

History of
HONTAI YŌSHIN RYŪ
(本體楊心流)



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Lineage:



1. The start

Hontai Yoshin-ryu (HYR) is a traditional Jujutsu school, also incorporating the long staff, the short staff, knife, short sword, long sword and rope bindings. The philosophical premise of the school is expressed in its name, stressing the flexibility of the supple willow which bends in the wind without breaking.

- HON 本: present; main; true; real
- TAI 體: Body; substance; object; reality
- YŌ 楊: Willow
- SHIN 心: Mind; heart; spirit
- RYŪ 流: Style, method

The metaphor of the willow was incorporated by the **founder of the school Takagi Oriemon Shigetoshi**. Born the 2nd January, in the 12th year of Kan'ei (1635) of high warrior caste stock, Takagi, whose childhood name was Umon, was the second son of Inatobi (or Inatomi) Sanzaemon. Inatobi Sanzaemon was a high level retainer of Katakura Kojuro, the warlord of the **Shiroishi domain**.



Drawing of Takagi Oriemon

*Umon left the Shiroishi domain and entered the martial gate of one Muto Danemon, a high level strategist of warlord Yoshihide. As Muto Danemon's pupil, Umon learnt **Muto-Ryu Kodachi** and **Kyochi Ryu Sojutsu**, pursuing the techniques and secrets of these schools to their highest levels.*

*Takagi's father Sanzaemon, who at that time served as a **Kenjutsu Shihan** or master sword teacher of the Shiraishi domain, met his bloody death in a night ambush. When Takagi received news of his father's death, he remembered his father's constant admonition, "**a willow (Yoboku) is strong, while a tall tree (Takagi) will snap**". Takagi took this teaching to heart, and avenged his father's murder.*

During his further life, Takagi studied hard, mastering also techniques of Yari, Naginata, Shuriken and Taijutsu. He became well known for his great physical strength, but he understood the need to be flexible in mind and technique.

There are numerous stories about heroic encounters that took place in different places of Japan. The fact is that Takagi improved his art by undertaking : journey throughout the country. His art became known as **Yoshin-ryu "The willow hart school" of Takagi**.

Once an accomplished master of bujutsu, Takagi took up service as the master sword teacher of the Shiroishi domain. Takagi-sensei passed away in the first year of Shotoku (1711) at the age of 87. His grave can be found somewhere in Katta-Gun, **Miyagi prefecture**, amongst the fields.



In 1993, Inoue Tsuyoshi Munetoshi, the 18th Soke, and his students located the grave in the former Shiroishi territory and were able to confirm that the tomb belonged to Takagi Oriemon.

2. The succession within the Takagi family

The second Soke, **Takagi Umanosuke**, received the teachings of Takagi Oriemon in 1671 at the age of 16.

Umanosuke was very powerful in unarmed and armed combat but due to inheriting the system at such a young age, he was also arrogant as young man.

*At one time Umanosuke and 3rd generation of **Take(no)uchi-ryu**, Takeuchi Hisayoshi fought a duel before the head of the Mori family. Comparing the two's physical characteristics, Takeuchi Hisayoshi stood at 4 foot 8 inches, while Takagi Umanosuke was a giant 6 foot 8 inches towering over Takeuchi like an adult and child.*

Two matches were held in which Takeuchi won easily. During each match, Umanosuke was thrown to the ground. When he tried to get up, he was locked on the ground and tied up with a cord. However, Umanosuke was so powerful that he merely flexed his huge muscles, and the normally strong arresting cord snapped immediately. Being stabbed with a sword finally defeated him.

Umanosuke saw his own arrogance in this and felt deeply ashamed. He went to Takeuchi Hisayoshi to apologise, and became a student, eventually receiving Kaiden.

While in his younger days Umanosuke had a tendency of using his physical strength, as he grew older, he realised the limitations of a system reliant on physical strength. For several years he tried to create such an art but failed. Later, when he travelled to a shrine for 100 days, he received a divine revelation "a willow's branches can bear the snow". Following this, Umanosuke further developed the initial art.

After mastering mental disciplines and concepts he eventually succeeded to obtain a system that defeated the opponent with a "Willow Heart" (Yo Shin). The true (honto) willow system was born and from that time on it was called **Hontai Yoshin-ryu Takagi-ryu**: "The true willow school of the Takagi family".

In 1693, Umanosuke was bestowed by his lord with a title that recognised him as a teacher and warrior of the finest calibre. Umanosuke died in April 1716 at the age of 61. Takagi Umanosuke had several students, amongst them Fuji Shobei, Kagawa (famous for Yari, Tosa no kuni) and his own son, Gennoshin.

