

# SMAA JOURNAL



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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### 2021 SMAA DUES

Membership fees are due on January 1, 2021. 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

- Karl Scott Sensei
- Nicklaus Suino Sensei
- H. E. Davey Sensei

**Editor:** H. E. Davey Sensei

**Assistant Editor:** Troy Swenson Sensei

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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](mailto: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](mailto:shudokan@smaa-hq.com) about special shipping for international orders.)

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

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## 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 <https://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.

## SMAA YOUTUBE CHANNEL

修道館武道会

Shudokan Martial Arts Association

Want to see some great videos of SMAA teachers, officials, and members? Now you can by visiting our YouTube channel. We're Shudokan1994, because 1994 is the year the SMAA was founded.

To see video of SMAA teachers and members, go to:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gg5Nlka6Ge0&list=PLS11\\_XCH8RkI868tRKZ0fdJFSeFGyNZ0o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gg5Nlka6Ge0&list=PLS11_XCH8RkI868tRKZ0fdJFSeFGyNZ0o)

To see video of the amazing experts that trained leading SMAA officials and teachers, go to:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcE7zBhv9Hs&list=PLS11\\_XCH8RkIV8liNZoXI93WI79BLE1NZ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcE7zBhv9Hs&list=PLS11_XCH8RkIV8liNZoXI93WI79BLE1NZ)

## OTSUKA SOKE NEWS



*Otsuka Soke teaching Meifu Shinkage Ryu*

On October 17 and 18, Otsuka Yasuyuki Sensei lead an autumn training camp in Meifu Shinkage Ryu despite the pandemic, using safety precautions to avoid spreading the virus. Due to the Coronavirus situation, no students from overseas could attend, but the scaled down camp benefitted students in Japan, who received in-depth instruction in Meifu Shinkage Ryu.

Otsuka Sensei is the current Soke of Meifu Shinkage Ryu (明府真影流), which specializes in the use of thrown dart-like weapons (shuriken) and a weighted chain (fundu kusari). One of the highest-ranking



*A student at the Meifu Shinkage Ryu autumn camp*

martial artists in Japan, Otsuka Soke serves on the SMAA Board of Advisors. He is one of several martial arts experts in Japan, who support the SMAA, while endorsing our ranks and seminars.

## H. E. DAVEY NEWS

In November, the Sennin Foundation Center for Japanese Cultural Arts celebrated its 39<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Founded in 1981 by H. E. Davey, the



*Japanese yoga, healing arts, martial arts, and fine arts at the Sennin Foundation Center*

Sennin Foundation Center offers instruction in multiple Asian arts of personal growth.

Western people have long been captivated by the mysteries of ancient Japan, but they've often been intimidated by the divide between East and West. For over 39 years, the Sennin Foundation Center has bridged that divide, helping children and adults experience the amazing benefits of studying a Japanese art. Lead by H. E. Davey, an internationally acclaimed author and artist, the Sennin Foundation Center offers instruction in time-honored disciplines to develop the mind and body. Mr. Davey, with over 50 years of training, unlocks the

secrets of Japanese yoga, healing arts, martial arts, and fine arts. After decades of practice in the USA and Japan, he has obtained advanced teaching certification rarely received by Western people, allowing him to craft new approaches to ancient paths.

Mr. Davey, one of three SMAA Primary Directors, donates his time to the Sennin Foundation Center, a nonprofit dojo in Albany, California. Recently, the dojo has started offering Zoom instruction to students around the world, helping them safely study during the pandemic. Find out more at [www.senninfoundation.com](http://www.senninfoundation.com).

## REMEMBERING RICHARD YAMAMOTO SENSEI

*By H. E. Davey*

Richard Yamamoto Sensei, one of the highest ranking Kodokan-affiliated judo teachers in the world, was an important member of the SMAA Board of Advisors. Yamamoto Sensei started practicing classic Kodokan judo when he was sixteen years old,

and he continued for more than 70 years. Until his death at over 90-years-old in December of 2013, Yamamoto Sensei was a very active senior citizen and a seventh dan associated with the Kodokan Judo Institute in Tokyo. One of the pioneers of judo in the

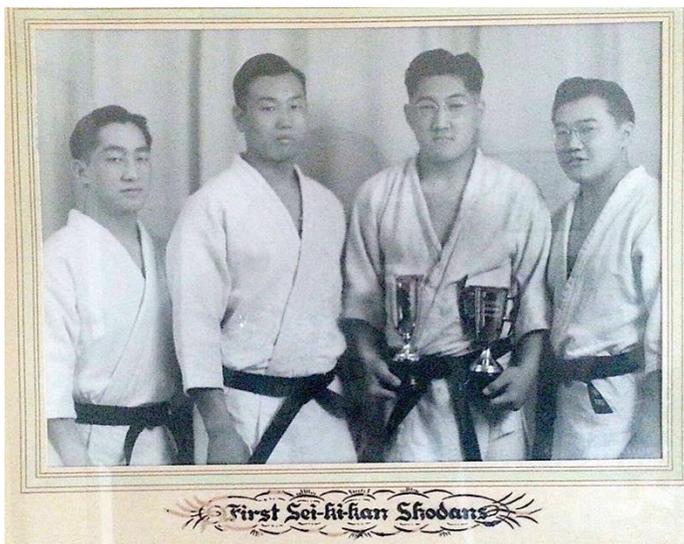


*Seikikan Judo Club in December 1938. Yamamoto Sensei is standing in the second row from the top, fifth from the left.*

