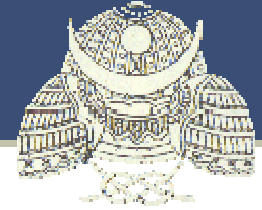


SMAA JOURNAL



Shudokan Martial Arts Association • PO Box 6022, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-6022
<http://smaa-hq.com/> • shudokan@smaa-hq.com • 1-734-645-6441

ANNOUNCEMENTS

2015 SMAA DUES

Membership fees were due on January 1, 2015. 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.

DONATIONS & TAX DEDUCTIONS

The SMAA is a federally tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation. As such, your donations to our association are tax deductible. Send your donations, in the form of a check or money order (made out to SMAA), to our headquarters in Michigan. We'll send you a letter back acknowledging your contribution, which you can then use for tax purposes. We hope you'll support the SMAA in our goal to preserve and promote traditional budo and koryu bujutsu.

E-MAIL

Please make sure we have your correct e-mail address. Without this address, we can't e-mail you the *SMAA Journal*.

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.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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修道館武道会

Do you have a new e-mail address? Have you sent it to hedavey@aol.com? If not, we also won't be able to send you SMAA publications, so please be sure to let us know if your e-mail address changes.

SMAA PATCHES

The SMAA HQ is selling official SMAA patches for your gi. They're great looking patches that embody the spirit and honor instilled in members of our group. They won't fade or bleed when you bleach them, and yet we've been able to keep the cost down. Each patch is basically a 3 ½ inch circle featuring our logo below:



Our patches were produced using state of the art digitizing and ultra-modern technology to create an accurate and attractive embroidered emblem. They feature tight stitches, sharp detail, clean lettering, and top quality craftsmanship. There's no jagged stitching, but we've still got plenty of stitches so that the background doesn't show through.

The patch should be worn on the left side of your gi jacket near your heart. SMAA policy mandates only one patch per uniform to maintain the sense of dignity associated with traditional budo.

These new patches are a great way to show your respect and enthusiasm for our group; we hope all of our members will order at least one. *And the best part is the patches are only \$5.00 (US) each!* (E-mail shudokan@smaa-hq.com about special shipping for international orders.)

To order, go to the "Payments" section of www.smaa-hq.com or send a check or money order made out to "SMAA" to:

SMAA HQ
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Ann Arbor, MI 48106-6022
USA

FACEBOOK PAGE



Have you been to the SMAA Facebook page? If not, you're missing out on the latest SMAA news, features, videos, photos, and information. It's easy and safe to join Facebook, and all you need to do is click the "Like" button to become a follower of our Facebook page. This is the fastest way to get SMAA news and updates, and we hope you'll drop by <http://www.facebook.com/ShudokanMartialArtsAssociation> and check it out. Once you're on Facebook, we hope you'll share our page with your friends and help us promote the SMAA.

SMAA ONLINE PAYMENTS

Did you know you can pay for your annual dues at our website using PayPal or a major credit card? You can, and you can also pay for gi patches and promotions in the same way. This is a much faster, and in some ways more secure, means of sending money to our headquarters. We hope more of our members will make use of this feature. Just drop by <http://smaa-hq.com/payments.php> for more information.

THE BEST OF THE SMAA JOURNAL CD-ROM

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.

OTSUKA SOKE NEWS



Participants at the Meifu Shinkage Ryu camp

In May, Otsuka Yasuyuki Sensei conducted his annual Spring Meifu Shinkage Ryu Training Camp in



Students throwing shuriken in Florence



Otsuka Soke's personal kusari-fundo, complete with tengu

Chiba. Students from in and outside of Japan participated.

Also in May, Otsuka Sensei, the current Soke of Meifu Shinkage Ryu, traveled to Europe to teach seminars in the arts of the shuriken (throwing darts) and kusari-fundo (weighted chain). He first taught in Florence, Italy and he later traveled to Milan.

From Milan, Otsuka Soke went to Austria, where he taught another successful seminar. Otsuka Soke is a member of the elite SMAA Board of Advisors, and he's very actively promoting traditional Japanese



Otsuka Soke training with the kusari-fundo

martial arts around the world, especially shurikenjutsu and kusari-fundojutsu.

Meifu Shinkage Ryu is based on Katori Shinto Ryu, one of Japan's oldest forms of koryu bujutsu. Otsuka Sensei, a published author of budo books, is one of the highest-ranking martial artists in Japan and one of very few people in the world teaching an authentic system of shurikenjutsu. He lives in Ichikawa-Shi, Chiba, Japan.

The SMAA is active around the world and led by both Western and Japanese martial arts experts. Otsuka Sensei is just one of a number of prominent martial arts teachers in Japan, who actively support our association and validate the ranks issued by the SMAA.

EVANS SENSEI NEWS

In May, John Evans Sensei and his students demonstrated Nakamura Ryu swordsmanship in London at the 2015 Festival Asia. Solo and paired kata were performed, along with the cutting of objects. Nakamura Ryu also contains yari ("spear") techniques, which were demonstrated as well to an enthusiastic audience.

Evans Sensei is a member of the SMAA Board of Advisors. He lived in Japan, where he studied



Evans Sensei demonstrating Nakamura Ryu

Nakamura Ryu battodo directly under the art's founder Nakamura Taisaburo Sensei, tenth dan. He also practiced swordsmanship with Danzaki Tomoaki Sensei, head of the Kenshukan Dojo of Muso Shinden Ryu. At the Kenshukan, Evans Sensei studied Muso Shinden Ryu iaido and Shindo Muso Ryu jodo ("the way of the four-foot staff"). One year later, he also began weekly trips to Kashima in Ibaragi Prefecture, where he trained at the Kashima Shinto Ryu school of classical swordsmanship under Yoshikawa Koichiro Sensei. In 1987, his training regime was profiled in a 30 minute NTV program in Japan entitled *Igirisujin no Musha Shugyo* ("An Englishman's Warrior Discipline").

Following his return to England in 1993, he decided to concentrate on Nakamura Ryu battodo and founded the Fudokan dojo in London. Since Nakamura Sensei's death in 2003, Mr. Evans has continued his Nakamura Ryu training in Japan with Suzuki Kunio Sensei, eighth dan/SMAA Senior Advisor, and Sato Shimeo Sensei, ninth dan. Evans Sensei received seventh dan in Nakamura Ryu in 2008.



A yari and katana kata at Festival Asia in the U.K.

In addition to his high rank in Nakamura Ryu, Evans Sensei obtained rank in the following traditional sword and weapon arts: Muso Shinden Ryu iaido (third dan), Kashima Shinto Ryu kenjutsu (shomon certificate), Shindo Muso ryu jodo (second dan), and Kurikara ryu kenjutsu (third dan).