The third successor was **Takagi Gennoshin**, son of Umanosuke. Like his father, Gennoshin was a powerful man. He took over the succession but in the meantime the school had moved to the Owari district (Nagoya), Tosa district (Koichi) and eventually to Harima-no-kuni, where Gennoshin would serve the **Himeji-han**.



View of Himeji castle

*In Himeji castle, there are records of how much retainers were paid. This historical material revealed that Gennoshin was paid five hundred Koku [A Koku was the quantity of rice, enough to feed one person for one year. Salaries of retainers were paid in Koku and also the wealth of each Han (domain) was expressed in Koku]. At that time, for a Bugei expert, to receive the status of 500 Koku was unusual and it illustrates how Gennoshin was highly appreciated by the **Himeji Han**.*

3. Succession within the Ako-han

The fourth headmaster was **Okuni Kihei**, a retainer from the **Ako-han**.

*In fact Okuni was originally a master of **Tendo-ryu Naginatajutsu**. One day when Okuni Kihei went to pay respect to his ancestor's Uji-gami (local guardian god or spirit) he saw the vision of nine Oni (Japanese ogres or demons) attacking him and breaking the blade of his Naginata. He was able to attack back with the handle portion of his naginata until he chased off the nine Oni. After this spiritual vision, Okuni developed his technique of Bojutsu (staff techniques) and called it **Kukishin-ryu Bojutsu** (Kuki can be translated as 'nine demons').*

At a certain time Gennoshin, the third soke of Hontai Yoshin-ryu Takagi-ryu, tested his techniques with Okuni Kihei, who was already well known for his Bojutsu. Okuni became a good friend of Gennoshin and they decided to train together and exchange knowledge. Gennoshin died in the 15th year of Genroku at the age of 32 but after he had asked Okuni Kihei to become the forth successor of Hontai Yoshin Ryu Takagi Ryu. Okuni Kihei accepted the request and continued to teach the art of the Takagi family. From that time on the techniques of **Kukishin-ryu Bojutsu** were taught along with **Hontai Yoshin-ryu Takagi-ryu**.

Since Okuni was a retainer from the Ako-han (Ako and Himeji were nearby domeins), the school moved away from Himeji.

Hontai Yoshin-ryu Takagi-ryu (tought together with Kukishin-ryu) was inherited for many years by the Okuni Family or Nakayama Family within the Ako-han:

5. **Ohkuni Hachikuro Nobotshi**
6. **Ohkuni Tarodayu Tadanobu**
7. **Ohkuni Kihyoe Yoshisada**
8. **Ohkuni Yozaemon Yoshisada**
9. **Nakayama Jinnai Sadahide**
10. **Ohkuni Buemon Hidenobu**
11. **Nakayama Kazaemon Sadataka**
12. **Ohkuni Kamaji Hidetoshi**

The 9th Soke, Nakayama Jinnai, was a student of Okuni Yozaemon, and served the Ako domain until the collapse of the Tokugawa period. His son, Nakayama Kazaemon, succeeded the 10th soke, Okuni Buemon, who was on his turn the son of the 8th soke, Okuni Yozaemon. Okuni Kamaji was the 12th soke, and son of 10th soke. He was the last successor of the Okuni family.

Ako city used to be the centre of a small Han which was rich thanks to its salt production (Ako's salt is famous for its high quality).



Ako played an important role in samurai history since Asano Naganori (the former daimyo) was the master of the Forty-seven Ronin. The story recorded in the Chushingura is based on the historical revenge of the death of their master by Forty-seven Ronin and is one of the most popular stories in Japan. Today,

Ako is located in Hyogo Prefecture (the current capital of Hyogo Prefecture is Kobe).

In the early days, starting from Takagi Oriemon, Hontai Yoshin Ryu Takagi Ryu branched off many schools, e.g., Sojutsu of Takagi Ryu (giving birth to schools like Mukan Ryu or Kakugai Ryu). The skills and techniques were spread outside the Himeji-han and Ako-han, reaching Owari-no-kuni, Obama, or even to Tosa-no-kuni and other regions in Japan.

4. Late Edo period and transision to the Meiji period

The 13th grandmaster was **Yagi Ikugoro Hisayoshi**.

One day, Yagi Ikugoro was sent out of the Ako domain following his involvement with political decedents Watanabe Kazan, Takano Choei and others.

He became ronin, later moving to **Akashi (west of Kobe)** to open a dojo.

According to one story, Yagi was so powerful that he stopped an attacking dog that was troubling some travellers with a mere skewer.

*His students at Akashi were Fujita Togoro Hisakichi, Ishiya Takeo and one Ishibashi, who each went on to transmit the teachings as **Fujitaden**, **Ishiyaden** and **Ishibashiden**. This caused the tradition to be taught on a hugely larger scale.*

Ishiya Takeo (born in 1845) was the 14th grandmaster.

As senior student of 13th Soke Yagi Ikugoro, he operated his dojo in Himeji, Okayama, Kobe and several other places.

