



IAIDO BEGINNERS MANUAL



[Welcome to Dublin Kobukai Iaido](#)

It's wonderful that you've decided to take up Iaido, the Way of the Japanese Sword. It is our hope that you will find it to be a deeply rewarding and enjoyable part of your life. That is also our sincere hope that the things you learn in the dojo will benefit you in every aspect of your life.

Aside from learning the physical techniques of how to use the Japanese Sword, which is really interesting in its own right and great physical exercise, there is also the cultural aspects of studying the sword, allowing you to explore the history and philosophy in a unique way and providing you with a unique toolset to deal with the stresses and delights of our daily life.

The dojo is often like a second family, with deep lifelong friendships forged through hard training, the connection of combat, and the shared passion and love of our arts.

Finally, we hope you make great new lifelong friends both in our dojo and in the wider global community. As part of the European Kendo Federation and as part of the international Iaido community we frequently attend foreign competitions and seminars where each of us have made remarkable friends with our fellow Iaidoka in Japan, the UK, US, Finland, Germany, Spain, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, France, and many more countries besides. We invite you to be part of that greater family.

In this manual, you'll find information and useful articles about how the students and teachers conduct themselves, how classes, grading, and seminars are taught, and a glossary of the common terms used in training and resources on where to learn more.

Before we get into the content of this manual, however, a word of advice, buy a notebook and pens and bring them with you to each class. Iaido is detailed and deep art with many new terms, concepts, and ideas being thrown at you. It is always a good idea to keep a journal of your classes, writing down new terms or names, points about a given technique or kata, a point of etiquette, etc. To this day, over a decade in, I still fill several notebooks a year. There's a lot to learn and it helps to keep track of it all. I recommend setting aside 10-30 minutes of an evening after each class to write down anything new you would have learned or any points of particular focus or correction for home practice.

See what I did just there....slipped in another important teaching point - you are expected to practice what you have been taught between classes. ;-)

Yours in Budo,

Dublin Kendo Kobukai Iaido

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[Introduction to ZNKR Gata Iaido](#)

From Kim Taylor's "Kim's Big Book of Iaido"

ed. Batman O'Brien

Iaido is the art of simultaneously drawing and cutting with the Katana. The Katana is the blade most commonly identified as the Japanese sword. It is worn thrust through the belt on the left side so that the edge is upward. Since this method of wearing the blade was not popular until shortly before the start of the **Tokugawa period** (1603-1868), Iaido can be said to be about 400 years old.

Before 1600 the main sword was the Tachi which was usually worn slung edge down from cords attached to the belt, much in the same manner as western cavalry blades.

These blades were light, long, and meant to be used one-handed from a horse. Although the art of quickly drawing the Tachi must have been practiced in some of the many sword schools that existed before the Tokugawa era, it is rare today and is not commonly associated with Iaido.

The earlier schools of the sword which included techniques of drawing and cutting may have taught methods for use with the Tachi. They would also have dealt with the drawing of the **tanto**, a blade of less than one foot in length; with the **wakizashi** (1 to 2 feet) which became paired with the katana (over 2 feet), and with the uchigatana which was a "third" blade worn during the "warring states" period before the Edo period. This uchigatana was thrust through the belt along with the tanto or the wakizashi and was the immediate forerunner of the katana.



A Brief History of Modern Sword Practice

During the **Meiji period** (1867-1912) the arts of the sword suffered first a contraction and then an expansion of the practice. In the early years of the era, the budo was ignored or discouraged by the government as the country sought to westernize. This culminated in the sword ban of 1876 which symbolized the end of the samurai as a distinct class. The elimination of the privileges of the **buke** (warriors) was one cause of the **Satsuma rebellion** (1877).

While it demonstrated the effectiveness of modern weapons and the new army against the old methods, the rebellion did result in an increase in the study of the sword.



In the new "classless" society the traditional sword arts became available to the general population. This accessibility, together with the military success of Japan in the Chinese war of 1894-5, and the Russian war of 1904-5 brought about a renewed governmental interest in budo as a method of national character building. During this period the sword became associated with rather rabid nationalism, an association it was to carry through the Second World War. In 1911 Kendo was introduced into the school system where it was taught until 1945. In 1939 Kendo became a required course for boys.

From 1895 until 1945 the ***Dai Nippon Butokukai*** (Greater Japan Martial Virtues Association) had overall responsibility for the arts of Kendo and Iaido. In 1945 this organization was disbanded by the occupation forces and was replaced in 1947 by the ***Zen Nihon Kendo Renmei*** (All Japan Kendo Federation). Iaido was attached to this new organization. In 1948 a parallel organization for Iaido was formed, the Zen Nihon Iaido Renmei. The ZNIR, which does not include Kendo, has its own standards and forms, separate from the ZNKR.

In 1953 Kendo was reinstated in the educational system as a sport form.

Father of Modern Swordsmanship

Throughout the transition period from the Meiji to the post-World War II era, one man held a special place. ***Nakayama Hakudo*** (Hiromichi 1869-1958) studied and taught throughout a career that spanned from the time of the samurai to the atomic age.

Nakayama was born in ***Ishikawa Prefecture***. As a young man, he was invited to ***Tosa*** by ***Itagaki Taisuke*** (1837-1919), one of the major figures in the ***Meiji Restoration***, and the founder of the

Jiyuto, Japan's first modern political party. Nakayama studied the *Omori Ryu*, the *Muraku Ryu*, and the *Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu* under *Hosokawa* (Gisho) *Yoshimasa*, the 15th headmaster of the *Shimomura-ha Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu*. He also studied under *Morimoto Hokushin* of the *Tanimura-ha Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu*.

Nakayama Hakudo eventually became the 16th headmaster of the Shimomura-ha.(Pictured Right).

Other instructors to Nakayama included *Negishi Shingoro* of the *Yamaguchi Itto Ryu* and *Terai Ichitaro* of the *Shindo Munen Ryu*. It was Nakayama Hakudo, along with *Oe Masamichi* (Shikei 1852-1927) and a few other instructors who formulated the three levels of study for Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu lai. In the early 1930s, Nakayama developed his own sword style which, in 1955 was named the *Muso Shinden Ryu*. This is one of the major laido styles of the present day.

Before WWII, Nakayama was an instructor to the Imperial guard. While testing swords for the palace guard it is said that he cut through the hips of a test pig, using his own blade. The blade was made by *Minamoto no Yoshichika*.



Nakayama was also an instructor to the *Keishicho*, the police academy.

Through the practice and teachings of Nakayama Hakudo and a few other dedicated swordsmen such as *Oe Masamichi*, the art of the sword survived from the Tokugawa period to the present. Modern students owe a great debt to these men.

History of the ZNKR Gata

Even before the Second World War, there was a feeling that the entire syllabus of a school such as the Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu was too much material for a student who simply wished to obtain a better feel for the sword. This was especially true for a nonprofessional swordsman or one whose main interest was Kendo. Some representative forms were selected from the lai schools and used for instructing Kendo students. One of the earlier examples was the lai set of the Keishicho Ryu which included one form from each of five different schools.

In 1947 the All Japan Kendo Federation became the worldwide representative for the art of Kendo. It is also the largest organization of laido. As the new sport style Kendo was developed, the governing body of the ZNKR saw a need for the study of laido, and the opportunity it afforded to use the katana.

In 1967 the Federation created a set of seven lai waza to be studied by Kendo students.

These techniques were developed by instructors from several different Iaido Ryu. The chairman was **Oya Kazuo**, Kendo Hanshi, Hachidan, and director of the ZNKR. The members, many of whom were students of Nakayama Hakudo and Oe Masamichi were as follows:

- **Masaoka Ichijitsu** (Kazumi), Hanshi, Kyu-dan Muso Jikiden;
- **Yamamoto Harusuke**, Hanshi, Kyu-dan Muso Jikiden;
- **Yamatsuta Jukichi**, Hanshi, Kyu-dan Muso Shinden Ryu;
- **Kamimoto Eiichi**, Hanshi, Kyudan Muso Shinden;
- **Danzaki Tomoaki**, Hanshi, Kyu-dan Muso Shinden;
- **Sawayama Shuzo**, Kyoshi, Hachi-dan Hoki Ryu;
- **Muto Shuzo**, Hanshi, Kyu-dan;
- **Yoshizawa Ikki**, Hanshi, Kyu-dan;
- **Suetsugu Tomezo**, Hanshi, Hachi-dan;
- **Ohmura Tadaji**, Hanshi, Hachi-dan;
- **Nukada Hisashi**, Hanshi, Hachi-dan.

The forms consist of three seiza, one Tate Hiza and three Tachi-ai kata. The set was named the SeiTei Gata which means roughly "representative forms". We no longer call it that however and now strictly refer to it as ZNKR Iai (Zen Ken Ren / All Japan Kendo Federation Iaido) It was introduced, with the requirements for examination, in 1968. The set illustrates the five essential methods of using the katana.

1. A horizontal cut on the draw.
2. A decisive cut from above.
3. Kesa giri, a diagonal cut.
4. Strikes and successive return strikes.
5. Thrusting with the tip.

In 1977 in response to criticism that the set did not represent the art completely, a new committee was appointed. The members of this committee were:

- **Danzaki Tomoaki**, Hanshi, Kyu-dan Muso Shinden Ryu;
- **Kamimoto Eiichi**, Hanshi, Kyu-dan Muso Shinden Ryu;
- **Wada Itachiro**, Hanshi, Hachi-dan Muso Shinden Ryu.
- **Hashimoto Masatake**, Hanshi, Kyu-dan Muso Jikiden Ryu;
- **Mitani Yoshito**, Hanshi, Hachi-dan Muso Jikiden Ryu;
- **Sawayama Shuzo**, Hanshi, Hachi-dan Hoki Ryu;
- **Tsumaki Seirin**, Hanshi, Hachi-dan Tamiya Ryu;

In 1980 three more tachi-ai waza were added to Sei Tei to enable it to more completely represent the strikes and movements of Iaido. These are numbers 8 to 10.

Students from Iai Ryu under the ZNKR study these techniques as well as those of their own schools. In addition, all Kendo students are encouraged to learn the ZNKR Gata. The ZNKR also encourages students to study one of the Koryu as well as the Seitei set so that their understanding of Iai becomes deeper.

The ZNKR Gata set is a bit different from the earlier sets of laido. It is based on a number of different katas taken from several sources but it is not simply that. The katas were extensively modified and the set is now a distinct entity on its own. laido, as practiced in the ZNKR kata is heavily influenced by Kendo and the Kendo no Kata and it is treated as a separate art from its parent sources.

The technical movements of ZNKR Gata laido include the most basic to some of the most complex in lai. Since this set is usually the first introduction to the art that a beginner will experience, some confusion may arise as to just what laido is. It can seem that there is no consistency at all from one kata to the next, movements seem to be made for no reason except to confuse the student. Sometimes the left-hand goes to the belt, sometimes the koiguchi. Sometimes the zanshin is *jodan*, sometimes *hasso gamae*.

It must always be remembered that Sei Tei is a "representative set" in the sense that it represents the range of laido rather than the "essence". It was originally intended (by Oe Masamichi and Nakayama Hakudo) that a student should learn Omori Ryu first. This set begins mainly from seiza and has a fairly consistent way of moving. Using this set an instructor can teach the basics of lai quickly since what was learned in the previous kata is applicable to the next. This is not really the case in ZNKR Gata. The techniques come from several schools and several levels of practice and of necessity the katas are dissimilar.



