

SMAA JOURNAL



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2014 SMAA DUES

Membership fees are due on or before January 1, 2014. Please be sure to pay your SMAA dues on time. You can either send a check to our headquarters or pay online at <http://www.smaa-hq.com/payments.php>. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and PayPal. This is a quick and safe way to make your annual SMAA membership payment.

We appreciate our members paying dues promptly. It makes life easier for the SMAA staff of volunteers, and it is representative of the type of self-discipline we are cultivating through the study of traditional Japanese martial arts. We are grateful to everyone that contributed to the SMAA in 2013, and we are looking forward to another great year of budo with you in 2014.

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OBJECTIVES OF THE SMAA

1. To promote and aid in the growth of Japan's traditional arts and ways.
2. To assist the public in achieving spiritual growth and physical development through budo/bujutsu.
3. To further friendship and understanding between Asian and Western martial artists.
4. To establish goodwill and harmony among martial artists of various systems.
5. To offer Western martial artists access to legitimate budo/bujutsu organizations and teachers in Japan.
6. To give practitioners of authentic budo/bujutsu recognition for their years of devotion to these arts.

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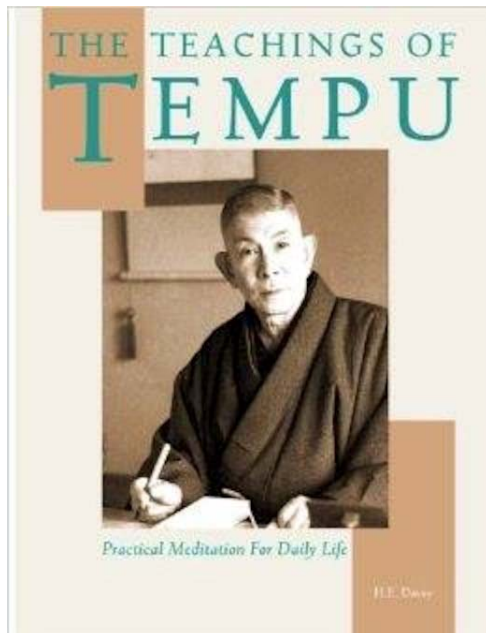
To celebrate its 15th anniversary in 2009, the SMAA created a special CD-ROM that contained a sampling of some of the best stories and articles to appear in the *SMAA Journal* since 1994. We mailed this free of charge to everyone in the SMAA as a

way of showing our appreciation to our members.

Although our anniversary has past, it's still not too late to get a copy of this CD-ROM, which is packed with hard to find information about budo and koryu bujutsu. For \$8.95, plus \$3.00 shipping and handling (\$5.00 outside the USA), we'll send you *The Best of the SMAA Journal*.

Send your check or money order to the SMAA HQ. Supplies are limited to the number of CDs remaining.

NEW H. E. DAVEY BOOK RELEASED



Michi Publishing just released H. E. Davey's first new book in several years. Mr. Davey, SMAA Jujutsu Division Shihan and eighth dan, is an award-winning writer and a founding member of the SMAA. *The Teachings of Tempu: Practical Meditation for Daily Life* is his latest book. It details the mind and body unification principles and meditation techniques of Nakamura Tempu Sensei, whose unique methodology helped famed martial artists in Japan attain profound levels of mastery.

Nakamura Sensei was an expert in Kodokan judo, kendo, and Zuihen Ryu battojutsu, an ancient form of swordsmanship. His mind and body unification principles are credited by numerous top budoka in Japan for helping them realize the deepest levels of budo. Such experts include the late Tohei Koichi Sensei, the only person to receive a tenth dan from the founder of aikido, and Tada Hiroshi Sensei, Aikikai aikido ninth dan. Although Nakamura Sensei was a friend of the founder of aikido, not just aikido teachers studied with him. Everyone from karateka to sumo wrestlers benefited from Nakamura Sensei's methods for developing ki, or "life energy," and from his exercises to cultivate the hara, a natural center in the lower abdomen that's linked to the generation of effortless power in both budo and Japanese yoga.

The Teachings of Tempu: Practical Meditation for Daily Life details the life and meditation techniques of Nakamura Sensei (1876–1968). Mr. Nakamura taught Shin-shin-toitsu-do ("The Way of Mind and Body Unification") for over 50 years and authored bestselling books. He trained over 100,000 people, including members of the Japanese Imperial Family, government officials, business leaders, top athletes, celebrated actors, martial arts experts, and notable novelists.

The book begins with Mr. Nakamura's early years and a global quest to cure his tuberculosis. This search took him to the USA, where he studied medicine at Columbia University. Next, he traveled to Europe, where he lived with actress Sarah Bernhardt and researched psychology. In Egypt he encountered Kaliapa, an Indian mystic and yoga master, who brought him to India for a final attempt to save his life. After austere meditation in the Himalayas, Nakamura Tempu attained enlightenment, shook off the bonds of illness, and returned to Japan a changed man.

The Teachings of Tempu uses episodes from Mr. Nakamura's life to introduce his philosophy of mind and body unification, his forms of

meditation, and how these skills can help you attain better health as well as deeper calmness, concentration, and willpower. It contains rare photos from Japan, which chronicle his long life. Also featured are extensive quotes from his books, the first time his writing has been offered in English. *The Teachings of Tempu* presents experiments and exercises you can try at home to understand mind and body unification—the essence of Mr. Nakamura’s realization and the secret to unlocking human potential and skill in Japanese martial arts. Illustrations of these exercises and forms of meditation are provided, along with an Introduction by Sawai Atsuhiro, a leading teacher of Shin-shin-toitsu-do, a direct student of Mr. Nakamura, and a member of the SMAA Board of Advisors. Dr. Robert Carter, author and Professor Emeritus of Philosophy for Canada’s

Trent University, wrote the Foreword. The paperback edition is 318 pages in length, and an e-book version will be offered shortly.

Author H. E. Davey has studied, in Japan and the USA, with several advanced disciples of Nakamura Sensei. The Wakuwaku Honshin Juku in Osaka and the International Japanese Yoga Association of Kyoto have both given him their highest level of Shin-shin-toitsu-do teaching certification. The book can be purchased at your local bookstore and discounted copies can be found at Amazon.com:

http://www.amazon.com/Teachings-Tempu-Practical-Meditation-Daily/dp/0615856330/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1383342690&sr=1-1&keywords=the+teachings+of+tempu

GHOSTS OF PRACTICES PAST

By Wayne Muromoto

There is something that happens when I put on my practice outfit, or keikogi, that colors that particular, current training time. I remember the past. It’s fitting, after all, because the Japanese word for training, keiko, is made of two Chinese characters that means “to consider or reflect upon the past.” So in teaching, I try to inculcate in my students what I myself had learned in the past from my own teachers, as best as possible, in my own way.