SMAA MEMBERS RAISE MONEY FOR EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS



The Dexter Rotary Club and Japanese Martial Arts Center have partnered together for the...

Origami Lotus Blossom Sale

Nepal Earthquake ShelterBox Relief Fundraiser

Who: The Dexter Rotary Club and Japanese Martial Arts Center
What: Selling blossoms at Dexter's Green Day and throughout the month of May to raise funds for ShelterBox
When: Dexter's Green Day is this Saturday, May 16 from 9:00am - 2:00pm
Where: Dexter's Green Day is at Monument Park in downtown Dexter

Nicklaus Suino Sensei and his students at the Japan Martial Arts Center in Michigan recently raised \$1810 to benefit victims of the catastrophic earthquake in Nepal. These funds will provide the survivors with dry shelter, bedding, water purifiers, and other important equipment. The money raised went to ShelterBox (<http://www.shelterbox.org>), and we hope everyone in the SMAA will donate to this worthwhile charity.

Since childhood, Suino Sensei has absorbed the techniques and philosophy of classic Kodokan judo. A central element of this philosophy is jita kyoei, or "mutual welfare and benefit," the idea that through budo we can perfect ourselves and then work for the betterment of society. The ongoing charitable activities at Suino Sensei's dojo are an outgrowth of his belief that by helping others we help ourselves. . . jita kyoei.

SMAA MICHIGAN SEMINAR

In October, the Japanese Martial Arts Center will host the SMAA Michigan Seminar. A two-day event, the seminar will be taught by Nicklaus Suino Sensei, and the topic will be *The Exceptional Martial Artist*. At this important seminar, Suino Sensei will not only teach traditional Japanese martial arts, he will focus on how to most effectively and effortlessly attain mastery in any form of budo and/or koryu bujutsu. The principles covered will also relate to success in daily life, reinforcing a common theme espoused by the SMAA: budo training must extend beyond the dojo to help society and ourselves. You won't want to miss this fantastic opportunity to study with one of the highest-ranking budoka living outside of Japan!

Here's all you need to know to participate:

What: The Exceptional Martial Artist—Using High Achiever Tactics to Become Incredibly Good at Martial Arts

Who: Nicklaus Suino Sensei (SMAA Managing Director, eighth dan iaido division, sixth dan judo division, fifth dan jujutsu division, and acclaimed author)

When: Saturday, October 17 & Sunday, October 18, 2015. Times to be announced.



Suino Sensei studied Eishin Ryu iaido in Japan under Yamaguchi Katsuo Sensei, judan.



Suino Sensei studied judo with Walter Todd Sensei, hachidan.

Where: Japanese Martial Arts Center, 3853 Research Park Drive, Suite 110, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48108 USA

How Much: \$125 General Public/\$100 SMAA Members for both days

Contact: Tel: (734) 720-0330, E-mail: shudokan@smaa-hq.com

Suino Sensei will be available to autograph copies of his many budo books. And as usual, SMAA members will receive a sizable discount at this seminar. However, to apply for your discount, make sure your 2015 dues have been paid.

We have only a limited number of spaces available for this fun event, so be sure to pay your fee early. We reserve the right to close registration when a maximum number of participants have been reached, and *pre-registration is required to join this seminar.*

FREE SMAA CALIFORNIA WORKSHOP

A special one-day SMAA Workshop will be offered in California on September 3. This event is 100% free

to SMAA members! It is just one of the many benefits of belonging to the SMAA.

The event will feature instruction in Shin-shin-toitsu-do, a form of Japanese yoga/meditation that can help you realize your full potential in budo, and Saigo Ryu sogo bujutsu, a synthesis of Japanese martial arts with an emphasis on jujutsu techniques. Here's all you need to know to participate:

WHERE: Sennin Foundation Center for Japanese Cultural Arts, 1053 San Pablo Ave., Albany, CA 94706 USA

WHEN: The September 3 workshop begins at 7:00 PM, but *you will need to preregister to participate.* Send email to hedavey@aol.com for registration information.

HOW MUCH: Free if your SMAA dues have been paid in 2015.

WHO: Instruction will be presented by H. E. Davey Sensei, an eighth dan in the SMAA Jujutsu Division, and Kevin Heard Sensei, a sixth dan in the SMAA Jujutsu Division. Both teachers have decades of experience studying Japanese martial arts in the USA and Japan. They, in addition, hold the highest level of teaching certification in Shin-shin-toitsu-do through the Kokusai Nihon Yoga Renmei in Kyoto.



H. E. Davey, SMAA Jujutsu Division hachidan

WHAT: Created by Nakamura Tempu Sensei, Shin-shin-toitsu-do has been studied by top martial artists in Japan as a way of realizing their full power in budo via coordination of mind and body. Human beings have a tremendous latent potential that's waiting to be unearthed. Nakamura Sensei discovered the extraordinary energy of mind and body unification beside an ancient waterfall in the Himalayan Mountains, allowing him to heal from tuberculosis and manifest a new state of consciousness. Upon his return to Japan, he created a new path called Shin-shin-toitsu-do: "The Way of Mind and Body Unification." A form of Japanese yoga and meditation, Shin-shin-toitsu-do unearths our buried talents and rarely realized potential. Read more at www.japanese-yoga.com.

While many Westerners use "jujutsu," "jujitsu," or "jiu-jitsu" to describe their art of self-defense, most of these methods bear little resemblance to the original Japanese jujutsu, Japan's oldest martial art. Both aikido and judo stem from jujutsu, and the SMAA is one of few groups to offer authentic



Nakamura Sensei teaching Japanese yoga

A TRIBUTE TO A HUMBLE MAN

By Mark Colby

On New Year's Eve 2013, Richard Yamamoto Sensei passed away at over 90 years of age. Ranked seventh dan in judo, he was one of the highest-ranking Kodokan certified judoka living outside of



Heard Sensei teaching Saigo Ryu

Japanese jujutsu. Don't miss your chance to try Nihon jujutsu at the SMAA California Workshop!

Saigo Ryu features a variety of throwing, pinning, and grappling techniques stemming from older methods originating in the Aizu-Wakamatsu area of Japan. It is a sogo bujutsu, an "integrated martial system," and it also features training in the martial arts of the sword, spear, staff, short stick, iron fan, and others. It is unique and unlike many more well known martial disciplines. While training is vigorous, and the techniques effective, the emphasis is on subduing an opponent without unneeded injury. Students improve their health while learning martial arts as meditation, which helps them to remain calm under pressure. The workshop will also teach methods for cultivating ki. Ki is the life energy that animates human beings, and an understanding of it is useful in martial arts and daily life. Read more at www.senninfoundation.com.