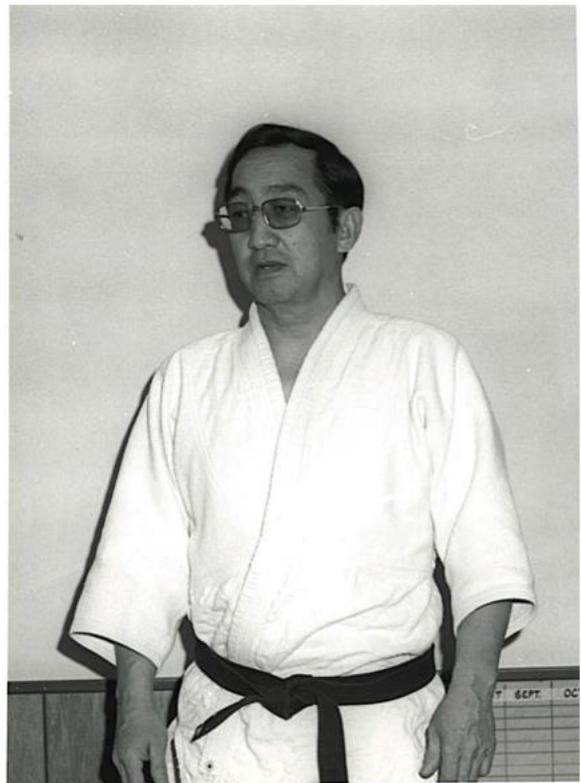
Northwestern part of the United States, Yamamoto Sensei was the chief instructor of Seikikan Judojo for many years. Seikikan was established in the 1930s, making it the second oldest judo dojo in Washington State. Its first home was the basement of a hotel run by Yamamoto Sensei's parents. He more or less lived in the dojo, with judo being a constant presence in his life.

Yamamoto Sensei practiced in the dojo and in seminars with a number of legendary judo teachers, including the late Kotani Sumiyuki Sensei (tenth dan), the late Fukuda Keiko Sensei (tenth dan), Daigo Toshiro Sensei (tenth dan), and others. His first judo teacher was Horiuchi Keiji (Keigi) Sensei, a member of the Nanka Judo Yudanshakai Hall of Fame and a Kodokan eighth dan. Horiuchi Sensei was one of the highest-ranking members of the United States Judo Federation (USJF) and a USJF Life Member. He passed away in 2006.

Yamamoto Sensei held high levels of referee certification through the USJF, and he was one of the highest-ranking members of this association. For many years, he also served as an official in the Northwest Judo Yudanshakai, a USJF affiliate association. He was a USJF Life Member as well.



*Yamamoto Sensei (left) was one of the first students to receive a Kodokan shodan at Seikikan Judojo*



*Yamamoto Sensei teaching traditional judo*

He worked as an electrical inspector, but judo was his passion. For decades, Yamamoto Sensei devoted countless evenings each week (and quite a few weekends) to training young judoka. He did this for free, and he never accepted money in exchange for judo instruction, believing that his teaching was a way of building a better society based on the judo principles of Seiryoku Zenyo ("Maximum Efficiency") and Jita Kyoei ("Mutual Welfare and Benefit"). Over multiple decades he taught hundreds, if not thousands, of students at Seikikan Judojo and in public clinics. Among his students are people from all walks of life, from U.S. national champions to people just starting judo. They all learned that classic judo is a way of developing one's character.

Yamamoto Sensei lived in the U.S. Pacific Northwest, and he was one of a number of prominent teachers of traditional budo and koryu bujutsu that make up the prestigious SMAA Board of Advisors. Among the members of this elite board are top martial arts leaders in Japan and other nations, experts in other

Japanese cultural arts, and important members of Japanese society, including:

- Omi Koji Sensei (Japanese yoga expert, member of the Japanese House of Representatives, and former Finance Minister of Japan)
- Iwasaki Hisashi Sensei (Soke of Kobori Ryu suieijutsu, the ancient samurai art of swimming and water combat)
- Otsuka Yasuyuki Sensei (Soke of Meifu-Shinkage Ryu shurikenjutsu, the samurai art of throwing weapons)
- Suzuki Kunio Sensei (A direct student of the founder of Nakamura Ryu swordsmanship and Hanshi/eighth dan)
- Wayne Muromoto (A representative of Ono Yotaro Soke and a high-ranking teacher of Bichuden Takeuchi Ryu jujutsu)
- Dave Lowry (An internationally famous martial arts author/journalist and teacher of Yagyū Shinkage Ryu swordsmanship)
- And many others

The SMAA is active around the world and lead by both Western and Japanese martial arts experts like Yamamoto Sensei. Their presence in the SMAA speaks volumes about the legitimacy of our group, and they're our most valuable assets.

