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Hasegawa Eishin

Seventh Headmaster of the Hayashizaki Lineage and Founder of Hasegawa Eishin-ryu

Editor's Note: This essay continues the journal's 2026 series on the Muso Jikiden Eishin-ryu lineage: Hayashizaki Jinsuke Minamoto no Shigenobu (April), the school's later evolution (July), and Oe Masaji Shikei (August). Hasegawa Eishin is the name inside the school's name. What can be said of him with care—and what cannot—is the subject of the following pages.

Identity and the Problem of Sources

The swordsman known in English as Hasegawa Eishin—more fully Hasegawa Chikaranosuke Eishin (長谷川主税助英信), or Hidenobu—is the figure from whom Muso Jikiden Eishin-ryu takes the second half of its name.¹ In the orthodox lineage claimed by that school he is counted as the seventh-generation successor to Hayashizaki Jinsuke Minamoto no Shigenobu, the late-sixteenth-century originator of the seated and standing drawing methods that later generations called iai or batto. In another, equally traditional reckoning he is not merely a transmitter but the school's founder (*ryuso*): the man who recast an older tachi art for the katana of the early Edo period and whose personal name became the style's designation.²

A biography of Hasegawa must begin with a caution. Almost nothing about him can be fixed with the precision expected of a modern life. Japanese encyclopedic treatments state that his dates of birth and death are unknown, that traditions about his birthplace conflict, and that “there are many points of doubt about the actual Hasegawa Eishin; the historical facts remain difficult to establish.”³ What survives is a composite of *densho* (transmission scrolls), later domain histories from Tosa and Shinano, and the memory of schools that claimed him as ancestor. The following account distinguishes, as far as the evidence allows, what is widely repeated from what is merely possible.

Names, Origins, and Dates

Different traditions preserve different personal names. In the iai and spear lines he is Hasegawa Chikaranosuke Eishin (長谷川主税助英信). In the



yawara (jūjutsu) transmissions of Muso Jikiden-ryū and Mukyū Gyokushin-ryū he appears as Hasegawa Kuranosuke (or Naizo-no-suke) Eishin. In Toda Nagato-ryū he is Hasegawa Kuraryō Eishin. The title *chikaranosuke*—“assistant of strength,” or a tax-office courtesy title—is the form most often attached to the swordsman.⁴

Place of birth is likewise disputed. Tosa (modern Kochi Prefecture on Shikoku), the domain that later made the style its restricted house art (*otome-ryū*), claims him as a native son. Spear denshō of the Hozoin Hasegawa-ha say he was born in Sanuki (Kagawa). Still other notices place his origins in Kishū (Kii). After service—variously to the Kishū Tokugawa house or, in English Tosa accounts, as a thousand-koku tax official to a daimyō of Oshū or Oshī—he is said to have become a ronin and settled in Edo, where he taught.⁵ One Tosa-oriented reconstruction has him born in Tosa, traveling to Edo for employment and study, serving a northern daimyō at a stipend of one thousand koku, and returning late in life to teach in his native domain.

Reported dates are internally inconsistent and in part legendary. *Kotobank* offers the range circa 1602–1719. Hozoin Hasegawa-ha tradition gives a birth in “Bunroku 7” (a year that does not exist in the calendar; some editors emend it to Keicho 3, 1598) and a death in the twelfth month of Kyōhō 4 (1719) at the age of 118. The Muso Jikiden Eishin-ryū article on Japanese *Wikipedia* simply records death in 1719. A Tosa narrative that makes him seventh headmaster already in 1610 cannot be reconciled with a birth around 1600. Other English accounts place his study under Banno Dan’emon-no-jō Nobusada in Edo during the Kyōhō era (1716–1736), which would push his activity a century later than the 1610 date. The safest statement is that he belongs to the early Edo period, that later tradition clustered around a death in 1719, and that no contemporary census, temple register, or *bakufu* appointment record has been produced to confirm either birth or death.⁶

Place in the Hayashizaki Lineage

The iai schools that descend from Hayashizaki Jinsuke (c. 1542/1546–1621) present a linear genealogy in which Hasegawa is the seventh name:⁷

