



# TETSUZAN

By Masaaki Hatsumi

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## *Fifth dan tests and a Happy New Year*

The fifth dan test tends to be thought of as some kind of esoteric act for people with superhuman sensitivity. For the martial artists of the past, their certification—equivalent to the fifth dan test—was a matter of “communication with the gods.”

On January 4, 1989, the head of the Bujinkan Dojo in the United States Embassy in Tokyo, Mr. Amagaya, (7th dan), and his student Mr. Inomata, (4th dan), came to my house bringing New Year's greetings. Inomata mentioned (his face reddening) that he was going to be married this year to a pretty girl 14 years his junior. As soon as he said this, I hit upon an idea and immediately put it to him: “Why don't we do the 5th dan test? Come on, let's go now!” So we got up and went off to the *Shakadô* (Buddha Hall, dedicated to the Buddha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism) of a nearby temple. However, Mr. Amagaya (whose daughter is also getting married this year), though he was the teacher, was more uneasy than his pupil, Inomata, who was the one undergoing the test! Inomata sat down slowly and deliberately in front of the *Shakadô* and closed his eyes. I made a bow to the Buddha statue, and turning around raised the test sword above my head. I unified my mind and spirit into a state of deep concentration, and then directed all this energy through the sword as I swung it down at the back of his head. The sword touched nothing, but his body seemed to be swept aside and blown over just as if it had been turned into air. With this *taihenjutsu*, Inomata earned his fifth dan.



“So, Amagaya, he did it beautifully didn't he?”  
I asked.

“Mm... How can I say it?... He just floated aside so easily and naturally, as if his body had become a puff of smoke!”

“This test, this beginning to the year,” I told them both, “is a sign that this year the teaching of the Bujinkan will be correctly received around the world!”

They both nodded silently. “The light of the Bujinkan is eternal!” one of us said, as we laughed and lightheartedly retraced our steps back to my house.

**January 7:** Sylvain Guintard, from France, visited my house while Mr. Manaka was there. We had an animated conversation about the seminar in Stockholm and about the French martial arts world. At one point, Sylvain



*Before the Shakadô.*



*Above: With Sylvain Guintard at the Shrine of Lady Benten.*

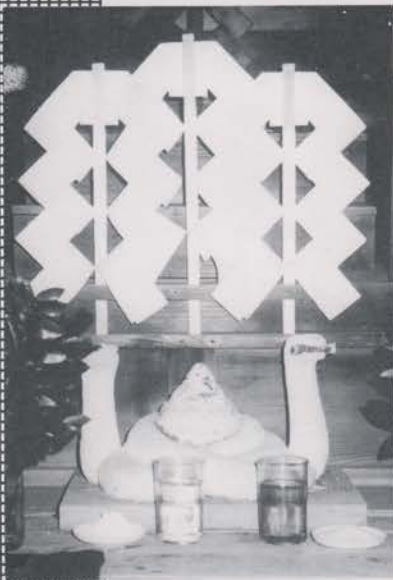
*Left: The 5th dan test is described in the Togakure-ryû scroll called 'Happô Hiken' (Literally, 'Eight-Direction Secret Sword' in the section titled 'Tenmon Jimon.'*



The 'Tenmon Jimon' section of the Happō Hiken' scroll.



The objects of worship on the altar at the Shrine of Lady Benten



said he wanted to be able to recommend a friend of his for fourth dan. But since he hadn't passed the 5th dan test, he didn't have the authority to help his friend, according to customary Bujinkan practice.

"Well," I said, "Mr. Manaka's here, so let's all go the Shrine of Lady Benten and do the test! This year is the Year of the Snake (in the Japanese calendar), and so we'll do the 5th dan test there, because there's a strong connection between Lady Benten and snakes."

So off we went, Sylvain, Manaka and I (sword in hand). I began recalling the past... The Shrine of Lady Benten... the park in front of the *Shakadō*. How often I had played and relaxed in these two places from as early as I could remember! Once, when I had fallen into the old moat in front of the Shrine of Lady Benten, an old lady helped me out. Fortune and treasures bestowed by the goddess! If Sylvain could pass his 5th dan test this year, it would mean fortune and treasure—a martial arts treasure and an *inner* treasure—for the Bujinkan! All of this came to me in a flash.

