

## **SWORD CARE**

laido practitioners either use an iaito (usually a chrome plated alloy sword) or a shinken (sharp steel sword, traditionally made). These should be cleaned and oiled regularly, particularly shinken.

Prior to every practice the mekugi (peg which retains the handle - tsuka - on the blade) should be checked to ensure that it is fully home and not damaged.

Periodically check the saya for any debris that may have collected inside - gently tap the mouth of the saya (koiguchi) on a soft surface (such as your hand or folded cloth) to remove such debris. If the debris has become compacted with sword oil then use a length of wire to carefully loosen the compacted material first.

### **Cleaning an iaito**

a) Hold the sword (by its handle) in your right hand, take a cleaning paper (rice paper - nugui-gami - which must be pre-wrinkled, however for iaito cleaning soft fragrance and lotion-free facial tissue can be substituted) with your left hand and place the back of the sword (mune) on the paper, starting at the base of the sword (by the habaki). Pinch the paper around the sword so that the paper is in contact with both sides of the sword *without touching the edge (ha) of the blade!* Slowly draw the paper along the sword towards the tip (kissaki) and off the end of the blade in one continuous movement. Repeat as necessary until the blade is clean.

b) Take an oiled cloth (lint-free cloth eg. 4x2 cloth available from gunsmiths) which has been soaked in a small amount of clove oil (choji abura although a light mineral/machine oil can be used such as sewing machine oil) and wipe along the blade (as described for cleaning). Do not over-oil the blade.

### **Cleaning a shinken**

a) Hold the sword (by its handle) in your right hand, take a cleaning paper and place the back of the sword on the paper, starting at the base of the sword. Pinch the paper around the sword so that the paper is in contact with both sides of the sword *without touching the edge (ha) of the blade!* Slowly draw the paper along the sword towards the tip (kissaki) and off the end of the blade in one continuous movement. Repeat as necessary until the blade is clean.

b) Take hold of the uchiko (tool which contains powder from sword polishing stones which is used to absorb residual oil and maintain blade polish) with your left hand; gently tap the uchiko a few times against both sides of the blade and mune. Do not over do it - it is not necessary to smother the entire surface of the sword with powder!

c) Take a fresh piece of cleaning paper and run it along the blade as previously described to remove the uchiko powder.

d) Take an oiled cloth and wipe along the blade (as described for cleaning). Do not over-oil the blade.