

Ninjutsu Grand Masters

Contributed by Administrator
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Ninjutsu Grand Masters of Japan So Much is owed to those Grand Masters who have passed on their knowledge and skills through the generations. Dedicated to all those in earlier centuries, here we acknowledge, as a token, just two of these, Masaaki Hatsumi and his tutor Toshitsugu Takamatsu.

Masaaki Hatsumi Sensei

Hatsumi Yoshiaki was born December 2nd, 1931 in Noda (just north of Tokyo). He later changed his first given name to Masaaki.

Hatsumi Sensei was introduced to Kendo by his father when he was seven years old. He also studied Judo and Karate. In junior high school he was a gymnast, boxer and the captain in the junior high school soccer team. He also studied social dancing which he believes helped him with the footwork in his Budo training. In his college years he continued to practice Boxing and Judo. He belonged to the Judo and Drama clubs and studied Theatre Arts.

During his studies in medical school, he received 4th Dan in Judo. He was asked to teach Judo to the American soldiers at the Yokota Army Base, which he accepted. He was in his early 20's and found that the big Americans seemed to have size and natural ability and Hatsumi found that they were learning in months what took the typical Japanese years. He began to question his training... What good is a martial art if a bigger or stronger person could easily defeat you? Hatsumi began searching for a true warrior tradition.

At 26 years old, Hatsumi Sensei met Takamatsu Toshitsugu in Kashiwabara city. He travelled across Honshu islands every weekend for fifteen years to study with his teacher. The train ride took him over half a day from his home in Noda to Takamatsu's home in Ashiwabara. After 15 years of studying, Takamatsu Toshitsugu died at the age of 83 in his home in Nara (just east of Osaka) on April 2nd in 1972. A few years earlier Takamatsu had already decided that Hatsumi would be the next sole inheritor and "Soke" (family head) of:

- Togakure-ryu Ninpo Happo Hiken, 34th Soke
- Gyokko-ryu Kosshijutsu Happo Hiken, 28th Soke
- Kukishin-ryu Taijutsu Happo Hiken, 28th Soke
- Shindenfudo-ryu Dakentaijutsu Happo Hiken, 26th Soke
- Gyokushin-ryu Ninpo Happo Hiken, 21st Soke
- Koto-ryu Koppojutsu Happo Hiken, 18th Soke
- Takagiyoshin-ryu Jutaijutsu Happo Hiken, 17th Soke
- Gikan-ryu Gikan Koppojutsu Happo Hiken, 15th Soke
- Kumogakure-ryu Ninpo Happo Hiken, 14th Soke

Hatsumi Sensei travels outside Japan several times a year to teach seminars, (Taikai). He thinks it is very important for all practitioners to attend these seminars, especially if they cannot go to Japan on a regular basis. Sensei writes Sanmyaku (the Bujinkan Densho), which is a "must read" for all practitioners of this art. Sensei has also released numerous videos and books.

Hatsumi Sensei's organisation is called "Bujinkan Dojo" (The Divine Warrior God's Place for Training) and the name of our style is generally called "Budo Taijutsu".

33rd Grandmaster Togakure-ryu Ninpo

Toshitsugu Takamatsu was born in the 23rd year of Meiji (March 10, 1887) in Akashi, Hyogo province. His given name was Hisatsugu but he later changed it to Toshitsugu.

Takamatsu had low blood pressure, and he drank a glass of salt water every day as a result.

The Takamatsu family originated from Matsugashima in Ise. It is believed that at some point in their family history the Takamatsu's had been Daimyo of this area and owned the Hosokiubi Castle. Takamatsu was given a makimono scroll called Amatsu Tatara. This scroll connected the Takamatsu family with the Kuki family. The Kuki family are heirs to Kukishin Ryu.

Toshitsugu's grandfather was Toda Shinryuken Masamitsu. He had a bone clinic and a Budo Dojo in Kobe. He was of Samurai rank and Soke of Shindenfudo Ryu and a direct descendent of Tozawa Hakuunsai, the original founder of Gyokko Ryu Kosshijutsu. Takamatsu's father sent him to train with Toda because he was weak as a child. His classmates would often pick on him until he cried. They would call him "cry baby".

Toda taught Takamatsu Shindenfudo Ryu. Later he learned Koto Ryu and Togakure Ryu. He was fond of Koto Ryu but

had little interest in Togakure Ryu.

During his first year of training he was taught nothing. Instead, he was thrown around by the other students continuously. He would bleed from the elbows and knees. Nobody would comfort him. They would just continue to throw him around the dojo. But every night he came back for more. After a year of this he was taught his first techniques. By the age of thirteen he mastered the techniques of the school.

Koto Ryu training involved strong conditioning of the hands and feet, especially the fingers and toes. As a result of constant striking of rocks and hard objects, Toshitsugu's finger nails were 4 to 5 millimeters thick. He could not cut them with nail cutters. It is said he could tear the bark off of a tree with a simple sweep of his hand. He later said that this kind of training is of no use today.

When he was thirteen he left high school to go to the George Bundow English School in Kobe. While there he learned Takagi Yoshin Ryu from Mizuta Yoshitaro Tadafusa. When he was seventeen he was given the Menkyo Kaiden to the Ryu.

At the age of 17 he was also taught Kuki Happon Jutsu from Ishitani Matsutaro Takekage. It was from Ishitani that Toshitsugu also learned Hon Tai Takagi Yoshin Ryu and Gikan Ryu Koppojutsu. Before Ishitani's death he passed the scrolls of these Ryu on to Toshitsugu.

Toshitsugu received his Menkyo Kaiden from Toda in 1909 when he was 22 years old. Toda died that same year. He once told Takamatsu, "Even when you are faced with death, die laughing."

Toshitsugu made several trips to China and abroad when he was young. There are countless stories of his adventures and martial prowess. Takamatsu once said he fought 12 fights to the death (the result of challenges) and 7 competitive matches.

In the 1950's Takamatsu took a new student named Hatsumi Yoshiaki, then in his 20's. Hatsumi had been studying Kobudo under a teacher named Ueno, who had told him that there was nothing more he could teach him. Hatsumi trained with Takamatsu every weekend for 15 years.

Takamatsu died on April 2, 1972 at the age of 85. He is buried in the Kumedra cemetery near Nara.