But lately, I’m thinking that when I tighten my obi (“belt”), I also reflect upon the ghosts of my own practices past. Like a doddering old geezer, when I slip on my white training pants, white quilted uwagi (“jacket”), cloth belt, and pleated hakama pants, I recall the many times I did so in the past, in memorable training sessions that lasted far into the night. Maybe it’s because I long ago turned 50 years of age. That’s half a century. That’s more years behind me than ahead of me, probably.

That’s all my youth gone and went, and now I’m in the autumn staring at the twilight years. That’s...as some college kids would blurt out . . . really OLD, man. “Man, you’re like my father,” some of them used to say. Now they say, “Man, you’re as old as my grandparents!” Sheesh.



The author (right) practicing Takeuchi Ryu jujutsu in Kyoto in 2012



Ono Yotaro Sensei (right), leader of Bitchuden Takeuchi Ryu jujutsu, shakuhachi flute expert, and teacher of Wayne Muromoto

So I put on my keikogi, we bow in, warm up, and work on our techniques. I'm focusing on what the students are doing at the moment. But behind them, behind the way I teach, the way I emphasize certain things, are all the ghosts of practices past.

There's the ghost image of my jujutsu teacher, when I first met him, at the peak of his physical prowess, moving like a greased monkey throwing people around, then losing interest and going into the back room of the dojo to play his shakuhachi flute while we fumbled over the techniques. In the cold, wintery Kyoto nights, sometimes it was just me and Takagi-san, hammering away at each other while our sensei played the evocative bamboo flute, watching us and sometimes getting frustrated and stepping back on the mats to correct our moves.

There's the fleeting image of my Muso Jikiden Eishin ryu iaido teacher when I first met him in the Butokuden in autumn, cupping his ears so he could hear me better, a gentle old soul, I thought, whose iaido was so expansive it truly was like the nickname given to that particular strain: tonosama no iai, or the "iai of a warrior lord."

There are the memories of the tough judo practices and fun times over beers afterwards that I enjoyed with a sensei and friend. I learned that he later ended up passing away in a frenzy brought on by

an extreme bout of his chronic manic depression, striking at enemies of his mind in a bamboo thicket.

There's the ghost image of another judo friend, who later counseled me when I was going through a divorce. He had gone through his own problems and was telling me things will get better; he found his wife in bed with another man, he hated his job, and he finally crashed his car into a tree...and walked away from it all, to a new town and career ... and he built a new life, becoming a professor in a field he enjoyed, with seven great kids and a supportive wife.

There's the great sempai ("senior") I had in karate-do. We used to train outside of regular sessions on the beach on the North Shore of Oahu, going over kata and kumite sparring over and over again. A few weeks before I had my thesis presentation and fine art show for graduate school, one of my sempai, who had become a police officer in the toughest beat in Honolulu, called me out of the blue to ask if I could come over for a few brewskis and to talk story about the old training days. I had to turn him down, saying I really needed to work on my master's degree final presentations. That moonlit night, after the phone call, he walked on



Ohmori Masao Sensei, the author's Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu iaido teacher

the beach where we used to train and put a bullet in his head, probably due to the stress of his law enforcement duties and his personal life.

There are the training sessions that I was allowed to participate in with the U.S. Olympic judo team. It gave me a glimpse into how great a gap there was between me and the cream of the crop. There was just no comparison, and I realized that I had better pay more attention to my schoolwork because there's no way I could ever be a professional athlete. The U.S. representative in my weight class dumped me all over the place. If anyone has any question as to whether judo is an effective martial art or not, I'd just say, try getting thrown by one of those guys in an asphalt parking lot. You'd be



The author, many years ago, in front of Kyoto's famed Butokuden



The author circa 1985

lucky if you can stand up after that in one piece. Surprisingly, for both him and me, however, when we ended up grappling on the mat I easily pinned him. There was nothing he did on the ground that I couldn't easily counter. That's when I realized I owed a debt to my judo sensei, whose own teacher was Mikinosuke Kawaishi, the renowned judo teacher who taught a very balanced, technique-oriented style of judo that emphasized equal dexterity in both standing and groundwork techniques.

There's the training sessions I used to have in jojutsu, out in a park on a mountain top, come rain or shine, even in the middle of tropical thunderstorms, where we'd be slipping and sliding in the mud and trying mightily to keep hanging on to our jo so that it wouldn't slip out and whack our partners in the head.

There's the winter time judo training sessions I had on the U.S. mainland, where we ran barefoot in the snow in upstate New York, us adults freezing our

toes while the kids in the group were traipsing and laughing at the novelty of the experience, unaffected by the cold.

There are so many memories of really good times, and really hard times, times that made fast friends, and times that drove unbreakable wedges between me and other people.

And there are the very first memories of when I first stepped onto a dojo mat, even before I owned a keikogi, and took my first lessons in breakfalls. The dojo was a former sugar plantation meeting hall, termite eaten, old, cobwebbed in the corners, retrofitted with a canvas-covered mat. Blue-collar workers taught the class: sugar plantation workers, garage mechanics, and tractor drivers. That was well over 40-odd years ago, when I was barely entering my teens, and those gruff old men were my first role models besides my father and schoolteachers on what it was to be an adult.

So I knot up my obi and cinch up my hakama, and for a brief moment, those ghosts come up from the past, making the instant bittersweet with its memories. Then I put those nostalgic bursts of recollections aside and train. And I make new memories.



The author in 2012



A younger Wayne Muromoto (middle) studying Shindo Muso Ryu jojutsu

About the Author: Wayne Muromoto is a member of the international SMAA Board of Advisors and a sixth dan in the SMAA Jujutsu Division. A frequent contributor to the *SMAA Journal*, he is the leader of Hawaii's esteemed Seifukan Dojo. You can visit them at <http://seifukanhawaii.org>.

BUDO: THE WAY AND ITS CULTURE

By H. E. Davey



Kaisho

Gyōsho

Sōsho

Do, the "Way," brushed in three different calligraphic scripts by the author

Japanese arts and Ways have been growing in popularity around the world for decades. In the West, many people practice flower arrangement, bonsai, tea ceremony, shiatsu, and martial arts. Despite their wide popularity, however, Japanese fine arts and martial arts are often misunderstood and distorted in the West. There is consequently a real need for literature that goes beyond the typical examination of the history and outward techniques of a single art form and that also exposes the lesser-known arts. What is most needed is comprehensive information about what these arts are, where they came from, and how Westerners can successfully engage in them. Such information is unfortunately rare, a situation that the SMAA has been working to rectify.

