



Riku Hatteru Sonja and his White Tiger

Kuniyoshi, Utagawa (1797 – 1861)

Events Schedule

2010	
May 14, 15	<u>Bakersfield Tai Kai</u> Bakersfield, CA
May 21-24	<u>SDK Iaido Seminar</u> Guelph, Canada
September 3, 4	<u>West Coast Tai Kai</u> Costa Mesa, CA

Tucson Tai Kai

Tucson was the site of the **ninth annual Tai Kai** associated with the *Shin Shin Ryu* of Japan. This year there was an interesting array of seminar offerings on Friday including three that featured *Kenjutsu*. *Sensei* (Robin) Ramirez gave an introduction to *Ono Ha Itto Ryu* techniques and *Sensei* (Tony) Alvarez shared some excellent insight that is contained in the *Mugai Ryu Kumitachi*. After the interval of *Tameshigiri* seminars at many levels, *Sensei* (Carl) Jenkins instructed interested students in the *Kumitachi* of the *Nakamura Ryu*. This year the *Shin Shin Ryu* seminar was greatly assisted by the kind efforts of **Derek Morris** of California. Performing his translations in the spirit of a U.N. interpreter, Mr. Morris provided the participants with a seamless flow of

information in English that seemed to emanate directly from *Soke Yamada*.

Saturday was the competition portion of the weekend and *Yamakawa Dojo* was well represented among a field of talented *Kenshi*. **Goya Kenny** excelled in several events including a first in *Iai Kata*. **Irene Swanson** placed in the control cut *Dodan* event and showed her perseverance in the team event. **David Wallis** went head to head with *Sensei* Kenny for the *Iai Tameshigiri* finals this year. This closely contested tie had to resort to an additional round and a new pattern before Mr. Wallis rallied. Team *Yamakawa* also cut twice in the “tag team” event where *Rokudan Giri* was performed on a **double target**. Local friends **Shawn Olson** and **Nathan Grunow** also did well this day. Mr. Olson placed in enough *Tameshigiri* events to earn the cutting award of a red, *Kensei* Sword, *Katana*. This year the *Yusho* prize went to **Jason Hatcher** of Virginia. One of *Sensei* Drawdy and Jenkins’ dedicated students, he distinguished himself all day and had to contest a tie breaking *Embu* against his instructor. Mr. Hatcher is now the proud owner of a Howard Clark 1086 *Wakizashi*. It was obvious that *Sensei* Jenkins shared in the success of his student.



Kitayama Cedar

Excerpt from “[Dancing on Temple Tops](#)”

Nestled in the mountains north of *Kyoto*, there is the cedar-logging village of *Kitayama* (喜多山). The cedar (*Sugi*) grown here is famous throughout Japan as a treasured and elegant building material. Sadly there are fewer families who maintain the painstaking forestry management practices required to produce *Kitayama* cedar. There is however a local [Cedar Museum](#) that memorializes the traditional craft of *Kitayama* cedar production. In this region, sections of the mountainside are successively cleared and replanted in a sustainable fashion. It is said that a forestry worker harvests the trees planted by his grandfather and that he in turn must plant trees for his grandson. As the trees grow, those destined to become the greatest logs are

pruned of their branches so that the central trunk grows tall straight and sturdy. Trees destined to produce slender logs for lighter and more delicate constructions are pruned of their central trunk, so that the branches of a single tree can produce numerous small logs. These techniques, of course are just good forestry management practices for sustainable production, but the real magic of *Kitayama* begins with molding of the living trees prior to logging. A forestry worker climbs to the very top of the tree and then begins wrapping the tree with straw-like forms made of hard plastic tied tightly against the tree with wire. The wrapping continues for the entire length of the tree from tip to base. When complete, the tree is allowed to grow for two years before it is harvested. After logging, the fresh trunks are stripped of their bark and cured and then polished to a high sheen by rubbing with wet sand. This latter task was traditionally performed by women, children and the elderly members of the family. A display at the Cedar Museum shows a woman in the traditional costume of a forestry worker’s wife, polishing a cedar log using wet sand rubbed into the log with her bare hands.



Of many sample logs on display, polished but unstained logs are shown on the left, while those that have been stained after polishing are shown on the right. Such beautiful wood is used for decorative interior architectural details in a traditionally constructed or aristocratic home.

Families from the *Nakagawa* area (North-east of *Kyoto*) and neighboring areas (i.e. *Onogo* and *Takao*) were appointed as *Kugonin*, a prestigious position serving the royal family, and tasked with delivering *Kitayama* cedar trees to the palace in *Kyoto*. There, *Kitayama* cedar trees were used in the *Sukiya*-styled architecture for the royal family and noble houses. This element also became popular due to the wide spread practice of the tea ceremony in the style introduced by *Rikyu* in sixteen century.