Because ZNKR is now used as the introductory set, its practice has been adjusted and it is performed as a basic set. This means, for instance, that the noto is the most basic form, and that the movements are all done with precision, and with no haste at all.

Those katas that derive from Oku lai are not performed in an "Oku" fashion but in the basic fashion of Omori ryu. In some ways, notably with Metsuke, ZNKR is now even more basic than Omori; or perhaps Omori, now freed of its introductory role, is becoming a slightly more advanced practice.

ZNKR gata is a young school of laido, as such, it is still developing in the finer details of its execution. The basic form is now quite stable but the intent and emotional shadings of the katas are still being discussed at the higher levels of the ZNKR. This is a healthy aspect of an art that is alive and still growing but it means that students must always make an effort to understand and practice the subtle interpretations that are introduced each year.

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** Kim Taylor Sensei's manual, Kim's Big Book of Iai, and other titles are available for order at:

http://sdksupplies.netfirms.com/cat_manual.htm

[Soul of the Samurai: Living the Way of the Warrior](#)

By Batman O'Brien

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Bushido - the way of the warrior. This is often referred to as the code of the Samurai, a collection of moral standards and codes of conduct that the Samurai, the professional warriors and eventual leaders of feudal Japan, lived by. Today many try to follow the "way" - it's frequently addressed in self help books, a constant of less than reputable martial arts schools and business success manuals. But here's the thing - that's all bull.

Bushido, as a universal samurai code of morality and conduct **never existed**. And yet, bushi (Warrior) - do (Way), has had the deepest impact on my life. In fact, I would go as far as to say it dictates everything in my life and is the fundamental set of principles upon which I live my personal life and run my businesses. That sounds either completely delusional or utterly self indulgent, "I live the path of the warrior" crap. But that's because of the association between Bushido and the ACTUAL principles one can live by. The truth, as always, is neither elitist, nor mysterious, it is nothing more than an eminently practical set of principles that can be applied to every aspect of our lives and once applied leads to a fairly stress free and successful life.

In this article I'd like to beg your indulgence for a moment and explain what seems to be the glaring contradiction in what I've said above - Bushido is not the way of the warrior - but **there is a way** of the warrior and you can follow it. In return I'll explain why Bushido is a fraudulent concept, take you through its history and development before explaining how to access the true martial philosophies and show you real world example of it's successful application... finally I'll give you resources for learning more about this and the martial art I'll be discussing so that you too can learn and apply these principles.

History of the Warrior Way

"Bushido", for all the claims and endorsements of pseudo-samurai wannabe's is a fairly modern development. The term, "bushido" doesn't appear very often in any of the classical texts of Japanese



literature, nor does it occur with any frequency in the military records. It doesn't really show up until some 17th century texts, and even then it's still quite obscure.

Bushido, or at least our modern use of the word to describe the samurai virtue, begins with the publication of ***Bushido: the Soul of Japan*** by **Nitobe Inazo** in 1905. In fact Nitobe believed he invented the word "bushido" so rare was its use before then. His text, considered for many years to be the definitive sourcebook on the philosophy of the samurai, extolled the chief virtues of;

- rectitude/righteousness (義 gi)
- courage (勇 yū),
- benevolence (仁 jin),
- politeness/respect (礼 rei) ,
- sincerity/integrity (誠 makoto) ,
- honour (名誉 meiyō),
- loyalty/duty (忠義 chūgi) and
- self-control (自制 jisei).

He also included sub virtues such as Filial piety (孝 kō), Wisdom (智 chi), and Care for the aged (悌 tei).

While these are noble attributes and worthwhile qualities they have little to do with the authentic philosophy of the feudal Japanese warriors and lords.

This book, written originally in English, was written by a scholar of European history and culture. Nitobe was not a scholar of Japanese culture and he had very little understanding of Japanese history. As such his work focused on creating a close parallel between what he *believed* of the samurai and the subject of his actual area of study - European culture. As such the list of qualities he felt made up Bushido were in fact made up, taken primarily from the concepts of European chivalry and the warrior ethos of Ancient Greece as found in texts like Homer's Iliad.

Nitobe did not invent the term bushido as he thought, but **he did invent a huge amount of the virtuous concepts that he claimed the samurai subscribed to.**

Hidden Leaves

Of course the next book often cited as giving insight into "Bushido" is the "**Hagakure**" (literally meaning, "hidden among the leaves") by **Yamamoto Tsunetomo**. This book is the basis for such movies as "**Ghost Dog: Way of the Samurai**" and perhaps responsible for the most often quoted and out of context commentary on the samurai, "The way of the samurai is found in death...", the book's opening line. Presented as the rules of conduct for a powerful samurai house, the **Nabeshima** clan this became the definitive account of samurai valour and conduct.

Along with, "*The way of the samurai is found in death...*", it also contains often quoted pearls of samurai wisdom as,

"It is good to carry some powdered rouge in one's sleeve. It may happen that when one is sobering up or waking from sleep, his complexion may

be poor. At such a time it is good to take out and apply some powdered rouge."

"A real man does not think of victory or defeat. He plunges recklessly towards an irrational death."

One could easily read such comments and develop a picture of a death loving, suicidal, mad man with overly blushed red cheeks.

Other comments extol the principles of dying selflessly, gladly for one's lord, and to focus on a single-minded purpose.

It's easy to see how young and impressionable readers or those with little knowledge of historical Japan and the actual military records could develop a romanticized view of the samurai...and after all, that's what this book is - nothing more than the romantic dreaming of a bitter man longing for an age that never existed.

The author even reveals this in a telling passage:

"It is said that what is called "the spirit of an age" is something to which one cannot return. That this spirit gradually dissipates is due to the world's coming to an end. For this reason, although one would like to change today's world back to the spirit of one hundred years or more ago, it cannot be done. Thus it is important to make the best out of every generation."

Yamamoto Tsunetomo was a man who regretted being born too late. He was a middle-ranked retainer in the 1700s. Peace had reigned in Japan for nearly a hundred years at this stage. There were no great battles of the samurai in his lifetime. No combat, no need for the warrior class which ruled



and of which he was an unimportant cog. He was in essence nothing more than a frustrated bureaucrat fantasizing that he was an action hero, a warrior. In his delusion, he turned himself into an authority on the subject - and that subject was what he "thought" the samurai would have been like. He was feudal Japan's Walter Mitty.

Finding that after his master **Motoshige** died in 1700 and that he couldn't kill himself in the ritual manner known as **junshi** (it was banned by his domain law and the shogunate) he went off sulking in the mountains and lamenting about the "good old days" that existed only in his imagination. After some years, disaffected and bored impressionable youths went to visit him to hear his ramblings and rants. After this death, one of these adherents named **Tashiro Tsuramoto** compiled his comments into the Hagakure.

And no one heard of it.

It was never circulated outside of the Nabashima clan territory, nor was it particularly popular there except to a certain romantic set. Its current popularity

and fame is mostly due to the Imperial Military who hijacked the comments about embracing death and used it to motivate their troops and inspire *kamikaze* pilots. It was a misunderstood man's ramblings used for military propaganda and now serves as quasi-philosophy for American movies that want Eastern thought.

For instance, the concept enshrining the samurai's desire and willingness to die forms one of the central tenets in both the Bushido and the Hagakure and yet there is a great divide between this espoused philosophy and the reality of feudal samurai behavior.

Of course, you can find accounts of warriors who choose to run into certain death rather than face capture and defeat. But these are noted examples - noted because it was very rare. And such examples of heroism are found in nearly every military history regardless of nationality. They are remarked on because it is remarkably rare as it was in feudal Japan.

The Turn of History

Further when you actually read the military account of Japanese warfare (and they were meticulous in keeping such records) a different picture of the samurai entirely one of deceit, misdirection, bribery, and treachery dominating the battlefield and deciding the outcome of military campaigns. There was little nobility in the practical matters of real combat. You won by any and all means necessary.

Frequently attacks were made to catch the opponent unguarded or unable to respond. Army's launched attacks as their opponents slept at night, men won single combat duels via cheating as much as possible (**Miyamoto Musashi**, arguably the greatest swordsman of Japan, won many of his famous fights by showing up early or late and launching surprise attacks against people he had arranged specific times with).

The other great attribute assigned to the samurai was their loyalty to their masters. Many romantic stories, such as the tale of the **47 Ronin** extol such virtues - to follow one's master in death. Yet, this unconditional and utterly selfless loyalty while certainly present was not part of Bushido...

Such beliefs were imported from Confucian philosophy and adopted in Japan before Japan itself was a nation. Such behavior was written into Shogunal edicts and domain law as a way of enforcing control - not because it was an ideal actively lived up to. The truth is samurai were paid retainers. They were hired for a wage and if they weren't paid or could get a better job employed elsewhere they were often happy to change allegiances.

Many a key battle in Japanese history was won by a unit or entire army changing sides mid-way through the fight. The last great war of feudal Japan, the battle of **Seikigahara**, was won in just such a fashion. The underdog combatant **Tokugawa Ieyasu** was solidly outnumbered by his opponent **Ishida Mitsunari**. Mitsunari had collected the support of several **daimyo** (feudal lords) and looked to



be the easy victor. He set his army up to surround Ieyasu on 3 sides - a great plan, except Ieyasu had already convinced one of the flanking generals to switch sides. As the battle progressed Mitsunari's plan failed due to the stalling general in Ieyasu's pocket. This in turn led to a spontaneous series of further betrayals and whole armies changing sides in the course of the battle and Mitsunari's forces fell apart.

Neither the Hagakure or the Bushido: the Soul of Japan were factual accounts of the philosophies and outlook of the samurai. They were simply the uneducated fantasies of men later adopted to serve a propagandist agenda. Today, sadly they are not appreciated for what they are, insights into a desire for such a code, but instead quick guides for a McDojo, McBusiness, or McMovie looking to add samurai glamour to their marketing and portfolio (I point you to the horrible travesty that was the 47 Ronin with Keanu Reeves)... and that leaves us asking if these aren't evidence of Bushido then what the heck is?



The True Bushido

Bushi-do - the warrior way, the true philosophy of the samurai is revealed through the diligent practice and study of the *koryu* - the oldest of the Japanese Martial arts - those developed during *actual periods of conflict*. And the one that perhaps BEST illustrates this is laido - the art of Japanese Swordsmanship.

I study a style of Japanese Swordsmanship known as *Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu laido*.

This style of fencing was developed by an enigmatic samurai known as *Hayashizaki Jinsuke Shigenobu* (c. 1546-1621) and is characterized by its rapid drawing and simultaneously cutting with the sword, either defensively or offensively, against one or more opponents.

The techniques begin and end with the sword in the scabbard. This is in comparison to Kenjutsu or Kendo, which are arts of fencing with a sword already drawn. The extraordinarily sharp katana was worn thrust through the belt, with the cutting edge upwards, so the draw and cut could be made in a single, lightning-fast movement. Just as in the Wild West, the gunslinger practiced his “quick draw”, so the Samurai polished his skills in drawing the sword. However, in common with many East Asian martial arts, the emphasis came to be on the mental and spiritual state of the practitioner; a state in which the rationalizing and calculating functions of the mind are suspended so that the mind and body can react immediately, reflecting the changing situation around him.

