



PRESENTS

# THE HISTORY OF THE NINPIDEN

BY

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忍秘伝

THE NINPIDEN

SECRET NINJA TRADITION

BY

HATTORI HANZO & OTHERS

1560

The *Ninpiden*<sup>1</sup>, or *Secret Ninja Tradition*, is a manuscript which is said to have been passed down in the family of *Hattori Hanzo Yasunaga* 服部半蔵保長 who served the *Shogun, Ashikaga Yoshiharu* and later the *Tokugawa* clan in the domain of *Mikawa*. The copy used for this translation is from *Okimori Naosaburo's* collection and has an ownership mark belonging to *Ooka Echizen no Kami*, who was a famous magistrate of *Edo* and also, though it is very vague, possibly the mark of the *Sainenji* temple, which was founded by *Hattori Hanzo Masanari* 服部半蔵正成 in 1594 and retains his grave in *Shinjuku, Tokyo*. The temple was moved to this latter site in 1634. According to the inscriptions on this manuscript, it was originally given by *Hattori Hanzo Yasunaga* to his son *Masanari* at his age of 19 in 1560. However it must be fully understood that the document in question is not the original and is actually a transcription by *Kato Sakuzaemon* 加藤作左衛門 in 1731 (Kyoho 16) and this can be seen stated at the end of Volume 1. Also, the end of Volume 1, lists the names of the successors starting with *Hattori Minobe Saburo* and then *Hattori Mino no Kami Yasukiyo* of *Ichi Sangu Kage Daimyoin* shrine.

Dating Problems

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<sup>1</sup> This can also be read *Shinobihiden* and would probably be the manuscript's original name.

As this is a transcription and is riddled with mistakes it is hard to discern a date. As can be seen below, multiple dates appear in the volumes:

Volume 1 – 1655 (as the date of original writing for this volume), 1727 & 1731.

Volume 2 – No date given

Volume 3 – 1560 (as the date of original writing for this volume) & 1733

Volume 4 – 1560 (as the date of original writing for this volume)

To add further confusion there is *another* manuscript which has the date of 1560 and named *Hattori Hanzo Ninpo Menjo* 服部半蔵忍法免状certificate. It is a transcribed abstract from Volumes 1, 2 and 4 of the *Ninpiden* and the inscription reads:

Written in 1560

*Hattori Hanzo* 服部半蔵

*Hattori Sukenoshin* 同(服部)助之進

*Hattori Hanzo* 同(服部)半蔵

1733

*Kato Sakuzemon* 加藤作左衛門

There are three possible theories regarding the date of the *Ninpiden*:

1. Volumes 2, 3 and 4 were written at the same time in 1560 (or before) and an introduction in the form of Volume 1 was added in at the later date of 1655. Then in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the whole document was transcribed and given the respective volume titles. This would appear to be credible as the last three volumes deal with what could be considered warring period ninjutsu while Volume 1 (1655) concentrates on telling the history of ninjutsu, which also bears resemblance to: the *Bansenshukai* (1676), a document that claims to have collected information from a myriad of ninjutsu texts and the *Igakoku Ninjutsu Hiho*<sup>2</sup> or *Secrets of the Ninjutsu of the Iga Domain*.

2. It is possible that the entire document was written in 1655 and that the date of 1560 are false, and was used alongside the names *Hattori* to create a greater respect for the text.

3. The entire text was created in 1731 and that the document mentioned above, the *Hattori Hanzo Ninpo Menjo* certificate was copied from this in 1733. While unlikely it must be registered as a possibility. Only the discovery of an earlier text would remove this theory.

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<sup>2</sup> Written by *Kikuoka Nyogen* and compiled in 1698. It is an abstract from the *Segen Itto*, which consists of 150 volumes.

## Who Wrote the Scroll?

The scroll is attributed to *Hattori Hanzo I* but this is only by theory. The task of finding the author is quite difficult as there are a great many names written within its pages:

### Volume 1

1655

*Hattori Minobe Saburo Yasukiyo* 服部美濃邊三郎

*Ichi Sangu Kage Daimyojin*<sup>3</sup> 一山宮影大明神

*Hattori Mino no Kami Yasukiyo* 服部美濃守保清

*Hattori Kizaemon no Jo Yasutsugu* 同 (服部) 喜左工門尉保次

*Hattori Chubei Masayasu* 同 (服部) 忠兵衛正保

*Hattori Sukenoshin Yasutatsu* 同 (服部) 助之進保辰

*Hattori Hanzo Nagayasu* 同 (服部) 半蔵長保

*Hattori Godayu Yasuhisa* 同 (服部) 権大夫保久

*Moriita Chozaemon Hisaaki* 守田長左衛門久明

1727

*Seno Kaheiji Katsuaki* 瀬野嘉平治勝明

1731

*Kato Sakuzaemon* 加藤作左衛門

### Volume 2

No date

*Hattori Hanzo* 服部半蔵

*Hattori Hanzo* 同 (服部) 半蔵

*Kato Yashiro* 加藤弥四郎

### Volume 3

1560

*Hattori Hanzo* 服部半蔵

*Hattori Sukenoshin* 同 (服部) 助之進

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<sup>3</sup> This is the name of a shrine or possibly a deity.

*Hattori Hanzo* 同 (服部) 半蔵

1733

*Kato Sakuzaemon* 加藤作左衛門

Volume 4

1560

*Hanttori Hanzo* 服部半蔵

*Hattori Hannai* 同 (服部) 半内

The *Historical Ninjutsu Research Team* is proposing that Volumes 2, 3 and 4 were written by *Hattori Hanzo I* and that the subsequent names below him are the people that these individual scrolls were given to. We would like to offer the theory that *Hattori Minobe Saburo*, wrote Volume 1 and those names after him are possibly those who the scroll was passed down to. We cannot qualify this theory as the book was transcribed which would have eradicated the individuals' hand writing which may confirm such a hypothesis. The other possible answer is that those individuals on the list are co-writers. However, this seems unlikely, as by nature only one *Hattori Hanzo* in each clan can exist at one time as the word *Hanzo* in this context is that of a family title or position. Also, it would assume that one of the writers is in fact the person who transcribed the text.

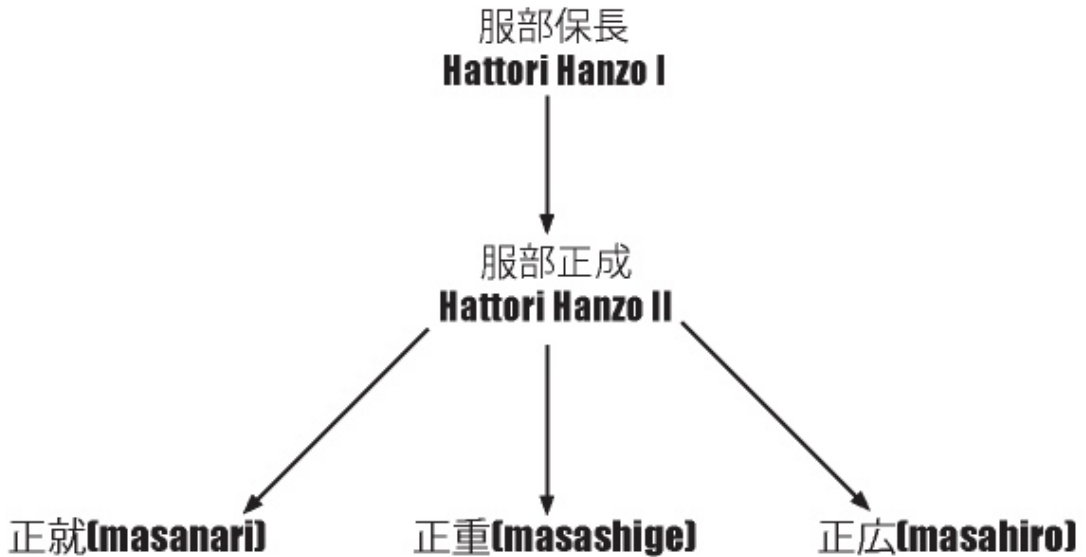
## The Mistakes

It is well known that this transcription of 1731 is somewhat littered with mistakes. It appears that the transcriber did not correctly copy some sections of the text. Examples of this are normally measurements. The Japanese measurement of, *Bu* 分 and *Sun* 寸 appear to have been mistranslated and make many of the tools impossibly large or impossibly small. They do show up as quite obvious and have been identified within the script. Alongside this Volume 4 lists 12 points for the shinobi to remember, however in the transcription these points were numbered yet were not put in order, the authors here have corrected the list and also chosen the best measurement that represents the true length of the objects described.