Japan. He also served on the SMAA Board of Advisors, and he was the most senior member of the SMAA Judo Division. He endorsed SMAA ranks and activities, asking nothing in return.



Richard Yamamoto Sensei, SMAA Senior Advisor

Judo champion Mark Colby was perhaps his closest student. Like Mr. Yamamoto, Colby Sensei serves on the SMAA Board of Advisors. He has travelled from his home in Chiba Prefecture to train at the Kodokan Judo Institute for over 30 years. — Editor

When thinking about what we in Japan call bushido—“the way of the warrior”—images are conjured about a certain kind of person. It is often a person with a stern spirit, who faces adversity with a soulful disregard for him or herself, choosing to sacrifice for the greater good. A practitioner of budo endlessly hones physical and mental skills, and gradually chisels an inner toughness out of the frailty of one’s humanity. However, I would like to talk about a different kind of bushido and a different kind of warrior. I want introduce you to my late friend and teacher, Richard Yamamoto Sensei, Kodokan judo seventh dan and head instructor emeritus of Seikikan Dojo in the U.S. Pacific Northwest. While he embodied many of the above qualities, there was something more to him, something very special.

Yamamoto Sensei preferred to be called Dick. If you passed him on the street you’d have seen a slight man, with shoulders just a bit too large for his frame. In his later years, he might have shuffled a bit, like many people nearing their ninetieth year. But if you looked past the cataracts and into his eyes, you might have noticed a glimmer of what I knew to reside within: a master practitioner of a gentle and selfless kind of bushido. It was a kind of bushido that lacked any trace of Hollywood dazzle, and one fully composed of a steady determination aimed wholly at making the world around him a better place.

When describing Dick, we could talk about his great victories on the competitive judo mat, his service in the famed 442nd in WWII, and even his time in the U.S. internment camps. *(The 442nd Regimental Combat Team of the United States Army fought in World War II and was composed almost completely of Japanese-American soldiers despite many of their families being subject to internment by the U.S. government. The 442nd was the most decorated unit for its size and length of service in the history of American warfare. – Editor)* It would be easy to get lost discussing specific waza, or “techniques,” Dick honed in his over seventy years as a judo aficionado. We could talk about all this stuff, but in the end it would sorely miss the point.



Seikikan Dojo in December 1938. Yamamoto Sensei is standing in the second row from the top, fifth from the left. He was 16 years old.

You see, Dick personified something especially good and sadly rare in budo today. He somehow managed to transcend the historical trappings of bushido, turning bushido instead into something relevant to our times . . . something enduring and timeless.

He lived his life by deeds, choosing action against pretense. He put one foot in front of the other, careful that each step helped those around him. I don't believe there was much conscious decision making in the way he chose to lead his life. Rather, it was how he was built, a kind of purity that is impossible to fake and very hard to engender.

As he moved through his life, he left a wake of people in his path. Some were his friends, but most were his students.

Some of these students became judo superstars, winning in national and international competition. Most, however, were just normal young people trying to make it through their days, folks wanting to be a part of something special or to find any foothold in the crazy and confused world of



Yamamoto Sensei at over 90 years of age

adolescence. There were also those utterly lost kids, who seemed to inexplicably find their way into Seikikan Dojo. They were kids that lacked stability and structure in their lives. From superstar to the dysfunctional, Dick treated them all the same, and over time became a kind of sturdy beacon everyone knew would always be there.

For nearly five decades—every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday—Dick taught traditional Kodokan judo to anyone that wanted to learn. Without fail, he arrived at the dojo after dinner and after a long day working to support his wife and four kids. Many weekends found our tousled band getting on buses for jaunts to yet another tournament, another flat tire, one more kid getting car sick, and a bloody nose or two. When one of us won, we might get a grin and a nod. If we lost, we would get a warm hand ruffling our hair or perhaps a playful slap to the back of the head. There were no hugs. These kinds of frills were unnecessary given the obvious and unbending nature of his affection.

After the tournament dust settled, we would inevitably get back to the dojo late at night, and go home to a hard dreamless sleep, while Dick would get ready for another day as an electrician. I have to wonder what his wife Kaz thought about all the hours and money he spent . . . without as much as a nickel to show for it. If it did bother her, she never showed it, always volunteering her time and energies, too.

Over the decades, thousands of kids lined up in seiza, kneeling to hear Yamamoto Sensei utter “Mokuso!” and then sit in meditative silence before practice began. Sometimes he picked a tournament star to lead warm-ups. But just as often as not, he would ask one of the kids that had recently lost a match or two to lead the class. Their faces would redden and their lungs would fill with pride knowing that they mattered.



Colby Sensei has been practicing and teaching traditional judo for almost 50 years.

Long before it was fashionable, there was never any discrimination at Seikikan Dojo. Black or white, boys or girls, rich or poor—everyone was welcome. Everyone was treated the same. There were no meetings or policies about this; it was just the way it was.

Ye reap what ye sow. Dick had a hard and long plow, with little in the way of financial remuneration from teaching judo, because he essentially taught for free. But for his efforts he had the love and respect of his family, friends, and most of all, his students. He asked nothing in return and would not take it if offered.

BOOK REVIEW: *THE WAY OF JUDO: A PORTRAIT OF JIGORO KANO & HIS STUDENTS*

By Wayne Muromoto

A happy confluence of events happened this weekend. I read a wonderfully written biography of Kano Jigoro Sensei by John Stevens, titled *The Way of Judo: A Portrait of Jigoro Kano & His Students* (Shambhala Publications), and I let my wife choose a movie for our Saturday night date. I was expecting a weepy romance date movie, but she inexplicably chose *The Grandmaster*, a highly fictionalized biopic about Ip Man, the teacher of martial arts

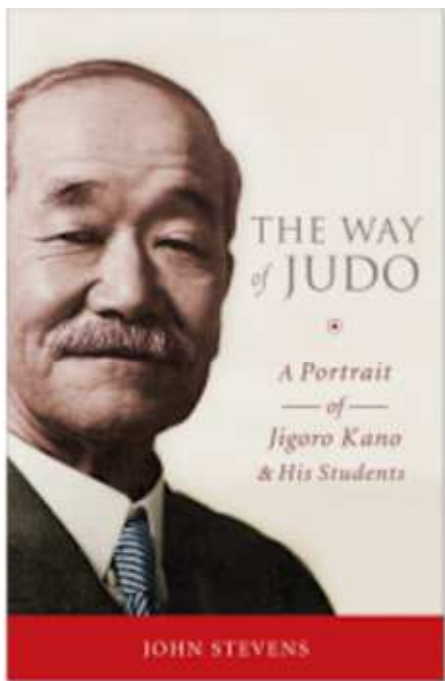
Richard Yamamoto Sensei found the true meaning of bushido in the 20th and 21st centuries. He was a master in the truest sense. Never have I seen a life so well lived.

