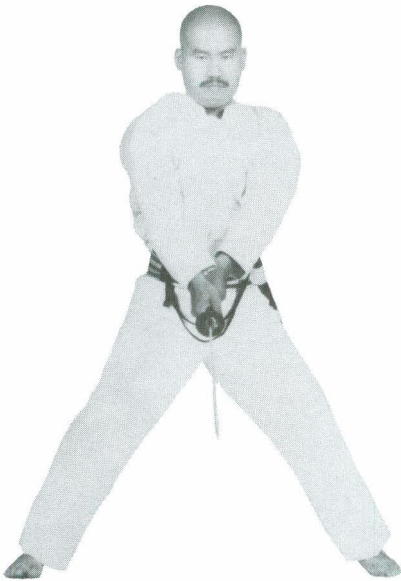




5. ...assume 'jodan-gamae', arching the back slightly before... 6. ...cutting straight down into the target...

9. ...and prepare to re-sheath your sword. 10. Place the sword in the scabbard, then...



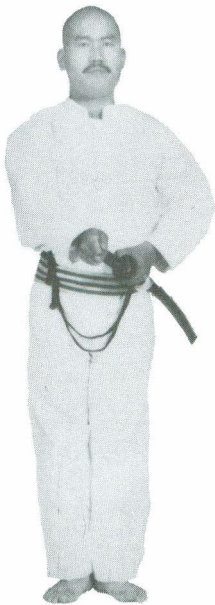


7. ...bending at the knees slightly as you do so to lower your centre of gravity and thus add power to the cut.



8. Clean your blade, 'chiburi'...

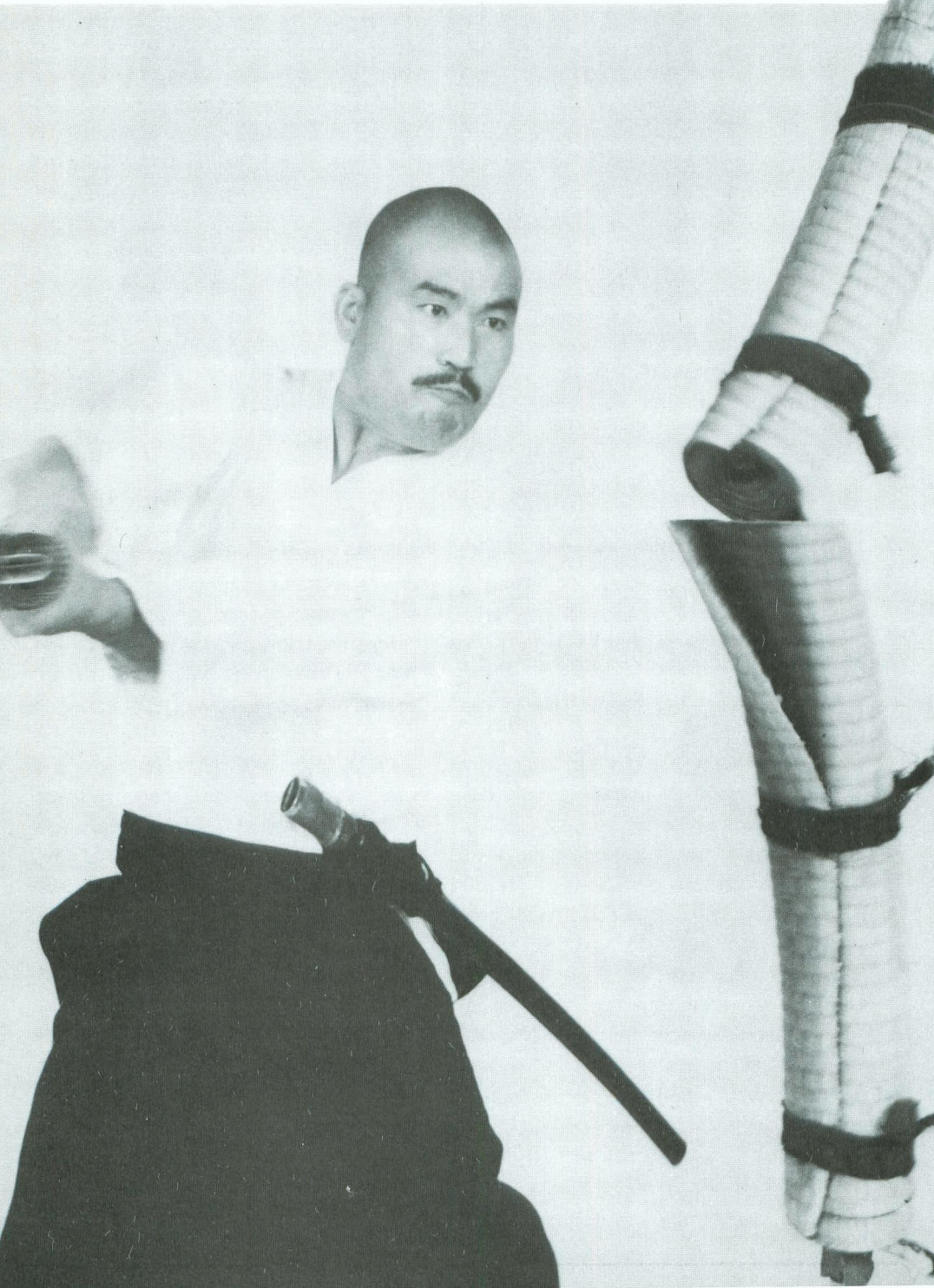
11. ...sliding the right foot up to the left, re-sheath the sword, and salute by placing the hand on the pommel.