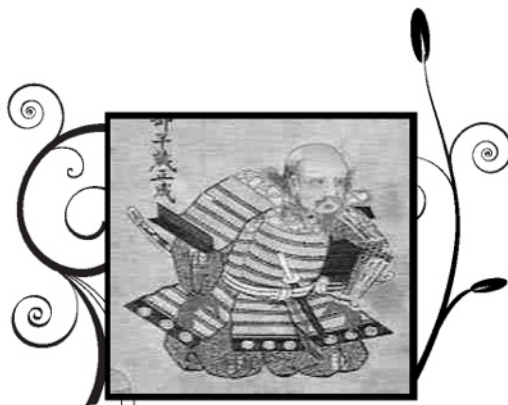
## The Life of *Hattori Hanzo*

*Hattori Hanzo*, is a name that shatters its way through the world of the ninja but who is *Hattori Hanzo*? It is normally not the case that people misunderstand *who* Hanzo is; it is more of a case that people simply do not *know* who or more realistically *what*

the name means. The first thing you need to know is that *Hattori* is a family name and *Hanzo* is both a name and a form of social position; it is a name taken on by the head of the *Hattori* family. The second thing that you need to know about *Hattori Hanzo* is the fact that there are more than one of them. It is unknown how many heads of the *Hattori* family there have been, however with reference to ninjutsu you only need to know of a few. Below you can see the family tree of the main members in question.



*Hattori (Yasunaga) Hanzo* was at first named as *Hanzo* 半三 *Iwami no Kami* which later changed to *Hanzo* 半蔵. He was from *Chigachi* in *Iga* and moved to serve the *Shogun Ashikaga Yoshiharu*. Afterwards he went to *Mikawa* to serve the *Tokugawa* clan. It is thought that *Hanzo Masanari (Hattori Hanzo II)* was born there. The *Ninpiden* says that this *Hattori* is the original author of the manuscript and that he gave it to his son *Hattori Hanzo II* or *Devil Hanzo*.



**A 17th CENTURY PORTRAIT OF HATTORI II**

*Hattori (Masanari) Hanzo II* or *Oni-Hanzo* was the son of the first *Hattori* and is the man who is said to have received the *Ninpiden* from his father at the age of 19. We also believe that at the age of 16, on the night attack on *Udo* castle in *Mikawa*, he infiltrated the castle leading 60 to 70 shinobi. To add to these achievements we believe that in 1576 he attacked *Kakegawa* Castle of the *Totoumi* and finally he took part in several battles: *Anegawa*; *Ushikubo*; *Kosaka*; and *Takatenjin*. This man was ‘friend’ to *Tokugawa Ieyasu*, leader of 300 ninja in the service of the *Shogun* and a master tactician. He also was the man who arranged for the *Shogun* to escape his enemies by making a mountain crossing through *Iga* using *Hattori’s* connection with the shinobi. This action is what resulted in the *Shogun* employing 300 ninja, which were said to be made up of 200 from *Iga* and 100 from *Koka*.

*Hattori Hanzo III* was the first son of *Hattori II* and also named *Masanari*. If his father was close to the perfect general then his son was the archetypal annoyed ‘teenager’ figure. By the time of the ascension of *Tokugawa Ieyasu* to supreme *Shogun* of Japan, *Hattori Hanzo II* was dead and his son *Hanzo III* was in charge of the 300 strong ninja group that were now stationed at gates at the palace in *Tokyo* that are still visible today. We know from the historical record that the ninja under this new head of the *Hattori* family revolted, complaining he was a poor leader. The incident resulted in manhunts and bloodshed which led to the dishonour of *Hattori III*. The problem ended with *Hattori III’s* death in the siege of *Osaka*.

On the whole, the *Ninpiden* is a great resource for those who wish to study ninjutsu in its historical context. It is full of fascinating information and skills developed by the ninja. It must be stated that this manuscript and this translation is subject to the difficulties inherent within the text. The text can be so simple or have the feeling that the reader should *know* a certain level of these skills that sections are open to interpretation and we, The *Historical Ninjutsu Research Team* have endeavoured to bring you the best translation possible without submitting our own theories above that of the information found within the text. Alas however, the reader should remember that the *Ninpiden* is not a manuscript that has given up all of its secrets and is open to much further study and correction.

The full *Ninpiden* is available in English on Amazon, March 2011.

ANTONY CUMMINS & YOSHIE MINAMI

# TRUE NINJA TRADITIONS

THE NINPIDEN & THE UNKNOWN NINJA SCROLL



INCLUDING  
100 NINJA POEMS

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