1st. Hayashizaki Jinsuke Minamoto no Shigenobu — founder of Shinmei Muso-ryū / Hayashizaki-ryū

2nd. Tamiya Heibei Shigemasa — also founder of Tamiya-ryū

3rd. Nagano Muraku Nyūdō Kinrosai — also founder of Muraku-ryū

4th. Momo (Todo) Gunbei Mitsushige

5th. Arikawa Seizaemon Munetsugu

6th. Banno Dan’emon-no-jō Nobusada

7th. Hasegawa Chikaranosuke Eishin (Hidenobu) — founder of Hasegawa Eishin-ryū

Several of the men above founded schools of their own. The genealogy is therefore not a simple family succession but a chain of license: each generation received the Hayashizaki drawing methods and, in some cases, added or separated a new ryū. Hasegawa’s position as seventh is the convention of the Tosa (later Tanimura-ha) line. Some modern writers, emphasizing the scale of his revisions, treat him as first generation of Eishin-ryū and regard Shinmei Muso-ryū only as a parent school. Both views are traditional rather than documentary.⁸

Technical Work: From Tachi to Katana

The contribution for which Hasegawa is universally remembered is technical. The older Hayashizaki methods had been shaped for the tachi, worn slung edge-down. By the early Edo period the samurai class had adopted the *uchigatana* or katana thrust through the obi with the cutting edge upward. Drawing, cutting, and re-sheathing had to be re-engineered for that carry. Tradition credits Hasegawa with making that adaptation and with composing a body of new techniques performed from *tatehiza*, the half-seated posture with one knee raised. Those forms survive as the *Tatehiza-no-Bu*, or *Chuden*, of modern Muso Jikiden Eishin-ryū—and as the corresponding middle set in Muso Shinden-ryū.⁹

The ten *tatehiza* kata associated with his name in the later standardized curriculum are *Yōkogumo* (Cloud Bank), *Tora-issoku* (Tiger’s Step), *Inazuma* (Lightning), *Ukigumo* (Floating Clouds), *Oroshi* (Mountain Wind), *Iwanami* (Breaking Waves), *Uroko-gaeshi* (Fish Scaling), *Namigaeshi* (Returning Waves), *Takiotoshi* (Waterfall), and *Makko* (Facing Front). Whether Hasegawa himself



named and fixed exactly these ten, or whether later headmasters selected and titled them from a larger inherited pool, cannot be known. What the sources agree on is that the change of draw—from an upward lift suited to a hanging tachi to a forward, edge-up extraction suited to the katana—and the cultivation of seated work other than seiza are his mark on the art.

For students at Itten Dojo this is not an antiquarian detail. Every time we rise from tatehiza we are repeating the solution later generations attributed to Hasegawa: a draw designed for the sword as it is worn in the dojo today, not for the slung tachi of the Sengoku battlefield.

Japanese *Wikipedia* notes a further claim, current in some modern retellings, that he served the Owari Tokugawa house at a thousand koku and that it was in that service he remade tachi iai for the uchigatana. The same article adds that this particular service story is probably a later tradition.¹⁰

A Master of Several Arts

Iai was not the only art attached to his name. Later school histories call Hasegawa a master of “a hundred martial accomplishments.” He is listed as nineteenth-generation transmitter of Muso Jikiden-ryu *wa* (a comprehensive yawara or jujutsu tradition, called Natsubara-ryu in Tosa), fifth-generation transmitter of Toda Nagato-ryu (bojutsu and kenjutsu), and founder of Mukyu Gyokushin-ryu jujutsu and of Hasegawa-ryu *iai heiho*. In spear he is founder of Hozoin-ryu Hasegawa-ha. The story given is that he already held a license in Oshima-ryu (plain spear) before studying the crossed sickle-spear of Hozoin-ryu, combined the two, and, out of deference, altered the character *ho* in the school name.¹¹