The Jade Merchant

A classic story in Japan and China revolves around a person who wants to learn a coveted skill.

A young man once went to a great jade expert and asked to be taught. The master accepted him and beguiled him each day in conversation that seemed to have nothing to do with jade.

Every day he would give him a different piece of jade to hold. Sometimes, he would simply hand him a stone and walk away. Months passed and the young man grew impatient. 'When will you begin the lessons, Teacher?' he asked respectfully, trying hard not to sound discourteous. 'Soon,' said the teacher gently and walked away. More time passed and every day they had conversations while the student cradled jade objects in his hand. One day, the teacher guided him to sit in the jasmine-scented garden, and put an attractive green stone in his hand. Up jumped the young man, shouting, 'This is not jade!'...the teacher nodded...



Some versions of this story have the student enduring this test for a full year before coming to the realization that he has been learning the skill he sought. Most versions have the student believing that he has been put off by the teacher until the very last moment. The student is usually quite patient in the beginning, but eventually shows his youthful energy and impatience by blurting out an observation and noting the quality of the piece he has been handed. Perhaps this is an object lesson in quiet observation and patience. It suggests that you may learn a great deal just from being attentive and by absorbing the experiences

that are available. It is not always necessary to have a course proclaimed and outlined in a syllabus.

Jade also has a reputation as the "wisdom stone" or the stone of longevity. There is a great deal of lore that associates the qualities of the stone with the virtues of a cultured person. This beautiful stone is admired for its hardness, translucent colors and warm brilliance. From these natural properties the ancients found the embodiment of the cardinal virtues of a perfect gentleman. Ancient texts such as *Li Ji (Book of Rites)* expounded the importance of jade to a gentleman whose wearing of jade pendants achieved both moralizing and ornamental purposes. In time, jade came to be identified as a symbol for everything that is good, pure, noble and sublime.



In Chinese, jade is pronounced as 'Yu', and most words or phrases related to "moral" include this word. One example of such a maxim is, "**Unpolished jade never shines**". This indicates that one cannot be a useful person if he is not educated. Jade also implied honor and conviction. Many girls in ancient times were also named using the word, jade to reflect the hopes of their parents. One of the Four Beauties in Chinese history, *Yang Yuhuan*, was the concubine of Emperor *Xuanzong* in the *Tang* Dynasty (618 - 907). *Yang* was her surname and her given name *Yuhuan* means simply 'jade ring'.

The term "Jade" actually refers to two distinct minerals. **Jadeite** and **Nephrite**. Nephrite can be found in a creamy white form (known in China as "mutton fat" jade) as well as in a variety of green colors, whereas jadeite shows more color variations, including blue, lavender-mauve, pink, and emerald-green colors. Nephrite is valued for its purity; its smooth glossy appearance symbolic of Confucian virtue. The brighter, more vividly colored jadeite on the other

hand, is desired for its shades of bright lavenders and emerald greens.

New Dojo

Two new *Dojo* have been invested this year at the conclusion of a visit from *Soke Yamada*. The people of Yuma, Arizona once again have a branch the *Shin Shin Ryu* in their midst and Nogales, Mexico will also be a recognized training site for these sword arts. The Yuma *Dojo* has been designated as the *Shin Taka Dojo* under the direction of *Sensei Daniel Vasquez* and in Mexico, *Sensei Yosuke Nishimura* will train students in the sword traditions of Japan at the *Yo Shin Kan Dojo*.

Soke Yamada concluded his visit to the United States with a visit and *Embu* in Mexico and a stop in Michigan to see his students and offer his encouragement. Also at the end of this trip, it was announced that the next Japan *Tai Kai* this summer will be held at the *Gujo Hachiman* (Castle) in the mountains North of *Nagoya*. This special location is one of three famous castles that have a special connection to the *Shin Shin Ryu* (*Gujo Hachiman*, *Kumamoto* and *Wakayama*).

Personal Growth

Perhaps one of the hard lessons to learn in an environment of competition is that your personal growth is more important than prizes or accolades. It is often true that sustained growth is rewarded but those baubles are a side effect and not the main purpose of our efforts. Our recent big event seemed to suffer a bit, from too much "cost to benefit analysis". Many students are hesitant to enter events if they do not see a good chance for a win, or perhaps they fear the possibility of an embarrassment. Knocking over a stand in *Tameshigiri* is something that must be done many times before it can be done without horror. If you have never done it, you are not really pushing your limits.

This year the [opening remarks](#) from both *Soke Yamada* and *Kaicho McClafferty* emphasized the importance of taking some calculated risks and "getting outside of the comfort" of the *Dojo*.