About the Author: Mark Colby Sensei began studying judo in 1969. His early training took place under Japanese and Japanese-American teachers at Seikikan Dojo, one of Washington State's oldest judo schools. He often placed first in numerous tournaments, participated in the United States Judo Federation Nationals, won medals in the AAU Junior Olympics, and trained with the U. S. Olympic Team. He received his first dan in 1976 from both the USJF and the Kodokan in Japan.

He moved to Japan in 1980, where he practiced judo with the Koichi Riot Police and at the Kodokan—the birthplace of judo. Two of his biggest wins were the USA-Canadian Championships in 1981 and the 1985 Maroto Kaigai Championship in Japan. He was the Grand Champion at both events, winning every weight class, despite being of average build. So impressive was this triumph, that he was featured on NHK national Japanese television. Colby Sensei continues to teach and practice judo in Japan, and he's a valued contributor to the *SMAA Journal*.

movie star Bruce Lee. Both were superlatively entertaining and, from a martial arts point of view, enlightening.

Both, coincidentally, tread on about the same time frame: Asia in the early to mid-20th Century, and how martial arts in respectively China and Japan underwent transformations through the life and times of two great masters of their generation. In



The Grandmaster, a kung fu action biopic of Ip Man is transformed by director Wong Kar Wai into a visually stunning, complex movie that goes, for me, one step beyond *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* in turning kung fu movies into an art-house rendition. There were other movies about the life of Ip Man, but this movie transcended the genre. And who could not enjoy seeing the beautiful Zhang Zhiyi perform kung fu in slow motion? But enough of that; I'll leave the movie reviews of Chinese movies to someone else.

Back to Steven's book. As the title says, the book is a compilation of the history of Kano Jigoro Sensei, his life, his times, and the students he influenced. It also summarizes his philosophy of life and martial arts. The value of the book is that it gives us an insight into the goals and mindset of the founder of a preeminent modern budo; the man whose influence, in many ways, formed what budo is to this day. His influence reached far past beyond even his own invention, judo, to affect the histories of aikido, karate-do, even kendo and the survival of older koryu arts. A devoted shepherd of his Kodokan judo, Kano Sensei was deeply concerned about the propagation and survival of all forms of budo.

Kano Sensei, as Stevens notes, was also a quintessential Meiji man; that incredible person born in the turn of the 20th century Japan, who had one foot in Japan's feudal past and one foot firmly in its future, who was inculcated both with traditional Confucian ethics and a samurai-influenced code, but who eagerly studied Western culture and traditions to forge a new, modernized nation. Because of his training and intellect, Kano Sensei's influence was not limited to just budo. He was one of Japan's great educators of his era, founding several academies, serving as an educational leader, and working tirelessly on behalf of sports education and the Olympic ideal. Kano Sensei was pivotal far, far beyond judo in Japanese modern history.

One of the many strengths of Stevens' book is that it places Kano Sensei and his students in the context of his times. While some of his students appear less than laudatory in their political and personal lives, Kano Sensei struggled to embody and promote culture, education, international peace and goodwill in a time of chaos and Japanese ultra nationalism. While the overall arc of Kano Sensei's life was positive, on a larger scale, it embodied a bit of tragedy, as he tried in his own way to promote peace in a country running headlong into perpetual war and imperialism.



Nicklaus Suino and Dana Jackson performing judo's Tai Otoshi throw



Michael Mancini, sandan, practicing authentic Kodokan judo

It is also instructive to note that Kano Sensei began to criticize his own creation as the years went on, and judo became more and more a competitive sport, rather than an ideal physical regimen that complemented a sound mind in a sound body. He felt the overemphasis on tournament play and winning was detrimental to an art, which he wanted to use to create well-rounded gentlemen (and women); but by then, the cat was out of the bag, so to speak.

How can we return the genie to the bottle and cap it when it is already well past its time to do so? What to do now? One can only wonder.

As a youngster, I loved the rough and tumble of judo randori (free practice). As I aged, I found greater insights in its kata, and was inspired by the open-mindedness of Kano Sensei's beliefs, his rational, systematic approach to training, and his acceptance of other forms of budo. But judo changed even in

my generation, and I also changed as well. Now I look at it from afar as a concerned outsider. The book will inspire both judo practitioners and non-practitioners alike. But it should arouse some introspection on the part of judoka as to the true purpose of their sport, and serve as both an example and a warning to other martial artists about the paths their arts could take.



Suino Sensei can trace his lineage from Sato Shizuya to Mifune Kyuzo to Kano Jigoro.

About the Reviewer: Wayne Muromoto lives in Hawaii, where he teaches authentic and traditional forms of Japanese jujutsu and iaido. Trained in Japan in martial arts, fine arts, and tea ceremony, Mr. Muromoto is a frequent contributor to the *SMAA Journal*, the editor of *The Classic Budoka*, and a member of the SMAA Board of Advisors.

THE BEGINNER'S MIND

By Nicklaus Suino

"**Empty Your Cup**" is a martial arts aphorism that virtually every student has heard. It refers to the idea that students should put aside their own thoughts and opinions and diligently try to do exactly as their instructor asks them to do. Whether one studies aikido, karate-do, jujutsu, or kendo, the requirement is the same: diligently and enthusiastically perform the techniques of your martial art, over and over, trying to match all the checkpoints provided by your teacher. The idea is that you should adopt a beginner's attitude, rather than an expert's, even if you are very accomplished. If you do so, you will find that your understanding and ability improve at a remarkable pace. There are several hurdles to achieving beginner's mind, however.

Previous training in a martial art can impede your ability to perform the checkpoints of your new art. In fact, it's more than your mind that keeps you from doing your new art correctly; if you've studied another martial art, the chances are good that you learned things in a different way. The old movements are programmed into your nervous system and can take time to unlearn. By staying relaxed, focusing on the relationship between the technique and the principle that makes it work, and trying to work slowly and systematically, you can dramatically decrease the time it takes to unlearn the old and learn the new.

Inner dialog is another impediment to effective learning. Most of us have a sort of continuous conversation with ourselves, in which we constantly analyze, compare, discriminate, and predict. In situations where intellectual analysis is required, this dialog can be beneficial. However, when learning a physical skill, the dialog can actually impair our ability to experience the techniques in all their fullness. Martial arts are physical skills, and if our complete attention is focused on the moment,



Suino Sensei began studying budo in 1968.

we are much more likely to absorb the subtle aspects of the techniques. Learning to quiet the mind is essential on the way to becoming an advanced martial artist.