A single anecdote of combat is repeated: in the Shoho era (1644–1648) he defeated Takekawa Muteki in a match with live blades. Like the 118-year lifespan, the duel is hagiographic until an independent record appears. What the multiplicity of claimed lineages does show is that early-Edo teachers often presided over composite curricula—iai, kenjutsu, yawara, bo, yari—and that later specialists inherited only one strand. The iai schools that still bear his name are the strand that survived in Tosa. The Shinano (Shinshu) transmission, which emphasized

yawara, bo, and *hojo* (restraint), died out in the late Meiji and early Showa years and has been the object of modern reconstruction rather than continuous practice.¹²

Students, Tosa, and the Name of the School

Hasegawa’s principal successor in the iai line is Arai Seitetsu Kiyonobu (also written Arai Seiketsu Kiyonobu), eighth generation. A densho issued by Arai in 1668 already uses the designation Muso Jikiden Eishin-ryu. That document matters. It shows that the full name later associated with Oe Masaji’s Taisho-era reorganization was already in use in the generation immediately after Hasegawa, and was not a twentieth-century invention.¹³

The art reached Tosa through Hayashi Rokudayu Morimasa (1663–1732), ninth generation, a versatile Tosa retainer who studied in Edo under Arai while serving on *sankin-kotai* duty (the Shogunate policy requiring alternating residency in Edo and in the home domain). Under Hayashi and his adopted successor Hayashi Yasudayu the school became an otome-ryu of the Yamauchi domain: taught in the domain school, forbidden to outsiders, and practiced by goshi and other Tosa warriors. Seiza forms from Omori-ryu, learned by Hayashi from Omori Rokurozaemon, were added to the Hasegawa tatehiza material and later classified as *Shoden*. After the death of the eleventh headmaster, Oguro Motoemon Kiyokatsu, the Tosa transmission divided into the lines later called Tanimura-ha and Shimomura-ha.

The Tanimura-ha, reorganized by Oe Masaji (1852–1927), is the immediate ancestor of the modern school called Muso Jikiden Eishin-ryu. The Shimomura-ha, through Hosokawa Yoshimasa and Nakayama Hakudo, is the ancestor of Muso Shinden-ryu.¹⁴

The name itself is a compound. Muso, “without equal” or “peerless,” is an epithet already attached in legend to Hayashizaki—praised, the story goes, by Toyotomi Hideyoshi—and sometimes transferred to Hasegawa. Jikiden means “direct transmission,” the claim of an unbroken teacher-to-student line. Eishin is Hasegawa’s name. Ryu is “school.” Some accounts add that Hasegawa headed, or borrowed the prestige of, an older comprehensive Muso Jikiden-ryu of *heiho* (strategy), and affixed Eishin to distinguish his iai. Whether that



older school existed as described is one of the unresolvable points in the record.¹⁵

Legacy

Hasegawa Eishin left no signed treatise that modern historians have identified, no portrait of certain authenticity, and no household archive. His monument is the practice itself. Every time a student of Muso Jikiden Eishin-ryu or Muso Shinden-ryu rises from tatehiza, draws a katana edge-up from the obi, and cuts, the motion is the one later generations attributed to him. The Tatehiza-no-Bu remains the “middle transmission” of both major Hayashizaki descendants. The Tosa domain’s decision to keep the art as an otome-ryu preserved a curriculum that, after the *Haitorei* (sword ban) and the Meiji restructuring of the warrior class, Oe Masaji could still reorganize and send out into national iai organizations.¹⁶

It is reasonable to treat Hasegawa as a historical person of the early Edo period, a licensed inheritor of Hayashizaki’s drawing methods, a teacher in Edo whose student Arai issued a 1668 scroll under the name Muso Jikiden Eishin-ryu, and the figure around whom Tosa and Shinano later built their house traditions. It is not reasonable, on present evidence, to treat the 118-year lifespan, the precise stipend, the Shoho duel, or the exact year of succession as established fact. The honest biography is therefore short on incident and long on transmission: a swordsman whose personal life has almost vanished, and whose technical choices still organize the training of one of the world’s most widely practiced traditional Japanese sword arts. ㊦

Endnotes

1. Japanese sources write 長谷川英信 (Hasegawa Eishin) and 長谷川主税助英信 (Hasegawa Chikaranosuke Eishin / Hidenobu). “Eishin” is the on’yomi of 英信, also read Hidenobu.

