

HONTAI YOSHIN RYU UK MESSAGE FOR 2010

2009 was an excellent year for Hontai Yoshin Ryu UK. We hosted an extremely successful Taikai with over a hundred participants from all over Europe. The 19th Soke was delighted.

We also did very well with Hontai Yoshin Ryu UK gradings during the year. We obtained six new shodan students: Dimitriy Dudko, James Ewens, Andrew Mayes, Ebbe Rogge, Tom Swales, and Umberto Pirera (joint UK/Italy). Andrew Mayes, Ebbe Rogge and James Ewens also achieved their shodan iaijutsu grading, along with David Richardson. Four members attained their nidan gradings: Anthony Browne, Sarah Chambers, Samuel Lim and Nick Norman (joint UK/Finland). We also acquired three sandan gradings: Stevie Wong, Rod Kowald and Rod Phelps. David Malvern gained his yondan in jujutsu and nidan iaijutsu and Mike McClure was awarded rokudan by Soke. Twenty Hontai Yoshin Ryu UK black belt gradings in total.

The popularity of Hontai Yoshin Ryu techniques continues to grow, as the technical level is appreciated. This has led to some new groups outside Hontai Yoshin Ryu teaching their version of Hontai Yoshin Ryu techniques. These groups claim to be genuine Koryu, but they are not recognised as such by Nippon Kobudo Kyokai, the Japanese government recognised Japanese classical Budo Association, where Hontai Yoshin Ryu is a senior member. The 19th Soke of Hontai Yoshin Ryu does not recognise grades obtained from other organisations teaching Hontai Yoshin Ryu techniques, and these grades are not recognised by Nippon Kobudo Kyokai, which is a member of Nippon Budokan, the Japanese government recognised Budo Association.

Some organisations are claiming to be ancient Samurai Koryu, when in fact they have only been set up in the last few years. They have created websites with pictures of scrolls, samurai and swords to give the impression that they are Koryu. The pictures are augmented with lengthy histories and ancestral family trees, but all of this is taken from the history and ancestry of Hontai Yoshin Ryu. They are not genuine Samurai Koryu but imitate Koryu for business purposes. Over the past 350 years there are many who would like to have been Soke of Hontai Yoshin Ryu, but only 19 have succeeded - because they were the best. Why train with an imitation Koryu when you can train with the real thing?

Several members have been expelled from Hontai Yoshin Ryu UK, leaving the organisation in much better shape. These expelled members have joined a newly formed imitation Koryu organisation. The real stature of this group was demonstrated when they applied to train at the Budokwai, the Hontai Yoshin Ryu Honbu dojo and the premier dojo in the UK. Of course, they were turned down.

I stress that the techniques of these imitation Koryu are taken from Hontai Yoshin Ryu, but the 19th Soke of Hontai Yoshin Ryu does not recognise the grades. They claim to be branches of Hontai Yoshin Ryu but only branches recognised by Hontai Yoshin Ryu Honbu dojo in Japan are official branches. So why not take your grades with a genuine Hontai Yoshin Ryu branch and have them recognised? 'Hontai Yoshin Ryu UK' is the only official branch in the UK.

I look forward to another successful year for the 19th Soke and all Hontai Yoshin Ryu members in 2010.

Mike McClure
6th Dan
Head of Hontai Yoshin Ryu UK