

Sword and Spirit

The Journal of Itten Dojo

July 2023



— Why Budo? —

Regardless of the times in which you live, or the circumstances of your life, success largely depends on things you can control:

- Building a foundation of strong relationships in a community of mutual support and achievement.
- Forging a disciplined and positive mindset.
- Enhancing your physical health and capabilities.

These are exactly the benefits membership in an authentic dojo provides.

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Waka of the Eishin-ryu

Editor's Note — I deeply appreciate having received permission from Reg Sakamoto Sensei to share a recent post of his, featuring his translations of a series of *waka* poems conveying insights to *Tatehiza no Bu*, one of the sets of forms in Muso Jikiden Eishin-ryu iaido. Waka are a traditional Japanese form of poetry typically consisting of five lines or “phrases,” in 5-7-5-7-7 syllabic meter.

In our line of Eishin-ryu, *Tatehiza no Bu* is described by Suino Sensei as the “Half-seated Set,” and contains some of the most challenging techniques in the art. In *The Art of Japanese Swordsmanship*, his Eishin-ryu training manual, Suino Sensei says,

“The half-seated position, though convenient for a quick transition into a strategically useful stance, is extremely difficult for Westerners for master. The deep bends in the knees and the balance throughout the kneeling positions are awkward for our relatively long legs, unaccustomed to sitting on the floor as we are. Nothing else, however, will develop the leg muscles as well or provide such an efficient means of rising to meet an opponent.”

Sakamoto Sensei started training in iaido under the Canadian Kendo Federation Iaido Bu (component) in 1994, doing the Seitei set with MJER as their koryu, as is the practice within the Zen Nihon Kendo Renmei Iaido Bu. In 2010, he moved to Nara, Japan, as a ZenKenRen 4th dan, where he met Yoshioka Soryu Sensei, Hanshi 9th dan, and holder of the Kongen no Maki. Yoshioka Sensei's *Nara Ryu Shin Kan* group does not belong to any Renmei. Yoshioka Sensei had been a member of the Zen Nihon Iaido Renmei, but left in consequence of his belief in the traditional, *machi* dojo (community dojo) system.

The Yoshioka dojo is dedicated to the koryu-only version of MJER, focusing on the trinity of iaido practice of *tandoku* (solo) practice, *kumitachi* practice, and *tameshigiri* (test-cutting). Every practice was three hours long, with half the practice working on the paired sets and the other half working on solo sets. Once a month, Sakamoto and the other students did test cutting.





Sakamoto Sensei training in Japan.

Treatises, songs, and poems—this is one of the ways in which information was passed down through the Japanese *koryu* (classical schools of martial arts). Ueshiba Morihei Sensei also passed down songs, but current aikido practitioners are not interested in such things and the English translations of such poems are not very good. Not that a lot of current aikidoka would take the time to learn the language of the art that they study...I mean, what would be the sense in that? I trust the sarcasm is not lost on the reader.

Here are nine poems for the 無双直伝英信流立膝之部 *Muso Jikiden Eishin-ryu Tatehiza no Bu* set. I am sharing the original Japanese and a simple translation.

These are not my interpretations, as I would only offer interpretations to someone who trains directly under me.

The poems were written by Hasegawa Eishin, the 7th headmaster of the ryu.

横雲
おく山は
嵐吹くかや
三吉野の
花は霞の
横雲の空

Yoko gumo
Deep in the mountains
A storm is surely raging
In Miyoshino
The blossom is a mist of
Trailing clouds across the sky

虎一足
猛き虎の
千里の歩み
遠からず
行くより速く
かえる足びき

Tora no Issoku

A fierce tiger
Will travel a thousand leagues
In no time at all
Yet its pace is faster still
Upon its return journey

稲妻
諸共に
光と知れど
稲妻の
後なる雷の
ひびきしられず

Inazuma

They may see the light
That flashes in the moment
That the lightning strikes
But they will not know the roar
Of the following thunder

浮雲
麓より
吹上げられし
浮雲は
四方の高嶺を
立ちつつむなり

Uki gumo

Floating clouds are blown
From the base of the mountains
Up to their summits
Rising to envelop each
Of the lofty mountain peaks

山嵐
高嶺より
吹き下す風
強ければ
麓の木々に
雪もたまらず

Oroshi

The powerful wind
Blowing down from the high peak
Is so powerful
No snow can settle upon
The trees at the mountain's base

岩波
行く舟の
梶とりなほす
間もなきは
いわほの波の
強くあたれば

Iwanami

When the boat is struck
Powerfully by a wave
Crashing on the rocks
There is no time in which to
Steer the vessel to safety

鱗返
瀧の波
瀬のぶる鯉の
うろつくは
水せき上げて
おつることなし

Urokogaeshi

A carp swims upstream
Against the rapids of the
Rushing waterfall
Its struggle swells the water
It will not be washed back down



浪返	Namigaeshi	瀧落	Taki otoshi
あかしがた	Even the high rocks	たきつ瀬の	As the waterfall
瀬戸越す波の	And cliffs that tower over	崩るる如く	Flows like an avalanche
上にこそ	Akashi's shoreline	流るれば	Its rapids seethe fiercely
いわをも岸も	Cannot contain the waves that	水とあそふ	In a powerful torrent
たまるものかわ	Roll in from across the strait	岩もなきかな	With which no rock can contend



Reg Sakamoto Sensei began his martial arts training in 1976, starting with jujutsu and later moving on to judo, Goju-ryu karate and kendo. He began aikido training in 1994 under Kameda Takeshi, the father of Yoshinkan Aikido in Canada, at the Aikido Yoshinkai Canada dojo. Sakamoto Sensei trained intensively at Kameda Sensei's Toronto dojo until 2010 when he moved to Nara, Japan. In Japan he began his training under Jacques Payet at the Kyoto Mugenjuku dojo. In 2013 Sakamoto Sensei founded the first Yoshinkan Aikido dojo in Nara prefecture—Yoshinkan Aikido Enmeikan—which is still being run by his student, Tsujimoto Kenji.



While in Japan, Sakamoto Sensei acquired his 6th degree black-belt in Yoshinkan Aikido as well as the corresponding Shido-in (teaching license). He was also awarded Kyoshi 7th-degree black-belt and the Kongen no Maki (license of full transmission) in Muso Jikiden Eishinyu iaido, a Mokuroku license in Hozoin-ryu Takada-ha spear, and has studied Konko-kyo Shinto as well as Soto-shu Zen.

Sakamoto Sensei returned to Canada in September of 2021 and opened the Enmeikan Dojo in Toronto to teach Yoshinkan Aikido with an emphasis on self-defense, encompassing a study of situational awareness, environmental awareness, command presence, and tactical communication, leveraging his more than twenty years of wide experience in the security field. Sakamoto Sensei can be contacted via his website (enmeikan.ca) or email at enmei70@gmail.com.