Ishiya Takeo was known as the master of masters in the Edo era and his most famous teachings were:

- “1 eyes, 2 speed, 3 courage, 4 power”
- “soft on the surface, strong inside”.

Ishiya Takeo is said to have defeated a powerful Osaka sumo wrestler named Ozutsu, immobilising the wrestler with his left hand while rubbing his face in the dirt with his right hand.

Ishiya Takeo passed away in 1909. **Ishiya Matsutaro Masaharu**, the 15th grandmaster, was the son of 14th Soke Ishiya Takeo. However Ishiya left home early and the system was transferred to Kakuno Happeita Masayoshi, the most talented (senior) student of the school.

Kakuno Happeita (Happeita can also be pronounced Hachiheita), born in the 8th year of Meiji, became the 16th grandmaster.

Kakuno opened a dojo in Nagata-ku, Kobe city. He was a master who had many skilled students, and who contributed a lot to the developing and evolving of the skills and techniques of the school.

Kakuno also came up with the Kakuno style technique. However, he taught this style separately from the main stream Hontai Yoshin Ryu Takagi Ryu.

On the 11th of July, 1935 at Kashima Jingu, and the following day at Katori Jingu, Kakuno performed what he called "Hontai Yoshin Ryu Takagi Ryu no Kata". He died in 1939 but by that time, some of his senior students had reached the level to become master themselves:

- **Minaki Saburo** (the most senior student of Kakuno) would become Soke of Hontai Yoshin Ryu
- **Tsutsui Yutaro** (also a senior student of Kakuno) would become Soke of Takagi Ryu.
- **Kanazawa Ichizo**, (another senior student of Kakuno who was assigned to become a substitute sensei of Kakuno's dojo), also continued to teach but would later sent his most talented students (like Inoue father and son, later to become 18th and 19th soke) to Minaki soke, who by that time had a dojo in Kobe.

5. Recent history

The 17th master was **Minaki Saburo**, also known by the name Kosyu.

Minaki was born in the 39th year of the Meiji Era (1906 A.D.). He entered Hontai Yoshin Ryu Takagi Ryu, taught by the 16th master Kakuno Happeita in the 11th year of the Taisho Era (1922 A.D.). Minaki received Menkyo Kaiden (completing mastery in the school and permitted to be independent) in the 8th year of Showa (1933 A.D.). He is considered to be one of the most distinguished students of the school.

Many episodes are told of him pursuing tough training, such as demonstrating the destruction of a stone into pieces by his bare hand. Minaki opened a dojo in Ushigome, Tokyo, and dedicated himself to developing many apprentices. With his master Kakuno, he visited all over Japan and demonstrated the school's technique. He was very active in introducing the school to the public. In the 14th year of Showa (1939 A.D.), when his teacher Kakuno passed away, Minaki went back to Kobe and stayed for a while. Later he entrusted Kakuno's school with Tsutsui Tomotaro and went out on a journey to pursue further training. On returning to Kobe, he entered Fumon no Taki, a waterfall in Maya Mountain, as part of his training to achieve the finest spirit for activating technique (mastering "ki", or vital energy). In the meantime, Tsutsui Tomotaro had taken up his role as soke of Takagi Ryu and Minaki could claim the school of Hontai Yoshin Ryu. Both schools then made great progress.

The 16th master Kakuno had been planning to better organize the various techniques and skills that had been developed over the years. Minaki succeeded in actualizing the will of Kakuno.

Minaki selected the most important and crucial skills of Hontai Yoshin Ryu Takagi Ryu and dedicated his time to organize these waza. The basic Kata "Gyako no kata", "Nage no kata" and "Oku no kata" were created and now they have to be mastered thoroughly before the much older "Omote no kata" can be studied.

Minaki Soke's constant words to his pupils were: "Budo (martial arts) is philosophy, and is the art of creation" and "Do not lose the path to sincerity". These admonitions of Hontai Yoshin Ryu remain unchanged. After the war, Minaki engaged himself in developing his students. Minaki taught that Budo without the spirit of Buddha is a heresy (which means a heart of mercy is the way to achieve the true Budo, otherwise, one will fall into an evil path). He also taught his students that the development of Budo requires creativity.

Minaki Soke passed away at the age of 83. His art and principles were inherited by Inoue Tsuyoshi Munetoshi and his son Kyoichi. They are still alive and maintained.

Several days before he passed away, Minaki Soke performed his final **Ishi Wari** (rock splitting) in front of his students. Summoning all his energy, his hand split through the rock powerfully with Kiai, the rock smashed. But where did that energy come from?

Inoue Tsuyoshi Munetoshi, the 18th was born in the 14th year of Taisho (1925).