In a video interview for Densho Digital Archive, a nonprofit association that documents the Japanese-American experience, the ever-humble Yamamoto Sensei said, "I guess I was one of the good judoists, or anyway one of the judoists that liked to do judo. I wasn't very perfect, but then I enjoyed it, because I could throw some of the people some of the time."



*The late Yamamoto Sensei at 90*

To his many students, Yamamoto Sensei was much more than just "one of the good judoists," having devoted a lifetime to this form of budo. For decades, he positively influenced a huge number of judoka, while helping them to improve their health and strengthen their spirit. I'm proud to have studied judo with him as a child and young man. He was a helpful influence of me growing up and someone I often think of fondly to this day. We were lucky to have him in a leadership position in the SMAA.

**About the Author:** H. E. Davey is one of the founding members of the SMAA. One of two Directors for the SMAA Jujutsu Division, he has earned an eighth dan and Shihan teaching certification. He's been practicing traditional Japanese martial arts for over 50 years.

## 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—be minimized to better resonate to the masses. Some argue that, for the good of the sport, judo's Shinto pedigree be eliminated altogether. 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



*"Kani Basami" painted by the author*

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



*Judo art by the author*



*Colby Sensei "on the mat"*

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.

## TRAINING WITH SUZUKI KUNIO

*By John Evans*

When I first attended the Saturday evening Kakuseikai class, in the sports hall of Tsurumi Middle School with Nakamura Taisaburo Sensei in 1984, the master would usually give a short address, and then swiftly lead us through the To Ho (basics) and Toyama Ryu sword kata. After this he would sit down and observe, occasionally summoning someone over or shouting a word of appreciation. For the greater part of the class, everyone would go through the kata by themselves. During this time, responsibility for teaching, corrections, and explanations was left to Nakamura Sensei's two senior assistants Sato Shimeo Sensei (now ninth dan, Shihan) and Suzuki Kunio Sensei (now eighth dan, Hanshi and a member of the SMAA Board of Advisors). The rest of us would continue practicing until these teachers decided to intervene.

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 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 has over 50 years of training in traditional judo, much of it in Japan, where he's lived since 1988. A judo champion and student of the late Richard Yamamoto Sensei, who he met at nine-years-old, he is a Kodokan trained and certified black belt holder. He is also the author of *The Japan Healthcare Debate*, *Negotiating the Gray Maze*, and *The Boxer Gate*. Colby Sensei is, in addition, a member of the SMAA Board of Advisors.

Sato Sensei was the older man, one of the many war veterans in the dojo, although he ran his own machining business and had the gracious manner of a gentleman. I learned he was also a senior and highly respected teacher of Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu iaido. By contrast, Suzuki Sensei was younger, and he had the tight curled haircut popular with yakuza gangsters and the slight swagger of a fighter. One of the most disconcerting people I have met, he would wander around the room with a disapproving look, as if he had noticed a bad smell and could find no corner of the room free from it. Notwithstanding the subtle differences in their interpretation of the Toyama Ryu kata (at this time Nakamura Ryu kata were not taught in the class), the two teachers worked as a seamless unit in a variation of the classic bad cop/good cop routine. Needless to say,



*Suzuki Kunio Sensei (left) at the Meiji Shrine  
(Photo courtesy of Guy Power Sensei)*

Suzuki Sensei was the bad cop. It was only after several months of weekly attendance that he finally addressed me and deigned to make some minor correction to my form. My feeling after this first encounter was that although I was a pile of excrement, I was a slightly tidier pile thanks to his intervention.

Suzuki Sensei's severity of practice was notorious, and he persisted in daily training late into the night outside his apartment block, whatever the conditions, even after a day driving heavy trucks for a construction company. In the 80's, in the early mornings and late at night, one often came across devotees of the bladed arts in public parks. But the health and safety culture slowly infiltrated, and such activities were prohibited. Needless to say, Suzuki Sensei, despite this change, persisted until one day the police arrived and took him to the station until Nakamura Sensei negotiated his release.

The technical accomplishment this persistence brought him came at a cost. His right arm did not completely straighten due to regularly hitting a brick wall to develop his Wado Ryu karate punch in his twenties. He employed similar severity in his efforts to perfect te no uchi (correct gripping of the sword). As a result of this, during his practice of reverse kesa giri, a diagonal sword cut, the torque on his right

wrist caused one of the wrist bones to displace and protrude outwards. Suzuki Sensei attended a clinic and asked what treatment he might receive. The doctor described the surgery that would be required and also the cost. After considering this information, Suzuki Sensei returned home, took out his hammer and hammered the bone back into place.