2. “Muso Jikiden Eishin-ryu,” Wikipedia; “Hasegawa Eishin-ryu,” Wikipedia; “無双直伝英信流,” Japanese Wikipedia.

3. “長谷川英信,” Japanese Wikipedia, which states that birth and death dates are unknown and that historical

facts remain difficult to establish. The article notes its own shortage of verifiable citations.

4. “長谷川英信,” Japanese Wikipedia; Kotobank, “長谷川英信流.” Variants include Hasegawa Kuranosuke / Naizo-no-suke Eishin (yawara lines), Hasegawa Chikaranosuke Eishin (iai and spear), and Hasegawa Kuraryo Eishin (Toda Nagato-ryu).

5. Sakura Budokan, “History and Genealogy of Tosa Iai”; Eikoku Roshukai, “MJER History”; Jikyojuku Iaijutsu. Tosa tradition makes him a Tosa native who served a northern daimyo at 1,000 koku. Spear densho place his birth in Sanuki; Kotobank mentions Kishu or Sanuki.

6. Kotobank, “長谷川英信流,” circa 1602?–1719. Hozoin Hasegawa-ha tradition, summarized on Japanese Wikipedia, gives death in Kyoho 4 (1719) at age 118 and a birth year that is calendrically impossible as written (Bunroku 7). Some Tosa pages say he became seventh headmaster in 1610; others place his Edo study in the Kyoho era (1716–1736).

7. Lineage of the Tosa / Tanimura-ha transmission as given in English Wikipedia, “Muso Jikiden Eishin-ryu,” and Japanese Wikipedia, “無双直伝英信流.”

8. English Wikipedia, “Muso Jikiden Eishin-ryu”; Japanese Wikipedia, “無双直伝英信流.” Some writers treat Hasegawa as first generation of Eishin-ryu rather than seventh of the Hayashizaki line.

9. English Wikipedia, “Muso Jikiden Eishin-ryu”; Jikyojuku Iaijutsu; Senshinkai, “History”; Sakura Budokan. The Tatehiza-no-bu (Chuden) is the set later generations attribute to Hasegawa.

10. Japanese Wikipedia, “無双直伝英信流,” which records the Owari / 1,000-koku service story and adds that it is probably a later tradition.

11. “長谷川英信,” Japanese Wikipedia; Kotobank, “長谷川英信流.” He is claimed as transmitter or founder in Muso Jikiden-ryu wa, Toda Nagato-ryu, Mukyu Gyokushin-ryu jujutsu, and Hozoin-ryu Hasegawa-ha sojutsu.

12. “長谷川英信,” Japanese Wikipedia. The Shoho-era (1644–1648) duel with Takekawa Muteki is reported there without independent corroboration. On the lost Shinano transmission, see Japanese Wikipedia, “無双直



伝英信流。”

13. Japanese Wikipedia, “無双直伝英信流,” noting a 1668 densho by Arai Seiketsu (Arai Seitetsu Kiyonobu) that already uses the name Muso Jikiden Eishin-ryu.

14. Hayashi Rokudayu Morimasa (1663–1732) studied in Edo under Arai and carried the art to Tosa as an otome-ryu. After Oguro Motoemon Kiyokatsu the line split into Tanimura-ha and Shimomura-ha. Japanese Wikipedia, “無双直伝英信流”; English Wikipedia, “Hasegawa Eishin-ryu.”

15. Eikoku Roshukai, “MJER History”; Kishintai, “History.” The claim that Hasegawa was nineteenth headmaster of a comprehensive Muso Jikiden-ryu heiho is traditional and not independently documented.

16. Oe Masaji (1852–1927) reorganized the Tanimura-ha curriculum into Seiza-no-bu, Tatehiza-no-bu, and Okui. English Wikipedia, “Muso Jikiden Eishin-ryu”; Musokan Hong Kong, “History of Iaido (IV).”