The core of laido's teachings are found in the **waza** or **kata** of the various schools and are composed of four essential elements. These are:

- Nukitsuke – The initial draw and simultaneous cut.
- Kiritsuke – The decisive finishing cut.
- Chiburi – A symbolic shaking of blood from the blade.
- Noto – Re-sheathing the sword.

Practically all kata have these fundamental parts in some combination or other, but may also include blocks, deflections, thrusts, and multiple cuts, depending on the scenario. laido kata are performed solitarily, against imaginary opponents, called **kassoteki**, or **teki**. (There are also partner kata, in fact, the majority of techniques in MJER are partner-based, though these are mostly practiced by very high-level koryu practitioners.)

The fact that there is no real adversary means the practitioner needs to be aware of where teki is at all times and to focus his techniques accordingly. This demands intense concentration from the laidoka. Each kata, though outwardly simple, has myriad technical details that can make it fiendishly difficult to master. Indeed, a single kata could easily take a lifetime’s study, and still not be perfected.

Physical Philosophy

laido is physical philosophy - it is the moral code and philosophical outlook of the samurai made manifest not in words but in deed. From the outside, the practice of laido - drawing, cutting, cleaning, and re-sheathing the sword appears to be a deceptively simple series of movements (try it - it's remarkably complex making something look so simple). It is often seen as elegant, often deeply



impressive but for many, that's all they see - refined movements and nothing more, no practical value.

And therein lies the first lesson of true ***Bushi no michi*** (the way of the warrior) - **deception**.

laido is perhaps the most complex of all martial arts - after all, it birthed the many gendai budo (modern martial arts) such as Aikido, Judo, Jujutsu, karate, and more. All of these stemmed from the



sword arts. (The hand posture of **Aikido** is that of holding a sword, **Gichin Funakoshi** the founder of **Shotokan Karate** wrote that your punches must be as cuts, etc..). The reason for this is that arts such as laido teach more than a simple series of incredible and remarkable sword fighting techniques - they teach immutable principles, strategies (known in Japanese as **heihō or hyōhō**) that can be applied universally. If you know the sword you know how to defeat any opponent. And that to me is incredibly amusing.

I've spent a small fortune and many years training with the best fighting experts in the world in reality-based combat systems. I myself am a qualified self defense instructor and I've trained under the best in the business - and here's the thing; the principles and hand to hand techniques of the Navy Seals, SWAT, SAS, and more and in laido.

So, yes it's remarkably practical - but that's not the point - the point is that it is remarkably practical because of the philosophies, codes, and principles it teaches through movement. And these principles are inherent in every effective martial art.

These principles are the true Bushido.

Kiryoku

Perhaps the best example of this is one of the key principles of Iai and Bushi no michi - **direct unwavering focus**. This is *Kiryoku* - perhaps it can be best explained as will. Kiryoku is the force of your will, determined and unstoppable. Your opponent cannot resist it. It is the resolve to complete the task before you. This is a key concept in both Iai, reality-based combat, and for life to be honest. It's one of the principles of the Bushi that I apply to nearly every aspect of my life and the results are spectacular.

And it's something I want you to have access to as well. Each of us has that power, that will of unified strength and determination that allows you to achieve any goal you set yourself, to succeed in any venture because you will simply keep going, undeterred until you do. **It is an attitude where you do not quit.**

Below is an image of my Bokken.



A Bokken is a wooden training sword used for sparring practice in the martial arts. While it can easily be dismissed as a wooden toy it's as dangerous as a live blade, perhaps even more so. A slight slip in concentration while fighting an opponent and you could easily end up with a broken limb, or worse a crushed skull. I am showing you this to share with you a deeply personal message I had engraved on the handle.

You can see the kanji, Japanese script, on the handle. It reads,

"Nana Korobi Ya Oki"

Translated that means,

"Fall 7 Times, Rise 8 Times"

It is a call to me, a reminder to constantly strive and persevere in the pursuit of my goals until they are accomplished. Once I set a task, I pursue it until complete. No matter how many setbacks, no matter how many obstacles knock me down, I get back up and I finish what I started.

It can be a fitness goal, a work goal, a dietary goal, and a relationship goal, but I don't stop until I achieve it and when you can harness the mind, body, and emotions in the pursuit of that goal it doesn't matter what comes in the way, you too will achieve it.

This is the type of mindset, the type of focus and determination you need to succeed in your quest for muscle mass, strength, or any other goal you may set yourself. Ultimately you are responsible for your success but there are steps you can take that will make that success practically inevitable.

I learned this through the practice of Iai.

In Iai, the forms start slowly, but once the blade is drawn the pressure is maintained on the opponent focusing on direct straight line attacks, until the opponent is dead. The major focus is on **taking center**. Doing so deflects the opponent's attack - this is extremely subtle and requires great control - it also takes great courage. To cut through an opponent's sword as it's rapidly slicing towards your head takes both commitment and guts.

Similarly, one of 3 fundamental principles of effective hand-to-hand combat is this same sense of commitment and unwavering focus on destroying a target. This is the hallmark of one of the most effective combat methods I've trained - Tim Larkin's Target Focus Training. You recognize a target and you put your whole weight and commitment into penetrating and destroying that target. From there a new one presents itself and you repeat until the threat is neutralized.

Real-Life Applications

Likewise in life, and I have found this with myself, my patients and my coaching clients - the key to succeeding in nearly any endeavor is a direct unwavering focus on one specific goal. If you try to do too many things at once your attention is split, your focus is diminished and your productivity is undermined. There is NO greater sabotage of productivity than multitasking. Multi-tasking is not a principle of Bushido. You can certainly do many things, achieve great skill in multiple areas be it in combat or business - but you cannot do it all at the same time. With focused unflinching resolve however you can accomplish a specific goal quickly and then move on to the next one. To those outside, it may seem you were doing many things at once, but that's not what's happening. It's simply a rapid and efficient succession of multiple targets selected uniquely and attacked and achieved individually with full vigor and commitment. It is through doing this that success is found.

Today I own, run and manage multiple businesses. Each in a different field and all successful. It appears to many that I am doing multiple things at once. I run a very busy 6-figure, private medical practice, (in fact I ended up getting so busy and booked through months in advance that I've taken on additional staff for the practice), work with my personal training clients (again fully booked out), my coaching clients and yet that same week I write and upload 4 new articles to each of my sites, send out 3 newsletters, release and launch a new book, (a full-time job in itself), write another book and outline the releases.

In that time I also run and teach at a dojo, finished up my post-grads in herbal pharmacology, currently taking 4 additional courses in a variety of fields from photography to NLP, and spend huge

amounts of time with my wife and family, train myself for an hour or 2 a day and enjoy my many hobbies.

If I tried to do all that at once I'd fall completely flat on my face and have a nervous breakdown. The trick to that is the same technique and principle found within the koryu and the Bushido and effective reality-based combat. I take one thing at a time and approach it with complete focus and commitment. Then I don't have to waste time going back to it. It's done, be it an opponent, article, book or launch. And I can move swiftly on to the next goal.

Musō Jikiden Eishin-ryū, Shindō Musō-ryū Jō, Hyōhō Niten Ichi ryū, and the other arts I have studied, these are the physical philosophies upon which I base my life.

These koryū are philosophy encoded in physical forms. These are the principles and teachings I bring into my life, they are the foundation of how I live my life, and if you're open to it, they may help you find some answers and provide you practical solutions to the problems we face in today's age.

My training in the koryū has helped me understand my own driving forces, my reasons for my actions, and insight into the actions of others. It has taught me better ways of dealing with confrontation, given me a new level of compassion, given me a method of coping with loss and grief, taught me to be far better in my businesses, and how to enrich my personal relationships.



The Deeper Truths

Simple-looking things have deep meaning in the koryū.

Stepping onto the dojo floor has taught me how to double my productivity.

The breathing methods have taught me how to calm and relax my body and mind and find balance in nearly every situation (though as I was gently reminded recently by one of my teachers I have to actively remember to do that to achieve my balance).

Training in koryū has taught me how to grieve, how to deal with anger, fear, and stress. It shapes my thinking, brings balance to my emotions, and structures my life.

Perhaps some of that may resonate with you. Perhaps not.

In time and with experience of the koryū I have no doubt you will discover things about yourself that will interest you deeply and that to me is the greatest reason to study koryū.

I asked one of my teachers over a campfire in the hills of the Czech Republic once why he still trains and he told me it was because of something Musashi had once written. That it takes so many years for things to develop and mature. Over the years he has been training his training has changed him and he is fascinated by how his training will change him in the next 10 years and what lies in store after that. **It is a journey of continual self-discovery and that's deeply interesting to me.**

These are just some examples of the principles of the true Bushido, the Bushi no Michi and how it can have a major impact not just on your martial arts practice but on your life. Within the koryu bujutsu there are many such principles found in dojo and that is its purpose - **to prepare and train you for life.** I can think of no greater practical application than that.

Summary of the Seitei Iai Kata

1. **Mae (前)**. Front. Commencing from a kneeling position, forestalling a frontal attack.
2. **Ushiro (後ろ)**. Rear. Commencing from a kneeling position, forestalling an attack from the rear.
3. **Ukenagashi (受け流し)** Receive, Parry and Cut. Commencing from a kneeling position, parrying an attack from the left.
4. **Tsuka-ate (柄当て)**. Striking with the Hilt. Commencing from a raised knee, seated position, forestalling two attackers, front and rear.
5. **Kesagiri (袈裟切り)**. Diagonal Cut. Commencing from a standing position, forestalling an approaching attacker.
6. **Morote-zuki (諸手突き)**. Two-Hand Thrust. Commencing from a standing position, forestalling three approaching attackers, two in front and one behind.
7. **Sanpōgiri (三方切り)**. Three Direction Cut. Commencing from a standing position, forestalling three approaching attackers, one each to the right, left and front.
8. **Ganmen-ate (顔面当て)**. Hit to the Face. Commencing from a standing position, forestalling two approaching attackers, front and rear.
9. **Soete-zuki (添え手突き)**. Joined Hand Thrust. Commencing from a standing position, forestalling an attack from the left.
10. **Shihōgiri (四方切り)**. Four Direction Cutting. Commencing from a standing position, forestalling four approaching attackers.
11. **Sōgiri (総切り)**. Complete Cuts. Five different and complete cuts. Commencing from a standing position.
12. **Nukiuchi (抜き打ち)**. Sudden Draw. Avoid, then respond to an attack from the front. Commencing from a standing position.

Guidelines for Safe Training

The guidelines outlined below have been written to aid in developing safe training practices for all dojo members. All dojo members have a duty of care to themselves and all other practitioners as well as any visitors to the dojo.

The dojo is much more than just a hall that we train in. The dojo is the place where we forge our spirit and our character, through rigorous physical conditioning, self-discipline, and introspection. A dojo has a unique culture all its own and it can take time to learn the proper procedures and rules. It's always good to ask questions, but please do so in a respectful manner that does not hamper the training of others. If you are unsure of any dojo etiquette or have safety-related issues immediately seek guidance from the instructor.