Writings that explore the more esoteric but immensely important aspects of these arts are more rare still. What are the underlying aesthetics of the Japanese martial arts? Some arts are touted as effective forms of "moving meditation," but how exactly do they function in this manner? What about the oft-mentioned but usually unexplained "spiritual dimensions" in the Japanese martial arts?

These esoteric aspects not only are inseparable from the technical and physical parts of practice,

but they are also the elements of these arts that are most universal and applicable to the daily lives of non-Japanese practitioners. The lack of information about these universal principles masks the fact that, at their deepest levels, such arts as tea ceremony (chado), flower arrangement (kado), calligraphy (shodo), and martial arts (budo) are closely related. A number of concepts are important and universal for all Japanese cultural arts, including budo. These points are not always well understood, and their interrelationship is often ignored in the West. In this article, I'll write about ten key elements that are crucial for successfully engaging in budo or any other classic Japanese art form, and I'll summarize these points at the conclusion of this essay. (For a more complete exploration of these topics, see my book *The Japanese Way of the Artist*, which is published by Stone Bridge Press.)

In addition, I realize that modern budo and koryu bujutsu (feudal era martial arts of the warrior class) are not identical. The late Donn Draeger Sensei wrote several excellent books outlining these differences, and I wrote perhaps the first biography of Mr. Draeger, which was published in the *Journal of Asian Martial Arts*. That said, in Japan the dividing line between budo and koryu bujutsu is hazy. Although the primary and original purpose of the ancient martial arts (koryu) was efficient battlefield combat, today few folks studying koryu sword, spear, and other skills are in the same situation as their historical predecessors. Actually, none are. And so, most koryu bujutsu teachers in Japan these days also feel that they are engaged in a type of spiritual Way, albeit one that is not identical to modern budo. For this reason, and others, my article will lump all Japanese martial activities under the generic moniker "budo." This makes sense, in this context, because

examining the nature of the Way is one of the key aspects of this essay.

HARMONIZING MIND AND BODY

Despite outward differences, Japanese fine arts, folk crafts, and budo share certain aesthetics; and more important, they demand the acquisition of related positive character traits for their successful performance. Notice that many of the names for these arts end in the Japanese word Do (Tao in Chinese). Do means “the Way,” and its use in these names indicates that an activity has surpassed its utilitarian purpose and been raised to the level of art, that its students are practicing it as a Way of life. In sum, a Do is an art that allows us to understand the ultimate nature of the whole of life by closely examining ourselves through a singular activity of life: to arrive at the universal through studying the particular.

Many artistic principles and mental states are universal to all Japanese Ways. One of the most meaningful and fundamental is the concept of mind and body coordination. Although few of us are required to use a calligraphy brush, Japanese sword, or tea ceremony utensils in daily life, learning how to use them skillfully can enhance our mental and physical health. Moreover, skill in these arts comes from integrating the mind and body.

In Japanese calligraphy, teachers speak of a “unity of mind and brush” and declare, “If the mind is correct, the brush is correct.” In Japanese swordsmanship (kenjutsu), it’s common to speak of a unity of mind, body, and sword. Mind and body coordination can be thought of as self-harmony. This integration is necessarily one of the mind and body in action, a central element for mastering any classical Japanese Way. We can all benefit from the principles of mind and body unification underlying the various Do, be it budo, shodo, or some other Do form.

Practicing one of the Ways, including budo, can lead to an understanding of the art of living life itself. Yet the teacher or book that can effectively demonstrate how the study of calligraphy or martial art can lead to spiritual understanding is rare; most simply pay lip service to showing the Way but fail to really offer clear explanations and effective techniques. It is commonly assumed that just throwing an opponent or manipulating a brush will somehow magically produce insight. Mere action will not lead to insight.

FROM THE PARTICULAR TO THE UNIVERSAL

Since all Japanese arts share the same aesthetics, the study of one Do can heighten the understanding of others. The same feeling of balance needed for skillfully “sculpting” a flower arrangement is needed in Japanese brush writing, in which every character exhibits a dynamic balance. In odori, or Japanese classical dance, and the martial arts, participants likewise master a dynamic balance that is analogous to the balance aimed at in Japanese calligraphy.

The identical unity with nature stressed in flower arrangement is also accentuated in martial Ways like aikido, while shodo calligraphy demands an intense attention to detail and brush form that is not incompatible with the methodical exactitude cultivated by disciples of ikebana flower arrangement. Chado, or the “tea ceremony,” is based on wa-kei-sei-jaku (“harmony-respect-purity-solitude”), and both Japanese calligraphy and flower arrangement seek to manifest related capabilities. These are specific expressions of the philosophical foundation of the tea ceremony, and they are also artistic, even spiritual, attributes universal to all the Japanese arts. Budo is not an exception.

In short, a thorough study of a particular Way allows us to assimilate these qualities and apply

them to the practice of unlike art forms. The opposite is also true: many Western students of miscellaneous Japanese cultural and martial arts commonly miss out on the magnitude of these ideas, and in the end practice a pale imitation of the authentic art that they are studying.

Japan has traditionally excelled in “spiritualizing” activities like martial arts, brush writing, dance, drama, and flower arranging. The ultimate goal in these Do is to see the whole of life through a particular practice or individual part of living. Master calligrapher, Zen expert, and founder of Muto Ryu swordsmanship, Yamaoka Tesshu, said that one of his principal teachings was “the practice of unifying particulars and universals.” D. T. Suzuki, author of many books on Zen, in like manner referred to “the One in the Many and the Many in the One.”

A certain procedure or copying exercise, for example, can be considered as a “particular.” In sumi-e, “ink painting,” the aim in copying the teacher’s rendering of a branch of bamboo is not to make merely a flawless duplicate; rather, the goal is to discover the essential quality, contained inside a given lesson or particular technique, of all techniques. We copy and study a particular model (kata) to lay hold of the universal principles that allow the technique to operate in the first place and that will at last empower us to rise above form to discover the formless. In so doing, it is often possible to perceive that these universal principles comprise something much greater than the singular art we’re studying, that they amount to indispensable lessons in living.

On a more penetrating level, ikebana experts speak of achieving a state where they discern the actual characteristics of the blossoms they’ll be arranging. They merge with nature, so that the particular (the arranger) unites with the universal (nature). Martial artists also speak of becoming one with their opponent and even the universe itself. The ultimate

aesthetic running through every Japanese Way is a naturalness in which the difference between the individual and the universe softens into oneness.

