

NAGINATA JUTSU

The Naginata is one of the main weapons used within the Fuma Ryu. It is a long pole weapon that was utilised by the dokoro ki naginata butai (Deaths head naginata squadron). This squadron acted as shock troops for the ryu and were utilised to break up enemy formations on the battlefield. The Fuma Ryu Ikusa Shinobi received training from the Houjou family in Japan. This was a Samurai family that the Fuma Ryu served for five generations.

Naginata Jutsu is taught within the ryu through students learning basic dexterity exercises. These ensure students familiarise themselves with the weapon and become relaxed when using it. Some of these exercises are explained below:

Naginata Dexterity Exercises

Figure of Eight Spin: This is essential for students to relax with the length of the weapon and to ensure they can control the weapon once in movement. It is essential that they can spin the naginata close to their body. This prevents them from hitting or cutting their colleagues when the weapon is in use. As the weapon is employed on the battlefield you would have been standing in regimented lines to receive the enemy, therefore you need to be able to spin and cut with the weapon at close quarters with little space either side of you. The spins should be done with each hand in a figure of eight cutting down and then cutting up.

Switching Hands: The advantage the naginata gives its user is its length. This can only be maintained if you can continually move your hands up and down the weapon to change its length or your leading hand. A basic exercise that teaches this is undertaken from chudan. You tsuki (thrust) then turn 180 degrees on your heels to face behind you. As you turn you switch your hands so that your left hand is now the lead hand and then tsuki once you have completed your turn. This exercise is repeated to ensure that the hands switch places exactly and that you do not move them up the weapon to alter its length.

Full Extension: As well as switching your hands to utilise the length of the weapon it is also important to be able to hold the weapon at full extension. This requires you to have the necessary strength to hold the weapon out straight gripping the naginata at the end of the shaft. For this exercise you hold your arm out straight in front of you, gripping the naginata at the end of the weapon ensuring the weapon is parallel with your arm. This exercise is undertaken using each arm.

Once you are comfortable using the weapon the ryu teaches kamae (stances), giri (cuts) and a kata to bring together movement and cuts with the weapon before you can progress to randori.

Once mastered, the naginata can be used to keep a number of armed opponents' at bay. It is a difficult weapon to combat but a hard weapon to master. However, once in full flow a competent naginata practitioner is difficult to combat effectively without using additional ninjutsu skills to gain the advantage.