Ego is one of the biggest hurdles to learning new skills, especially for those who have studied other arts previously. It's common for martial arts students to strongly identify with the system they've studied, and when they are offered new ways to accomplish martial arts goals, those new ways can seem strange or threatening. It's normal to experience a defensive reaction when asked to try something different, but the accomplished practitioner will learn that the reaction need not be acted upon. Instead, one can recognize that the reaction is a product of "self," a body of reflexive thoughts and feelings that may not actually represent who we are, and move through it toward the desired technique. Recognizing that learning to do things in new ways does not threaten who we are

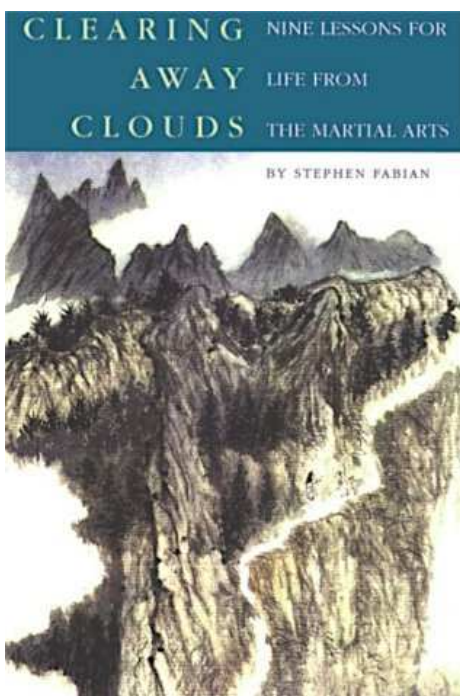
is an enormous step in becoming accomplished martial artists.

Outside the dojo, the attributes of a good martial artist—confidence, open-mindedness, positive attitude, and awareness—are tools for success. In life, as in the dojo, we keep what we embrace and lose what we reject. A human being with a big heart has room for many wonderful things!

About the Author: Nicklaus Suino Sensei and Guy Power Sensei are the leaders of the SMAA Iaido Division. An Iaido eighth dan, Suino Sensei has had multiple fine books on budo published. He is also the Director of the SMAA Judo Division and an advanced member of the SMAA Jujutsu Division. He has decades of training in classic budo, which he studies in Japan and the USA

AN EXCERPT FROM *CLEARING AWAY CLOUDS*

By Stephen Fabian



Chapter 7: Be Patient and Flow

Those who are patient in the trivial things in life and control themselves will one day have the same mastery in great and important things.

Bong Soo Han, as quoted by Joe Hyams in *Zen and the Martial Arts*

The more I attempted to learn and apply the physical and philosophical dimensions of Asian martial systems and the Way of Mastery, the more I was

drawn to actually experience them in their full cultural context. My anthropological training was also a major motivation in this regard. In anthropology we learn that cultural components are integrated, which implies that whatever the Asian martial arts are all about is in some fundamental way tied into virtually everything else in their culture of origin. The traditional martial systems of Japan (and other Asian nations) were an integrated part of culture in the past, and contributed greatly to the formation and character of the contemporary nations of Asia. For Japan, Nitobe Inazo's text *Bushido: The Soul of Japan* is explicit on the significance of samurai training and ethos to the development of this globally significant nation.

With this in mind, once my doctoral responsibilities were concluded and with the happy coincidence of a job offer from a Japanese firm in Surabaya's hands, we made our logical—and momentous—decision. We stored, sold, gave away, and threw out some of our possessions, packed and shipped the rest, and soon followed them to Japan. There we lived and worked for the next three years, learning about the land and its people, norms and standards, traditions and changes, and ourselves.

UNDERSTANDING JAPAN

While it may be that the brilliance of the Japanese miracle of economic development has dimmed of

late, few can doubt the impressiveness of the rise of Japan from defeat in World War II to current world economic dominance, e.g., second only to the U.S. in annual GNP, and touted as the world's leading donor nation. This accomplishment is all the more impressive when we consider how little in the way of natural resources Japan has that would facilitate this level of successful competitiveness.

Historically, the Japanese have developed as an energetic and disciplined people, whose social system and cultural norms emphasize tight-knit groups with a productive work ethic, and to which attention to obligation is paramount. Contributing factors in the development of these characteristics are the natural setting, geography, and distribution of natural resources in Japan, a country comprised of mountainous islands in which the subsistence base necessary for a developing civilization needed to be wrested from land circumscribed by sea and steep slopes. Another contributing factor has been the destructive natural calamities such as earthquakes and typhoons--and their potential side effect, the tsunami, our misnomered "tidal" wave--which have periodically leveled communities, and from which the survivors have repeatedly reconstructed their social and cultural structures.



The author teaching koryu jujutsu

What is cause and what is effect in the development of Japanese attributes is debatable, but another elemental factor in the development of the Japanese has been a set of characteristics associated with a martial ethos that has pervaded Japanese civilization for centuries. For over 250 years during the Tokugawa era (1600–1868), the bushi or samurai, Japan's warrior class, were essentially at the top of a caste-like social system. But even long before this, at least from the 12th century when fighting between rival Taira and Minamoto clans resulted in military domination of a hitherto nobility-run government, Japan's military leaders wielded considerable social and political power, facilitated by their actual ability—through force of arms—to control.

Besides the discipline inherent in efficient and successful military organizations, numerous attributes have been associated with Japan's bushi. An outgrowth of the philosophical and religious bases of Shinto, Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, the code of conduct of the samurai certainly evolved over time, as well as in different feudal domains, itself a subject worthy of further detailed study. But the more or less comparable codes within which these warriors trained and developed has come to be known as bushido, the Way of the bushi or warriors.

The earliest treatise on this subject written by a Japanese (in English) for a Western audience is the book *Bushido: the Soul of Japan* by Nitobe Inazo, who based his work, in his own words, on "what I was told and taught in my youthful days, when feudalism was still in force." In it, Nitobe describes the most salient attributes of bushido to be rectitude or justice, courage, benevolence, politeness, veracity/sincerity, honor and personal dignity, loyalty and duty or obligation, and self-control. (Compare these attributes with the "Five Constant Virtues" of Confucian tradition: benevolence, righteousness or rectitude, propriety, wisdom, and trust or faith that Warner and Draeger list in *Japanese Swordsmanship*.) As in the case of

most ideals, there are certainly deviations from and excesses in the application of these traits. But Nitobe's main point is that much of what is Japan today, indeed its very "soul" (as indicated in the subtitle of his book), derives from the tenets of bushido.

Although Japan has changed significantly in many respects since Nitobe's era, Nitobe's words are still worth heeding:

He who would understand twentieth-century Japan must know something of its roots in the soil of the past. Even if now as invisible to the present generation in Nippon as to the alien, the philosophic student reads the results of today in the stored energies of ages gone.