BUDO CULTURE

It is widely recognized that the various Do originated in Japan. Because they are inextricably entwined with Japanese culture, an understanding of Japanese culture is needed to make more than superficial progress in their practice.

Nevertheless, it is reasonable to ask to what degree the Ways and Japanese culture are separate, can be separated, and indeed if they should be separated. The evidence of neglect on the part of both Western and Japanese students of the Ways to deeply consider these questions makes such an inquiry even more important. In this article we are concerned with two entities: the different Japanese Ways and the Way itself. The Way means the Way of the universe, and so it clearly is not limited to a specific art. The Way is universal; the Ways are particular. Being both simple and complex, this distinction is sometimes overlooked. In a sense, it can and cannot be made. As the mind cannot truly be separated from the body, the Way and Ways cannot be separated. Still, the mind and body have different characteristics and modes of functioning; the mind has no form, the body has form, and so on. We can make distinctions and speak in terms of mental versus physical despite the fundamental oneness of the two. The Way of the universe and its outward expressions, the different Ways, are similarly inseparable but nonetheless distinguishable.

Occasionally people that study a Do form have heard a Japanese teacher state that only a native Japanese practitioner of tea ceremony, shodo, budo, and other disciplines can fully understand these practices. This sentiment, which seems to be less frequently voiced these days, is obviously infuriating to non-Japanese students of these arts.

And while this may shock and further infuriate such individuals, I would agree with it—but only on one level.

THE WAY AND THE WAYS

The Ways are Japanese cultural arts. The Way is not. As Japanese cultural disciplines, the different Do are an outgrowth of Japanese art, history, religion, geography, government, and many other specific factors. And the reference is not simply to contemporary Japanese culture but includes everything that has come before. If we separate the Do from their cultural ground, they cease to exist, degenerating into nothing but a generic sort of art. While multiculturalism is a popular idea and a good thing in general, there is no value in reducing the art forms of other cultures to whatever an individual practitioner is comfortable with based on his own cultural preferences. This kind of homogenizing will only render the arts of other cultures bland and shallow.

The Americanizing of cuisines from other traditions provides a simple example. I like spicy food, and so I frequent Thai restaurants. I'm often disappointed, however, when I discover the food is bland and inauthentic. Querying owners, I'm usually informed that the cuisine has been "adjusted to American tastes." Perhaps, but it has also sometimes been rendered unrecognizable and tasteless. I'd hate to see this happen to the Japanese martial arts and other Do forms.

Since budo and other Do are an outgrowth of centuries of Japanese cultural development, they can never be understood by Westerners in the manner that native Japanese understand them. Plainly, Westerners aren't Japanese, and we must arrive at our own comprehension of these arts. Whether our comprehension of said arts is problematic depends on whether it results in a homogenization, or "dumbing down," of these classical arts. Like tampering with a rare classic car

to make it "look cool" or painting big numbers on an antique clock to make it easier to read, facile alterations to these arts would damage their integrity. And make no mistake, a number of the Do forms are very much living antiques that derive part of their value from their antiquity. I, and a number of other Western and Japanese devotees of these time-honored arts, would urge Westerners to leave them intact, and if this isn't palatable, to consider a different activity more suitable to their tastes, rather than destroying venerable cultural artifacts.

Despite some Japanese arts and Ways having survived for centuries, as living arts they are fragile and depend for their survival on the people who teach them. If these people, Japanese or non-Japanese, lose the art's essence that is rooted in Japan, then a given art may be rendered unrecognizable within a generation or two.

What with the westernization and internationalization of Japan, and the transplantation of the Do onto foreign soil, this consideration becomes vital. How will the Do grow outside of Japan? This and other crucial questions need to be looked into, but they form a topic that is beyond the scope of this article. Nonetheless, regarding the successful transplantation of the Do, we need to consider the following ideas.

I now and then hear some American teachers of different martial arts speak of "not needing the Japanese at this point," or "being better than the Japanese at . . . [insert your favorite art]." I can only shake my head. Competition of this sort has no place in budo, as Westerners and Japanese should have the same goal: the understanding, dissemination, and preservation of a traditional Japanese cultural art. For when the Japanese aspects of an art are lost, so too are the art's history and character. In such an event, a different name should be applied to the activity. At the least, if we alter the nature of such arts, we should note

this by indicating that we teach or practice *American* karate-do or *European-style* ikebana, instead of trading off respected Japanese traditions. The Do are, after all, *Japanese Ways*, as evidenced by their Japanese names.

But is that all they are? Decidedly not. If they were, I wouldn't have bothered to write this article. Because, although I enjoy participating in parts of Japanese culture, that wasn't my original motivation for getting involved in the various Do that I study. And it isn't why I continue to practice them. My original motives had much more to do with the universal aspects of the different Do, aspects whose understanding allow us to cultivate attributes that are valued regardless of cultural orientation. These aspects relate to the Way as much as to the Ways (for the Way is ultimately the Way of the universe).

The Ways are Japanese, and Westerners cannot divorce these arts or themselves from Japanese teachers or culture without losing something significant. Yet just as the Japanese Do are Japanese, they're also expressions of a Way that transcends nationalities and political boundaries. Understanding this universal Way has *nothing* to do with where we were born. It is the Way of humanity, the Way of the universe, and its significance is boundless and timeless.

So, while Westerners perhaps can't understand the Ways as the Japanese do, we can certainly grasp *the Way* itself. And between Japanese and Western students of the Do, this is a most important link. Although I have heard a few Japanese sensei state that "only we Japanese can fully understand a Do," *none* of my fairly large number of Japanese friends, seniors, and teachers (of several different Do) has ever made such a proclamation because of the ease with which it can be misunderstood. If your sensei makes this assertion, what he is saying might be true, but only on one level, and perhaps not the most important one at that. Such a claim also

indicates that the person espousing it is focused primarily on the particular, cultural aspects of the Do, and such a teacher is perhaps not the best one for a student interested in the meditative, universal attributes of the Way.

Because of my long exposure to the Japanese martial arts, other Japanese Ways, and Asian culture, several of my teachers have urged me to serve as a sort of bridge between East and West, particularly in terms of the Do. Other teachers in Japan espouse the international proliferation of the Ways as a vehicle toward *sekai heiwa*, or "world peace." Thus budo and the other Ways have at their core both universal and particular qualities. The particular manifestation of the Ways is Japanese, but they are also human expressions of the very heart of the universe.

FOLLOWING THE WAY

In writing this article, I've considered three types of readers: those who are studying budo and understand it as a Way, those studying budo but who don't understand it as a Way, and those who haven't studied authentic budo and aren't familiar with the practice of a Japanese art as a Way of life. In two of three cases, therefore, I'm writing for readers who haven't experienced the practice of a Japanese art as a spiritual path, and this article is aimed especially at this larger group of readers.