Behavior

- On entering or leaving the dojo, students must face the *shinza* and respectfully bow.
- Absolutely no disrespect will be shown to any instructors or fellow students.
- Students should follow the guidance and instructions of their senpai (seniors)
- Respect your fellow students' experience in other arts. As well, do not expound upon your experience to others during class, regardless of how it may relate to the techniques being taught.
- A student cannot leave class early without the permission of the instructor.
- You are responsible for your behavior as well as ensuring the correct behavior of anyone junior to you in the dojo.
- You should arrive with plenty of time before training. This allows you to properly prepare your gear, warm up and participate in the class without disruption.
- Students who arrive late should enter the dojo and wait to be invited to join the class by the instructor.
- A proper warm-up is strongly recommended before training. This will usually be included in the class but you should include your own warm-up whilst waiting especially if you have any specific needs not shared by the rest of the group.
- If you have an injury or are feeling unwell it may be wisest not to train. If you still wish to train, inform the instructor who can make allowances for your needs. The instructor may refuse you permission to train if the injury is too serious.
- Listen to the instructor intently to both maximize your learning and ensure your safety. Your safety is a primary part of all instruction given in the dojo. If you are unsure of any instructions please ask politely for clarification.
- Remain attentive and do not allow yourself to become distracted. Always check your surroundings and ensure that you are cutting to a clear unobstructed area and are aware of your training partners around you.
- *Metsuke* (gaze) should always precede a cut, do not cut without first looking where you will cut.
- Never practice techniques or cuts behind or near a group receiving instruction. Their attention is focused on the instructor and they may not notice you.

- Your dojo time is your training time, do not stand around idle in class. Practice the last thing you were shown.
- If you need to move around the dojo, always walk behind people at a safe distance with your left hand holding the tsuba (sword guard).
- Treat all training weapons as if they were *shinken* (live blades) and treat them with the same respect.
- Smoking, chewing gum, or eating sweets/food is not permitted in the dojo. Water is permitted, but not on the training floor.
- Do not come to class when intoxicated. Do not consume any alcohol before class.
- Do not misuse any equipment in the dojo.
- Do not use profanity or abusive language in the dojo.
- Use a quiet voice in the dojo (except when leading the count or directed otherwise).
- Do not talk to someone who is not in class or who is just watching.
- For more information on Dojo etiquette and culture see, "*In the Dojo*", by Dave Lowry, Weatherhill, 2006.

Dress

- Being prepared and properly attired is a key element in ensuring the safe practice of iaido. Of course, beginners are not expected to have the full attire but should wear comfortable loose-fitting clothing appropriate to training i.e. no studs, tassels, belts, etc
- Do not wear rings, earrings, necklaces, bracelets, anklets, nose/ear studs, watches, neck chains, or any metallic articles during class. Wedding bands are okay.
- Your iaido *keikogi* (training jacket) should be a good fit with sleeves that finish approximately 10cm above the wrist. Longer sleeves pose a safety risk as they can catch on the *tsuka* (sword handle) during training.
- Your hakama should be properly tied and secured with the four *himo* (straps). The *koshi-ita* (backplate) should be connected to the *obi* (belt) with the *hakama-dome* (shoe horn-shaped tab). The front of the hakama should lightly touch the top of the feet while standing and slope slightly upward towards the rear. If the hakama is the incorrect length or improperly tied it may present a tripping hazard during training.
- The use of *tabi* (footwear) is not normal in our style of iaido. However, they should be worn at training for health reasons, such as preventing the spread of infectious diseases including athletes' feet.
- No outdoor footwear should ever be worn on the training floor. This is highly disrespectful and may introduce sharp objects such as dirt, stones, or glass onto the training floor.
- Before entering the dojo floor zori (traditional sandals) should be worn to keep feet clean while walking from the changing rooms to the dojo floor. If wearing zori they must be removed before entering the floor and placed neatly in the designated area. If there are a large number of attendees these may present a tripping hazard if incorrectly placed.

Training equipment

Pre-practice safety checks should be carried out on all training weapons, both bokken/bokuto and iaito.

Safety checks for an iaito:

- Check the **mekugi** (bamboo pegs) are fitted tightly.
- Ensure all fixtures (in particular the **seppa** and **tsuba**) are tightly held together and there is no rattle to the sword.
- Ensure that there is a good fit between the **koiguchi** (mouth of the scabbard) and **habaki** (metal collar). Otherwise, the sword could fall from the scabbard as you lean forward.
- Check for any splits in the **saya** (scabbard).
- Check that the binding on the **tsuka** (handle) is tight
- Iaito should be cleaned and oiled before use and bokuto should be checked for splinters.
- Swords should be transported to and from training by wrapping them in a protective bag and then placing them in a dedicated sword carrying case. Ideally, this should be locked.

Dojo Environment

The dojo is a shared space and we all have the responsibility of ensuring a safe and welcoming environment.

- Swords should always be placed flat on the floor with the ha (cutting edge) facing towards the wall.
- Avoid placing your sword somewhere it is hard to see, such as under benches.
- Do not step over other people's swords; this is highly disrespectful and dangerous.
- All unnecessary items, water bottles, etc, should be removed from the training floor prior to training commencing.
- The floor should be cleaned and inspected for any dangerous objects or defects before the start of every training session.

FAQ

A Q & A for the Beginner

The laido FAQ is a list of general questions that may help you decide on whether laido is the right discipline for you. The truth is lai and Japanese Swordsmanship is NOT for everyone. It is a very hard and intense discipline and will require a lifetime commitment for progress.

These are the questions I'll cover:

1. What is laido?
2. Can I practice laido?
3. Where does laido come from?
4. How do you pronounce laido and what meaning has it?
5. What benefits can I expect from the study of laido?
6. How fit do I have to be to start laido training?
7. Am I too old to study laido?
8. Do you need equipment to start?
9. What do you wear?
10. How to Tie Your Obi Part 1
11. How to Tie Your Obi Part 2
12. How to Wear Your Hakama
13. How to Fold Your Hakama
14. Do you use real swords?
15. I bought a Japanese sword on EBay - can I use it for laido practice?
16. Is laido expensive?
17. Is there sparring in laido?
18. Is laido dangerous?
19. Are there any competitions?
20. What About Gradings?
21. Is there a Recommended Reading List?

Iaido FAQ 1. What is Iaido?

At its most basic level, laido is the traditional Japanese martial art of drawing, cutting, and re-sheathing a katana (a particular type of Japanese sword). However, many practitioners would say that there is a deeper purpose to laido, one that strives to develop awareness, centeredness, sincerity, a calm mind, and mental and physical harmony through the practice of traditional sword techniques.

It is perhaps the martial art most closely associated with the samurai class and Japanese nobility. In Dublin Kendo, we offer training in ZNKR (All Japan Kendo Federation) lai. This is a modern set of 12

kata taken from various koryu (old schools) and standardized to provide everyone with an excellent understanding of the basics of Japanese swordsmanship.

This allows students to grade and participate in competition internationally.

Our senior instructors are all **deshi** (students) or **monkasei** (apprentices/disciples) of various lines of Koryu, the old styles of Japanese martial arts used by the samurai dating back hundreds of years. Unlike many other arts, koryu has not developed a sporting element and remains true to its focus on the development of mind, body, spirit and practical techniques.

Training in specific koryu arts such as **Shindo Muso Ryu, Suio-Ryu, Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu, Hyoho Niten Ichi Ryu**, and **Muso Shinden Ryu** etc is only offered to those who show an aptitude and dedication to general training and developed a proficiency in the kata and movements taught in the setei lai and jo classes.

Iaido FAQ 2. Can I practice Iaido?

Certainly. With that said, the decision to study Iaido is not one to be made lightly. Practicing Iaido requires a long-term commitment. As one learns the fundamentals and develops an increasing technical understanding the techniques themselves increase in difficulty and as such they demand a longer period of time to learn. The subtleties of even the simplest movements can take years to fully understand and appreciate. But with that commitment comes a great sense of achievement, personal and technical development, and a unique skillset and place in an unbroken martial tradition.

Iaido FAQ 3. Where does Iaido come from?

Iaido originates from Japan. There are many different styles or “ryu” of Iaido practiced and these developed as a result of different families and provinces, and of course different directions of thought. Each of these in turn has its own lineage and pedigree. For more information about the general progression of Iaido’s history check out this page - (<http://www.way-of-the-samurai.com/iaido.html>).

Iaido FAQ 4. How do you pronounce Iaido and what meaning has it?

It’s hard to write its pronunciation and is one of many questions best asked of an Iaido instructor in person but to write it the best approximation would be ee-eye-do. As regards the meaning of Iaido, there are a number of interpretations and translations available and it does not translate into English at all easily. The word itself is composed of 3 Japanese characters: i-ai-do.

Roughly, “I” comes from Iru, to be; Ai (as in Aikido) means coming together, harmony, or love; and Dō means road, or Way (in the Buddhist sense). Loosely translated then, Iaido means being in harmony with one’s surroundings, always being prepared for any eventuality.

Iaido FAQ 5. What benefits can I expect from the study of Iaido?

Different people find different things in Iaido and that is perhaps one of the reasons for its popularity. The theories and cultural context from which Iaido originated are long gone. No longer do we walk around with 2 swords at a time when deadly personal combat was a daily possibility. Many of the sensibilities from which these techniques were derived are alien to us in the present, however, the underlying principles upon which they were based are still deeply relevant today. In fact, many find these principles are more important today given the nature of our society.

For some Iaido is an art where they get to practice a living breathing history, to be part of a continued tradition, and preserve an important piece of cultural history. Others enjoy more personal benefits, in learning to develop a sense of calm while in the midst of stress. All participants regardless of their personal motivations and benefits they derive from the study of Iaido all share in the increased physical coordination and dexterity improved through training along with substantial improvement in mental awareness, concentration and 'focus' and lifelong friendships and community - all forged through regular practice.

Many martial artists find Iaido captivating and complex enough to serve as their sole art, others find it the perfect complement to their core system, but previous experience of martial arts is not required to benefit.



Iaido FAQ 6. How fit do I have to be to start Iaido training?

Not that fit at all. At least not at the start. Iaido is not as aerobically challenging as many of the other Japanese martial arts such as Kendo, Karate, Judo, or Aikido and so can be practiced by young and old alike. With that said, however, many advanced students find the activity of training grueling both mentally and physically due to the great mental focus, deep stances, and movements. It's not uncommon to be breathing heavily, the sweat dripping off your brow and your legs shaking after a

particularly good training session. Ultimately, as with many things, you get out what you put in, and as always the best way to find out is to drop in and try a class.

The study of laido is certainly worthwhile both from a mental and physical point of view, as it emphasizes not only physical and psychological strength but mobility and fluidity of movement and thought. Many techniques do involve kneeling, and if you have a history of joint or knee problems it would be advisable to talk this over with an instructor and to wear knee pads.

Iaido FAQ 7. Am I too old to study laido?

It would be unlikely. Many practitioners of laido come to the art at later stages of life, and some of the most renowned experts and practitioners only started training in their 40's!

Currently in our Dojo members range in age from 9 to 58 and it's expected that practitioners train with an intensity that suits their own physical condition.

At the early stages of training, a fair amount of time is spent on tanren or development drills to take you from any level of fitness and conditioning to that required for laido. As always this is done at an appropriate pace for the individual student.

You don't have to be fit at all to start, and over time you will develop the unique blend of stamina, endurance, and strength that comes from laido and that will serve you well in your lifetime. Many of the greatest laidoka today are in their late 90's and still train daily.

Iaido FAQ 8. Do you need equipment to start?

No. Beginners train with a wooden training sword called a bokken/bokuto. This will be provided by the dojo for you to use during class. However, if you wish to buy your own they are quite inexpensive, and it is even possible to obtain a bokuto with a saya (scabbard) – this is invaluable as it introduces the student to the use of a saya from the very beginning.