I was curious to see and experience for myself this land of the samurai, to know what it had become, and to learn from what it still has to offer.

IN THE LAND OF THE SAMURAI

Surabela was hired by a firm providing instructional services in international communication, which would make use of her administrative, linguistic and multi-cultural skills. Since the firm was a subsidiary of the enormous Sumitomo keiretsu or "business family", we were able to move into subsidized company housing. This had the advantage of relieving us from the hassles of finding a place on our own, and of reducing our rent. Residence in company housing also came with a ready-made neighborhood: other Sumitomo employees and their families, a sort of work-based extended family.

Although Japan is a land where you can see and experience breathtaking natural beauty, as well as inspiring ages-old shrines and temples of hand-hewn timber, most Japanese (and foreigners living in Japan) live in an urban setting characterized by

asphalt, glass, and concrete; bustling traffic in the form of cars, commuter trains, bicycles, and swarms of pedestrians; and skyscrapers and sky-high prices. The area in which we lived, Koshien—a district of Nishinomiya which is about half-way between the larger centers of Osaka and Kobe—is typical in this way, and famous in Japan as host to the biannual high school baseball national championships. It is a busy place, full of the inevitable noise, smog, and occasional congestion of the modern city. But it also has its charm, especially in the scattered elements of traditional aesthetics: small neighborhood Shinto shrines with their prominent torii (entry gate), Chinese-inspired architecture, and green growing things; miniature sculpted gardens; relatively crime-free streets; and a general neat tidiness. And there are also, and most importantly, the Japanese people themselves, who know the value of courtesy, and who helped us feel welcome, if not actually at home.

Our apartment, known as a "2DK" in Japan (that is, two rooms, with a dining-kitchenette area), was a common type and tiny by American standards, at least for a family. Our living area was comprised of two 6-tatami mat rooms (tatami, a rush used extensively for flooring mats, is affixed to frames which measure about three by six feet [or three to



Fabian Sensei in action

six Japanese shaku lengths]), a kitchen with barely room for a card-table, a short hall, toilet and bath rooms (separate and closet-sized), an entry alcove (the ubiquitous genkan where shoes are removed before entering), and a narrow balcony. For storage, closets ran the length of each tatami room, in which the folded bedding (futon) is kept during the day, as well as all clothes and other personal belongings. The inconveniences of this apartment—such as its small size, and the challenge of heating either water or the living space itself without a centralized system for doing so—were somewhat compensated by the tastefully decorated sliding cardboard doors (fusuma) dividing the internal spaces, and the paper window shutters (shoji) that illuminate with a pleasant diffuse light, while nevertheless concealing the inside from the out.

Fortunately for us, my wife had not only begun learning her Japanese intensively while previously living and studying in Japan, but had continued to take courses in it at the University of Illinois, and had become quite fluent. Unfortunately for me, except for a short cram course two weeks before our departure, I had never formally studied the language. Once Surabela began her full-time employment duties, this left me at home with our two-year old daughter, with virtually no Japanese language, and playing house-husband in a land where men are rarely seen at home during day-time hours. On most days, Rebecca and I would join the other company children and their mothers for play in a large sand box and on park equipment, where Rebecca, with her dark hair and the advantage of the pre-pubescent brain for language acquisition, quickly became acculturated and functionally bilingual.

For me it was not that easy, although I was able to complement my individual language study from books and audiotapes with daily application in actual life contexts. This resulted in fairly rapid progress in spoken Japanese, especially during the first six months of our stay. My motivation was

high, and there are certainly an abundance of learning aids available. But it was difficult and awkward being the only adult male among the daily groups of interacting children and mothers, which limited the extent to which I felt comfortable practicing my Japanese (it is also true that men and women speak slightly different styles of Japanese, which further complicated my learning process). Once we acquired bicycles and an attached seat for Rebecca, she and I were able to take rides, for shopping or sightseeing, or even to the seashore (not very distant, although access to it was restricted by a high sea wall) and other parks. Even though such jaunts relieved some of the monotony and discomfort of my daily schedule, I knew that for the sake of Rebecca's socialization and normal development, she needed regular contact and play with other children, and so as often as not, we played near our apartment.

Besides having primary daytime responsibility to care for our apartment and daughter, and learning the language, I was also seriously attempting to rewrite my doctoral dissertation into a book. The irony of my intense involvement in Asian martial arts while preparing a doctoral thesis on South America in the U.S., and writing a book on Brazilian Indians while in Japan, is not lost on me. There is no doubt that in each instance my ability to totally and exclusively immerse myself in one specific project was affected by these somewhat competing and diverse interests. Perhaps this combination unnecessarily complicated my life, but it seemed the only reasonable course of action, especially once my disparate interests began developing and demanding expression. Besides, I was not sure then, nor am I any more certain now, that exclusive emphasis in only one direction of study is most beneficial, or even desirable. This attitude matches my staunch support of the liberal arts education, which stresses a broad foundation of study in the humanities, arts, and social and natural sciences. Such an orientation not only ensures well-rounded development, but also allows for focused study in a

way that should maximize the potential for cross-disciplinary connections. Making these bigger, interdisciplinary connections was part of what I hoped to be achieving by my mix of interests and activities.

To be successful, such a mix does depend on an efficient ability to focus, to concentrate on the matter at hand, especially since you may be changing the subject of your attention dramatically, in relatively short periods of time. It also requires patience, since the acquisition of knowledge—especially on disparate subjects simultaneously—seldom comes quickly or easily. Both the ability to focus and to be patient are enhanced by serious martial training, in which you cannot hope to achieve respectable competence in mental and physical focus in a short period of time. So I attended to my house-husbanding and parental duties; studied the language, the culture and the people; and worked on my book, focusing on each in turn, and struggling with my impatience to know more, speak better, and be productive in my new and alien environment. This was the everyday context of my entry into Japan. But my personal, primary reason for being in Japan was not forgotten: formal training in a traditional Japanese martial art.



Fabian Sensei is one of the highest-ranking Western teachers of authentic Japanese jujutsu in the world.

And thankfully, this opportunity was not long in coming.

HONTAI YOSHIN RYU JUJUTSU

Japan is known for a plethora of martial systems, especially such modern sports as judo and kendo, and the Okinawa-derived karate. Since I had no interest in competition, both judo and kendo held little attraction for me in terms of my training, and karate, although of different varieties depending on the specific ryu or school/style, was also somewhat unattractive due to its at least superficial similarity to tae kwon do in emphasizing kicking and punching techniques. I was hoping to train in a style that could complement these techniques, one that emphasized joint locking and throwing in order to immobilize an attacker, and possibly some traditional weapons use. Being in Japan, I also sought something quintessentially Japanese.

Master Hyong, knowing my philosophical interests in the arts, had suggested perhaps the most obvious choice, aikido. Aikido was established as a new martial style during the middle decades of this century by Ueshiba Morihei, a gifted martial artist and devoutly religious man, who elaborated upon the base of his formal training in traditional styles of jujutsu/aikijujutsu and kenjutsu to devise a system that he felt allowed a person to harmonize with universal energy. My earliest personal contact with aikido had been the club demo at the U of I, and while the instructor had been impressive, I had doubts about my fit, at least at that time, with such a style, especially as it was practiced there. As it turned out, there simply were no aikido classes anywhere near or moderately convenient to our residence in Koshien, again stymieing my interest in that art.

Another possibility that interested me was jujutsu (also spelled jiujitsu or in other variations). Nitobe lists jujutsu as among the curriculum of studies of bushido, and defines it as "an application of

anatomical knowledge . . . to incapacitate one for action for the time being." One of the first actual Japanese instructors of jujutsu to teach in America, Kiyose Nakae, gives more substance to the definition in his 1958 instructional manual, *Jiu Jitsu Complete*: "jiu means 'gentle, pliable, virtuous, to submit' and *jitsu* means 'art or science'." Its techniques as perceived by Westerners were so unlike fighting that they are labeled "tricks" in this relatively early (English) publication, and are said to "wipe out differences of size, weight, height and reach."

The potential problem in training really traditional jujutsu however, is its lack of accessibility. Several Japanese friends or acquaintances with whom I spoke in the U.S. prior to leaving for Japan were convinced that jujutsu was no longer practiced in Japan, that rather the more modern judo was the only existing form of this art. This sentiment is even expressed by the publisher in his original preface to Nakae's text: "Jiu Jitsu is no longer taught in Japan. It is no longer passed from generation to generation, as it had been for hundreds of years." Assuming that if against these apparent odds I could find a jujutsu school, what would be the likelihood of it being close enough for me to train in, or of my acceptance as a foreigner into its ranks?

Fortunately for me, not only is traditional jujutsu still taught in Japan, but the headquarters of one such style was located only a 15-minute bicycle ride from our apartment! Without prior knowledge of its location or existence, my manner of entry into this system, the Hontai Yoshin Ryu, was so obviously fortuitous as to make me ponder such concepts as destiny, fate, and karma.

The Honbu dojo or headquarters training hall of Hontai Yoshin Ryu is located in a municipal building in Imazu, Nishinomiya. It shares this space with several other martial styles in an elaborate scheme of time-sharing. As it happened, the Japanese wife of an American who was an employee in the same firm as Surabela trained at the dojo. This family

kindly invited us shortly after our arrival in Japan to their apartment—one similar to ours in a neighboring Sumitomo building—and it was during our conversation over lunch that our shared interest in the martial arts arose. Upon my mention of jujutsu, the woman informed us of the presence of the Hontai Yoshin Ryu at her dojo, and suggested I go see a practice session; she even offered to make the requisite introductions, highly significant in Japan. It seemed then—and it still seems—too good to be true. Barely containing my excitement, I thanked her for her information and offer, and made arrangements to go with her that very week to the dojo.

My first practice session in the Hontai Yoshin Ryu occurred on 21 July 1987, less than two weeks from the date of our arrival in Japan (9 July). Since it was a Tuesday night, and since the Hontai Yoshin Ryu is a koryu or ancient traditional system with both unarmed and weapons components, I began my actual training not in unarmed combat, but rather in the use of the 6-foot staff (cho-bo or roku shaku bo), after which several members of the style took me out for talk and drinks. Although we had difficulty communicating (no one spoke much English, and my Japanese was still embryonic), we achieved and shared *kimochi*, the "good feeling" that is elemental for group harmony in Japan. From such talks and shared training strong interpersonal bonds were formed, and I was able to piece together some of the history and current state of affairs of my new style, a traditional school that has nevertheless changed to some extent with the times.

Although I had not known it at the time, the Hontai Yoshin Ryu, with some 350+ years of history, was then in an active state of exporting itself overseas, and had already established several schools in Europe, and during my three year stay would establish others, including in Australia. No formal contacts had yet been made with Americans, however. That several hundred students practice

the style outside of Japan is ironic considering that a "crowded" night at the honbu (headquarters) dojo yields perhaps a dozen participants, and most nights have fewer. In spite of the considerable foreign interest in the style, it remains relatively unknown in mainstream Japan (or in the U.S.); considering this, it is again ironic, perhaps, that at the time of my training in Japan (1987–1990), my period of consecutive training at the dojo became the longest of any foreigner.

IN THE HONBU DOJO

The main training schedule of the Hontai Yoshin Ryu during my stay was on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday nights, from about 8:00 PM until 10:00 PM. Tuesday was bo night, emphasizing the long (six foot) and short (three foot) staffs, while Wednesday and Friday emphasized primarily empty-handed jujutsu. The core of the jujutsu is encoded in sets of weaponless forms or kata, including defenses against different types of attacks (for example, a wrist grab, lapel grab, punch to the face or body), and incorporates a variety of deflections, strikes, joint locks, and take-downs or throws. Additional jujutsu kata also include defenses against the tanto (knife) and katana (long sword), while other sets of kata involve the wakizashi (short sword), and the han-bo (three foot stick), as well as the cho-bo.

Although I was given the generous option of wearing my tae kwon do black belt, I preferred to don (for the third time in my life) the beginner's white belt. The training suit worn in practice is a simple white dogi, with either a white or black belt tied around the waist. I found the pureness and simplicity of the unadorned uniforms and lack of colored belts to produce a rather powerful and positive aesthetic effect. Occasionally in practice and always for demonstration purposes a traditional black or dark blue hakama is also worn, which adds considerable dignity to the outfit, but also requires attention from its wearer when executing movements, particularly falls and rolls, since it is not that difficult to get your feet entangled in the folds of material. Training is

generally done barefoot, although for outdoor performances a simple thonged zori or sandal with or without tabi (split-toed socks) can be worn.

A practice session in Hontai Yoshin Ryu jujutsu is a curious blend of formal structure and informal relationships. Class is started and ended with students in a line, everyone seated in the seiza posture with feet tucked under (insteps on the floor and heels against the buttocks), facing the front of the dojo and the class leader. All bow to the front (where there is a Shinto shrine), and to the leader, who also bows; there may or may not be a period of meditative calm, mokuso, and some message or philosophical discourse by the leader. Inoue Tsuyoshi Munetoshi, the system's current and 18th Soke or Grandmaster, is particularly fond of sharing his philosophy. A lifelong practitioner of the martial arts, and master of many styles (including two-time Japanese National Champion in jukendo, the fiercely competitive bayonet-derived style, as well as devoted practitioner of shodo, the way of calligraphy), Soke is an embodiment of the samurai ethos: disciplined, physically strong yet aesthetically sophisticated and philosophical, successful in professional matters, and socially prominent as a leading local citizen.