Nakamura Sensei permitted a bit of latitude in individual technique. Sato Sensei incorporated some subtle modifications of ashi sabaki ("footwork") and saya biki (pulling of the scabbard back while drawing the sword) from his practice of Eishin Ryu. Suzuki Sensei, however, adhered rigidly to the basic technique of the Toyama Ryu army style. He often practiced using the modified jukendo bayonet belt of the Toyama Military Academy, with a thick leather loop in which the sword was sashed. Because saya biki is impossible under these circumstances, this requires very fine control of small actions and contributes to the ruthlessly minimalistic and hidden (ura) skills of Toyama Ryu.

It took considerable efforts on my part, over several years, before Suzuki Sensei began to grudgingly recognize that I was not totally useless. Shortly after passing my third dan test, I cheekily went through the full Nakamura Ryu kata set in the corner of the



*The late Nakamura Taisaburo Sensei,  
founder of Nakamura Ryu and judan*



*Suzuki Sensei, SMAA Senior Advisor*

hall just to see the response. I had never been taught these forms. Immediately the two teachers approached me and complimented me on my correct technique, speed, and power. Compliments from these two were a very rare event, and I was rapidly enveloped in a warm glow. They quickly added “but no nami!” (no wave—no rhythm) and laughed in a very cutting manner. The sting of this rebuke went deep, as it was made very clear that I had completely missed the point of the Nakamura Ryu kata.

Not long after this rebuke, I was invited to Suzuki Sensei’s home. (Although invitations to Nakamura Sensei’s home were frequent, visiting Suzuki Sensei was unheard of.) After dinner, he produced a shakuhachi flute and played a long, beautiful melody, full of rising and falling rhythms. Afterwards, he said this was how he had learned nami. Guy Power Sensei, Co-director of the SMAA laido Division, says that Suzuki Sensei told him practicing of a “soft” art like shakuhachi was essential if a martial artist was not be unbalanced by hard training.

A nami (“wave”) gathers mass and potential energy before releasing. The wave seems almost to draw back into itself before it crashes forward. This illustrates well the nature of kihaku (dynamic projection of ki — “life energy”). Not only does this accumulation create the spring for a devastating attack, it is also unsettles the opponent. In the moment before the release of power, the opponent is intimidated, and yet at the same time, hypnotically drawn in. Suzuki Sensei was a master of this art. Since Nakamura Sensei no longer performed kumitachi (kata with a partner), and Sato Sensei did kumitachi only with Suzuki Sensei, it was with Suzuki Sensei that I felt this intimidating—but exhilarating—power most strongly. Guy Power Sensei writes of one such experience:

*Suzuki Sensei once visited me at Camp Zama’s Sagamihara Family Housing, where he gave me one-on-one instruction in kumitachi. After*



*Suzuki Kunio Sensei and Guy Power Sensei, both leaders in the SMAA laido Division*

*about half an hour, we took a break; then when we resumed again, he put away his iaito (“iaido sword”) and belted his shinken (“real sword”)—which he used through the entire eight sets . . . both as shitachi and uchitach, attacker and defender. All I could focus upon was his razor-sharp blade, and I thought I did a good job in my performance . . . all calm and collected-like. At the conclusion, he looked at me and laughed heartily saying, “Power! You were terrible—shaking like a leaf!!” Ha ha ha ha! (I can laugh NOW).*

Sato Sensei and Suzuki Sensei regularly performed kumitachi with shinken at demonstrations all over Japan. I am told that during one demonstration at the Kodokan Judo Institute after performing tameshigiri (cutting objects), the pressure built up inexorably during each approach in the kumitachi kata. In the fourth kata, one counters suichoku giri (a vertical downwards cut) with yoko giri (“sideways cut”), pulling the cut to avoid slicing open the partner’s abdomen. Sato Sensei’s keiko gi (“practice uniform”) was a little loose above the belt. As Suzuki Sensei sidestepped, his sword hit the edge of Sato Sensei’s gi at great speed. The considerable sound of that impact drew a spontaneous gasp from the audience in the great hall. A pregnant pause followed while everyone waited the moments it takes for a sharply cut incision to open up under the pressure of gathering blood. Allowing for the fold of material, Suzuki Sensei had adhered to the issun rule (by which practice cuts should miss the target by 2 centimeters). No blood was spilled.

The source of Suzuki Sensei’s tremendous kihaku (ki power) became clear during my visit to Japan in 2009. He told me that since he was too young to have shared the war experiences of many of the other Kakuseikai members, he felt a particular responsibility to get as close as possible to that reality through his practice. He was fiercely critical of the poor standards of judging in exhibitions, particularly in their failure to either appreciate or



*The author performing tameshigiri*

value combat-real qualities during the performance of kata and tameshigiri.

On his visits to London in recent years I was amazed by the warmth and openness of his teaching. It was hard to recognize the Suzuki Sensei of old, although his demonstrations were just as fiercely impressive. It seemed he had absorbed many of the generous qualities of Nakamura Sensei. At the end of his second class, I commented on how he had much he had mellowed. He pointed out that while I was busy translating, I failed to notice that during his very long and kindly explanations of chudan kamae (“middle level posture”), he had kept students holding their swords up in that position for a full 25 minutes! This had given him the opportunity to gauge their level of commitment. During the course he noted the quality of every individual and took considerable trouble to make sure he had addressed the important issues of each one as far as they were able to respond. He took particular pains with one very tense, aggressive, and tunnel-visioned student.