Iaido FAQ 9. What do you wear?

As regards clothing, during laido special clothing is worn. Iaidoka train wearing a **hakama** (traditional Japanese wide pleated trousers) and **kekio-gi** (jacket similar to that worn in karate). An obi (belt) is also worn. The laido obi is about 100mm wide and approximately four meters long and wraps several times around the waist beneath the hakama. This allows the sword to be held securely.



Because many laido techniques are performed from a kneeling position, kneepads are strongly recommended.

Hakama and keiko-gi are robust versions of the formal samurai clothing of the 18th and 19th centuries. They are worn during sword practice, in preference to something like the clothes worn in karate, in part to emphasize the formality of the occasion. laido training is meant to be more than just physical training, and the choice of clothes emphasizes this. Additionally, the clothes add grace and dignity to an already graceful and dignified art. From a practical standpoint, the hakama is cool and comfortable, allows easy movement, and disguises the feet from the opponent.

Colors worn are usually dark, with black being generally preferred, but it is advisable to check with one's instructor before ordering a uniform. No outward sign of rank is worn, though kimono-type gi and striped hakama are usually the preserve of high grades (fourth Dan and above), and generally only worn on formal occasions. Training is normally done barefoot unless there is a medical reason for not doing so, though tabi (Japanese socks with a separate big toe) may be worn outdoors or for formal displays.

In the beginning, any clothing that permits a good range of movement can be used – a tracksuit, or judo or karate suit is ideal. A judo/karate belt will also suffice in the initial stages.

10. How to Tie Your Obi Part 1

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OXcfApEZC7k>

11. How to Tie Your Obi Part 2

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XhHlatc0TsA>

12. How to Wear a Hakama

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rnFQob0e8Lw>

13. How to Fold the Hakama

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uly9-wL2HfE>

Iaido FAQ 14. Do you Use Real Swords?

For the most part, we use a type of blunt training sword called an iaito. And iaito can be made of steel however most commonly they are made of a zinc-aluminum compound. The edge is unsharpened, allowing us to train with a sword that has the appearance and feel of a real sword

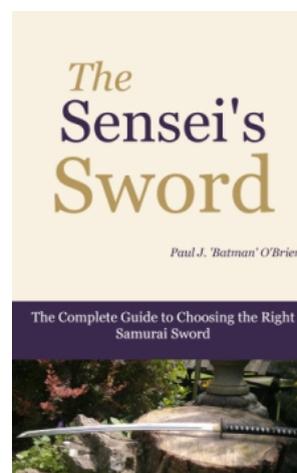
without the risk of injuring ourselves or someone else. Very advanced laidoka would use a live sharpened blade called a Shinken. This is capable of cutting.

Beginners are fine using a wooden sword called a bokuto, meaning wooden katana.

That said, after a few months of training and if you decide laido is for you; your instructor may recommend you purchase an Iaito. Training with an Iaito (sword-copy) often results in your educational level and the intensity of your learning developing a little faster.

Before you get an Iaito it is important that your instructor thinks you are ready for it and also that you get the correct type and size for you. Iaito come in different lengths to suit the person wielding them, as always, talk to your instructor before making a decision.

I explain the differences between these and the correct type of sword used in Iai in **The Sensei's Sword: Choosing the Perfect Blade**. Copies are available to Kendo na hEireann students at a discounted rate with all proceeds going towards the club.



Iaido FAQ 15. Can I use the sword I bought on EBay or a local martial arts store for Iaido practice?

Generally and most probably not. There were many “samurai swords” available before the new legislation came into effect, in “martial arts” shops, eBay, and so forth. Unfortunately, the majority of these are totally unsuitable for Iaido practice. Many of these swords are pressed and sharpened and also extremely brittle and can fracture unexpectedly. Additionally, they lack a full “tang”, the part of the sword that extends into the handle. You should not attempt to use any sword purchased until it has been checked by your instructor.

See **The Sensei's Sword: Choosing the Perfect Blade** for more.

Iaido FAQ 16. Is Iaido expensive?

Iaido is like any other hobby or leisure pursuit and can be as expensive as you want to make it. However, that is entirely at your discretion and it certainly does not have to be expensive to enjoy the art. While training fees vary from dojo to dojo, they aren't generally very costly.

Depending on where you get your gi and hakama, should you choose to dedicate yourself to the art, you could spend as little as €120. You can also get this second-hand on occasion.

Bokuto are often provided by the club although you can purchase your own for as little as €30.

Training swords - called *laido* - can be expensive, but the purchase of an *laido* is not necessary until you are well advanced with your studies. Even so, great quality weapons are now available from Japan at very reasonable prices.

The largest costs associated with the art are travel expenses to attend various international seminars and competitions.

Iaido FAQ 17. Is there sparring in Iaido?

Yes. Absolutely.



There is no “free sparring” as in the conventional sense often seen in other martial arts, however many styles of Iaido engage in paired pre-arranged forms that safely simulate sparring. These drills, designed to teach proper distance and timing are performed using bokken, though some extremely advanced practitioners use Shinken.

Within the Musō Jikiden Eishin-ryū (無双直伝英信流) style I practice and without variations included in either set - we have 42 solo waza vs. 64 paired forms. Clearly, the majority of our work involves working

with a partner to learn distancing, timing, and targeting against a real, living, and reacting opponent.

Again I stress this does not include *henka waza* if it did, that number would be well into the 100's. The first technique of the "*tachi uchi no kurai*" has over 17 variations on its own. And again - that's NOT including the "lost" forms, the grappling arts, hand-to-hand work, etc. :-)

Many of the basic ZNKR forms are also practiced with a partner to learn distance and timing and we also teach the Kendo no Kata - a set of 10 forms (7 longsword vs long sword, 3 short sword vs longsword) that are based on older koryu teachings.

Iaido FAQ 18. Is Iaido dangerous?

No. Iaido is a very safe martial art. However, as with any physical activity injury is a possibility.

Iaido FAQ 19. Are there any competitions?



Yes, they are called Taikai. Participants may compete in aesthetic displays of Iaido kata. I am proud to say Ireland has done well at an international level bringing back medals and trophies in international Taikai and even at the highest of international levels, the European Championships, with a Fighting Spirit Award.

Iaido FAQ 20. What About Gradings?

Smaller club-level gradings are held throughout the year, and a national seminar and grading event is held annually. Fully etiquette, grading requirements, and other details are provided to the students in advance of a grading. Grades awarded in Ireland are awarded by the national body, ***Kendo na hEireann***, and registered with the ***EKF (European Kendo Federation)***, which is a member of the ***Zen Nihon Kendo Renmei (All Japan Kendo Federation)***.

Iaido FAQ 21. Is there a Recommended Reading List?

Yep. :-) Studying outside of the dojo is an important part of training. In the early days there were few texts in English that really helped the students of Iaido. Today however there are more and more high-quality detailed manuals where you can read about the history and development of Japanese Swordsmanship and about the techniques of Iaido.

We recommend the following:

Kim's Big Book of Iaido Vol 1 (https://sdksupplies.netfirms.com/cat_manual.htm) - Pronunciation guide, History of Japanese Sword, Sword schools and Kendo, Iai ranking requirements,

List of waza names, Care and use of equipment, Etiquette, Sword basics, stances, suburi, Glossary of terms.

This book is not restricted to laido practice but forms a good general introduction to Japanese sword training.

Kim's Big Book of laido Vol 2 (https://sdksupplies.netfirms.com/cat_manual.htm) - Seitei Gata (Zen Ken Ren lai). The All Japan Kendo Federation (ZNKR) laido forms (Seitei Gata lai): History of Seitei Gata lai, Forms 1-10, Quick Key, General Instructions and Advanced Notes. Lavishly illustrated. One of the easiest books to learn from.

Flashing Steel: Mastering Eishin-ryu Swordsmanship (2nd Ed) - Flashing Steel, is a best-selling and highly acclaimed book on iaijutsu (alternatively called iaido). The technical instruction is focused on Muso Jikiden Eishin koryu of a different line to the one practiced in Ireland and there is an old version of Seitei lai taught within. The real beauty of this book are the essays on the philosophical concepts of laido.

The laido Handbook (Peter West) - (Available directly from Batman). Formerly the BKA laido Handbook, this latest volume by Peter West Sensei Nanadan Kyoshi, founder of Myoken Dojo, is an invaluable source of information for laidoka of all levels.

Simply bound, this volume is all about content, with over 130 pages packed with detailed information and descriptive images. Information ranges from simple but essential Dojo etiquette, descriptions of laido equipment and care for laido swords, through to the most up to date details on Seitei and Koryu laido Kata, as well as essential rules and regulations for grading and competition.

A very popular volume for beginners and a perfect starting point for those looking for a comprehensive view of and companion for laido practice.

ZNKR laido Training Handbook (2014 edition): This publication produced by the ZNKR (All Japan Kendo Federation) is the official English language guide to lai. Includes written descriptions of the Seitei Kata in addition to a detailed glossary and guidelines for gradings.

The Japanese edition is now publicly available to download from the ZNKR website here - https://www.kendo.or.jp/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/iai_manual.pdf

The ZNKR laido Training Video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7lqzd70sCJo>

This video from 2008 introduced the basic Seitei kata. It's a useful memory aid for the lessons learned in class.

Warm Up and Conditioning (Tanren)

The following warm-up sequence is the one I used by SWAT, SAS, Navy Seals, and more. It is the same warm-up sequence I teach when instructing or training with members of elite military units. It's also the same exact warm-up I teach in my martial arts classes

The reason is simple. It is the most direct and efficient method for lubricating and preparing the muscles and joints of the body. In addition, it re-enforces 2 excellent key principles; the directions of attack and defense. There are limits to how many directions a human can attack and defend from.

1. Forward and Back
2. Up and Down (vertical)
3. Side to Side (horizontal) (Left to Right and Right to Left)
4. Diagonally (X) (right to left, left to right, and those directions reversed)
5. Circular (which is just a continuation of either a horizontal or diagonal movement)

That's it. They are the only directions you can attack and defend from. They are also the only ways a joint can move.

Given the military background of this warm-up sequence, you can appreciate the importance of reinforcing such critical information. Of course, the methods of attack and defense devised by man correspond to the limitations of the human body; our joints can only move in certain directions. Once this is understood a comprehensive and effective warm-up can be systematically applied from the Neck down.

So that's what you do. In essence, start with your head and slowly and gently move it through the above checklist of directions. When you've done that, 3-5 repetitions per plane of movement, move lower to your shoulders, elbows, wrists, fingers, spine, hips, knees, ankles, and toes. Literally, this warm-up will prepare every muscle and joint from head to toe, taking each through a full range of motion and increasing synovial fluid in the joints

You will see this is a Dynamic warm-up. This means there are no static holds or traditional stretches. This is because static stretching is shown to be ineffective for improving Range of Motion. All it does is weaken supporting tendons and ligaments and ultimately undermines your structural integrity. Static stretching also reduces physical performance and lastly INCREASES the risk of injury.