It might surprise you that someone could practice, and in too many cases actually teach, a Do form without realizing what it means to genuinely engage in it as a Way. Human beings frequently do things in a mechanical manner, unaware of what is taking place at the moment. Along with this tendency is the habit of making assumptions. It's common to assume that because we're practicing an art that ends in "Do" and our teacher is tossing off Asian-sounding platitudes that we are seriously investigating the nature of the Way. Assumptions, however, are based on the past, and reality is now

and rarely matches our assumptions about it. We study the Ways to wake up to reality.

The Ways don't involve philosophical speculation but actually doing something, whether painting, serving tea, or engaging an opponent. And doing exists in the moment, as does the body, thus offering us a chance to explore unification of mind and body in the instant. It would be difficult to image a more valuable exploration.

It is obvious from the preceding that we cannot learn the Ways (or discover the Way) by reading about them. Nevertheless, the written word can point at universal truths. It can also inspire readers to take up the practice of a Do form. Perhaps most importantly, books and essays can ask questions that cause us, writer and reader alike, to drop preconceived ideas about living, giving us, in that way, the opportunity to experience the beauty of existence as it really is.

So now you might be thinking about practicing a form of budo (or other Do form) that has always fascinated you. You might go to the Yellow Pages or World Wide Web to find a suitable teacher and school. This might or might not be a useful method. Many genuine teachers are not in the Yellow Pages or on the Web. And in the Japanese Do, there are no teachers, only sensei. And sensei do not have schools or studios or gyms. And they don't have students, they have deshi, and deshi don't take classes. Confused? Let me explain.

DOJO: A PLACE OF THE WAY

We live in a consumer-oriented world. It seems almost everything—and sometimes everyone—is for sale. When it comes to learning something, we expect to find a school, pay for classes, and get what we paid for. This works if you're taking a course in math. You pay for the finite series of classes, buy the textbook, listen to the teacher explain the material in the text, take the test, and

you complete the course. You got what you paid for. But a dojo isn't a math class. The sensei cannot be bought. The course never ends. And the Way is not for sale.

At the Sennin Foundation Center for Japanese Cultural Arts we offer classes in Japanese yoga, healing arts, martial arts, and fine arts, all of which can be practiced as Ways. I once had someone visit our dojo to observe group practice in the martial tradition we study. He wanted to take only private lessons from me; however, the art he was interested in requires interaction with a variety of people if a person is to learn it well. I explained this and offered to teach him privately as long as he participated in some group instruction. He left promising to think about it.

I got a call from him a week later reiterating his desire for only private lessons. I also repeated my explanation, adding that, although I'd certainly bring in more money by teaching him privately, I'd also be doing both of us a disservice. He offered even more money. I declined. At this juncture he grew incensed, unable to understand that money wasn't the issue. It might have been the first time he had been faced with something he couldn't buy—for any price. Isn't the customer always right? Perhaps. But a dojo isn't a convenience store. The Way is not for sale.

Similarly, I've had people visit who had made long-term commitments to another sensei and another version of one of the Ways I practice. I usually encourage such people to honor their original commitment and continue with what they've started. For most, the additional time commitment alone would make sincere study at our dojo difficult. On more than one occasion, the person has been dumbstruck that I was sending them away: "But you're offering classes, and I'm prepared to sign up and give you my money." The Way is not for sale.

A sensei isn't selling the Way, and so he or she doesn't have customers. A dojo is not an enterprise designed to make money. It certainly can be run in a businesslike, professional manner, and in some cases it may be financially prosperous. The fundamental intent of a dojo, however, differs from a business or school.

"Dojo" is a term originally used for an area in a Buddhist temple employed for meditation. Do means "the Way," and jo means, "place." The original Sanskrit term is bodhimandala, meaning "the place of enlightenment." The word for "school" in Japanese is gakko. Although many people assume that a dojo refers to a martial arts training hall, in fact dojos are not limited to budo. Not too far from our dojos, for example, is the world-renowned San Francisco Taiko Dojo. They practice the Way of the taiko drum, which is hardly a martial art.

A dojo, then, is an environment where firsthand experience and experimentation lead to deep understanding. The memorized data or theoretical understanding of a subject associated with a classroom setting is actually of a secondhand nature. What is secondhand is in effect borrowed; it isn't genuinely part of us since we haven't experienced it for ourselves. In budo and other Ways, understanding comes from what we sense for ourselves by means of direct mind and body experience, and the place for this experience and understanding is the dojo.

SENSEI: A GUIDE ALONG THE WAY

Sensei is a title of respect that is widely used in Japan. It means "teacher," but it connotes ideas not necessarily suggested by the Western notion of teacher. Because of a lack of knowledge of Japanese culture in general and the Ways in particular, misconceptions regarding the sensei as a concept and as an actual individual have crept into American and European understanding of

budo and the other Do.

On the one hand, the sensei of the classical Ways are not equivalent to, for example, a high school teacher; the methods and place of instruction, for one thing, differ significantly. On the other hand, "sensei" shouldn't be taken to mean infallible master, cult leader, or Grand Pooh-Bah. Sensei is also not a designation reserved for teachers of ikebana, karate-do, or a particular Japanese art. In fact, Japanese doctors, lawyers, and certain other professionals receive the same designation. It's possible to suggest that a doctor, for example, is teaching the Way of medicine, but this understanding of teaching differs from that in the West.

Likewise, the assumption occasionally encountered in the United States that you can only have one sensei is patently false. Considering the broad usage of the term in Japan, this is obviously a Western myth. It is true that sensei will caution that trying to seriously follow several Do forms is frequently a mistake. Owing to the time needed to genuinely study such arts, even practicing more than one is likely to be too much for busy people. Little is gained from studying too many Do; they are all aspects of a single universal Way. The point of practicing one Do is to follow *the* Do, not to acquire a diversity of technical knowledge or intellectual entertainment. Teachers in Japan also warn that having more than one sensei *for a specific art* can be a problem. Attempting, for example, to practice two systems of flower arrangement simultaneously can lead to confusion, not to mention serious conflicts of interest. In this context, it is true that you can only have one sensei, but there are many sensei. So if you were to visit another teacher of flower arrangement, regardless of the system, and you failed to call him or her Sensei, you would be considered rude by that teacher and also by your own sensei.