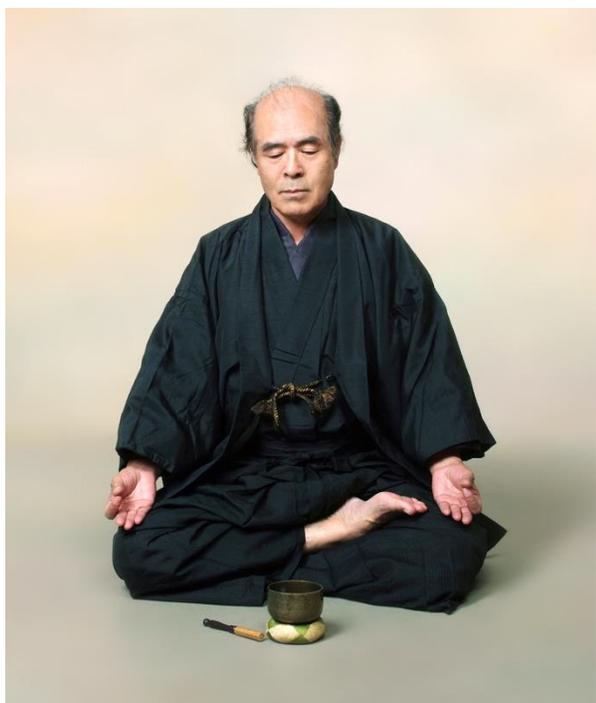
He said, “Understand, you are exactly like I used to be; if you can be kind to yourself now, you will go further than me.”

**About the Author:** John Evans Sensei, SMAA Senior Advisor, learned Nakamura Ryu and Toyama Ryu

## MY INTRODUCTION TO BUJUTSU

*By Sawai Atsuhiko*

When I was young, I studied koshiki suiei-jutsu, which means “ancient swimming art.” The dojo, or training hall, was a small lake surrounded by lavish green trees and a golf course. The American Occupation Army made it in the 1940s in a northern suburb of Kyoto. Although suiei-jutsu was developed by the bushi (“warriors”) of my country in feudal times, and while it is a form of koryu bujutsu, or “old style martial arts,” we practiced it as a Do, or spiritual path, in the 1940s. Unlike most forms of swimming, it is unmistakably a martial art, and its training is as hard as judo or kendo. It is definitely different from modern sport swimming as we see in the Olympics.



*The author in meditation*

swordsmanship directly from Nakamura Taisaburo Sensei (tenth dan) and Suzuki Kunio Sensei (eighth dan). A seventh dan in Nakamura Ryu, he teaches in London at the Fudokan Dojo, and he is the author of *Kurikara: The Sword and the Serpent*.

My teacher’s teacher was from the bushi warrior class, and before World War II, he always kept a dagger in the bosom of his kimono. He was asked why he carried such a thing when he came to teach suiei-jutsu, and he answered, “If any of my students should die in the lake during my teaching session, I will kill myself with this weapon to take responsibility.” Such attitudes are associated with bushido, the “way of the warrior,” and they have few parallels in modern sport swimming.

There are three different primary points that distinguish ancient Japanese suiei-jutsu from modern swimming:

1. There must be beauty as well as effectiveness in the form of swimming.
2. There is no competing with others in speed.
3. You should swim quickly, but you should never be tired when you reach land.

These are the principles of Kobori Ryu, the ancient form of swimming that I studied. There have been many traditional swimming schools (ryu) in Japan, one existed in almost every clan in the Edo period (around 1600 to 1867 AD). However, now perhaps only a dozen remain across the country of Japan. There are no big differences between them. Still, each school developed their own techniques to cope with the unique terrain and geography of the area they lived in. For instance, a feudal clan facing the Pacific Ocean often contrived a way to swim swiftly in the open sea, whereas a ryu situated near a lake typically developed a method to swim there.

When I started to study *suiei-jutsu*, I found some young girls (of high school age) swimming with marvelous grace and elegance. The teacher whispered to me, “Men should swim with majesty and beauty. Not like that way!” I had never seen swimming like this, as I had learned the usual swimming when I was a high school boy, and I believed we had to swim as fast as possible to be considered talented.

Several years after I began to study *suiei-jutsu*, I was given the certification of *Shihan*, or “Master Teacher.” Gradually with practice, I found myself never tired even after many hours of swimming. One day my teacher saw my performance from the lakeside and called out, “Now you’ve got it. There is some beauty in your movement.” More than my certificate, that meant I had truly reached the level of *Shihan*. I was delighted.

### THE TECHNIQUES OF SUIEI-JUTSU

There are many styles of swimming in *suiei-jutsu*. One of them is called *nukite*, which literally means “crawling arms,” and is similar to the free-style crawl in Western swimming. In *nukite*, we must keep our head and breast a little above the water surface, making it possible to see in four directions in case of a possible attack. This style was contrived for a *bushi* to swim with his sword and a bundle of clothes on his head.

