



Ei - Eternal / Forever

Essential Principles of *Nakamura Ryu*

From the “Eight Rules of Chinese Calligraphy to the Eight Directions of Cutting”

Taizaburo Nakamura, *Iaikendo*. (Tokyo: Seitousha, 1973), pp. 110-112. Translated by Takako Funaya.

Speaking of *Nakamura Ryu's* essential principles, I was once a *taito honbun sha* (officers and noncommissioned officers authorized to carry swords) in northern China during World War Two. While teaching actual combat martial arts as an army *Kenjutsu* (swordsmanship) instructor, I was inspired with the thought that the laws of calligraphy could be applied to swordsmanship. *Happo giri*, the eight directions of cutting, is most logical in terms of the sword's arc path.

Needless to say, I intended to create this method logically by combining my Eight *Kamae* (fighting stances) with the Five *Kamae* which *Kendo* uses. The Five *Kamae* are the foundation of swordsmanship based on the old-school traditional styles of fencing, and is the outcome of our predecessors' painstaking research.

For instance, *Omori Ryu Iaido*, which is one of the traditional styles, has basic sword techniques; however, the very practical diagonal cut is not used. This is totally illogical.

In *Kendo*, *kirigaeshi* (repeated strikes and returning to the start position) is executed by hitting a horizontal area with both right and left diagonal strikes. This can be grudgingly accepted simply because *Kendo* is a bamboo sword technique. Traditional *Iaido* styles have few natural diagonal cutting techniques and are not appropriate for actual combat techniques because of the formal kneeling position used in executing their techniques. This is why the former *Toyama Military Academy* created *Toyama Ryu Iaido* and based it on standing techniques; thus, creating an actual combat martial art.

After the abolishment of wearing the sword in 1872, *Kenjutsu* and *Iai* became an entertainment performance. The term used then, **iai-nuki**, still remains to this day (and has a negative connotation). Sometimes you can see exhibitions in which a long sword is drawn, sometimes with a blade as long as five to six feet long; this is *Iai-nuki*, not **iaido**.

The Nakamura Ryu Spirit

I have studied Japanese sword test cutting through an extensive range of experiences and created *Nakamura Ryu Batto-jutsu*. My system is based on studies on how to bring the sword blade to a halt following a cut, how to parry, and how to progress to the next fighting stance by utilizing the sword's kinetic energy.

In the past I have displayed *Toyama Ryu Batto-jutsu* test cutting many times on television as well as during *Kendo* and other martial arts tournaments. While performing test cutting, I always cut bamboo or thick rolls of rice straw as substitute targets. I always display the best sword techniques I have gained from my experience such as: the correct blade angle-of-attack, the blade's arc path in relation to the target, a firm wringing grip (which is the proper way to hold the handle), and spiritual aspects of the unison of sword, mind, and mental power. This is true *Iaido*, born from the basic movements of the sword techniques of *Kendo* and *Iaido* prearranged forms.

**“Iai to wa, hito ni kirarezu, hito kirazu
Jiko no renma ni, shugi no michi.”**

**“Iai: not killing others; not being killed by others. Self training
and polishing, the road to discipline and cultivation.”**

From *seigan no kamae* (a variation *chudan gamae*), holding your sword with its tip pointed at your opponent's eyes, it is said that "the sword is soul and heart". Stand in *chudan gamae* (middle stance) with your heart as your core, like

a big cedar tree. From this *seigan no kamae* you can generate ever-changing, kaleidoscopic techniques which are essential to both defense and offense.

In the next section, I will explain about the sword technique which I dynamically developed. The section describes the basic cutting line of *Happo Giri* from the Eight *Kamae*. This technique was formally introduced as *Happo Giri* on television in April, 1963.

Essentials of the Eight *Kamae* and *Happo Giri*

The Eight *Kamae* (derived from the Five *Kamae*)

1. ***Chudan no kamae***. Middle guard stance.
2. ***Gedan no kamae***. Lower guard stance.
3. ***Migi waki no kamae***. Right side, lower guard stance.
4. ***Migi hasso no kamae***. Right guard stance.
5. ***Hidari jodan no kamae***. Left upper guard stance (left foot forward).
6. ***Hidari waki no kamae***. Left side, lower guard stance.
7. ***Hidari hasso no kamae***. Left guard stance.
8. ***Migi jodan no kamae***. Right upper guard stance (right foot forward).

The Eight Direction Cut

(devised from calligraphy's "Eight Rules Pertaining to the Chinese Ideograph" *EI*)

1. ***Morote tsuki***. Double-handed thrust.
2. ***Shinchoku giri (karatake wari)***. Downward vertical cut ("splitting the Chinese bamboo").
3. ***Hidari kesa giri***. Left downward diagonal cut.
4. ***Migi gyaku kesa giri***. Right upward diagonal cut.
5. ***Migi kesa giri***. Right downward diagonal cut.
6. ***Hidari gyaku kesa giri***. Left upward diagonal cut.
7. ***Migi mayoko giri (migi ichimonji)***. Right horizontal cut (right "one" ideograph).
8. ***Hidari mayoko giri (hidari ichimonji)***. Left horizontal cut (left "one" ideograph).

There are various methods of *noto*, resheathing the drawn sword, which are extant; I have incorporated eight of them into my system. The *Toyama Ryu* technique of guiding only one third or one half of the blade into the scabbard is standardized throughout. This differs from the old-school technique in which the full length of the blade is dragged across the back of the left hand until its tip slips down into the scabbard mouth.

The eight *noto* which I incorporate are:

1. From *chiburi*, the right hand elevated as it draws the back of the blade across the left hand [*Toyama Ryu*].
2. Overhand grip from *chudan gamae*.
3. From the reverse-sword position after left *kesagiri*, blade resting on right knee [*Omori Ryu Iaido*].
4. From the reverse sword position after right *kesagiri*, blade on the left knee.
5. Overhand grip, after left *kesagiri*.
6. Overhand grip, after right *kesagiri*.
7. From blade forward. Left hand grasps the *koiguchi* while the blade tip is concentrated on your opponent; then *noto*.
8. From *yoko ichimon-ji*, so named because the sword looks like the horizontal Chinese character "one" [*Omori Ryu*].

Here, I must say a few words about *chiburi*, throwing the blood from the blade. As performed in the old-school styles, the swordsman describes a huge "O" in the air, the blade traveling in a counter-clockwise direction. Beginning at the six o'clock position, the arm circles slowly to the twelve o'clock position, then it is brought forcefully down to the six o'clock position where it is abruptly halted.

The centripetal force created by this movement is supposed to be enough to shake debris from the blade; however, this *chiburi* is ineffective. It is impossible to discharge flesh and blood so easily from the sword. The only sure method is to use a cloth or absorbing paper to wipe off the residue.

The *chiburi* used in *Toyama Ryu Iaido* and *Nakamura Ryu Battodo* is actually an "en garde" position; the sword is snapped down, point slightly elevated at knee level. From this position one can maintain *zanshin*, as well as convert easily to a thrust should the need arise.