Despite this, I've heard people in the United States

refuse to call anyone Sensei other than their own teacher. Others sometimes even refuse to call their own teacher Sensei “until I’m sure I respect you enough to offer you that title.” Beyond seeming bizarre to anyone who has studied budo in Japan, these attitudes point to a misconception. Such people take their sensei and the title itself far too seriously. They are looking for a perfected being who will confer on them The Truth. This is fantasy. Skilled sensei point the way by passing on knowledge and creating an environment where students are able to arrive at a direct understanding through their own efforts and motivation.

At the other extreme, there are people who refuse to address their teacher as Sensei because “It’s no big deal,” “This is America,” or because they simply can’t be bothered. This attitude negates the distinctive relationship that exists in budo between sensei and student. Although you might have little or no contact with your sensei outside the dojo, your relationship with him or her is not an impersonal one, “just business.” Because of the spiritual and life-altering nature of the Ways, sincere study under an equally serious sensei produces a unique and close alliance. I’ve rarely socialized with some of my sensei, but, owing to the penetrating and long-term characteristics of our relationship, my sensei frequently know me better than some of my close friends do. My teachers might not know my favorite food, owing to a certain distance often needed in such relationships, but they have nonetheless plumbed the depths of my personality in a manner seldom encountered. (As sensei to my students, I have seen the counterpart to this.) If, therefore, I were to address my teachers by their first name, it would serve only to negate the special nature of the connection in the Ways between sensei and pupil. As significant, it would also reveal the superficiality of my intent. (This relationship isn’t always paralleled in Japan between, for instance, a lawyer and his client, although the lawyer would be

addressed as Sensei.)

As in life in general, a correct balance is needed in studying the Ways. Our sensei isn’t a god, but we also don’t have the kind of relationship with her or him that we have with our buddies or our sixth-grade teacher. This is because we are not classroom students; we are not taking classes or attending school, and we are not trying to simply acquire technical knowledge. We are interested in seeing and embracing the Way.

DESHI: AN APPRENTICE OF THE WAY

A student who pays for a college or evening class is, in a sense, a consumer. In Japanese, *seito* is the term used to refer to this kind of student. A “student” of a Do form in Japanese is called a *deshi*, a word that is perhaps closer in meaning to the old Western concept of an apprentice. Since the Way is not for sale, and a dojo isn’t merely a business, *deshi* don’t actually take classes or pay tuition. (This is not to say that dojos don’t charge a fee, they usually do, but the fee is more a donation to help sustain the operation of the dojo and support its sensei.)

Students *attend* a class and expect to be taught. *Deshi* *join* a dojo to discover and embrace a Way. Joining a dojo is closer to being adopted into a family than attending a class. Students seek information. *Deshi* make a commitment to undergoing transformation and gaining understanding. Students memorize facts; *deshi* learn through practice. To learn is to grow, and to grow is to change. Are we seeking actual growth, and thus change, or are we more interested in intellectual stimulation and/or the redecoration of what we already are? For the *deshi*, this is a key consideration.

When I first started to teach the Shin-shin-toitsu-do style of Japanese yoga, I noticed an interesting and ongoing occurrence. The principles of mind

and body unification underlying this Way are universal, relating to a variety of people and subjects. Consequently, certain students would invariably enthuse that I was saying things they had always believed or introducing things they had always thought possible. Although such enthusiasm might seem harmless, it isn't always a good thing.

Some of these ardent participants dropped out as quickly as they had started, more quickly than many other people. I began to ask myself what might occur if I said something they haven't heard before, if they were challenged in what they believe or were required to consider real change. I discovered that such students are ardent if they feel I am confirming their beliefs or expectations and much less so when I surprise or challenge them. This phenomenon is not limited to my dojo.

Are we in fact looking for authentic growth, which is change, or just seeking confirmation of what we have already experienced? Do we seek escape from the prison cell of stagnation or only a redecoration of that cell?

If we have reoccurring problems, these problems repeat because we are carrying previous conditioning, and *what we were*, from the past into the present. This affects *what we are*. To break this cycle requires a break with the past, a break with the known and a leap into the unknown. The dojo, ourselves, the sensei all exist in the present. Clinging to the past in the form of beliefs, biases—conditioning of any kind—transforms the present into another version of our past. Certainly exposure to new, radically different ideas can forever change *what we think*, but the Ways continuously change *what we are*.

The Do (or Tao in Chinese) is the Way of the universe, a Way that always exists in the present, changing and not changing, from moment to moment. Embracing the Way, then, invites freedom

in continuous change and never-ending growth.

Accumulated knowledge is not understanding. Humankind has accumulated knowledge from the past for generations. Although useful, it has not deeply transformed humanity: war, racism, and poverty still exist. Understanding is realized from moment to moment. The moment is eternal, existing beyond time. The Way is likewise eternal and transcendent.

TRAVELING ALONG THE WAY

What I have described in the preceding does not exist in the West or in Japan without exception. Some sensei see themselves as teachers with students and schools, and not all sensei describe their place of practice as a dojo and their students as *deshi*. Nonetheless, what I have described reveals the traditional approach to practice of the Ways, including budo, and an awareness of this approach will be of value to students who find themselves in traditional or more westernized settings. Certainly an idea of what can be expected in more traditional dojo will lessen "culture shock."

And culture shock is not too strong a term to use. Since many sensei are Japanese or are Westerners who have trained in Japan and know they are dealing with important Japanese cultural properties, you may wonder if, when you step into their dojo, you've suddenly entered a foreign environment. Even if your new sensei goes to lengths to make you feel at home or to explain her teachings in a manner understandable to Westerners and novices, don't assume that she is the same as a schoolteacher. Most sincere sensei are nice people, and Japanese culture is gracious toward new acquaintances. These impressions can lull you into thinking that your dojo isn't that different from your tennis club. If you've found an authentic dojo and a genuine sensei, this assumption couldn't be more wrong.

Like any culture, the dojo has its own means of functioning that may not be familiar or compatible to you. Indeed, because the culture of the dojo is not necessarily the same as that of modern Japan, even Japanese can suffer from a sort of culture shock. Yet among the valuable aspects of training in a Do is cultural exchange itself, and it's only clinging to what we're comfortable with that can make this experience a negative one. What's more, the different culture you're moving into isn't different simply because of its Japanese overtones. The greatest, most important, and yet most subtle difference lies in the culture of the Way itself, which doesn't always conform to current social norms.

A SUMMARY OF THE WAY

In writing this article, I aimed at communicating several important points relating to the various Japanese Do in general and budo in particular. The importance of these topics has become clear to me after decades of teaching and practicing Japanese martial arts, both in Japan and the USA. Further, many of these topics were/are important to my teachers, most of whom are Japanese or Japanese-American. On several occasions over the years, these sensei have asked me to find a means of communicating these crucial concepts to Western people. My books, and now this article, are attempts to do just that.

So . . . these are the concepts we've covered:

1. Quite a number of classical Japanese arts and folk crafts end in the word Do. This is not limited to various forms of budo, but it does include them.
2. Because these arts are often thought of as Ways in Japan, they have similar values, principles, aesthetics, and benefits. The study of one aids you in understanding the others.
3. Traditionally, one of the key aspects of all classic Japanese fine arts, crafts, and martial arts is unification of mind and body. This is indispensable, and students must carefully consider how to accomplish it. Its value in daily life is equally indispensable.
4. The Do arts are not merely methods for learning to do a particular thing well. Students are expected to discover universal principles and values that relate to many aspects of living.
5. Budo and all Do arts cannot be learned effectively without considering the cultural matrix that they evolved in. Stripping away these cultural components significantly alters these arts, sometimes beyond recognition.
6. The Way is not identical to the Japanese Ways. While budo is uniquely Japanese, the Way is not. Westerners, who understand authentic Japanese budo culture, can comprehend what they study in a manner that may sometimes differ from their Japanese counterparts, but which is no less valuable.
7. Not everyone claiming to teach shodo, budo, or some other classical Japanese Way is actually doing so in the truest sense. This is unfortunately true in the case of both Japanese and Western exponents.
8. A dojo is not a school.
9. A sensei in the various Do is not equivalent to a schoolteacher or a coach.
10. A deshi is not merely a student.

I hope this article helps SMAA members to understand points that I didn't "get" for years . . .

despite the fact that many of my childhood friends were Japanese and so were the majority of my teachers. Japan is extremely adept at adapting elements of other cultures into its own; it is much less adept at explaining and exporting its own unique culture. And sadly, for a very long time Western people—even budoka—were not terribly interested in learning about Japanese culture, which has resulted in decades of misunderstandings in Europe, America, and other nations.

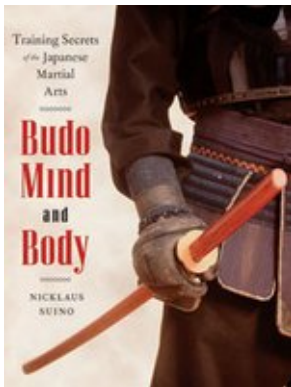
I've long hoped my books and articles could help both sides to bridge this cultural gap in a meaningful manner. Since most teachers in the

SMAA have the same goal, I've also long felt fortunate to be part of this important association. It is the SMAA, perhaps more than any other contemporary budo association, that is helping East and West learn from each other in a way that benefits both sides. We are all privileged to be part of this international budo fraternity of Japanese and Western martial arts exponents.

About the Author: H. E. Davey is the author of *Unlocking the Secrets of Aiki-jujutsu*, *The Japanese Way of the Artist*, *The Teachings of Tempu: Practical Meditation for Daily Life*, and other works. One of the founding members of the SMAA, he has received an eighth dan and Shihan teaching license from the SMAA Jujutsu Division.

AN EXCERPT FROM *BUDO MIND AND BODY: TRAINING SECRETS OF THE JAPANESE MARTIAL ARTS*

By Nicklaus Suino



MENTAL DISCIPLINE

There is no way to attain mastery of any martial art without using the mind. Mind and body are inseparable, and even if the conscious mind is doing nothing other than thinking, "I really hate doing all these front kicks," the unconscious mind is moving the body through the motions and making adjustments to fit the circumstances. Every action has an effect on every thought and every thought affects every action. This is why it is so important to take active control of the mind in the dojo.

Because budo training can be so repetitious, many students daydream their way through practice. Do not allow yourself to fall into this trap. Daydreaming saps the body of energy and ends up making practice even harder. Force yourself to concentrate on the techniques, constantly finding new aspects to work on. When you feel tired during practice, push yourself past the fatigue and train even harder. You will find that the more you commit to hard practice, the more energy you will have available for it.

Negative thoughts perpetuate themselves. Avoid complaining or even allowing the idea of complaint to arise. Do not disagree with your instructor during class. If you feel that something is wrong in your training, reflect on it fully and carefully outside the dojo. Do not bring it through the doors as a complaint, even internally, unless you are absolutely confident about your position. Even then, bring it up in private with your instructor, and tread lightly. If you have put the proper effort into seeking out good instruction in the first place, the

chances are good that the teacher has sound reasons for doing things a certain way.

Be very reluctant to criticize anyone or anything in the dojo, except yourself. This approach is good for practical reasons, since it allows things to run smoothly, but there is an even more important reason for it. It helps to turn your critical focus inward, forcing you to accommodate yourself to circumstances. In daily training, you will be thinking about how you can improve, so eventually you will get better. In a fighting situation, you will adapt to the attack, giving yourself a better chance of avoiding it and countering.

This last point is one reason why it is so dangerous to practice martial arts using weak, choreographed attacks. Removing too much vigor from the attacker's role trains us to be weak. We may begin to focus on the fact that our partners are not attacking us "right," so we cannot execute our techniques. This is dangerous thinking; after all, it is ridiculous to imagine a real attacker stopping to adjust his grab so that we can easily release our arm and throw him. When someone tries to hurt or kill us, we must use any means available to escape or defend ourselves, whether they fall into the cannon of "correct" technique or not.

None of this means that we ought to give up independent thinking because we are involved in martial arts. Budo training can be a tool to help us become more incisive thinkers, but there is a time and place for the exchange of ideas, whereas the dojo is meant to be a place for practice of ideas disseminated mainly by the teacher. Experience has shown that the best martial artists are those who understand this distinction and put it into practice.

EVERY ACTION BECOMES A HABIT

Whether you practice your kata correctly tomorrow or just go through the motions, you will have spent the same amount of time in the dojo. In the first

case, you will have moved one step closer to mastery of the kata, but in the second case, even though you have gotten a little exercise, you will have actually moved your training backwards. This is because, in the dojo, every action becomes a habit.

Building on a good habit is much easier than overcoming a bad one. It is said that if you practice a skill incorrectly one thousand times, you will need two thousand correct repetitions to learn it properly. This may be a slight exaggeration, but experience shows that most students who do not learn to monitor themselves and focus on practicing correct technique never get very good. If your training is worth doing, then it is worth doing right, and you will get much more satisfaction from it if you can see progress as a result of your hard work. The sooner you decide to make every training session better than the one before it, the sooner you will begin to make real progress.