Another style is called *noshi*, which literally means “stretching,” and it was devised to swim up a rapid. In doing *noshi*, you must swim sideways, sliding a little on the back side in order to reduce the water pressure to as little as possible, while stroking your arms and legs inside the water like the breaststroke of modern sport swimming. Once you are accustomed to this method, you never feel tired and can swim with a remarkable speed. You can swim slowly if you like, feeling as if you were resting on the water. This was important for the *bushi*, because if they were exhausted when they reached land, they would be unable to actively engage their opponents.

*Bushi* also learned a method called *soku-geki*, which literally means “leg beating.” You hit the surface of the water as strongly as possible with your knees bent. The purpose of this method is to swim in any sort of shallow water. When I snorkel in *Hanauma Bay* in Hawaii, I use this *sokugeki* method in the shallow water of the coral bed (about 30 centimeters deep), and I can swim smoothly and enjoy watching the fish. If you do otherwise, you’ll kick the rugged coral rocks and have your knees and legs cut and bleeding. If you practice *soku-geki* for five to ten minutes at the start of a swimming session, it can effectively prevent you from experiencing cramps. We also learned a way to swim with our clothes on, the aim of which is to rescue someone drowning.

The *waza*, or “technique,” that impressed me most was the way to swim with both hands and legs tied together by two ropes. This technique was for a *bushi*, who had broken out of an enemy’s prison, to escape and swim across the castle moat.

An expert *shihan* demonstrated it first to us. And my teacher surprised us by saying, “You believe you swim with the arms and legs, but you’re wrong. You can swim without them. Look at a fish. Real swimming is using the whole body.” This unified use of the whole body is needed (and taught) in every form of genuine *koryu bujutsu* and modern *budo*.

### FROM TECHNICAL TRAINING TO A SPIRITUAL PATH

The methods in ancient Japanese martial swimming are all very practical and pragmatic at first. But gradually, as you advance in learning the techniques, you reach some level where you produce beauty in your movement, and this process from pragmatism toward formal beauty is similar to any Japanese martial art, or “do” arts such as *kendo* or *judo*.

This tendency to progress from pure functionality to beauty and spirituality forms one of Japanese culture’s pillars. We can see this same tendency in other Japanese arts like *kado* (“the way of flower

arrangement”), chado (“the way of tea ceremony”), kodo (“the way of incense”), and others. Why did this tendency arise at all?

The elevation of all Japanese arts, crafts, and skills from their pure utilitarian function toward paths of beauty and enlightenment occurred during the long period of peace that continued for 300 years in the Edo Period. At this time, the Tokugawa Shogunate ruled my country. Peaceful times prevailed all over Japan, while in many other parts, especially in Europe, many battles were fought for hegemony. The Tokugawa Shogun (supreme military ruler) governed Japan.

Before Tokugawa established control of Japan, many feudal lords, governing each province with military power, had been fighting with each other. This produced a period of unsettled turbulence for three centuries. During this era of constant warfare, few teachers had the time or inclination to see what existed in the martial arts beyond combative effectiveness. Toward the end of this period, Portuguese and Spanish missionaries came to Japan to spread Christianity, accompanied by some people carrying European weaponry.

In 1543 AD, a musket rifle was first introduced to this island country in the Far East. (They ignited the gunpowder with a burning straw-cord and fired a bullet.) After that, many feudal clans competed to produce guns of superior sort and fought with them. In time, the level of production progressed remarkably, with the result that the technical level was heightened in some provinces to the top level in the world. Prior to that, for 300 years, Japan did not manufacture any gun. Some muskets manufactured here toward the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century are treasured in art museums and show marvelous artistic and technical skill.

You might think it strange, but since the Tokugawa Shogun came to dominate Japan, he forbade any one, or any clan, to produce Western firearms in order to maintain the peace. This edict, among

others, was one of the ways that he ushered in an almost unprecedented era of peace. During this era, teachers of bujutsu and varied Japanese cultural arts, no longer embroiled in war, began to look beyond the purely utilitarian function of these arts.

Besides this, the Tokugawa government closed all Japanese ports to the outside world to hold the peace more securely inside. This is called sakoku, which literally means “the country closed with chains.”

All through these peaceful times, for three centuries, Japanese koryu budo and bujutsu, as well as other classical arts, went through a unique modification, that is, as I mentioned, the process from mere practicality to finding beauty in established forms (kata) or styles (ryu). To seek after beauty in your performance needs discipline and mental training for the practitioner. And so, koryu bujutsu became an art. Some of its techniques lost practicality, and stylish beauty became stressed, which is a reflection of the practitioner’s mind.

## THE MARTIAL ARTS AND THE MIND

Practicing budo or koryu bujutsu is not only good for our health like physical exercises, but also it teaches people about the relationship between mind and body—in other words, the importance of unity of mind and body. Therefore, some bushi studied Zen Buddhism, because Zen sitting meditation was thought to lead to the realization of mind-body unity that is essential for mastery of the martial arts.