12. Drop the right hand to your side to resume the attention position and finish the exercise.



TAMESHIGIRI: TEST CUTTING



In Japan's bygone ages, when war between states or prefectures as we would now call them, was common, swords and swordsmen were regularly tested, and those that did not make the grade, quite literally fell by the wayside. Life was harsh and frequently brutal, and men lived by the strength of their right arm, and the sharpness of their sword.

After the battle of Sekigahara in 1600, times for the Samurai changed quite dramatically. From being full time warriors, decades then centuries of peace turned them into country gentlemen, scholars and in some cases, dissolute wasters. The pair of swords 'daisho' thrust through the sash became as much a badge of office as a means of self preservation. Ornaments, rather than essential items necessary for the performance of the Samurai's role as a loyal servant to his master.

In some clans however, the way of the sword remained strong and the old traditions were rigidly adhered to. So that practical battlefield techniques were not forgotten or compromised, test cutting was practised, both on targets made to simulate human bodies, (e.g. bamboo-wrapped in wet straw to duplicate bone covered with flesh) and on certain occasions the actual bodies of executed persons. In this way the quality of both training and weaponry was maintained, and the old secrets that had been acquired at the cost of life and limb to previous generations, did not die but were preserved intact to be passed on to those of the Samurai caste that would follow.

The testing of a sword was a serious matter, one for which an expert would usually be employed. The bodies to be used would be carefully scrutinised to make sure that they were free of any trace of disease or infirmity as it was believed that this might compromise the purity of any sword used upon them. The testing of swords on the bodies of Samurai and Priests was also taboo, presumably as a mark of respect, as was cutting the bodies of the lowest orders the 'eta' or unclean ones and the 'hinin' or non-men; both of which were regarded as being something less than human.

The sword tester would mount the blade to be tested in a special holder, often of his own design, then after one, or a number of bodies had been arranged, either draped over a mound of sand, or supported in an upright position by his assistants the cutting would begin. Swords that cut successfully would often be marked with details of the test and an official record made of the number of bodies cut at one stroke, (the record is seven) and the name of the swordsman. The tester often doubled as executioner and it was for this reason that they were among the most skilful of Samurai with a sword, and therefore the best suited to this necessary if somewhat unpleasant task.

What is sure is that, regardless of the quality of the sword if the technique of the swordsman was deficient, the cut would not succeed, and the blade could be chipped or bent as a result. This why the practice of actual cutting is so vitally im-

portant even to the modern swordsman for without it, neither the physical (stance, cut and grip) or mental (spirit, determination and resolve) elements of swordsmanship can be learnt or evaluated and the result is the empty and meaningless movement that typifies so many 'modern' forms of martial arts. Strength, speed and excellent technique are not enough, the trainee swordsman must repeatedly experience the fusing

of mind, body and spirit at the moment of the cut to fully understand the meaning of swordsmanship. Toyama Ryu is a practical form of swordsmanship that does not pretend to instil in its followers religious or spiritual values of any kind. It is as Miyamoto Musashi tells us swordsmanship must be:—

The craft of defeating the enemy in a fight and nothing other than this.



Cutting large bamboo requires perfect 'hasuji' as well as flawless technique and tremendous power.



Kesa-giri, the diagonal downward cut of the Toyama School, takes its name from the "kesa" or bib worn by Buddhist monks worn slung diagonally across the body, along the same path that the sword describes when performing this cut.



NAKED BLADE

For more than a thousand years, Samurai swordsmen were universally regarded with a mixture of fear and awe. Even the mighty Kublai Khan must have marvelled at their power as he watched his Mongul invaders, literally cut to pieces when he threw them against the shores of 13th century Japan. Toshishiro Obata is a swordsman in this tradition; the techniques that he teaches are those of his samurai ancestors, swift, dignified and deadly.

拔刀術

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