Now the body is warm and supple we can introduce some specific stretches using the tanren-bō (forging stick) or suburi-to (conditioning stick). As always, use caution and good judgment. These are a selection of the stretches and drills taught in our classes:

Tanren-bō Stretches

1. Special Forces Joint Work
2. Overhead Stretch
3. Spinal Rotation stretch.
4. Side Stretch
5. Chest to Toes Hamstring Stretch

6. Deltoid Stretch
7. Assisted Quads Stretch
8. Achilles Tendon Stretch

Tanren-bō Drills

1. Seiza Kirioroshi
2. Double Handed Kirikaeshi
3. Advanced Kirikaeshi
4. Staggered Kirikaeshi
5. Zenkutsu Dachi Kirikaeshi
6. Kesagiri
7. Iai Goshi and Lunge
8. Alternating Circular Kesagiri
9. Yoko Men Giri (Cut to the Side of the Head)
10. Ukenagashi with Kirioroshi in Kiba Dachi
11. Kaishaku Cut
12. Suihei-giri Horizontal Cut
13. Tanren-bō Kata 1
14. Happa Giri 8 Directional Cutting
15. Single Handed Kirioroshi
16. Kirioroshi Kata 1
17. Kirioroshi with Forward Lunge
18. Kirioroshi with Rear Lunge
19. Seiza Combinations
20. Adv Tanren-bō Kata 1
21. Adv Tanren-bō Kata 2

Tanren Strengthening Exercises

1. Forearm Flex
2. Rear Forearm Flex
3. Forearm Rotation
4. Frog Squat
5. Overhead Combination Lunges

Tanren-bō Isometrics

1. Forward Neck Press
2. Wide Grip Overhead Press
3. Shoulder Press
4. Shoulder Press 2
5. Upper Back Row
6. Underhand Row
7. Bokken Trap Pull
8. Seiza Lat Pull
9. Seiza Cross Arm Back Contraction

10. Seated Back Row
11. Seiza Chest Press
12. Bokken Forward Chest Press
13. Bokken Triceps Extension
14. Bokken Biceps Contraction
15. Rear Bokken Biceps Contraction
16. Bokken Squat
17. Kiba Dachi with Bokken
18. Isometric Lunge
19. Bokken Balanced Single Leg Contraction
20. Bokken Balanced Calf Contraction

Two Person Drills

1. Matching
2. Advancing
3. Entering
4. Misdirection
5. Parry and Counter Attack
 - Overhead Attack
 - Rising Draw
6. Wrist Control to Counter Attack
7. Overhead Control to Counter Attack
8. Angular Drills
9. Angular Matching
 - Entering
 - Parry and Counter Attack
 - 45 degree counter attack
 - 45 degree Parry and Counter Attack
10. Rising Draw
 - Counter Attack
 - Parry and Counter Attack

Greater instruction in all these tanren exercises including video can be found in **Samurai Strength Volume 2: Tanren**. Copies for Kendo na hEireann students are available by request at a discounted rate with all proceeds going towards the club.

General Glossary

Terms Frequently Used in Japanese Swordsmanship

Aiuchi	strike together
Ate	strike
Ayumi-ashi	'moving foot forward,' footwork when walking
Batto	draw the sword, iai
Benkyo	studying
Boken, bokuto	wooden sword
Boshi	hamon from yokote to kissaki
Bu	0.3 cm
Bu	war
Budo	training path of warfare
Bukuro	sword bag
Bunkai	application of kata techniques (with opponent)
Bushido	training path of the warrior
Chakiza	command to sit down
Chiburi	moving blood from the blade (demonstrate zanshin)
Chi Ugui	wiping blood from the blade
Chu kissaki	middle form kissaki
Chudan	middle level (in koryu curriculum)
Chudan no kamae	middle level guard posture
Chuo	middle third of blade
Daisho	two paired swords often a katana and wakizashi or katana and tanto
Daito	long sword, worn cutting edge upwards
Dan	step, grade

Datto	remove sword from obi
Debana Waza	attack using the initial technique of the opponent
Dojo	place where budo is practiced
Embu	display, demonstration
Embugi	display or demonstration clothes
Embuji no shomen	agreed front side for embu
Fuchigane	metal band between tsuba and ito
Fukuro	sword bag
Fukusa	curved edge leading to kissaki
Fumikomi	moving forward with stamping foot
Fumikomi-ashi	stamping front or adjusting rear foot
Furikaburi	raising the sword to cut
Gakusai	student
Ge	opposite side of dojo to kamiza
Gedan no kamae	lower level guard posture
Gendaito	sword made after 1868
Giri / Kiri	cut
Gunto	military sword (WWII)
Gyaku Kesa Giri	diagonal upward cut
Ha	cutting edge
Habaki	collar against tsuba
Habuchi	border of yakiba
Hadagi	undergarment
Hakama	wide pleated trousers
Hakama Sabaki hand	spreading the hakama legs to the left and right with the right
Hamachi	'step' where ha meets habaki

Hanmi	posture with one foot in front, back foot slightly turned
Hamon	line of tempered section
Hanami	cutting line from mune to ha
Hanshi	master (highest shogo)
Haori	over jacket
Happo Giri	to cut in eight directions
Hasso no kamae	guard posture with left foot forward, sword above right shoulder
Hasuji	pointing line from munemachi to kissaki
Hayanuki	all Eishin kata performed without break
Henka Waza	alternative interpretation of a technique
Hera	peg inside rear of hakama
Hi	groove for weight reduction
Hidari jodan no kamae	left foot forward jodan
Hikigiri	pulling cut
Hikitaoshi	pulling down technique
Himo	cord, lace
Hira	face of blade from shinogi to ha
Hiraji	face of blade from shinogiji to hamon
Hiraki-ashi	rear foot moves to front at new angle, front foot becomes rear foot
Hitoe	top of tang at munemachi
Hitoemi	body turned in halfway towards opponent
Hitokokyu	in one breath
Iai	'Being prepared' 'vigilance,' 'flexibility,' drawing the sword
Iaido	“I” comes from Iru, to be; Ai (as in Aikido) means coming together, harmony, or love; and Dō means road, or Way (in the Buddhist sense). Loosely translated then, Iaido means being in harmony with one’s surroundings, always being prepared for any eventuality. Or, perhaps more succinctly - the way of always being prepared.
Iai Goshi	lowered hip, ready posture

Iai Hiza/Tatehiza	seated posture with right knee raised, sitting on left foot
Iai Hiza/Tatehiza no bu	chudan, middle level series of kata in Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu
Iaijutsu	art of drawing the sword
Iaito	metal training sword
Ichiyoshi	cutting without a pause
Iorimune	mune with two surfaces
Jigane	'skin steel,' very hard outer layer
Jiku-ashi	foot turning on the spot on toes and heel
Jodan no kamae	upper level guard posture
Juban	undergarment
Kae Waza	alternative form of a technique
Kaicho	dojo president
Kakemono	calligraphy roll
Kamae	guard posture
Kamae o toku	kamae with lowered, slightly turned sword of defeated opponent
Kami no ashi	foot closest to kamiza
Kamishimo	formal dress: armless upper garment with hakama
Kamiza	highest place of honor, to the right of shinzen
Kancho	dojo leader
Karuma waki no kamae	kamae with horizontal sword
Kashira	end of tsuka
Kata	training form or set of forms
Katahaba	thickest measure of blade
Katana (uchigatana)	Japanese long sword since the 15th century, worn edge up
Katana kake	sword stand
Katate	with one hand
Katate-uchi	one hand cut

Keiko	training
Keikogi	training jacket
Keitoshisei	left hand on sword at hip, thumb on tsuba, 45°, kashira in front of solar plexus
Kenjutsu	art of sword-fighting (with partner)
Kensen	point of the sword
Kesagiri	diagonal downward cut (scarf cut)
Kihon	basic techniques
Kime	'decision,' sharpness of movement in cutting
Kiri-age	upward cut
Kirigaeshi	diagonal cut ending in waki no kamae
Kirioroshi	vertical, forward cut
Kiriorosu	to cut from above
Kirite	cutting ('living') hand
Kiritsuke	decisive cut
Kirukudashi	decisive cut
Kissaki	point
Kohai	one's junior
Koiguchi	open end of saya ('carp's mouth')
Koiguchi no kiri gata	'method of cutting the carp's mouth,' coordination of hands at start of draw
Koiguchi o kiru	'method of cutting the carp's mouth,' coordination of hands at start of draw
Kojiri	butt of the saya
Ko Kissaki	small kissaki
Kokyu	breath control
Komekami	through the temple
Koryu	traditional school

Koshiita	board at back of hakama
Koshinogi	shinogi in kissaki
Koshirae	fittings and saya of a sword
Kote Uchi	forearm/wrist strike
Koto	sword made between 806 - 1595
Kumitachi	training with partner
Kurigata	attachment of sageo to saya
Kyoshi	teacher (middle shogo)
Kyu	beginner's ranking
Ma	timing interval, distance in time
Ma-ai	position, distance in space (to the opponent)
Maki-ito	material of tsuka binding
Mamorite	covering, protecting hand
Marimune	mune with rounded surface
Matadachi	split at side of hakama
Mei	signature on tang
Mekugi	bamboo pin through tsuka and tang
Mekugi-ana	hole for mekugi
Menuki tsuka	decorations for better grip
Metsuke	direction of looking
Migi jodan no kamae	right foot forward jodan
Mitsukaido	point where shinogi, yokote and ko shinogi meet
Mitsumune	mune with three surfaces
Mon	family crest
Monouchi	upper third, cutting part of blade
Montsuki	wide sleeve top with mon on chest, sleeve and back
Morote	with both hands

Morote-uchi	two hand cut
Motodachi	defending side in a technique
Mudansha	person without Dan ranking
Mune	back edge of blade
Munemachi	'step' where mune meets habaki
Musubi	way of tying a knot (sageo, sword bag)
Nagasa	length of blade from munemachi to kissaki
Nakago	tang
Nakago Jiri	end of tang
Nigiri	grip
Nishikibukuro	ornamental, lined sword bag
Noto	re-sheathing the sword
Nukitsuke	drawing and cutting
Obi	belt
Ochiburi	large chiburi
O'Kissaki	large kissaki
Okuden	secret level (in koryu curriculum)
Okuri-ashi	kendo footwork (sliding step of both feet)
Osiwaza	attacking when the opponent retreats
Reigi	etiquette
Reiho	method of bowing
Renshi	assistant teacher (lowest shogo)
Renshu	training hard by trial and error
Renzoku Waza	training consecutive techniques
Ritsurei	standing bow
Ryu	school, curriculum
Sageo	braid from saya, tied to hakama himo

Sagetoshisei	sword carrying posture at ease
Saho	method of etiquette
Same	ray skin under tsuka-ito, reducing play
Sanpogiri	to cut in three directions
Sashi-omote	outer side of katana, away from hip
Sashi-ura	inner side of katana, towards hip
Saya	scabbard
Saya no uchi	inside the saya
Saya-ate	collision between the sayas of two persons
Sayabanare	to leave the saya
Sayabiki	saya control, usually pulling back
Sei	without movement, inactive
Seichushin	through the center
Seigan	natural walk
Seitei kata/gata	series of forms established by the ZNKR
Seiza	kneeling posture
Seiza no bu	sitting section (of kata series)
Seiza no shisei	sitting posture
Seme-ashi	pressing, pushing foot
Semete	pressing, pushing hand
Sempai	one's senior
Sensei	one who has gone before, teacher
Seppa	washers either side of tsuba
Shaku	30.2 cm
Shiai	match, competition
Shiai-jo	match area
Shibori	wringing movement of the hands on tsuka while cutting

Shidachi	defending and following side
Shigane	'heart steel,' soft inner layer
Shihan	highest teacher in dojo
Shimo no ashi	foot farthest from kamiza
Shimoseki	side of students, opposing teachers
Shimoza	lower place of honor, to the left of shinzen
Shinite	'dead' hand
Shinken	'new sword,' modern made live blade
Shinkenshoubu	drawing and cutting with a live blade, serious match
Shinogi	ridge at widest point along blade
Shinogi Ji	face of blade from shinogi to mune
Shinpan	referee
Shinpan cho	tournament supervisor
Shinsa	grading
Shinshinto	blade made between 1804 - 1867
Shinto	blade made between 1596 - 1803
Shinzen	shinto shrine
Shisei	posture
Shitagi	undergarment
Shiteiwaza	set form in grading or competition
Shizentai	natural posture
Shoden	first level (in koryu curriculum)
Shogo	title
Shomen	straight ahead
Shomen Giri	front cut
Shomenuchi	cut or attack straight to the front of the opponent
Shoto	wakizashi, short sword

Shusin	head referee
Soete	supporting hand
Soete Tsuki no kamae	guard posture before thrusting in the abdomen
Sonkyo	half-crouching posture
Sori	curve of the blade from mune to nagasa line
Suburito	heavy wooden sword
Suki	weak, vulnerable point, opening, chance
Sun	3.02 cm
Sunegakoi	block defending the lower leg
Suri-ashi	sliding foot
Suwari Waza	sitting techniques
Tabi	formal soft footwear for inside the dojo
Tachi	Japanese long sword between the 8th and 15th century, worn edge down, primarily designed for single handed slashing while on horseback.
Tachi iai no bu	standing section (of kata series)
Tachirei	standing bow with the sword
Tachi Waza	standing techniques
Taikai	competition, tournament
Tai Sabaki	body movement (while turning)
Tameshigiri	test cutting
Tanome	sleeve of montsuki
Tanren	Conditioning, Forging
Tanto	Knife
Tategiri	standing, stable cut
Tateha	drawing with cutting edge upwards
Tatehiza	see iai hiza
Tatenoto	noto with cutting edge upwards

Te no uchi	inside of the hands, control of hands, correct grip, timing of shibori
Teitoshisei	left hand on sword in obi, thumb on tsuba, tsuba on centerline
Teki	opponent
Tenuchi	gripping, locking
To	curved, one-edged sword
Tomete	stopping hand
Tori	attacking side of a technique
Toshi	blade and tang
Tsuba	hand guard
Tsubamoto	part of blade near tsuba
Tsubazeriai	tsubas pressing, 'feeling' together
Tsugi-ashi	rear foot toes move to front heel line
Tsuka-ito	material of tsuka binding
Tsukamaki	tsuka binding
Tsuki	thrust
Uchi	strike
Uchidachi	striking / attacking side
Uchiko	cleaning powder for the sword
Uke	receiving side of a technique
Ukenagashi	block and deflect
Uwagi	iaido jacket
Waki no kamae	guard posture with sword hidden behind the body
Wakizashi	short sword from daisho
Waza	technique
Yasurime	file marks left on tang
Yogi	meaning of a performance
Yohogiri	horizontal cut

Yokochiburi chiburi	opening to the side
Yokogiri	side cut
Yokomenuchi	cut to the side of the head
Yokote	line between kissaki and rest of the blade
Yudansha	person with Dan ranking
Zarei	sitting bow
Zekken	chest identity patch
Zori	sandals for outside the dojo

Common Phrases and Commands

Ato	back, backwards
Domo arigato gozaimasu / gozaimashita	thank you (very formal)
Gogi	referee break in a match
Hajime	begin
Hajime no saho	begin etiquette
Hante	end of a match
Iai kisogeiko	practice basic forms
Junbitaiso o hajimemasu	start warming up
Junbitaiso o owarimasu	stop warming up
Kamiza ni rei	bow to kamiza
Katana o motte	get your swords
Kiritsu	Stand up
Koi	come here
Kotai	change (partner)
Matte	wait
Mawatte	turn around
Menokotai	change roles
Mou-ikkai	again
Moichido	one more time
Mokosu	silence (meditation)
Osame	to place sword in obi
Otagai ni rei	bow to each other
Owari no saho	end etiquette
Rei	bow

Seiretsu	stand in line
Sensei (-gata) ni rei	bow to the sensei
Shinzen ni rei	bow to the shinza
Shobu ari	result of a match
Shomen ni rei	bow to the front side
Shugo	come together for instruction
Tate	stand up
Torei	bow to the sword
Yame	stop

Common Terms describing important philosophical concepts

in Iaijutsu

Dai kyo soku kei	big, strong, fast, smooth (in katana technique)
Enzan no metsuke	gazing at far off mountains
Fudoshin	imperturbable ('immovable' 'unfettered,' 'unstopped') mind
Fukaku	'deeply,' depth of personal character through training, elegance
Fushin	conscious thought, stopped mind
Go no sen (no waza)	five rules to conquer the opponent before he decides to attack
Heijoshin	normal state of mind, without distractions
Hingurai	appearance
Ichi go, iche e	one encounter, one mind
Jikishin	'direct mind,' honesty
Jo ha kyu	soft, smooth, sharp or slow, medium, fast (in timing)
Junanshin	malleable mind
Takegoe	cry adding energy to a technique
Kassoteki	logical movement opposing an imaginary adversary
Katsujinken	life giving sword
Ki	breath power, inner strength
Kiai	shout or yell adding energy to a technique
Kigurai	bearing, demeanour
Kihaku	being focused with the mind
Ki ken tai ichi	spirit, sword and body are one, in harmony
Kimochi	expression, bearing

Kiryoku	vitality, energy, willpower
Kokoro (-gamae)	attitude of spirit, heart, honor, respect, confidence
Kuraidori	performing a realistic (inner) fight
Muga	without 'I' or ego
Mushin	empty mind
Munen	without thought
Muso	without rational mind
Mushin	without rational mind
Riai	meaning, logic, principles, harmony of theory and praxis
Satsujinken	life taking sword
Saya no uchi no kachi	victory in the saya
Sei	'action, no action,' calmness in movement
Seme	pushing, pressure (mental and physical control of the opponent)
Sen	forestall, take initiative
Sen no sen	attacking between the opponent's decision to attack and his movement
Sen no waza	attacking faster than your opponent
Sen sen no waza	attacking between the opponent's decision to attack and his movement
Shi gi tai ichi	spirit, sword and body are one, in harmony
Shin	Chinese concept of kokoro
Shishin	see fudoshin
Shu ha ri	budo learning curve of imitation (absorbing), understanding (breaking) and consolidation (leaving)
Sutemi	accepting an attack with counter-attack in mind
Tachikaze	'sword wind,' sound or focus of cut
Tai chi tai bun	hear with your body, think with your body
Tan seki den	'forge in the morning, polish in the evening,' hard training

Yoyu

'the margin,' only what is absolutely necessary

Zanshin

total awareness, composure and preparedness after the
attack

Additional Useful Terms

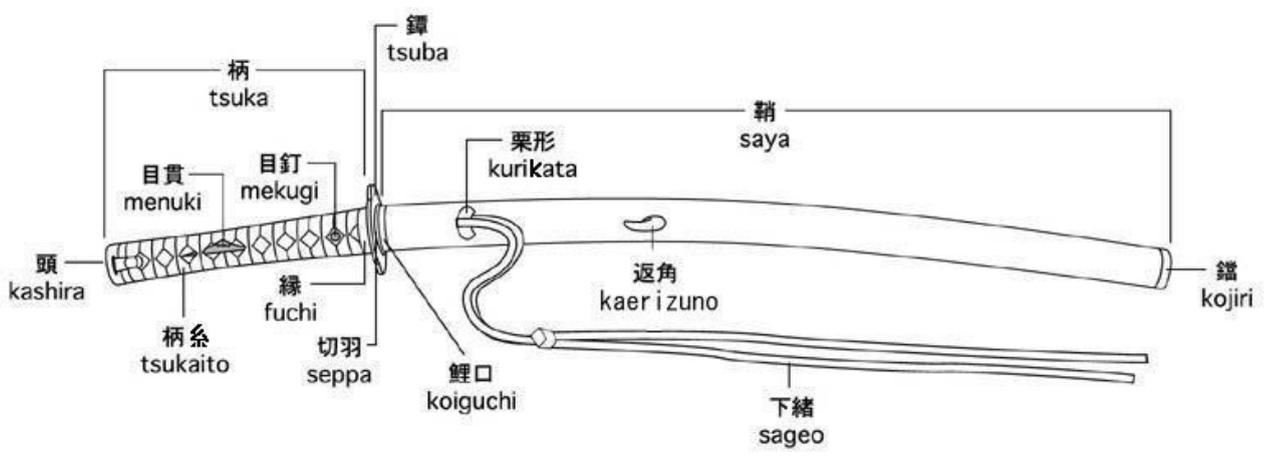
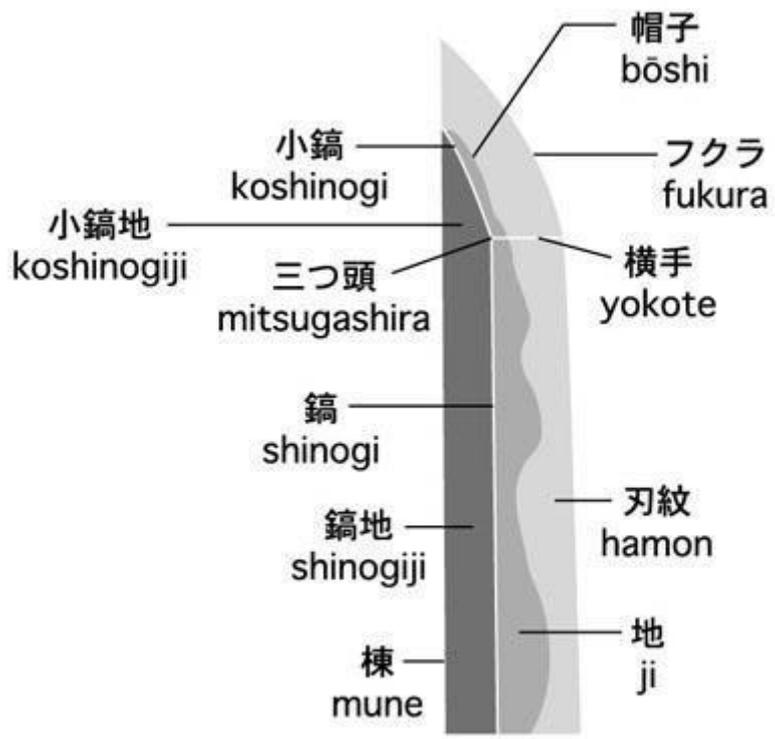
Age	lift, raise
Arigato	thank you (informal)
Ashi	foot
Ashikubi	ankle
Asoko	over there
Atama	head
Atode	after
Chigau	different
Chi-isai	small
Chikaku	near
Chokkaku	right angles
Chushin	centre
Dame	don't, bad, not like that
Do	(soft) side of the torso, also: degrees (angle)
Domo	thanks (informal)
Domo arigato	thank you (formal)
Dozo	please (go ahead)
Eguru	scoop out, gouge
Ganmen	center of face
Gokai	grand, brash, intrepid, robust
Gomen nasai	excuse me (apology)
Gyaku	reverse, opposite, inverted
Hai	yes
Han	example