I think what many people find most needed in doing budo is concentration. Once you lose concentration, you are sure to lose to the opponent. And concentration has much to do with the unification of mind and body.

Most people think they just have to make every effort to cultivate the power of concentration. But they are mistaken. Concentration cannot be realized just by tense effort or strained muscles.

Concentration comes to you easily by coordinating mind and body, which is natural in humans and not something to be attained artificially. In a newborn baby, you see its body and mind are one. As we grow old, we find some people losing mind-body coordination, while others sustain it and display their power of concentration in sports and budo. Why?

Some of us, or perhaps most of us, tend to lose concentration because of unneeded thoughts that we allow to enter into our minds while playing a sport or doing some martial art. Why?

This often takes place when illness, unhappiness, suffering, or any other perception that comes from living life visits us. We tend to distract our attention from what we are doing at the moment we become attached to some thought or experience. It leaves our concentration difficult to maintain. Our adult life in modern times is filled with various forms of stress, so distracting perceptions often intrude into our consciousness.

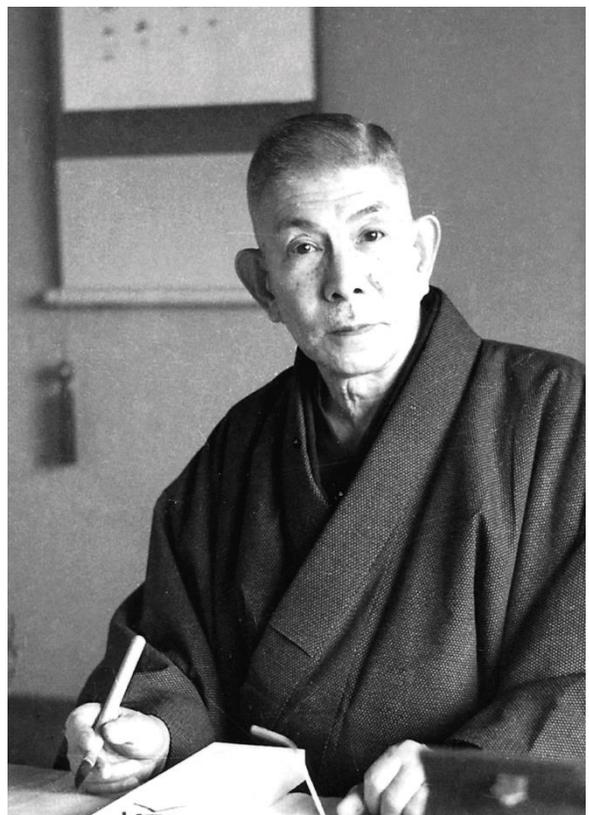
## MARTIAL ARTS AND UNIFICATION OF MIND AND BODY

How can we transcend our attachment to varied perceptions that enter the mind via our five senses, and thus maintain concentration? How can we get back to that innocent clear consciousness, that natural condition of mind-body unification? My teacher of Japanese yoga, Nakamura Tempu Sensei, answered these questions and presented us with twelve methods to realize concentration and calmness in the midst of activity. He called this art Shin-shin-toitsu-do, or “the Way of Mind and Body Unification.”

In 2001, most of these methods—eight out of twelve—were written about in English for the first time in the book, *Japanese Yoga: The Way of Dynamic Meditation* (Michi Publishing), by H. E. Davey Sensei, my friend and fellow teacher of Shin-shin-toitsu-do. I’d like to encourage SMAA

members to purchase this book as it will help you to master budo. I think it will interest SMAA members because Shin-shin-toitsu-do is very efficient for realizing the full potential of any ordinary person in any field of human activity. However, this is especially true for budo, and it was one of the reasons that when I was over 60 years of age I was able to successfully begin training in Hakko Ryu jujutsu for the first time.

Nakamura Tempu Sensei invented a way anyone can walk. By following this path himself, Nakamura Sensei realized new ways of looking at life, our world, and even the universe. While his realization was similar (to some extent) to that of people who practice Zen meditation, it was still unique in his pragmatic and simply understood explanation of Japanese yoga philosophy and practical methods. Uniting Eastern and Western methods of education, Nakamura Sensei made use of science to explain ancient Asian truths. More than this, his Shin-shin-



*Nakamura Sensei*

toitsu-do amounts to a bold affirmation of human instincts and desires, innate tendencies that many teachers of meditation have vainly tried to forbid in the past.

Nakamura Sensei lived an eventful life, and developed remarkable methods for developing ki (“life energy”) and the amazing power of mind and body coordination. Since I am also a bugeisha (“martial artist”) like many of you, I’m sure that these ideas and methods can help martial artists to improve skill in suiei-jutsu or any other martial art.

## THE NOBILITY OF BUDO

By Wayne Muromoto

空手は君主の武芸。

Karate wa kunshu no bugei.

(“Karate is the martial art of intelligent people.”)