Very soon after, under the intent gaze of Manaka, 9th dan, Sylvain Guintard swayed away as he sensed my sword sweep down at his head. He'd got it!

**T**he *Shakadō*, or Buddha Hall, is dedicated to the Buddha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism.



A closer view of the altar objects: two white snakes guarding a jewel.



**January 9:** The first Day of the Snake (also pronounced 'Hatsumi') in this Year of the Snake—a day of two snakes (pronounced 'mimi,' meaning 'ear' or 'hearing')—and the day of the year's first practice. In this practice, I spoke of the *daken taijutsu* of the Shinden Fudôryû, which Takamatsu Sensei said he learned from Toda Shinryûken Sensei in his first lesson from him. Then I explained the differences between *jûtaijutsu* and *daken taijutsu*. We moved on into practical techniques, doing *hanbôjutsu*, *shikomijôjutsu* (with a sword stick), and ended with *kage no ittôgiri*, the 5th dan test. "Today is the first day of the two snakes ('hatsumimi,' = 'hearing for the first time'). Let's see if the *Bujin* (the god of martial arts) is hearing us now!

Guus, come and sit in front of me!" Guus Lekanne (from Holland) came and knelt on the mat with his eyes closed. A few moments later, I felt the spirit of the snakes (or, 'of listening'), and let it strike down through the sword at his head. The sword found no obstacle, but also from his inner response I knew that Guus had passed! This is how one can enter the state of oneness between man and god, of unity within oneself, for in this way, the 5th dan test becomes a link with the subtle worlds, a "communication with the gods."

To try to explain what I'm saying in other terms, let me speak of the ninja's awareness. It is not some ordinary academic body of learning or detailed understanding of things and their significance, as some people think. Awareness as I learned it from Takamatsu Sensei was significantly different from the everyday, accepted idea of awareness. In true awareness, a person is directly conscious of the spiritual world, and his or her mind is at one with it. Only one who has been able to attain this unity with spirit can be called *aware*, a person of consciousness.

And what happens after the 5th dan test? Well, that is the point where the true *budoka* can begin the training of the inner eye, the "eye of God." But in relation to this sense, this 'feeling,' let us look again and appreciate anew the significance of the 5th dan test, taking examples from other areas of society also. There are those who say that children grow up and learn by seeing their parents from the back. And a friend of mine who lives in New York, the budo master Raymond Otani, says the following about the teacher-pupil relationship: "A teacher who speaks is valuable; but one who guides without speaking is more valuable. A leader who guides is precious; but far more precious is one who does not guide, but who speaks worlds with his back view alone."

That's a really fine saying, isn't it? There is a lady photographer, Toshie Imai, who has built up a magnificent collection of pictures of horses. When we were speaking some time ago about photographing horses, she said, "Don't point the camera lens directly at the animal—when you're taking a picture. There are times when, somehow, the horse knows, gets embarrassed, and won't move well or stand naturally."

"Once, I was standing with my back to a horse, and I wondered, 'What can I do to get really good pictures of it?' I turned around for a moment, and it was playing and moving around beautifully. 'That's it!' I thought. 'That's what she sensed.'

"When I can't take a good picture while looking at the animal, I always face the other way, just like in the 5th dan test, and I sense the right moment to turn around and click the shutter," she told me, adding with a modest blush, "And that's how I managed to get some lovely shots of horses."

She saw that the sensitivity required for the 5th dan test was useful even in her field. So please remember the multifaceted significance of the 5th dan test, and take care never to forget the importance of your inner eye, your inner senses.



Guus demonstrating jôdan uke.



## “Jiraiya and the World Ninja War”

The 50-episode television drama series, “Jiraiya and the World Ninja War,” is over now. It was aired every Sunday from the beginning of last year to the beginning of this, and achieved quite high audience ratings. My first reason for deciding to make the Jiraiya series, was to correct and change completely the views that the average person has of ninpō as a murderous and deviant practice. These terrible traits have merely been invented and attributed to ninja society by writers and cartoonists. Another reason was to dramatize what the true ninja is looking for in life, and to ask what things of importance the ninja’s way of fortitude and forbearance can contribute to modern society: what ninpo has to offer modern man.

