



*Shinozuka Iga no Kami Sadastuna Defending Kawai Castle with a Large Timber.* Aka (適材適所 teki-zai-teki-sho) "Right lumber, Right Place"

*Yoshitoshi, Tsukioka (1839 – 1892).*

## Events Schedule

**2009**

**Feb / March**

*Mizu Hi Tai Kai*  
Tucson, AZ

**May**

*Florida Tai Kai*  
Palm Bay, FL  
(USFBD)

**August**

*West Coast Tai Kai*  
Costa Mesa, CA

teaching English over the coming year. As of last year, Joe Garcia went to England to work in publishing and John Beckman went to work again in the aerospace industry of California. We wish all of our members good luck as they pursue their goals and we look forward to hearing from them as their lives unfold.



## Meaning of *Iai*

Many students of the sword have asked where the term “*Iai*” comes from. There will no doubt, be disputes over who should take credit for the term, but we can all agree that it is widely used today to describe traditional Japanese swordsmanship. The now classic text on *Iaido* in our experience has been Japanese Swordsmanship by Warner and Draeger and they have addressed part of this question on Pg. 96 in a section titled; The Characters for “*Iai-Do*” and their Significance

...The character *i* (居) refers to the numerous different positional attitudes that can be assumed by the human body in the simultaneous presence of a high state of inner motivation. This state of motivation is characterized by a purposeful will that is at once devoid of fear and the expectation of failure, as well as one that acts with an unfailing conviction that what is being done is just (righteous)...

...the ideogram *i*, is further coupled to *ai* (合), an ideogram that infers the ability of a person to quickly adapt himself to any and all circumstances that occur in life. *Ai* is, in fact, symbolic of a responsive attitude, a mental set that is characterized by an extreme degree of flexibility of the mind that is also reflected in bodily actions...The word *iai* can also be read as *iawasu*, a term that invokes complex metaphysical dimensions...

There is one other source that indicates a deeper interpretation of the characters representing *Iai*. Dr. Hajime Baba maintains a resource web site for the University of Kyoto *Iaido* club. He has mentioned that *Iai / Iawasu* is an allusion to a longer Japanese maxim. This is a common feature of educated Japanese and Chinese literature perhaps most famous as so called “four kanji sayings” (四字熟語, *yo-ji-juku-go*). These are Chinese character strings without any extra *kana*. They often represent very complex ideas in a

sort of short hand for the initiated. His description is below;

*Iaido dealt more with everyday situation rather than those on the battlefield. The term "Iai" is taken from the Japanese phrase: "Tsune ni ite, kyu ni awasu". The meaning of this is, whatever we may be doing or wherever we may be, we must always be prepared from any eventually <sic> (for any eventuality).*

So as we can see once again, context is everything in Japanese language and culture. We can use our dictionaries to translate characters and words but there is usually an important aspect that is understandable only with a working knowledge of Japanese culture.



*Sensei Takaba of Seki City*

## Autumn in Japan

Three of our members joined the trip to Japan this autumn. Goya Kenny, Loren Kierstead and Patrick Haley made a trip to Takayama for a training visit with *Soke Yamada*. The Japanese members of *Shin Shin Ryu* made the arrangements for the annual “In House” *Tai Kai* to coincide with this visit. All of the teachers and students were directed to compete in team and individual *Kata* events at the *Kani Sports Complex* North of Nagoya. *Tameshigiri* was done as a group activity and there were several *Embu* during the day. Our members did well and *Sensei Keupp* of Tucson won first place overall.

Other parts of the week included visits to *Onsen* baths (Hot springs), local sightseeing and an auspicious trip to *Soke’s* waterfall for some inspired training. Also this trip, a special morning was arranged with one of Seki City’s noted *Tosho, Takaba, Hiroshi Sensei* (*Takaba Hiromune* 高羽 弘宗). He earned his sword makers license in 1978 and has frequently won recognition at the annual competition. He is a member of the *Miyairi School* of sword smiths. Both *Hiroshi* and

## On the Road

We knew it would happen someday, that more Tucson sword students would be called away from this area for work or education. Patrick Haley is now living and working in Phoenix, Arizona. He is pursuing his education at the Culinary Institute towards becoming a *Chef de Cuisine*. *Yosuke Nishimura* is back in Japan for the time being and *Anrdrea Cesarini* is at the observatories in Ireland until March. Sarah Humphrey is making plans to spend some time in Japan

his father *Hidetada* are disciples of the National Living Treasure Smith *Miyairi, Kiyohira*.