Inoue Tsuyoshi was the 26th head of the Inoue family, part of a high level naval family. Until the end of the Tokugawa period, the family served the Iyo Seijo domain's Matsuhira family, and in the 10th year of Taisho, moved to Nishinomiya.

After returning from the Second World War, Inoue was heart broken to see the depressed people with their hope crushed. He established the Imazu Juyu-kai in the 23rd year of Showa (1948 A.D.) to encourage and train the youth of Imazu district in Nishinomiya city. After the establishment of the Imazu Juyu-kai, he enjoyed support from the local people, which led him to unite different Budo schools that agree with his principles. Thus the **Imazu Budo-kai** was formed, and is still active to this day.

Inoue Tsuyoshi was skilled in Kendo, Jukendo and other modern Budo. In Jukendo, as a member of the best team, he won the Japan National Jukendo Tournament and also achieved second place in national-level individual competition twice. Inoue's interest was not limited within the modern Budo, besides Hontai Yoshin Ryu, he has also mastered several styles of laido, and other Kobudo.

Initially, Inoue was a student of Kanazawa Ichizo, who was assigned to become a substitute sensei of Kakuno's dojo.

*Like Minaki Sensei, **Kanazawa Ichizo Sensei** also helped to realize the ambition of Kakuno Happeita, to better organize the techniques of Hontai Yoshin Ryu and he formalized the Tanto (knife) techniques into the "Tanto Dori" kata.*

Kanazawa Sensei recognized the difference and prominent ability of Inoue whom he later sent to train with Minaki Saburo.

Inoue received full permission to teach (Menkyo Kaiden) in the year 46 Showa (1971). In the year 57 Showa (1982), Inoue Tsuyoshi was designated Soke by Minaki with representatives from many different schools and authorized personnel from Nippon Budokan as guests. In this ceremony, Inoue Tsuyoshi received an old sword. This sword has been regarded as the school treasure, as the sword has been handed down for a long time by the school. In fact, the 13th master, Yagi Ikugoro, always carried the sword. The record of the ceremony is kept and maintained in the school.



Inoue Tsuyoshi vigorously continued to dedicate spreading the Budo and constantly developing and evolving the techniques of the school. His activity were not limited in Japan but also includes active teaching overseas.

Together with Kurushima Sensei (Menkyo Kaiden), Inoue Soke also re-vitalized **Hontai Yoshin-ryu iaijutsu** kata and kihon, based on original writings and own experience.

*Formal **iai**jutsu training has not always been part of the daily teachings of all soke, but Inoue Tsuyoshi Munetoshi, the 18th generation soke, begun again to formally teach iai-jutsu to his students. Indeed since it is essential that students can correctly manipulate the sword to perform all the Kumidachi kata in the school and since it becomes harder (even in Japan these days) to ensure that beginners gain these skills in parallel of their normal training, Inoue Soke wanted to ensure proper sword training within the system.*

***Kurushima Sensei** and **Inoue Soke** were also very much in favor of kenjutsu exercises with bokken (wooden sword), recognizing the need to re-enforce the correct usage of the sword. In their mind, kenjutsu and iaijutsu are essential and training with the sword goes beyond the need to prepare students to employ it against other weapons.*

Because iaijutsu is included in our training and we now have again a formal set of kata does not mean that it is considered part of the main curriculum of the school. On the other hand, like in every koryu, when you formalize things, you have to ensure that students train these aspects with the same sense for perfection as other parts of the system.

Inoue Tsuyoshi Munetoshi, retired in 2005 and passed away on the 28th January 2014.

6. Current Soke

The current 19th master is **Inoue Kyoichi Munenori**

Inoue Kyoichi was born in the 24th year of Showa (1949) as the eldest son of the 18th master , Inoue Tsuyoshi Munetoshi. He started training in Kodokan Judo in his infancy. Then he became the instruction member of Imazu Juyu-kai, established by his father. In his youth, Inoue Kyoichi trained not only in modern budo ,(judo, kendo, jukendo and karate), but also kobudo receiving advice of his father.

Like his father, he was a direct student of Kanazawa Ichizo and Minaki Saburo.

Inoue Kyoichi inherited the Soke status from his father in 17th year of Hesei (2005).

Inoue Kyoichi Munenori lives in Nishinomiya, but teaches several times a year outside Japan.

He is devoting himself in passing down the correct spirit of Kobudo that he inherited from his father and his masters Kanazawa and Minaki.



*Densho shiki (change of Soke)
Nishinomiya 2005*

Inoue Soke has a family of students both in Japan, and around the world. The overseas branches, officially acknowledged by the Sohonbu Dojo, in Japan, are in Australia, Belgium, Finland (with sub branches in Sweden and Estonia), Italy (also overseeing Germany), UK and USA.



Representatives from Overseas Branches with Soke and his son, Nishinomiya 2005

7. Overview:

