

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

2011 DUES REMINDER

SMAA dues should have been paid on the first of January, 2011. Please make a point of sending your payment to our Michigan headquarters on or before this date. Prompt payment helps the SMAA to run smoothly, and it reduces the amount of labor and cost associated with sending late dues notices.

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 3½ inch circle featuring our logo shown 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.

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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修道館武道会

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, just send a check or money order made out to "SMAA" to:

SMAA HQ
PO Box 6022
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SMAA ONLINE STORE

Don't forget that the SMAA has a great online store, where you can purchase official SMAA merchandise.

All proceeds go to support our nonprofit group, and you can find some great deals on shirts, hats, stickers, mouse pads, and a bunch of other fun stuff. Go here to check it out:

<http://www.cafepress.com/shudokan/>

SMAA EUROPE SEMINAR WITH SUZUKI KUNIO SENSEI

Great news! John Evans Sensei, SMAA Senior Advisor, will host an official SMAA Europe Seminar in London this summer. The featured instructor will be Suzuki Kunio Sensei, Hanshi and eighth dan in Nakamura Ryu swordsmanship. Suzuki Sensei is one of the highest ranking martial artists in Japan, if not the world, and he is a direct student of the founder of Nakamura Ryu. He is also a member of the elite SMAA Board of Advisors and one of several SMAA officials living in Japan. This is the first time Suzuki Sensei will teach at an SMAA event.

SMAA members will receive a 10% discount on this two day August event. Attendance is limited, so get your registration form and fee in early. Don't miss your chance to study the art of the samurai sword with one of the top teachers in the SMAA. Here's all you need to get started:

SMAA Europe Seminar

Subject: Nakamura Ryu battodo

Teacher: Suzuki Kunio Sensei, Hanshi/eighth dan

Dates & Times: 20th /21st August, 10am -5pm (both days)

Location: City of London Academy, Islington

Prebend Street, Islington London, N1 8PQ

Cost: £120 (including test cutting materials).

Contact: E-mail John Evans Sensei at info@battodofudokan.co.uk for registration materials.

WE'RE ON FACEBOOK

The SMAA has its own Facebook page. Drop by <http://www.facebook.com/ShudokanMartialArtsAssociation> to get the latest SMAA news. Check out the cool photo albums featuring top SMAA teachers. And become a fan of our new Facebook page, so you don't miss out on all the latest SMAA activities.

Not a Facebook member? Don't worry; registration is safe, easy, and you'll have lots of fun once you have your own Facebook page.

A NOTE TO SMAA MEMBERS

We have recently become aware of at least one other martial arts group that uses the acronym "SMAA." Please note that the Shudokan Martial Arts Association is not affiliated with any other group or organization that uses SMAA to identify itself. Though we do not believe any careful observer would confuse our thoughtful, traditional approach with that of another organization, we suggest that

you be sure to type in “Shudokan Martial Arts Association” when seeking information about our association.

Our website can be found at <http://www.smaa-hq.com/> and our Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/ShudokanMartialArtsAssociation>.

JMAC ANNIVERSARY

Nicklaus Suino Sensei's Japanese Martial Arts Center celebrated its fifth anniversary in Ann Arbor, Michigan on June 25. JMAC benefits from Suino Sensei's decades of traditional budo training. Suino Sensei began studying Kodokan judo in 1968. During that time, he first met Ito Kazuo Sensei, judo tenth dan, and Sato Shizuya Sensei, ninth dan. Sato Sensei was to become an instructor to Suino Sensei twenty years later, in 1988, when he moved to Tokyo to practice judo. During his years in Japan, he also studied Sato Sensei's system of modern jujutsu, and he practiced Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu iaido with Yamaguchi Katsuo Sensei, tenth dan.

After years of studying judo and practicing with some of the best known judoka in the world, including Walter Todd Sensei, Sato Nobuyuki Sensei, Yamashita Yasuhiro Sensei, Mike Swain



Suino Sensei teaching the traditional iaido of Yamaguchi Katsuo Sensei

Sensei, and many others, Suino Sensei returned to Ann Arbor to open the Japanese Martial Arts Center, where judo is taught both as a competitive sport and a lifetime personal development pursuit. Jujutsu and iaido are practiced at JMAC as well, with a similar emphasis on developing both mind and body.

Suino Sensei believes that every human being should have a mission, and that the traditional martial arts (with the character development aspects intact) are a superb method for finding and refining your personal mission. Through safe, systematic practice of judo, or one of the other traditional Japanese martial arts, JMAC students gradually improve their health, self-confidence, and ability to perceive and adapt to reality.

SMAA members from various locations started arriving at JMAC on Saturday at 3:30 PM. The anniversary event included a promotion ceremony for JMAC members who had successfully completed prior kyu and dan tests. Following the presentation of official SMAA rank certificates, everyone enjoyed a potluck party. The JMAC annual potluck has become world famous among those "in the know." Each year, JMAC members have raised the bar by bringing better and more exciting dishes from their home cultures or old family recipes. Thanks to all the SMAA members that participated in this fun event and congratulations to JMAC members that received new SMAA ranks.



Nicklaus Suino Sensei with his iaido teacher Yamaguchi Katsuo Sensei, tenth dan

TO DIE ON THE MAT

By Mark A. Colby

The successful globalization of judo as a major Olympic sport has caused its historical roots—bound in Eastern spiritualism—to be minimized to better resonate to the masses. Some argue that, for the good of the sport, judo's Shinto pedigree be eliminated all together. Others feel passionate that without spiritualism, the thing we call judo is not judo at all—relegated to a kind of pajama wrestling.

Diverse opinions aside, it is difficult to conclude that judo is not somehow different from most other sports. Notwithstanding its indisputable historical roots, what is it that makes judo different?

This question was posed to an admittedly stacked deck of judo devotees who occupy the old-boy's corner of the dai-dojo ("large dojo") at Tokyo's Kodokan. The most remarkable response was; "If you need to ask the question, you likely have no hope of ever understanding the answer." While this retort came as close to the truth allowable given the fuzzy nature of budo spirituality, it did not satisfy my Western wiring, so I pressed for more.

"Judo is more a religion than a sport," stated one grizzled eighty-year-old whose recent stroke forced a talon-like grip on his tiny beer glass. "All I care about is dying on the mat. What happens after that doesn't matter," he said, staring fearlessly into the abyss.

"The only real friends I have ever had in my life are judoists." says a spry seventy-two-year-old former cop. "We understand each other and don't need too many words to communicate." He also agrees that his preferred method of cashing out is face down on smelly green tatami ("mats").

Grasping for telltale threads of logic, I concluded that the group's responses seemed to cover two of

the fundamental pillars defining religion: communicating with like-minded people and finding a way to accept the finality of death. Could this bring us closer to defining what makes judo different? Is this why so many people in Japan practice judo into their ripe old age? Are these people practitioners of a spiritual kind of judo, different from what many others practice?

Akimaru Koho, M.D., Ph.D., Kodokan sixth dan, and a professor at Nippon Medical School thinks so. He is seriously contemplating the creation of a Judo Hospice, complete with ripe tatami and a red lantern beer joint. Just the mention of dying in a judo hospice brings strong emotions and interest from aging sensei and family members alike. They may not understand Grandpa's passion, but they know that it is real, and that it beats the alternatives—hands down.

In the end, judo will mean different things to different people and may even evolve as we age. Perhaps only those who patiently sow and cultivate a lifetime of experience achieve the more spiritual



Nicklaus Suino Sensei, SMAA Judo Division Director, performing the tomoe nage technique



Colby Sensei has studied classic judo in Japan for over 30 years

aspects. And perhaps it is only natural for the young to dismiss any deeper meaning, focusing instead on rubbing an opponent's face in the mat. Little do young judoka know that, one day, it may be this same mat on which they too yearn to gasp

their last pungent lungful.

About the Author: Mark Colby Sensei, SMAA Senior Advisor, has decades of training in judo, much of it in Japan, where he's lived for the last 30 years. 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. This is a feat usually accomplished by heavyweight competitors. Colby Sensei is of average build. His wins harkens back to the era of classical judo when smaller judoka competed without weight classes and sometimes won overall. The Maroto Kaigai Championships is an important event, and as a result, Colby Sensei was featured on NHK television in Japan. A Kodokan trained and certified black belt holder, he is the author of *The Japan Healthcare Debate*, *Negotiating the Gray Maze*, and *The Boxer Gate*.

THE THREE ASPECTS OF TRAINING

By Nicklaus Suino

There are three aspects to physical training in budo, whether you train for self-defense, physical fitness, or character development. These are as follows: (1) learning new techniques; (2) mastering the techniques you know; and (3) applying the techniques in action. All three aspects are critical if you want to become a really good martial artist.

LEARNING NEW TECHNIQUES

Because you come to a new art with no knowledge, the early part of your martial arts career will be mostly filled with learning new techniques. Typically, you are taught a throw, joint lock, sword cut, or strike—you practice it a bit until you have memorized the pattern—your teacher helps you refine it a bit—and then you are taught another

new technique. This is the same whether you study aikido, iaido, judo, jujutsu, karate-do, or kendo. Because students get a lot of attention at this stage, and because of the excitement and interest of constantly learning new things, many students get addicted to learning new techniques. If they don't manage to move past this addiction, they will never become accomplished martial artists; instead, they will become collectors of skills—dilettantes with no deep understanding of their art. In fact, learning new techniques is the smallest part of the career of a true martial arts master.

MASTERING TECHNIQUES

In the traditional martial arts, we don't really believe in the idea that a person can truly “master”

a technique or an art. Instead, we believe that becoming great at martial arts is a lifetime's commitment, and that we must constantly revisit the techniques we know to try to deepen our understanding of them. What we mean when we say that the second aspect of physical training is "mastering techniques" is that we constantly practice what we know, always trying to be better. We analyze each part of a technique, figure out what could be done better, practice that part, then put the whole thing back together and try to make it more efficient, more effective, or more beautiful. If we keep at it long enough with an enthusiastic spirit, we can eventually become quite good at our chosen art.

APPLYING TECHNIQUES IN ACTION

Once we have achieved some degree of understanding of our martial arts skills, we can apply them in action. In judo, this is done in randori (free practice), in karate-do we engage in kumite (sparring), in iaido, we simply repeat our forms again and again, seeking to deepen our ability to focus on and execute the detailed form requirements. Through this application, we learn what works well and what needs more work. We can go back to the mastery stage to analyze and perfect skills that don't work well in application, try

them out again, and continue this back and forth process until we succeed at throwing a challenging partner (or whatever our milestone is at the time). This eventually makes us very capable at self-defense, demonstrating, kumite, or whatever our goal for training may be.

Having good training partners is critical for success in application of techniques. Dojo mates who care about your success can make all the difference. They will apply their strength in the right measure so that you can attempt your technique and determine whether or not it works. They can comment on how your technique looks or feels to them, allowing you to use the feedback to make yourself better. As you improve, they can increase their strength and speed, helping you to refine your skills even more. There are very few better friends than a really good training partner.

About the Author: Nicklaus Suino Sensei is one of the founding members of the SMAA and the group's General Manager. He holds a fourth dan in jujutsu, a sixth dan in judo, and a seventh dan in iaido. He is also a yudansha ("person with dan") in kyudo archery, aikido, and karate-do. Fluent in Japanese, he lived for several years in Tokyo, and he returns to Japan on a regular basis to further his study of judo, jujutsu, and iaido.

KIAI: IS YOUR KIAI LIKE A LION'S ROAR OR A SQUEAKY TOY?

By Wayne Muromoto

My dog has a favorite chase toy. It's a furry squirrel doll that squeaks. I put it on a string and yank it on the ground in front of her, squeeze it in my fist so it squeaks, and twirl it around me. My dog goes crazy over it. The squeaks arouse the predator instinct in her, and she just goes insanely happy chasing it, chomping on it with her teeth, and trying to shake it and tear it limb from limb whenever she's able to catch it.

So the other night I was trying to get my students to kiai; to "shout," during their kata, and I didn't hear a lion's roar. I heard a squeaky toy squeal. Not good. Rather than disturbing the attacker's focus with their kiai, I told my club members that their kiai would encourage an attacker's animalistic, predatory instincts. That's the total opposite of what a kiai is supposed to do.



The author teaching Takeuchi Ryu

In Japanese, kakegoe is a generic “shout” or loud yell. A kiai, however, is a special kind of yell (if it’s a yell at all... more on this later). You can begin to decipher what a kiai is by analyzing its Chinese characters. The word kiai is made of two characters: ki, or “spirit” or “inner strength;” the ki of aikido; and -ai, which is from the verb “to meet, to come together, to gather.” So the kiai is not just acoustic; it is when everything comes together in one unified action: mind, body, spirit, breath. If done well, the forceful exhalation of breath is timed to coincide with the apex of physical exertion, technical execution, focus and timing.

If your center of gravity is lowered, if the energy feels like it is coming from the lower spiritual center called the seika tanden (a few inches below the navel and in about two inches or so), then you are “centered” and are able to exert a great deal of unified, coordinated action through your body. This unified action is expressed by a forceful exhalation of breath through the kiai. If the yell comes from the full diaphragm, the entire lung capacity of your body, it should sound full-bodied and deep, like the roar of a lion. That’s the theory, at least.

If, however, your kiai sounds like a squeaky toy, then there’s a whole mess of things just wrong. Squeaky toy kiai happens when the breathing is constricted. Like when I go to the dentist and the first drill starts whirring... I squeal in fear. I’m not taking deep breaths, not using my entire diaphragm to fill up my lungs and exhale. The shoulders are bunching up to help you breathe, not your diaphragm.

Compare it to when your shoulders are relaxed, and it feels like you are breathing “from the stomach.” Then you are using the entire chest diaphragm to breathe, using your full capacity, and controlling your musculature properly, without constricting your arm movements by tightening up your shoulders.

Tightness in the shoulders will constrict the breathing and lungs. That will lead to a tight, squeaky yell. That’s why I could immediately tell my students weren’t breathing correctly and their movements were coming from their shoulders, not from their hips and legs.

Thousands of years of evolution have led predator animals to recognize the difference in a prey animal’s vocalizations. If my dog stalks a toy, and it squeaks, oh boy; she thinks it’s a scared little furry creature, and she will pounce on it. Consider the difference between a dog itching for a fight to protect its territory and a dog that is scared and yelping, running away with its tail between its legs. They will have totally different vocalizations.

The same goes for the human animal. That’s why in martial arts, kiai are not meant to be squeals of fear, which are high-pitched with tightly constricted vocal chords. They are meant to be like the roar of a lion or tiger, not the squeal of a squeaky toy.

Granted, people with different body types will have different vocal ranges. Women as a whole may have

a higher pitched kiai than men. But within those parameters, any kiai should sound like it's coming from the lower seika tanden, not from the upper third of one's lungs, whatever the pitch. A little Chihuahua will have a higher pitched bark than a German Shephard, of course, but you can tell when either of them are really angry and ready to bite your ankle compared to when they are whimpering. It's a whole different tone and timbre.

Different *ryu* will have different vowels and vocalizations for kiai. In general, however, most kiai will have a beginning, middle and end, and will nominally be made of just one vowel. For example, a very common kiai is "Ei!" Even if done quickly, if you take it apart, you should notice a short introductory moment when the "eee-" is starting up. Then there's the middle, which is the apex of the kiai, the loudest "EEE!" and finally, as you close off your yell, the ending "-i." Open, start to yell, full yell, then start to close, and end of yell. If you slowed it down, it would sound almost like "eee-Yay-eee."

The kiai should NOT trail off, or dribble off into nothingness. It should have a definite end. As one former teacher of mine used to say, "You have to 'eat' your own kiai."



The author teaching Japanese swordsmanship

So the kiai shouldn't be a "Yahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!" and then you slowly dwindle away into obscurity like someone falling off a tall cliff.

Neither, however, should it be a too-short yelp. Like screaming "Yip!" quickly. That's not a full-bodied, good vintage kiai.

In the past, I've attended some karate tournaments where I've heard all sorts of really odd kiai. The two-syllable ones are the most problematic. "Ei-sah!" "Yow-sah!" "Eee-yasa!" (Okay, that last was three syllables, but I've heard that too.) The worst one I heard was someone literally screaming "Ki-ai" for his kiai. Or, rather, he was yelling "Kee-yah!" What's next? "Boo-yah!" "Boom-chaka-laka!""??? You might as well start yelling the famous Three Stooges kiai, "Whoop-whoopwhoopwhoopwhoop!"

Obviously, these are not very good kiai because they are not one, singular syllable that is extended over the climax of the action; it's two or more, and you thereby end up dividing the strength of the sound among two or more syllables, quite possibly weakening your singular movement as well.

Most practitioners are used to the kiai that accompany a climactic movement, as in the performance of a karate kata. You reach the apex of your exertion in a physical movement and kiai at the same time. But there are other kinds of kiai. There is a zanshin no kiai (a finalizing kiai that is done apart from any outward movement), and there is even a silent kiai that is discussed in such systems as aikido and iaido. There are multiple kiai that accompany two complementary actions done one after another. There are different kiai according to intent and time of execution during an encounter. My own *ryu* divides kiai up into an "initial" kiai, an "ongoing" kiai and the zanshin no kiai. The vocalizations are different, and signify different kinds of body movement, with different psychological impacts on the attacker.

The zanshin no kiai may be found in some koryu as a “finishing” kiai to totally destroy the spiritual and psychic strength of the opponent at the end of a kata and is separate and apart from a particular move or technique. The silent kiai in aikido and iaido is the concept that you don’t necessarily need to yell in order to have kiai; the unification of one’s mind, body, spirit and breath is the kiai itself.

The best exercise for kiai is to simply do one’s kata properly, with the proper kiai in the proper location. You can also practice kiai alone by sitting and trying to kiai, focusing your attention on how you sound. You can do this in a group, too, with a teacher leading and the students attempting to imitate the teacher’s kiai per the ryu’s style. The main objective is not so much how loud you can kiai; it’s to strive for proper tenor and tone of the kiai. It should be low and seem from the seika tanden, not from the shoulders or upper lungs.

This may seem esoteric, but it’s really a basic fact in martial arts that a strong kiai not only unifies one’s own mind, body, spirit and technique, but it also helps in unnerving and defeating one’s opponent. If a kiai can do that, then it has already served its purpose well. People will grunt, shout and yell naturally in all sorts of physical exertions that require total mind–body focus, such as blocking in football, hitting a baseball, and so on. It’s not really all that far from roots in practical body physiology.

On an esoteric level, Mikkyo Buddhism and Shinto believed in the mystical powers of certain sounds. In Mikkyo, these are called mantra, the most famous being the “om” chanted during some Buddhist meditation sessions. Esoteric Shinto had the notion of kotodama, words of mystical power, based on the ancient Japanese language. Ueshiba Morihei Sensei, the founder of aikido, was a believer of the effectiveness of kotodama. I suspect that the more esoteric notions of kiai in martial arts were drawn from and influenced by such religious



The author teaching jujutsu in Honolulu

and spiritual ideas. Even Western religions considered certain words, such as the name of God, to be of great, unnatural power. However, I would caution that simply pulling out a pop culture book on Mikkyo Buddhism, and then attempting to stick some kind of mysterious mumbo jumbo on your martial arts practice, is probably not a good idea. The connection is either there or it’s not in your tradition. And it’s best to leave it at that.

E.J. Harrison, writing at the turn of the 20th Century of his experiences in Japan, claimed to have met a master of kiai-jutsu, someone who specialized just in the technique of kiai. The master gave a demonstration by stepping out to his garden and emitting a kiai in the direction of the shrubbery. Birds fell from a tree, unconscious. Then the master performed another kiai and the birds awoke, shook themselves out of their stupor, and flew away.

I’m not sure if that’s a true story or not, and I’ve really never met such a kiai-jutsu master myself, but I did experience one incident that led me to believe that we shouldn’t totally discount such tales.

Once, a student senior to me was teaching a friend and me in a secluded forest, and he started to talk about using the kiai as a weapon in and of itself. Because we were in an isolated part of a public forest reserve, he gave me an example of the really powerful kiai he had been working on. He turned away from us and let loose a kiai at a stand of trees some twenty to thirty yards away. Even with the yell directed away from us, I felt like my eardrums were nearly pierced, and the birds in the trees bolted up into flight as if they had been attacked by a huge tree-climbing mountain lion pouncing on the branches they had been sitting on. My eardrums rang for quite a few seconds afterwards.

“Well, you don’t have to do this all the time in practice, but that’s how it should sound if you use it for real,” he said. “If somebody means to do you

harm, you could let loose this kiai in front of his face and really stop him because it would surprise the person. If it only stops the person momentarily, at least it will help you to do a counter or run away.”

My senior’s kiai was truly like that of a roar of a tiger or lion. And it sure wasn’t a squeaky toy sound.

About the Author: Wayne Muromoto is one of the highest ranking members of the SMAA Jujutsu Division and a teacher of Bitchuden Takeuchi Ryu as well as Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu iaido. Takeuchi Ryu specializes in jujutsu and numerous weapons, and he teaches both arts in Hawaii. He also has an interesting blog called *The Classic Budoka* at <http://classicbudoka.wordpress.com/>.

AIZU MARTIAL ARTS

By H. E. Davey

My wife is a descendent of the Abe samurai family, who were part of the Aizu han, or “clan,” located in the northern part of Japan’s main island (Honshu). In the 1990s, I made two trips to Japan to research the koryu bujutsu, “ancient martial arts,” of the Aizu han. I visited the Nisshinkan, an Aizu samurai training academy, and the Aizu Buke Yashiki, a samurai mansion, where Saigo Tanomo (an Aizu retainer) lived. I dropped by Tsurugajo Castle and its museum, along with other pertinent locations, and interviewed the staff and historians of these various institutions about Aizu samurai history and bujutsu. This brief article will give SMAA members a peek into the martial past of one of Japan’s celebrated samurai strongholds. I think this article is timely given the recent devastation of the Fukushima area by earthquake, tsunami, and radiation. I hope it will inspire SMAA members to donate to disaster relief for Japan, while it informs readers about the Aizu role in Japanese martial history.

THE AIZU HAN

The area of Aizu and the present-day city of Aizu-Wakamatsu are situated in northern Japan’s beautiful mountainous country in Fukushima prefecture. Some of Japan’s most awe-inspiring



Tsurugajo Castle

scenery is near Mt. Bandai and Lake Inashiro in the Aizu area. Aizu-Wakamatsu is a castle town that prospered in the Edo period. During this 250 year period, Japan was ruled by the shogun, who can be thought of as a kind of generalissimo of feudal lords. A little over 100 years ago, the Boshin Civil War broke out between the west side clans (with Satsuma-Choshu as the main force) and the east side clans (with Aizu as the main force).

The Boshin War was fought from 1868 to 1869 between forces of the ruling Tokugawa shogunate and those seeking to return power to the Emperor. The conflict found its origins in unhappiness among numerous nobles and young warriors with the shogunate's handling of foreigners after the opening of Japan during the previous decade. An association of southern samurai, particularly the domains of Choshu and Satsuma, and court officials secured control of the imperial court and influenced Emperor Meiji. Tokugawa Yoshinobu, the shogun, realizing the futility of his circumstances, abdicated power to the emperor. Tokugawa had hoped that by doing this, the Tokugawa house could survive and be part of the future government.

However, military actions by imperial forces, partisan conflict in Edo, and an imperial decree abolishing the house of Tokugawa, led Yoshinobu to attempt to seize the emperor's court in Kyoto. The tide quickly turned in favor of the more up to date imperial faction, and after battles culminating in the surrender of Edo, Yoshinobu also surrendered. Those loyal to Tokugawa retreated to northern Honshu and eventually Hokkaido. Defeat at the Battle of Hakodate broke this final holdout, and imperial rule was supreme throughout Japan, ending the military part of the Meiji Restoration.

AIZU AND THE BOSHIN WAR

Although the Aizu han and other clans struggled valiantly against the west side clans, gradually, all of Aizu's allied clans were defeated until Tsurugajo

Castle, and the castle town itself, became the last stronghold. (The five-story Tsurugajo Castle, or "The Crane Castle," was built by the feudal lord Ashina Naomori in 1384.)

During the last weeks of the Boshin Civil War, the shogun abdicated. At this date, Daimyo Matsudaira Katamori in Aizu, who had entrenched himself in Tsurugajo with his retainers, was attacked by the west. (A daimyo was a kind of feudal lord.)

About this time, two groups of young people, trained in Aizu martial arts were organized. The first group, known as the Byakkotai, was a squad consisting of sixteen and seventeen year-old boys. While the second group, the Joshigun, was a troop of young girls. Feeling anxious over Matsudaira's safety during the assault, the Byakkotai returned to Aizu from another battle front to find their town in flames. Thinking that their city and Tsurugajo had been lost, they responded in the most heroic way available to them as bushi—"warriors"—by performing seppuku, or "ritual disembowelment." Even today, visitors come to the site of their suicide on Mt. Imori to pay their respects.

It is ironic that Tsurugajo itself was not actually on fire, and that the battle was not yet over, and would continue for another four weeks. However, the resolve of many Aizu families was so great, that during this final month, the bushi wives and children committed seppuku as well. In this way, the warriors wouldn't have to worry about them being captured, be concerned of what would become of their families if they were killed in battle, or in any other way be hindered in their struggle. In the home of Saigo Tanomo, the elder advisor of the Aizu han, 21 bodies of those that had committed seppuku, or hara-kiri, were found. Those who remained in the castle, predominantly children and senior citizens, also committed suicide rather than surrender. Aizu-Wakamatsu, the battlefield that ended the era of the bushi, was drenched in blood. (Even in 1995, when I visited

Tsurugajo, I saw a few Japanese tourists discreetly moved to tears by the story of the Aizu bushi and the Byakkotai—the tragic heroes of Aizu-Wakamatsu.)

In America, the inaugural transcontinental railway had just opened for business in 1869. The above episode took place the preceding autumn and can be thought of as marking a pivotal moment in Japanese history.

AIZU MARTIAL ARTS

Many martial systems, or ryu, were taught and practiced within the Aizu han. Perhaps the most well-known tradition to have connections to Aizu is the Daito Ryu, which will be explored shortly.

When conducting research on most koryu bujutsu systems, the average Japanese historian will immediately reach for one book—the *Bugei Ryuha Daijiten*. Published after years of research by Watatani Kiyoshi and Yamada Tadashi, this massive reference work, consisting of numerous historical entries about a large number of ryu, is considered by many to be "the bible of bujutsu research." It's not perfect, and not every ryu is in it, but it's extremely useful. Unfortunately, like many legitimate works on Japanese bujutsu, it has never been published in English.

Aizu martial arts are briefly outlined in the section on Daito Ryu:

Daito-ryu (aiki, jujutsu, sword, two-sword)

Daito-ryu is the root of aikido. Its techniques are divided into three levels: aikinojutsu, aikijujutsu, jujutsu. These techniques were all part of the martial arts (bugei) taught at the Aizu han (fief) Nisshinkan training hall.

. . . Higher level bujutsu (martial methods) were taught within the han, including the Taishi-ryu heiho (martial strategy), Sekiguchi-ha Itto-ryu

(swordsmanship), and various jujutsu styles. The martial arts curriculum were [was] a combination and consolidation of these styles. It was taught to the upper class officials of the han, those who received 500 koku or more per year.

The *Bugei Ryuha Daijiten* continues:

. . . This consolidated bujutsu was given the name Daito-ryu when the Dai Nihon Butokukai, which organized judo and kendo schools all across Japan, was established in 1899. . . .

. . . In conjunction with the concept that Japan, China and Korea should form a cooperative unit, called the Greater East Asia (or daito) Co-Prosperity Sphere, the ryu (style) was labeled Daito-ryu, to represent the belief that it was, like the consolidation of countries under the Co-Prosperity Sphere, a consolidation of the best martial arts of Japan. The former Aizu han elder advisor (karo) Saigo Tanomo told Takeda Sohokaku [Sokaku] to use this title for the martial arts style.



Nisshinkan Main Gate

It further states:

. . . Tanomo wrote up the form and contents of the style's densho (written teachings) for Sohaku [Sokaku], in which there is a passage that states: "The Daito-ryu was for generations the ancient martial tradition of the Minamoto clan. Shinra Saburo (Minamoto) Yoshimitsu was one of its major developers. . . ."

THE NISSHINKAN

When I arrived in Aizu-Wakamatsu, the first place I went to research Aizu bujutsu was the Nisshinkan. It's impressive even to tourists with little knowledge of samurai culture. If you are in the area, it's worth a stop, because Saigo Tanomo and the celebrated Aizu bushi—including the Byakkotai—were all trained at the Nisshinkan. This Aizu clan school of the late Edo period was instrumental in the development and propagation of martial arts, possibly including what is now known as aiki-jujutsu. And at the time I visited, some martial arts were, once again, being taught at the Nisshinkan to residents of Aizu.

During the late 1700s, Aizu experienced a great famine that caused the deaths of many citizens.



Suiren-Suiba-Ike: The Nisshinkan Pool

During this time, Matsudaira Katanobu, the fifth daimyo of Aizu, was advised to build a school to reform the educational system, develop the children of the Aizu bushi, and thus make the clan stronger in general. It took from 1799 to 1803 to build the Nisshinkan.

It is said that the school had the biggest scale and most rounded program of study of the 300 clan schools in Japan at the time. Even though the school buildings were destroyed during the Boshin War, the rebuilt buildings present a truthful representation of what it used to be like. A pond formerly utilized for suiei-jutsu training purposes was likewise reconstructed and is referred to as "Japan's oldest swimming pool." Suiei-jutsu is the samurai art of swimming and combat in water. (Iwasaki Hisashi Sensei, SMAA Senior Advisor, is the current leader of one ancient system of suiei-jutsu.)

Upon entering the Nisshinkan, the ten-year-old sons of the Aizu bushi were acquainted with the "Naranu Koto Wa Naranu Mono Desu." This was literally a list of "things you must not do," and describes the ethics of the Aizu warriors:

1. You must do what your seniors tell you to do.
2. You must bow to your seniors.
3. You must not tell lies.
4. You must not behave in a cowardly manner.
5. You must not bully those weaker than yourself.
6. You must not eat outside.
7. You must not talk to women outside.

Young students studied such subjects as sodoku ("reading"), shodo ("calligraphy"), tenmon-gaku ("astronomy"), Confucianism, swimming while



In the Nisshinkan compound

wearing full armor, *bugei* (“martial arts”), and *reishiki-kata* (“etiquette”). Etiquette was important as the warrior class had strict and complex social rules. Instruction varied from conducting oneself at the dinner table, to how to hand a sword to another, to how to commit ritual suicide.

Some historians believe the consolidated systems of *jujutsu*, swordsmanship, archery, horseback riding, and other arts, which were taught only to the children of high-ranking bushi in the Aizu clan, were called *oshikiuchi*. (However, other authorities contend that the term describes only the consolidated unarmed systems.) It is a term comprised of three characters: the first meaning “secret,” the second meaning “style,” and the third meaning “inner” or “within.” These three characters may indicate a system of martial arts that was not openly revealed to the public and which was taught only within the han. It was this combination of various *ryu* that was known as Aizu *oshikiuchi*, and which some feel evolved into *aiki-jujutsu*. One of the most famous students of the Nisshinkan was Saigo Tanomo.

SAIGO TANOMO

The Minamoto family is one of Japan's most illustrious martial clans and the subject of numerous Japanese books and films. More than one branch of this powerful bushi family existed. A

particular offshoot eventually became known as the Takeda clan. The *Aizu Han Hi-oku Oshikiuchi Ni Tsuite* also indicates the secret system, which would later be called *aiki-jujutsu*, was passed down for generations by the Takeda family, beginning with the famous twelfth century general, Shinra Saburo Minamoto Yoshimitsu.

Eventually, Takeda Shingen, one of the most celebrated military leaders in Japanese history, became the leader of the Takeda clan. His well-known martial mottoes were: “Quick as the wind,” “Peaceful as a forest,” “Overwhelming like fire,” and “As immovable as a mountain.”

After the death of Takeda Shingen in 1573, his younger brother, Takeda Kunitsugi, moved from Kai to settle in Aizu province (in the present-day Fukushima area), under the administration of Ashina Moriuji, and became a minor nobleman in the region of Koike. Members of the Takeda clan of Aizu are said to have been involved in Aizu *oshikiuchi* for some time. Eventually, the art fell into the hands of Takeda Soemon (1758–1853), a teacher of Confucian philosophy, *bushido*, and *aiki-in-yo-ho* (“the *aiki* principles and methods of yin and yang”), who acted as an instructor for the lords of Aizu. The Aizu bushi were trained in the combined system called *oshikiuchi*, which was based on the spiritual concepts contained in the *aiki-in-yo-ho* system of philosophy and martial strategy. *Oshikiuchi* was derived from *Daido Ryu* (not to be mistaken for *Daito Ryu*), which involved swordsmanship, mounted archery, spear arts, and gunnery/explosives, and *Mizuno Shinto Ryu* (swordsmanship and *jujutsu*), as well as other previously mentioned martial arts.

Toward the end of Japan's feudal period, the Aizu warriors sided with the Tokugawa shogun in a last-ditch, valiant battle against the gun-bearing forces of the Emperor. The doomed Aizu bushi, including much of the Takeda family, were among the last warriors to die in the before mentioned Boshin Civil



Saigo Tanomo (1830–1903)

War; they were overwhelmed by the Imperial forces, who restored the Emperor Meiji's power, and wrenched Japan into the twentieth century.

Following this battle, the perpetuation of Aizu oshikiuchi was passed on to the late Takeda Soemon's student—Saigo Tanomo. (Takeda Soemon is believed to have had two main students: his grandchild, Takeda Soyoshi, and Saigo himself. After Soyoshi's death in the war, Saigo taught Takeda Sokichi, Soyoshi's oldest son, until Sokichi's own death.)

Saigo, who also lost the majority of his family in the Boshin War, was a minister of the Aizu fief and the administrator of Shirakawa castle. He came from the Hoshina family of the Aizu clan, which was an important family that had participated in the administration of Aizu clan affairs for generations. During the first year of the Meiji period (1868), Saigo avoided the Imperial forces by escaping to the northern island of Hokkaido. He managed this retreat on August fifteenth, just before Tsurugajo Castle was overwhelmed.

On May 18, 1869, Saigo was in the city of Hakkodate on the island of Hokkaido. He was later captured and jailed on the main island of Honshu, where he remained incarcerated as a political prisoner for almost one year. Once he was freed, Saigo traveled to the Fukagawa section of Tokyo to live with his younger brother Yojiro. Yojiro, who was also involved in politics, was not particularly pleased with the present regime, and joined a revolutionary group plotting to overthrow the new Meiji government. Yojiro was soon arrested and jailed for ten years.

Saigo Tanomo avoided his brother's fate and in 1871 settled in the Izu area. He started a small school for children, perhaps inspired by the Nisshinkan, and taught kan-gaku (“Chinese philosophy”). According to the text *Saigo Tanomo*, in 1875 he began to work at the Totokobetsu Shinto shrine as a priest. However, a famous relative of Tanomo's, Saigo Takamori, came into conflict with Emperor Meiji. As the result, Saigo Tanomo lost his position at Totokobetsu in 1878.

Two years later he was rejoined with his former feudal lord Matsudaira and they both became priests at the Nikko Toshogu Shinto shrine. He is believed to have taught oshikiuchi at this shrine. During Meiji 20 (1887), Saigo joined the Daidodanketsu-Undo, which was another political movement, however in two years he was working again as a priest, but on this occasion at the Reizan Shinto shrine. He is said to have taught oshikiuchi at this location as well. Eventually, Saigo Tanomo returned to his beloved Aizu, where he lived out the remainder of his life.

Saigo Tanomo (a.k.a. Hoshina Ginshin and Hoshina Chikamori) remains an important player not only in aiki-jujutsu history, but in Japanese political history in general. According to the book *Saigo Tanomo*, his original family name was Hoshina, but before his birth the family name was changed to Saigo. Daimyo Matsudaira of Aizu was from

another branch of the same Hoshina family that changed its name to Matsudaira. (When Saigo Tanomo returned to Aizu during the last part of his life, he changed his name back to Hoshina. This kind of name changing was not uncommon in old Japan and still goes on to a limited degree today.) However, complicating matters further, Daito Ryu expert Kondo Katsuyuki Sensei has indicated:

. . . After that it [aiki-jujutsu] was handed down through the Takeda family as a gotenjutsu (martial art for use inside the palace). On the other hand, in the time of the fourth Tokugawa Shogunate, Ietsuna, Masayuki Hoshina of the Aizu clan, the fourth son of Hidetada, entered the Edo castle as an instructor to the Shogunate family and completed development of the art which came to be known as oshikiuchi. Therefore, the Daito-ryu of the Takeda family and the oshikiuchi of Lord Masayuki Hoshina were transmitted separately. Then in the Meiji period Sokaku Takeda Sensei perfected Daito-ryu by combining the school originated in the Takeda family and the school of the Aizu clan.

According to Donn Draeger Sensei, noted bujutsu author and expert, following the abolition of the bushi caste, Saigo taught oshikiuchi, while working as a priest, to select disciples, including Takeda Sokaku and Saigo Shiro.

TAKEDA SOKAKU

While serving in his religious capacity at the Nikko Toshogu shrine, Saigo Tanomo met Takeda Sokaku Sensei, son of Takeda Sokichi, who was already an accomplished swordsman of the Ono-ha Itto Ryu, notwithstanding his young age. Despite Saigo's desire, presumably, to pass on the Aizu han teachings of oshikiuchi to Sokaku, Takeda Sokaku had little interest in oshikiuchi, and it would be some time before he would embrace the legacy of his family. (On the other hand, in the *Daito Ryu Aiki Budo Ni Tsuite*, Takeda's son wrote that Sokaku began studying oshikiuchi under Saigo at

the age of fifteen, while serving as an apprentice priest at the shrine before leaving to study under other martial arts teachers. Other historians have speculated that Sokaku learned oshikiuchi from his father Sokichi as well. It seems fairly certain, however, that Sokaku did practice sumo and Hozoin Ryu Takeda-ha sojutsu under his father's guidance and these arts may have influenced his teaching of Daito Ryu.)

Therefore, Saigo Tanomo attempted to train other disciples, including an adopted son, Saigo Shiro. (Takeda Tokimune Sensei, son of Takeda Sokaku, has stated that Saigo Shiro was actually the illegitimate son of Saigo, who later adopted him to make matters "official.") However, after moving to Tokyo, Saigo Shiro came under the influence of Kano Jigoro Sensei, founder of Kodokan judo. Using his famed yama-arashi, or "mountain storm technique," which stemmed from oshikiuchi, Saigo Shiro defeated jujutsu-trained opponents as part of Kano's Kodokan team, and established the place of judo in Meiji-era Japan. (Mori Hakaru of Takuma-kai aiki-jujutsu, however, has stated that, in his opinion, no direct evidence exists to prove that Saigo Shiro learned oshikiuchi.) Saigo Shiro's fame was so great that he was portrayed in novels, and by renowned director Kurosawa Akira in film as the judo hero Sugata Sanshiro. However, torn in loyalty between Saigo Tanomo and Kano, Saigo Shiro eventually abandoned both arts.

In 1898, according to Donn Draeger, Saigo Tanomo and Takeda Sokaku came to a meeting of minds, with the latter either becoming the disciple of Saigo Tanomo, or according to Takeda Tokimune's account, resuming his training. On May 12, 1898, Takeda Sokaku is said to have received a poem from Saigo, which amounted to a kind of teaching license. Following Saigo's death, Takeda began to restructure and modify oshikiuchi, and at around this time, some say, created the name "Daito Ryu" as well. (The exact date varies depending on the source.)

Based on the signatures contained in eimeiroku documents of Takeda, he may have trained about 30,000 students in his lifetime. Among the most famous of these direct students was Ueshiba Morihei Sensei (1883–1969), founder of aikido.

THE AIZU BUKE YASHIKI

Aside from the Nisshinkan, SMAA members that are interested in Aizu martial culture should visit the Aizu Buke Yashiki. The chief building in this facility is the old home of Saigo Tanomo, principal retainer of the Aizu area. It is well worth a trip if you are in Fukushima.

Saigo's residence has an imposing 38 rooms, and the lifestyle of the era's bushi can be experienced and understood by visiting members of the public. Its rooms vary from a sand-box toilet and cypress tub to an elegant reception hall reserved for the Lord of Aizu. The compound also includes several original buildings, including a rice mill and thatched shrine brought from nearby villages. The Aizu History Museum is also situated inside the same location, and the staff is knowledgeable about Aizu martial arts and samurai history. For SMAA members that can read Japanese, a number of books about Saigo, the Aizu samurai, the Boshin War, and related topics are available for purchase.

The lavish mansion is built with Japanese cypress and zelkova (a Japanese tree similar to American elm). Dolls and furnishings show the life of the



Aizu Buke Yashiki

previous residents. The property, which includes the clan's rice mill and other historic buildings, encompasses a substantial 23,000 square meters.

TRAVELING TO AIZU–WAKAMATSU

Fukushima prefecture as a whole isn't in great shape since the recent devastation, and right now isn't a great time to go there. Residents of Northern Honshu are very resilient, and someday this area will recover, especially with the help of the international community. When it does, you might like to visit Aizu–Wakamatsu, home of the fearsome Aizu samurai. You can download a brochure here:

<http://www.city.aizuwakamatsu.fukushima.jp/e/sig ht/download.html>.

Below is some information about visiting the places mentioned in this article:

Aizu Buke Yashiki

Admission: 850 yen / Open everyday from 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. (April – November), 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (December – March) / 0242–28–2525

15 minute bus ride from Aizu Wakamatsu Station. Get off at Aizu Buke Yashiki Mae.

Nisshinkan

Admission: 850 yen / Open everyday from 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. (April – November), 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (December – March) / 0242–75–2525

15 minute taxi ride from Aizu Wakamatsu Station.

Tsurugajo Castle

Tsuruga-jo Castle Folk Museum: admission 400 yen / Open from 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. (entrance closes at 4:30 p.m.), closed first Monday – Thursday in July, first Tuesday – Thursday in December / 0242–27–4005

10 minute bus ride from Aizu Wakamatsu Station.

Get off at Tsurugajo Kitaguchi.

Aizu occupies an important place not merely in my life (being related through marriage to an Aizu samurai family), but it is also significant due to its role in Japan's feudal past and because of its connection to the martial arts of aikido and aikijujutsu. I hope this short article has given you a glimpse into the martial history of one of Japan's renowned samurai strongholds.

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About the Author: H. E. Davey is one of the founding members of the SMAA. He holds a seventh dan with the SMAA Jujutsu Division, and he is the editor of the SMAA Journal.

THE INTANGIBLE SWORD

By Paul Martin

One of the things that we in the West tend to neglect in our study of the Japanese sword is the spiritual aspect. We tend to forget the fact that in Japan the sword is considered a sacred object. We become too involved with questions and kantei ("appraisal"). There are many questions about swords that will never be answered, so we shouldn't get too wrapped up in it. Instead of heated debate about who made an unsigned sword, perhaps we should be thinking "So what?" and the question we should be asking is "Is it a good sword?" I think the latter question is more positive and beneficial to the study of swords. The study of the sword should be, in part at least, a spiritual and reverent one if we are to understand the sword fully within its context in Japanese culture. Viewing swords has been associated with contemplation, and as we evaluate our appreciation of the sword we will come to realize the path that we are on and comprehend other aspects of Japanese culture such as; the silence of the tea ceremony, the moment a Zen master writes calligraphy, the natural glaze on a Japanese pot, or

the moment sumo wrestlers face each other in a match, and bear it in mind for our future study. It is here that the essence of Japan resides.

The first time we picked up a sword we were probably firstly drawn to the purity of the steel, the elegant shape and the undulating line that we thought was a hamon (the crystalline structure along the edge of a blade), but was probably just the hadori polish. Then we noticed the wood grain-like pattern, but could not determine whether it was well forged or well polished. As we progressed in our study, and our mind was trained, it opened our eyes to be able to eventually see all the activities within the steel.

It was said that the Emperor Gotoba (1180–1239), who while retired in exile had the Goban Kaji come to his residence in rotation and forged swords with them, had the eye of a man of the way. Even then the spiritual significance of viewing swords was recognized. As in accordance with the precepts of Zen Buddhism, you have to free your mind of the



Photo: Tom Kishida

Martin Sensei appraising an antique sword

10,000 things that distract you on a daily basis. It is the same when you are viewing a sword. You cannot fixate on one aspect. If we concentrate on one aspect our mind stays there, if we concentrate on the hamon it blinds our sight to see the other aspects. You must keep your mind open and fluid, free to move. If you concentrate on one thing your mind stops. We must be able to accept the sword as a whole. For example, the sword has been for hundreds of years, an object of illuminating the existence of Zen. In kendo, we strive to obtain the state of “no mind” (mushin), This does not mean to become mindless, but to free your mind of all distractive thought. This state, when reached, allows your mind to work freely at great speed; many of the great swordsmen were considered Zen masters because they could attain this state of mind, however this state is lost simply by conscious thinking. For example, if you consciously try to correct any faults in your technique, i.e. adjusting your right hand, your mind is now concentrating on your right hand, and the mind and thoughts stop there. Then your overall mind and body are not in harmony because of this

conscious thought.

This attitude can also extend to collecting in general. If we fixate on collecting do we become merely collectors? After all, at the end of the day the swords are just swords. Yes, they are the extraordinarily beautiful antiques of our study; and yes, they do have to be cared for and preserved for future generations, but if we get stuck on the swords themselves, is this inhibiting our fantastic study of the sword?

There are many swords in major museums. These swords are the property of the people and can be accessed with little effort. We do not feel the need to own these swords to appreciate them, neither are we distracted from their beauty by worrying about how much they are worth or whether we can afford them. It is no good for the swords to just be lying in museums unappreciated; we need to study them. It is up to us as students of the sword to investigate these collections and make use of them. They are not just in museums for high brow academia; they are there for care, preservation, and for the education of the nation.

If we can adopt a more spiritual approach to our study it makes other aspects of the sword more apparent. When we approach the sword as a spiritual object of moral guidance to a samurai seeking enlightenment, we instantly understand why in Japanese history the sword survived the gun. The sword was a sacred gift from the gods, intrinsically beautiful, encompassing elements of nature. The gun on the other hand was a means to an end, a mere weapon made by and taken from barbarians, not intrinsically beautiful, with no religious connections. The sword was a guide to the way and still is so to this day, not only in usage, but in viewing too.

About the Author: Paul Martin Sensei is a Japanese sword specialist. A native of England, he lived in Japan for many years, where he studied kendo,

**Shudokan Martial Arts
Association**

PO Box 6022
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-6022

Phone:

1-734-645-6441

E-Mail:

shudokan@smaa-hq.com

iaido, and several forms of ancient swordsmanship, including Ono Ha Itto Ryu. But his main area of specialty is the study, history, and appraisal of the Japanese sword as an art object. He is one of the world's foremost scholars of the Japanese sword, and he serves on the SMAA Board of Advisors.

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Ann Arbor, MI 48106-6022