Funakoshi Gichin

We like to think of martial arts as being egalitarian, in which ethnic or racial prejudices should hold no sway. Unfortunately, budo is a reflection of the culture it is in, and it will therefore reflect that culture’s positive as well as negative aspects, carried into the training hall. Yet, of course, budo as a Way, a shugyo, should aim for being better than the narrow-minded prejudices that negatively color the society it is bound in.

However, martial arts are not for everyone. The quote from Funakoshi Gichin Sensei, who brought Shotokan karate-do to Japan from Okinawa, reflects that sentiment. The martial art of karate-do, he thought, was for people who had the maturity and intelligence who would do credit to the art, not drag it down as a street brawling technique. It was an art for gentlemen and gentlewomen.

Funakoshi Sensei had several reasons why he made that statement, not just speaking only in a grand, philosophical way. He was trying to overcome the

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prejudice mainland Japanese (Naichi) had at the time for Okinawans (Uchinanchu). Historically, the Ryukyu Islands were late to Japan’s feudal unification. It had been, in fact, its own separate kingdom, under a series of kings. When it was subsumed under the shogunate, it maintained its lineage of kings, although it became controlled by Japan. The nature of this takeover made Okinawans, although their islands were part of Japan, treated like “second class citizens.” They weren’t “pure” Japanese, so to speak (although, as one native Japanese history buff told me, the notion that Japanese are a “pure” race is just bunk. From ancient times, and through DNA studies, the Japanese people are a mongrel race, closer to Koreans than many of them would like to think). They were looked down upon, their art and peoples considered foreign and inferior.

When Okinawan karate masters were invited to teach karate in Japan, I am sure they were keenly aware of this ethnic prejudice. It is, therefore, probably no accident that Funakoshi Sensei was one of the first teachers to bring this art to Japan in the early 1900s. His social standing as an educated man, an elite in a society that still clung to Confucian values of respect for intelligence, gave him the social status that a better but less literate karate teacher could never hold.



*Mr. Muromoto (left) training in Kyoto  
(Photo by Ono Yotaro Sensei)*

Funakoshi Sensei taught first at a dormitory for students from Okinawa. Later, he set up a dojo at Keio University. Again, this was no accident. Funakoshi Sensei was trying to make karate a martial art for the intelligentsia, not just for brawlers or thugs.

That's the historical context. In addition to that, when we look at the comment, philosophically speaking, kunshu can more specifically be termed "noble elite," or as the Nelson Dictionary translates it, "(royal) ruler." Why did Funakoshi Sensei use that term when there no longer was a royal class to speak of, outside the main Japanese imperial family and the remnants of the old Japanese lords and Okinawan kings, who were now called "counts?"

In Okinawa, kunshu once referred to the Okinawan royalty, but the royalty relied upon an upper class of bureaucrats who served in government positions. These positions were based upon passing examinations based upon a study of the traditional Confucian classics. Thus, entrance to the intelligentsia, the elite among the Okinawans, outside of those in the royal bloodline, was based upon knowledge. A "noble elite" was a person who

was versed in the wisdom of his society, his culture. In the past, it was the Confucian classics. In Funakoshi Sensei's modern era, it was having a grasp of the Westernized education of the day. A kunshu, to Funakoshi Sensei, probably meant that nobility was arrived at in these times through diligent study, a proper education, and a grounding in morals and ethical behavior reflective of those times. To go further, Funakoshi Sensei wanted karate-do to be a budo for the intelligentsia, but not just for book-smart people. By using the term kunshu, which reflected a kind of traditional nobility, he may have been saying that karate-do was for people who had a nobility of spirit, not just of the mind.

Of course, I could be putting words into Funakoshi Sensei's mouth that he never meant, but I do suspect that his specific use of the term kunshu meant that he wanted his beloved karate-do to be for people noble in spirit, not just for actual, blood royalty, or for heartless intelligentsia. Not everyone can avail himself of an advanced college degree, but everyone can cultivate such a spirit, no matter what one's social standing or occupation is in society, no matter one's race, religion, ethnicity, or sexuality. When I started judo classes as a youngster, my teachers were blue collar workers: sugar plantation



*An old photo of the author (left) studying Bitchuden Takeuchi Ryu with Ono Yotaro Sensei, the current headmaster of this ancient martial art (Photo courtesy of Ono Sensei)*

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workers, auto mechanics, and mill workers. When I joined a karate club a few years later, my first teachers were police officers. They weren't intellectuals, university professors, or upper-class white-collar workers. But they all carried themselves with dignity, and served as role models for me, a young man, not just for martial arts but for life. This was what being a decent, honorable citizen was about. They brought honor to their martial arts. That honor, I think, is the nobility that Funakoshi Gichin Sensei was hoping his art would bring to people.

**About the Author:** Wayne Muromoto is a frequent contributor to the *SMAA Journal* and a member of the SMAA Board of Advisors. A longtime supporter of our international nonprofit organization, Mr. Muromoto lives in Hawaii, where he teaches Bitchuden Takeuchi Ryu jujutsu and Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu iaido.

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