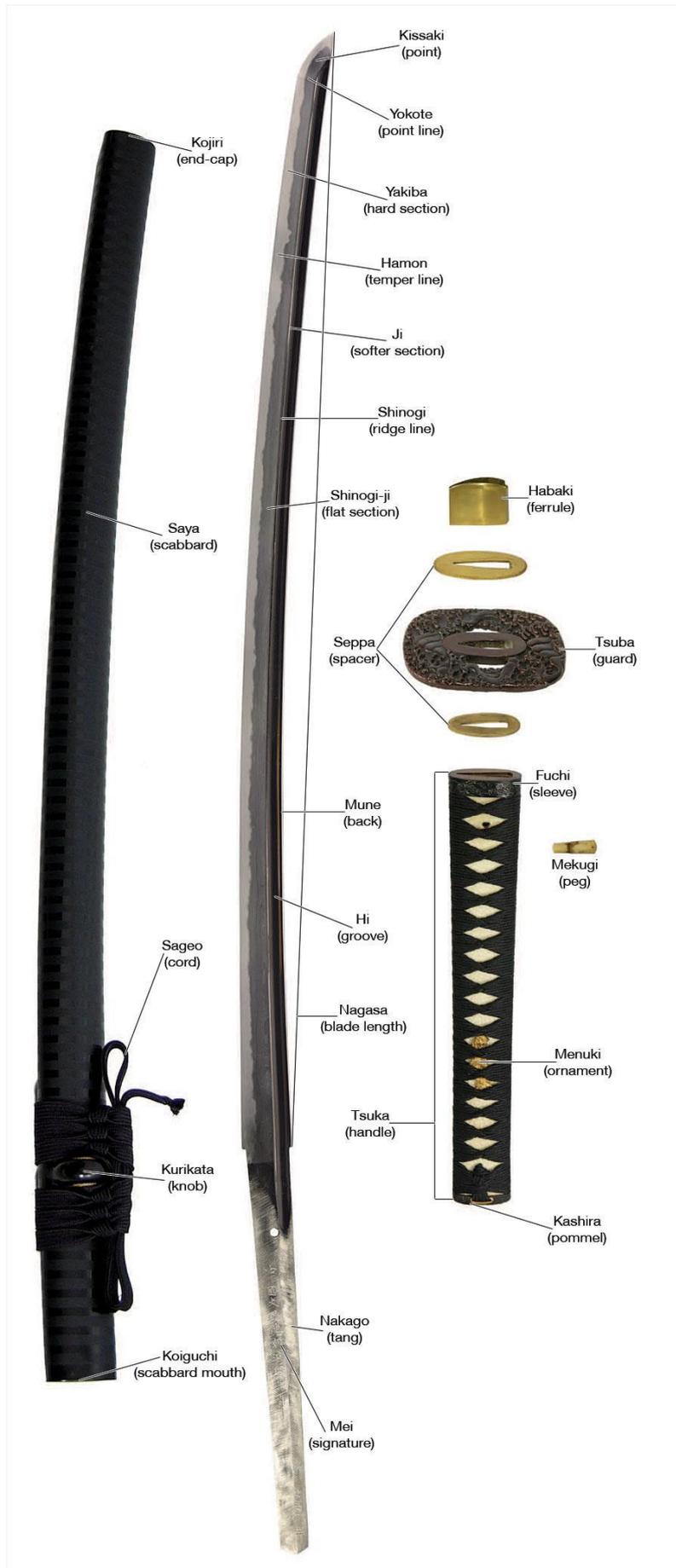
Hammi	turned in
Hantai	the other way around
Hara	abdomen
Hayaku	quick, fast
Heiko	parallel
Hetta	unskillful, bad
Hidari	left
Hiji	elbow
Hiki	to pull
Hira	flat
Hiza	knee
Ichi mon jo	straight line
lie	no
Jinchu	centre of upper lip
Jozu	skillful, good
Kaiten	to turn
Kakato	heel
Kakudo	angle
Kata	shoulder
Katate	single handed
Kesa	lapel / sash of monk's costume, hanging from left shoulder
Kimochi	feeling, sensation
Kiri/kiru	to cut
Ki o tsukete	be careful
Koshi	hip, waist
Kote	forearm
Kubi	neck

Kyoju	to teach
Machigai	mistake
Mae	in front
Massugu	straight ahead
Mawari	to swing around
Me	eye
Men	face
Migi	right
Mimi	ear
Miru	to look
Mo	more
Motto	more
Mune	chest
Nakazumi	centre line of the body
Naname	diagonal
Nanken	'bad sword,' wrong way
Naze	why?
Ninode	upper arm
Nodo	throat
Ogesa	big form
Oki	big, large
Omote	outside, front side
Onegai shimazu	please (asking)
Oshiete kudasai	please, teach me
Otoshu	falling, cutting downwards
Owari	end of training
Ren	to polish

Sabaki	movement
Seitei	established
Semeru	push, press, 'attack'
Shamen	side of head including temple
Shita	down, under
Shizuka ni shitekudasai	quiet please
Shomen	front side of head
So	like that (the right way)
Sode	sleeve
Soto	outside
Suigetsu	solar plexus
Suihei	horizontal
Sukoshi	a little, small amount
Sumimasen	excuse me (to attract attention)
Sunden	point between the eyes
Tanden	lower abdomen
Tate	upright, vertical
Tate ichi mon ji	vertical line
Tate kudasai	stand upright please
Te	hand
Tekubi	wrist
Te no uchi	inside the hand/palm
Tsumasaki	tips of the toes
Uchi	inside
Ude	arm
Ue	up
Ura	inside, back side

Ushiro	behind
Wakarimasen	I don't understand
Wakarimasu	I understand
Warui	bad
Yatte mimasu	I will try
Yawarakaku	softly
Yoi	good
Yoko	flat, horizontal, to the side
Yoko ichi mon ji	horizontal line
Yokomen	upper side part of head
Yubi	finger, toe
Yukkuri	slow





As you can see there's a terrific amount to study. What is even more interesting is that nearly every part of the Japanese blade above has different shapes, classifications, and styles depending on the type of blade, period of manufacture, and maker. It's a remarkable if complex study.

And it has great bearing and importance as each ryū (martial arts school) has different requirements, and again, as we'll see, these requirements change over the course of time and with different headmasters.

As such it's important to have a fair degree of familiarity with these different terms. To help I've produced a quick alphabetical list. Please note this is a very minimal run-through – there are whole books written on nearly every individual aspect I'll touch on below.

- **Bohi:** A long groove carved into the blade, often mistakenly referred to as a blood groove. It's not. It's primarily designed to lighten the blade. It also causes the sword to whistle when properly aligned. Some schools like them, many don't. We'll cover this in more detail later.
- **Bonji:** Sanskrit characters carved into the blade evoking Buddhist deities.
- **Bōshi:** Literally "cap", the hamon formed within the kissaki.
- **Fukura:** The cutting edge of the kissaki.
- **Ha:** The cutting edge of the blade.
- **Habaki:** A small metal collar (often decorated) that buffers the tsuba and secures the blade into the saya.
- **Habakimoto:** The part of the blade that sits under the habaki.
- **Habuchi:** The dividing line between the hamon and the ji, commonly called the nioi guchi.
- **Hacho:** The length of the cutting edge. See also: nagasa.
- **Hada:** The steel skin and pattern of the blade, also called jihada.
- **Hamachi:** The notch where the cutting edge of the blade begins.
- **Hamon:** The crystalline structure which forms along the cutting edge of a blade as a result of the hardening process. There are many different patterns of hamon and I'll look at these in some detail later. Again many schools recommend a particular type and are wary of others.
- **Hawatari:** See: nagasa.
- **Hi:** A groove carved into the blade for decorative or weight-decreasing purposes. Some schools recommend these, others don't. We'll examine both points of view later.
- **Horimono:** Decorative blade carvings like bonji.
- **Ji:** The surface area of the blade between the shinogi and the hamon.
- **Jihada:** The surface area of the blade between the hamon and the shinogi. See also: hada.
- **Kaeri:** The part of the bōshi that turns back towards the tang, along the mune.
- **Kasane:** The thickness of the blade, again a crucial point for different styles and ryū.
- **Kissaki:** The tip of the blade from the point to the yokote – there're lots of different types. We'll discuss which are recommended for which style soon.
- **Koiguchi:** The mouth of the saya, most often made from buffalo horn but some schools prefer metal. This is another point to discuss later.
- **Koshinogi:** The part of the shinogi that runs from the yokote to the tip in the kissaki.
- **Machi:** The notches that mark the end of the mune, munemachi, and the end of the hamachi.
- **Mei:** The signature or inscription on the tang.

- **Mekugi:** Often a bamboo peg used to secure the handle onto the tang. Some schools have two, one of which is metal. The placement and how many used is another point for discussion later.
- **Mekugi Ana:** The hole in the tang where the mekugi is inserted.
- **Mihaba:** The width of a blade: measured from the mune to the cutting edge and again a specific recommendation in various schools. I'll show you more on this later.
- **Mitsukaido:** The place where the shinogi meets the koshinogi and the yokote.
- **Monouchi:** One third of the blade from the yokote towards the tang.
- **Mune:** The back of the blade. This is another area of variation – you can have flat, or diamond etc. and there are guidelines for each and reasons behind those choices, which we'll examine shortly.
- **Nagasa:** The blade length, measured from the tip to the munemachi. A *crucial* part of sword selection! Get this wrong and your Iai will suffer. Specific schools have different advice to calculate your blade length. I'll discuss these, and suggest my recommendations, later in the book.
- **Nakago:** The tang of a blade; the length of the tang dictates your grip. We'll look at this in detail shortly.
- **Nakago Jiri:** The tip of the tang.
- **Nioi Guchi:** The dividing line between the hamon and the ji.
- **Omote:** The front side of the blade.
- **Sakihaba:** Width of the blade at the yokote. Different blades and different schools dictate which is right and wrong for you. Another point to consider...
- **Saya:** Scabbard. The saya has many variations; each school has a preference, not just in colour but also in how it's shaped. I'll examine these, and the role of the shogunate on this, later.
- **Shinogi:** The ridge line that runs from the yokote to the end of the nakago. Some ryū teach you to block with the shinogi, and as such its selection and style is a point to consider before purchase. I'll provide more detail later.
- **Shinogi Ji:** The area between the shinogi and the mune.
- **Sori:** The curvature of the blade. There are many types and it's another *crucial* aspect of sword selection. If your blade is too curved, or not curved enough, then it won't work for the style you practise. I'll give you the recommendations of masters later.
- **Sugata:** The shape of the blade.
- **Tsuka:** The hilt and there's a *huge* amount to explore here, which we'll cover in the section on koshirae. Things to look out for here are the ito (wrap), ergonomics, menuki (ornaments) and tsuba (sword guard). Each school has its preference and I'll go into great detail on these aspects in a later section.
- **Ura:** The back side of the blade.
- **Yakiba:** The hardened area of the blade.
- **Yakihaba:** The width of the yakiba.
- **Yokote:** The dividing line between the kissaki and the body of the blade (mainly on shinogi-zukuri swords) and a key consideration for martial artists. I'll touch on this in detail later.

As you can see, there are a lot of terms there to get familiar with, and as mentioned a great deal of variation exists in each of these aspects. But we don't need to go into *that* level of detail in an analysis of swords for their use by an individual ryū.

NOTES