Whereas my first lesson in bojutsu emphasized basic striking movements with this weapon, my first jujutsu session began with ukemi, the all-essential break-falls that minimize risk of injury by helping you take the shock of a throw. We also worked some basic drills with a partner that emphasize body mechanics, such as how a wrist can be extracted without applying aggressive force from a hand that has grasped it.

In general, warm-ups, following the bowing-in, are brief, usually only a series of front rolls back and forth across the dojo, sometimes followed by simple throwing drills. The greater part of a training session is spent training specific kata with a partner. In my experience, the new student is introduced

fairly quickly to the first and second kata in the first jujutsu series called gyaku no kata. Unlike most karate kata or taekwon do poomsae which are performed by individuals and can have twenty or more movements in them, jujutsu kata are practiced between two people and may appear relatively simple: the attacker moves in (for example, grabs a wrist or lapel, or punches to the face or belly), and the defender responds, with a designated technique. Correct technique and attitude, good timing, and proper body position and movement (tai sabaki) are of major importance. The defensive motion may be a locking or throwing maneuver with or without a strike, but is over in a brief moment, after which the two practitioners retreat from each other and take up a prepared stance in a state of heightened mind-body alertness called zanshin.

That all of this appears simple is what makes the actual performance of the kata so remarkably difficult. Jujutsu movements are replete with nuances and subtleties, and a type of body motion that must be cultivated over an extended period of time. Responses are typified by circularity and the use of the lever principle, and rely on a thorough knowledge of human anatomy for the application of accurate locks, throws, and even pressure point strikes (atemi). Because true proficiency in this art requires not only refined physical technique, but a certain frame of mind—this relates to the various concepts associated with the term ju—it requires long and diligent training, under masterful instruction.

And so I began a new stage of my martial journey. In spite of my previous 10+ years of martial training, my initial progress felt agonizingly slow. Donning yet again the beginner's white belt in this different art really required me to "empty my cup" of prior conceptions, and to apply all of the glimmerings of awakening martial awareness in the study of this traditional Japanese system. All of my previously grasped Lessons of Mastery were reiterated, and one utterly fundamental new one was added: the need for patience and the ability to flow.

Jujutsu is an excellent context for learning this Lesson: its subtle movements, timing, angles and positions defy quick or easy learning, and its major philosophical tenet—the Japanese ju—is to flow, to develop and apply the qualities of flexibility and suppleness. Learning to flow with my partner, to not meet aggressive force directly with aggressive force but rather to use the attacker's own force, momentum and position against him or her, has been an extremely important revelation to me. Ideally, once mastered the skills of jujutsu allow you to neutralize an attack with minimal harm to yourself and with minimally expended energy, allows the smaller and weaker to overcome the larger and stronger, and allows you to control to some degree the damage you cause your attacker. Beyond this, the jujutsu adept can also apply this tactic of ju to interpersonal interactions and relationships of a non-physical nature, reducing aggression and conflict in these contexts. But of course all of this requires time, training and patience.

PATIENCE AND FLOW

The Way to Mastery is not a commodity that you can purchase at your local discount or department store, nor is it a refreshment or entertainment that gives immediate gratification. It is rather a series of challenges that comprise an endless process of being and becoming. Because this is so, and in spite of the many frustrations and setbacks you will inevitably experience along your way, it is important that you acquire and practice patience. The development and application of patience is facilitated by an attitude of flowing with the Way. The more compulsively you struggle for achievement, the more you will become mired in the muck of frustration and defeat.

The self-discipline necessary to keep us to the task of mastery despite setbacks, pitfalls, and endless frustrations can harden us to a point where we become physically, mentally, and emotionally stiff

and rigid, as I myself was in my earlier "crusty" phase. As one version of Lao Tzu's *Tao Teh Ching* (*Book of the Tao* or *The Way of Life*, Witter Bynner translation) puts it,

Man, born tender and yielding,
Stiffens and hardens in death.
All living growth is pliant,
Until death transfixes it.
Thus men who have hardened are "kin of death"
And men who stay gentle are "kin of life."

Such over-rigidity is not only unattractive to others, but it severely limits our development and abilities, and in a martial context can be deadly. In Eiji Yoshikawa's novel *Musashi*, our hero learns this lesson from Yoshino, a geisha he meets. Following a chance encounter, the highly cultivated geisha finds herself oddly attracted to this youthful and rather uncouth but impressive samurai. As they awkwardly interact, Yoshino reveals her sadness at Musashi's affected alertness and rigidity—which he defends by claiming to be in readiness for potential enemies. Yoshino counters by suggesting that while in such a state, if he were to be attacked in force, he would be killed immediately. The geisha illustrates her message poignantly, by cutting open the valuable stringed instrument upon which she plays so masterfully. She shows Musashi how the instrument's beautiful sound is created by combining its rigid wooden structure with flexible strings. Yoshino comments:

. . . the tonal richness comes from there being a certain freedom of movement, a certain relaxation, at the ends of the core.

It's the same with people. In life, we must have flexibility. Our spirits must be able to move freely. To be too stiff and rigid is to be brittle and lacking in responsiveness.

The geisha's message is that strength, hardness, and perseverance need tempering with gentleness, flow, and patience. This is part of the meaning in the name, Hontai Yoshin Ryu, which has for its imagery the Willow Heart/ Mind where the willow, which bends and sways in a strong wind is considered superior to the stiffness of an oak, which can be snapped off by the same gusts.

Musashi eventually became the embodiment of flexibility and flow, and shared this wisdom with his students and all of us in his creative works and writing. In the Water Scroll (or Book) of his *Go Rin No Sho* (*Book of Five Rings*), for example, he condemns rigidity and praises flexibility: "I dislike rigidity. Rigidity means a dead hand and flexibility means a living hand . . . Always maintain a fluid and flexible, free and open mind."

Also, by "letting it happen" as Master Hyong would frequently advise us, we are not so much in a rush to get to our objective that we make things harder for ourselves getting there. Habitually "letting it happen" will also facilitate "letting go" in ultimate mastery. Rushing headlong towards mastery will keep you far from it, like grasping for something in water, only to send it further away. Such heedless haste distracts you from the significance of the journey itself. Patience, the capacity of calm endurance, will help you measure your tread when you might otherwise recklessly dash forward, and can also help you tolerate the tribulations and challenges you will surely encounter on your Way.

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