Special thanks again to *Nishimura, Yosuke* for his translation services and to Patrick Haley for organizing many of the communal meals. Everyone worked hard to make the trip a success.

## Tessen

The underlying spirit of *Tessen Jutsu* is rooted in training with everyday items for self defense. The *Samurai* of the *Edo* period had to observe strict rules concerning their main weaponry that sometimes left them at risk. Upon entering most houses, they were compelled to leave a long sword at the door. A visit for a castle audience or a trip to the *Yoshiwara* district would require most *Samurai* to do without edged weapons all together. To cope with this, many people practiced the art of improvised weapons or they went prepared with custom made, permitted items.

In traditional Japan the folding fan (*Sensu*) was a common item of daily life. Because of this, it was a prime candidate for some minor modifications to make it an effective weapon. The *Tessen* (Iron fan) was produced in several varieties. One costly option was a functional folding fan that had iron endplates or even included iron staves. A lesser alternative was a solid metal truncheon that was shaped like a closed fan. A much riskier alternative was to hide a blade in case of an emergency. This latter option would in some situations be equated with an attempt at assassination or considered treasonous if discovered in some settings.



There is some folklore associated with this weapon as well. An old story tells of a clever *Samurai* saving his own life with a *Tessen*

without actually wielding it to parry a sword or an arrow. The account has been variously assigned to men of Japanese history and may well be apocryphal, however it illustrates very well, the problem of being disarmed. A *Samurai* was summoned to the castle by his lord for some failure or lack of preparedness. The decision was made to do away with him by crushing his neck between two heavy sliding doors as he performed the required bow at the entrance. Perhaps suspecting that his life was in danger, this man placed his *Tessen* in the track and bowed in the customary way. When the doors were shoved towards his neck, they were jammed by the object and bounced harmlessly away. It is said that the *Samurai* behaved so calmly during the ordeal that his lord reconsidered his worth as a warrior. The *Samurai* pretended that nothing had happened and was spared any further punishment.



*"It was at this point that Takeshi finally understood the lesson on blocking a cut"*

## Jodo Kata

It is well known that the sword master, *Nakayama Hakudo* was an authority of *Iai* and *Kendo*. It is lesser known that he was also a master of the *Jo*. It makes sense that he would be versed in the pole arms of his time and the *Jo* has much in common with the *Bokuto*. It requires the same sense of *Maai*, *Zanshin* and balance. It shares many of the same targets while presenting a reach advantage against most swords. Perhaps of greatest consequence, is the fact that you are most likely to find a stick close at hand in an

emergency. A rake or broom handle are part of our modern context. A walking stick is also viewed with little apprehension in many situations. The *Jo* offers the versatility of using both ends so it makes you expand your mind to new possibilities.



Recently, Dr. Gettings has been teaching the foundations of the *Jo* at the *Yamakawa Dojo* and we have also had opportunities at the annual *Tai Kai* to take seminars with Sensei Stokes of California in *Suiyo Ryu Jodo*. Our practice in Tucson includes handling exercises and *Kata* of the *Kawaguchi* tradition. Students may also be interested in the ZNKR standard set of *Jodo Kata*. There are twelve *Kata* that have been arranged to include all the "basic" techniques of the *Jo*. Just like *Iai Kata*, the small number of *Kata* can be deceiving. True mastery of all of them could take a lifetime.

## WWW

It has been a goal this year to develop a *Yamakawa Dojo* web site as a way for new students to find us and a place to make resources available to current members. We now have the basic components on line with room for improvements in the future. Please visit the *Dojo* web site at;

<http://www.yamakawadojo.com/>

You will find a recent archive of newsletters, PDF documents relating to swordsmanship and Japanese culture. We have also prepared a page of valuable links to other *Dojo*, reputable vendors and links to information about swords and history. Future projects include an online *Fudekake*, more resource documents and expanded picture archives.