Most people think that a ninja movie must be first and foremost an action picture, right? But I put action second in this series. The reason for this is that the true ninjutsu techniques consist very largely of elements that are concealed and unseen. Also, it was a program directed at children, and so catered to childish dreams and the fairy-tale mentality. Since it was a “home drama,” love was an important aspect. Love must also be at the heart of the martial arts, but most people who are training in fighting techniques approach them with a brutal attitude. My intention in making the series was to indicate a new direction—toward a more humane practice of the martial arts.

The word ‘dream’ is often to be found in the writings of Zen monks and of Miyamoto Musashi and others. It’s essential for adults, too, to cherish dreams, you see. Takamatsu Sensei once said, “You know, I think that the most desirable condition is to be a member of a cheerful and happy family, to have friends and partners who trust each other, and to preserve a sense of justice.” But I must explain at this point that when he said ‘member (of a family),’ he used the Japanese word ‘ko.’ When this word ‘ko’ is written (in Chinese or Japanese), it not only means ‘child,’ but it also appears at the ends of names and words such as Lao-Tzu, Confucius and prince, carrying the meaning of ‘distinguished personage’ or ‘respected person’—a fine person who is able to stand up for justice and what is right.

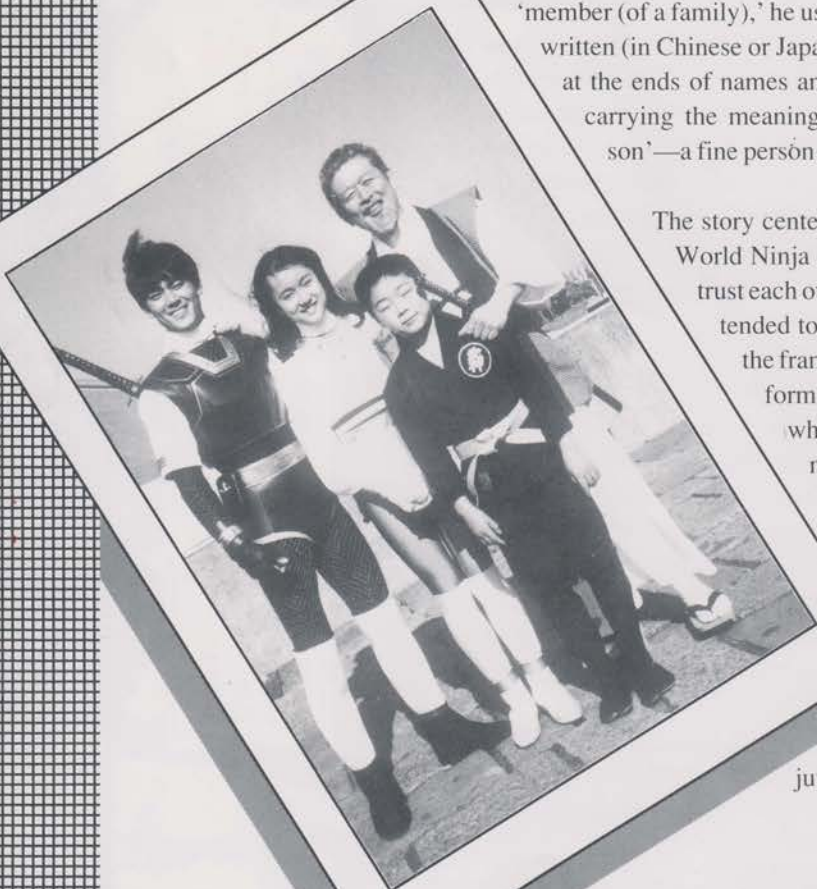
The story centering around the Yamaji family in “Jiraiya and the World Ninja War” is all about three children who are cheerful, trust each other, and are actively maintaining justice. It was intended to be a production that would adhere consistently to the framework of the *Sanshin no kata* (literally, three-heart form, or a trinity of minds). I think that not only those who are training in ninjutsu and other martial arts, but many other people, too, should see it. I personally would like to speak to them directly from the screen. But anyway, here I am, acting as Tetsuzan Yamaji, of the direct line of Togakure-ryū ninjutsu.

So, starting in the next edition, I will describe the story of the “World Ninja War” episode by episode, with comments on the ninjutsu and other budō for the enjoyment of readers.

Right: The Yamaji family Tetsuzan Yamaji (father)  
Manabu Yamaji (younger son) Kei Yamaji (daughter)  
Tōha Yamaji (elder son)



“Togakure-ryū Ninpō Bujinkan” At the entrance to the dōjō site selected for the TV series: Tōha, also known as Jiraiya, with the sober-faced Tetsuzan





January 13, 1989

In a photograph appearing in a Japanese newspaper, Sylvain Guintard a little while after he had passed his fifth dan test, holding his book on ninjutsu published in France, and standing with Sôke and 'Essence of Ninjutsu'...

**Sylvain:** "Well, this is my first book, but I'm sorry about the mistakes in it."

**Soke:** "No, no! Thanks for putting out a very nice book! We have a saying in Japanese, "Bungles are the beginning of success." The important thing is to have a constant passion for transmitting the right feeling—a good, fresh and clear feeling and for the correctness of the teaching.



初見さん国際出版  
高弟シルバンさんも

忍者初見さん(戸隠流34代宗家)は、これ迄も数々の著書を出版、その名はあまねく世界に知られているが、この程またアメリカコンテンポラリー社から「忍術のエッセンス」を出版した。また初見さんの高弟のひとりシルバンギヤンターさん(仏)もエディションデユモント社から「忍術」を出版フランスで大きな話題になっている。写真:画人

## Buyû (Martial Arts Friends)

This section of our newsletter is reserved for any *buyû* who have had the kindness to come and study my ninjutsu, so that they may tell about pleasant experiences with other *buyû*, amusing stories of mistakes, bloopers and screw-ups, or other tales of life "keeping going" in the Bujinkan—it is intended as a column for all to share and enjoy.

Since this is just the second edition, let me present a few photos of the time when Steve Hayes, Bud Malmstrom, and Jack Hoban came to Noda City to appear in a television program shot in Kiyomizu Park.

If any of you readers can recount some interesting or funny incidents that have occurred during practice, please write them down and send them to me at the Bujinkan Hombu. The person sending in the best contributions over the year will be awarded a certificate at the Daikômyôsai in December.

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**Steve.**

*"They're really persistent, these guys, in trying to tangle me up! And all I'm doing is showing some clever little tricks of mine for whipping five attackers... Ah, but if only the girls would do this! -- Whoops, er, sorry, Rumiko!"*

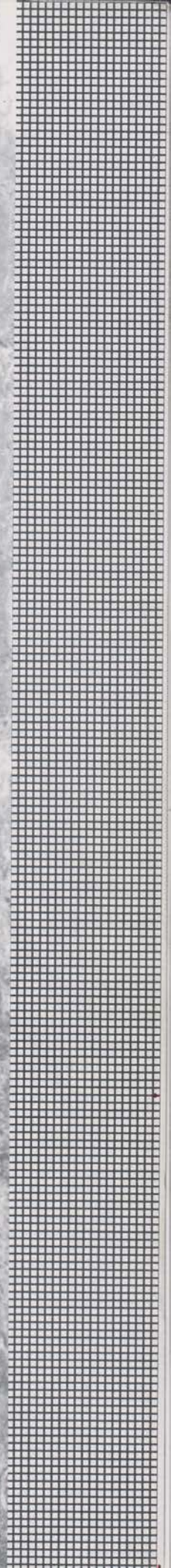






***What's Jack doing?***

*"Huh? You've given me this ninja stick, but it hasn't got any gadgets!"  
Can this, too, be ninjutsu?*





**Bud.**

*"Hey, is your camera running? OK, so now here I am... I'm going to come in and cut. Ah, Steve, just make sure you've got Nagato's Bizen-to firmly held, OK? I'll give him a swiipe while he can't get away!..."*