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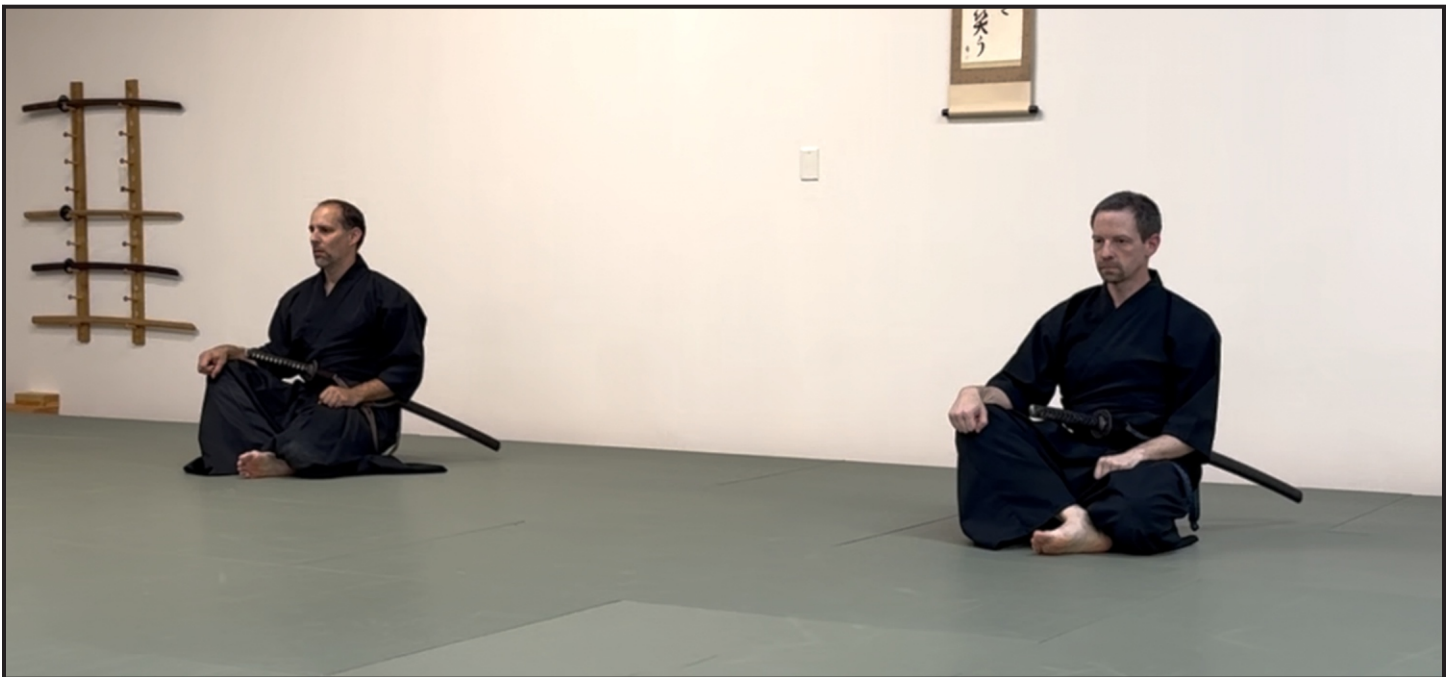
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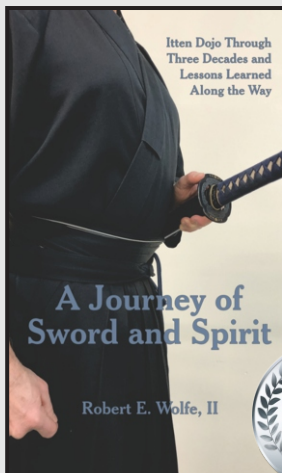
Robert Wolfe, chief instructor of Itten Dojo, began martial arts training in 1975 while attending Bucknell University, where he earned a degree in Japanese Studies. Mr. Wolfe has taught since 1985, and founded Itten Dojo in 1992. His articles on martial arts have been featured in publications such as the *Journal of Asian Martial Arts*, *Bugeisha*, *Aikido Today Magazine*, *Inside Karate*, *Martial Arts Training*, and *Martial Arts Professional*. He is the author of two books: *A Journey of Sword and Spirit — Itten Dojo Through Three Decades and Lessons Learned Along the Way* and *Budo Renaissance Man — The Martial Arts Journey of Nicklaus Suino*, and a 2025 inductee to the PA Karate Hall of Fame.



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