DEEPEN YOUR UNDERSTANDING

All techniques can be understood in a variety of ways. Kata can be studied from the point of view of physical movement, the principles by which the techniques work, timing, bunkai (the fighting application of the technique), history, and so on. A throwing technique may work according to a single specific principle, but you must also learn what differences will result from applying it at different angles or with different timing, how to defend against any variation, and even who invented the technique, and when and why, and the evolution it has undergone over time. The more you know about the technique, the better you will eventually perform it.

There are natural stages in the life of a martial artist, but it takes effort to move from one to the next. Time in practice is only one factor; far more important are intensity of practice and constant striving to know more about your art. If you work hard and are lucky, you will move from beginner to

intermediate, and eventually to advanced student. To become a teacher is easy—you just start offering lessons—but to be a good teacher means that you must have a very deep understanding of the art.

Mastery of a martial art means that the technique and person are not separate. The art grows out of the artist, and the artist is a product of a lifetime's immersion in the art. It is popular in some circles to imagine that any person with a pure heart who is relaxed enough will perform perfectly, but this is wishful thinking. Only serious hard work with the body and mind will lead to mastery.

OBSERVATION

Although we are constantly looking at things, most of us do not see clearly. We have ears, but do not always hear correctly. We need to be taught how to observe. This becomes abundantly clear when a new student begins practice in the dojo. Shown a simple stance or hand movement, the new student will almost always leave out an essential part when executing it. After the second or third explanation or demonstration, the student will come much closer to adhering to the desired checkpoints. An advanced student, on the other hand, will do it almost right the first time, even if he or she has not studied the same martial art before. Novice students also have difficulty facing attackers in the dojo. They often focus on the wrong aspects of the attack and end up getting hit or kicked. After a longer period of training, of course, they do much better.

You can greatly improve your ability in both solo practice and in sparring or self-defense by teaching yourself to observe clearly. In budo, this means not only looking and listening carefully, but also making sure your body is following instructions. When an instructor tell you to pull your shoulders down, do more than nod your head. Consciously attempt to pull your shoulders down. If you are not sure how "down" should feel, raise

them to see what that is like, then pull them down again. This sounds like common sense, but almost every instructor can tell you about students who listen to instructions, shout, "Hai!" (Right!), and then fail to do what has been asked of them.

During regular training, keep your eyes open. If the technique of a student near you seems weak, look carefully to see what he or she is doing wrong. You may feel satisfied if you simply recognize the problem, but to complete the learning process, mentally check yourself to make sure that you are not making the same mistake. Go further and study the stance and movements of your instructor. Rather than waiting for your technique to be corrected, consciously try to duplicate the teacher's movements, or those of senior students who are executing the technique properly. If you fail, it will then be because you either do not understand fully or are simply not capable of performing at the same level, but at least it will not be because you made no effort.

In time, observation and self-correction will become reflexive, and your learning process will accelerate. Another benefit of this sort of observation is that you will become skilled at judging people's ability simply by looking at them. Many great teacher can make accurate guesses about a student's past training and rank by watching them perform a single technique. There is no great mystery in this—it simply takes a long time to learn to do it. It comes from being aware of many people's strengths and weaknesses and observing how they develop during training.

Strong powers of observation will make you far better in the ring or when defending yourself. Besides knowing the telltale signs that allow you to predict certain attacks, you will also be able to discern the weaknesses of opponents as soon as they make their initial moves. If you learn both to predict the attacks of opponents and to exploit their weaknesses, you will succeed far more often

in competition.

TWO-SIDED MIND

Our goal in martial arts training is to learn skills that we can apply to all areas of our lives. Still, the outside world places different demands on us than does the dojo. Life as a martial artist will be much more rewarding if you can learn to separate these two worlds in your mind. In the dojo, you are expected to work hard, obey the teacher, and be respectful to seniors. Your opinion is not particularly valued; only the instructor's opinion counts. When you are offered advice, you do not agree or disagree, you simply say, "Hai!" You call your seniors sempai and the head teacher sensei, yet they call you by your first name. Whatever your economic or social standing outside the school, where you stand in the dojo depends on how long you have been there and how hard you have worked. If you have a sensitive or artistic nature, you are expected to suppress it during training. Pain, unless caused by serious disease or injury, is supposed to be ignored.

Outside, your opinion counts. There are situations in which it is impolite or improper to express yourself, but in most cases your friends value your ideas. If others express themselves and you disagree, you feel free to explain how and why. Economic status has a large bearing on how you interact with others. At the same time, you are free to express your creative and sensitive side. Pain is something to be sympathized with, talked over, and treated.

Those who insist upon behaving as if they were in the outside world when they are in the dojo are just as foolish and misguided as those who insist that others follow dojo regulations in their outside lives. The correct principle to follow is to behave in a manner appropriate to the circumstances, neither overly familiar and unrestrained in the school nor sanctimonious and rigid at home. New students

are most likely to cause awkwardness by failing to modify their conduct to accord with their locations.

Train hard when training, relax fully when taking time off. Jump to follow rules in the dojo, but don't be offended by the casual behavior of your seniors in their time off. Be careful not to treat a love relationship like a training relationship, since the rules are much clearer in the latter. Success in both the dojo and the outside world comes through hard work and clarity of purpose, although many of the rules and methods are different. Be sure to understand each environment and behave accordingly.

NO-MIND

There is a state of being that is the goal of Zen training called "no-mind." Our goal in martial arts is similar to this. We strive to become so proficient at our techniques that they happen without our conscious bidding, manifesting themselves at the right time, correctly executed, and achieving proper results. Many students believe that they must consciously suppress their intellect in order to reach this state, but in martial arts our approach is different. We try to reach a state of no-mind by forgetting about trying to attain it. As in every area of budo, the key to understanding no-mind is hard training.

By throwing yourself into your training, you become more and more skilled at your art. Techniques that were difficult at first become easier, then more difficult again as you find new aspects to practice. With time, an upward spiral of learning takes place. Eventually, some techniques become reflexive. If you practice enough, there will be occasions during which you will be attacked when you are not expecting it, and your body will act out its trained response. Your aim in training should be to develop all your techniques to this level, which is a lifetime's work.

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Some students misapprehend the idea of no-mind in a way that results in their becoming lazy. They choose to adopt a state of mental passivity, thinking that this is somehow close to the desired condition. As with most excuses to avoid hard work, this takes the student away from good technique and incisive thinking, making it harder to excel rather than easier. Stop yourself from being lazy in training, mentally and physically, as soon as possible. If we assume that you are in the dojo because you want to be good at budo, doesn't it make sense to work for progress rather than to stagnate?

About the Author: Nicklaus Suino Sensei is one of the founding members of the SMAA. He has decades of budo training, and is a well known author of books on budo.

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