

Parcours en iaido
Personal iaido path

In 1973, at the age of twenty I first met Mr. Rene Joly, alias Prajñānanda, who taught me the Buddha-Dharma. The Buddha-Dharma might be seen primarily as a method to develop a frame of mind of openness to the way things appear.

Prajñānanda observed that I lacked energy and advised me to practice budo: In 1973 I started karate and aikido, achieving 2th dan in the latter. Then I began fencing, kenjitsu (Kurama Ryû), and taiji quan which allowed me to acquire the basics of martial arts technique and appreciate their value. I also owe a significant debt of gratitude to intense professional training as an actor-mime developing body awareness. When Prajñānanda passed away twenty years later, I turned to Zen. Encounters with Kusan Sunim in South Korea, Moriyama D. Roshi in Japan, and others left a deep mark on me.

These joint practices, having taught me how to learn, enabled me to approach iaido in 1981 with the “beginner’s spirit” (shoshin) highly valued in Zen and its related arts such as shodō (calligraphy) and chadō (tea ceremony). I entered my training in this state of mind and earned 1th dan after a few months of practice.

I first began studying Muso shinden ryû iaido (4th dan within the Japanese and French kendo federation), then I began my studies of Muso jikiden Eishin ryû iaido (MJER) in 1984 and became a student of this traditional school in Japan under Esaka Hiroshi Seigen, hanshi 10th dan and vice-president of the Japanese iaido federation (Zen nihon iaido renmei - ZNIR). Esaka sensei became my master, assisted by Hinago Sakae sensei, juhanshi 8th dan (six times champion of Japan). He introduced me to Yamaguchi Katsuo Seikou, who invited me to join the International Martial Art Federation (IMAF.)

Between the different disciplines, schools and federations, I have passed around thirty different dan examinations, mainly:

- Kyôshi (teacher) 7th dan in 2003 certified by the IMAF.
- Renshi (expert, in the sense of “the man of experience”) in 1996 and 6th dan certified by the ZNIR in 1994 and by the MJER Seito Kai in 1993.

I have contributed to the development of iaido by teaching and training teachers who have established eleven dojos in France, Germany, Serbia, and California (Berkeley and San Francisco). I also wrote a book for practitioners in 2013: *Iaido, the Living Art of the Japanese Sword*.

In 2019, I recognized my successor in the person of Andrej Diamantstein, kyoshi 7th dan, who teaches in California and has been my student since 1988, then that of Esaka Sensei, and now of Hinago Sensei. I offer him my deep gratitude and ongoing support for his cooperation, expertise, and sincere and open understanding of iaido.

I received and transmitted the tradition in service of the art. Today, I coach teachers at their request. For a long time, I have been researching the conditions of the possibility of “presence” (from the Latin *prae-sens* - “being in front of oneself” - opening up the sense of meaning and its modalities of attention and of reception based on Zen and phenomenology (especially Japanese). I have made this work the subject of some workshops, conferences, and publications.

IAIDO 居合道. 居/I: beings, being (or again the meaning of "sustainable "); 合/AI: unity, union, harmony; 道/DO: the way, the path (or even the function). "The way of harmony with beings, the way of the unity of being". The Japanese language does not distinguish singular from plural here, nor does the practice.

