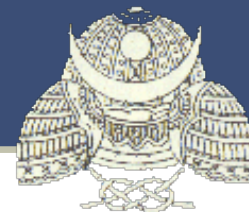


SMAA JOURNAL



Shudokan Martial Arts Association • PO Box 6022, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-6022
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ANNOUNCEMENTS

2021 SMAA DUES

Membership fees were 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 <https://www.smaa-hq.com/payments>. 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.

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修道館武道会

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

SMAA PATCHES

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



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

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

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

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

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

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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=gg5NIka6Ge0&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_XCH8RkI868tRKZ0fdJFSeFGyNZ0o

NEW SMAA ONLINE LIBRARY

We're always trying to offer more benefits to go along with your SMAA membership. So, be sure to drop by www.smaa-hq.com and check out the new SMAA Online Library. We're in the process of gradually adding back issues of the *SMAA Journal* to our website.

BUDO: THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION

Article and Japanese Calligraphy by H. E. Davey

Japanese martial and cultural arts have been growing in popularity around the world for decades. In the West, many people practice flower arrangement, bonsai, tea ceremony, shiatsu, and budo. Despite their wide popularity, however, Japanese arts are often misunderstood and distorted in the West.

There's a real need for literature and instruction that goes beyond the typical examination of the history and outward techniques of a single art form and that also exposes the lesser-known arts. What's most needed is information about what these arts are, where they came from, and how Westerners can successfully engage in them. Such accurate information is unfortunately rarer than you might expect. Writings that explore the more esoteric but immensely important aspects of these arts are rarer still. What are the underlying aesthetics of the Japanese martial arts? Some arts are touted as effective forms of "moving meditation," but how exactly do they function in this manner? What about the oft-mentioned, but usually unexplained, "spiritual dimensions" in the Japanese martial arts?

These esoteric aspects not only are inseparable from the technical and physical parts of practice, but they're also the elements of these arts that are

most universal and applicable to the daily lives of practitioners. The lack of information about these universal principles masks the fact that, at their deepest levels, arts like tea ceremony (chado), flower arrangement (kado), calligraphy (shodo), and martial arts (budo) are closely related. Studying with a knowledgeable instructor, like teachers certified by the SMAA, can reveal important and little understood aspects of these disciplines.

HARMONY OF MIND AND BODY

Despite outward differences, most Japanese arts share certain aesthetics; and more important, they



What is the spirit behind budo?

demand the acquisition of related positive character traits for their successful performance. Notice that many of the names for these arts end in the Japanese word *Do*. *Do* means “the Way,” and its use in these names indicates that an activity has surpassed its utilitarian purpose and been elevated to the level of art, that its students are practicing it as a Way of life. In sum, a *Do* is an art that allows us to understand the ultimate nature of the whole of life by closely examining ourselves through a singular activity of life: to arrive at the universal through studying the particular.

Many artistic principles and mental states are universal to all Japanese Ways. One of the most meaningful and fundamental is the concept of mind and body coordination. Although few of us are required to use a calligraphy brush, Japanese sword, or tea ceremony utensils in daily life, learning how to use them skillfully can enhance our mental and physical health. Moreover, skill in these arts comes from integrating the mind and body. The important relationship between the mind and body and how to achieve mind-body harmony is a principal theme of most traditional Japanese martial arts (if they are taught correctly).

In Japanese calligraphy as well, teachers speak of a “unity of mind and brush” and declare that “if the mind is correct, the brush is correct.” In Japanese swordsmanship (*kenjutsu*), it’s customary to speak of a union of mind, body, and sword. Mind and body coordination can be thought of as self-harmony. This integration is necessarily one of the mind and body in action, a central element for mastering any classical Japanese Way.

Practicing one of the Ways can lead to an understanding of the art of living life itself. Yet the teacher or book that can effectively demonstrate how the study of calligraphy or martial arts can lead to spiritual understanding is rare; most simply pay lip service to showing the Way but fail to really offer clear explanations and effective techniques. It’s commonly assumed that just throwing an opponent



“Plum blossoms dropping, I look up at the heavens—a sharply clear moon.”

or manipulating a brush will somehow magically produce insight. Mere action will not lead to insight.

STUDYING BUDO FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

In fact, it’s the manner in which we approach the Ways that determines what we learn from them. I’ve spent the majority of my life studying various Japanese arts, and speaking as someone who was once an excruciatingly shy, overweight, uncoordinated, and severely asthmatic child, I can confirm they offer a tremendous potential for self-transformation. The deliberate, conscious practice of Japanese *Do* forms *can* result in the cultivation of the mind and body. But these Ways provide that potential however, they don’t guarantee it.

In order to fruitfully approach the martial arts, tea ceremony, Japanese dance, or other arts as meditative acts, it’s important to see exactly how they can lead to understanding. Many people arrange flowers, make tea, or practice the martial arts without any sudden insights into the nature of life. To avoid this, look for teachers and books that



Some martial arts use meditation to enhance effectiveness in budo and life.

straightforwardly explain principles and practices that will allow you to directly experience these arts as meditation. It doesn't just happen by magic or by osmosis.

It's also important to keep in mind that cultural props like traditional dress and bowing aren't inherently spiritual. Simply wearing a gi or bowing doesn't express a meditative nature; it is the manner in which you bow, for example, and the invisible spirit of your practice that makes a Do a Way. This spirit and its importance are topics a well-informed instructor of classic Japanese martial arts should be capable of clearly explaining. It behooves you to search for that kind of teacher, and we have quite a few instructors like this in the SMAA. This is yet another reason to support the SMAA.

LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS

Although all who teach the Japanese martial arts are themselves students of their disciplines, it's important to share the knowledge and insights one has gained for the benefit of others, and that motivated me to write this article. At the same time, while I want to share with readers my experiences and thoughts concerning martial arts, it would be a mistake if others view me as a spiritual authority or martial arts master.

To look to another for the truth is to bypass the Way of the universe that's right before our eyes. It's trying to see through the eyes of another and thus fated to result in delusion: the follower thinks she or he has seen the truth—whereas it is at best only a reflection of it—and the leader figures he or she must be doing something right because of the worshipful demeanor of the followers. The connection between such leaders and followers is, unfortunately, shared delusion. Still, many opt for following others, because looking for the truth invariably involves a leap into the unknown. And it's a leap we each must make by ourselves.

In short, we're each responsible for our own spiritual progress. While a skilled and knowledgeable sensei is a must, don't expect this person to simply give you spiritual awareness. It can't be done.

Along the same lines, although the Japanese martial arts do have profound spiritual dimensions, and while a real dojo is more than merely a school, a dojo shouldn't be run like a religious cult. Nor should a sensei expect to be treated like the leaders of such cults. Walk away from anyone and any dojo that has these trappings. The worship of one's sensei isn't needed for spiritual growth via martial arts.

WHAT ARE THE UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLES IN YOUR MARTIAL ART?

So, how can someone start to explore the spiritual dimensions of their chosen martial art? Certainly, a good teacher should be able to help with this and provide more definitive information than mere platitudes. (Be aware, however, that you might have to search for a while to find such an instructor or even change martial disciplines.)

But what can the individual do for themselves to explore the spiritual elements in a given martial art? You can start by figuring out the principles behind the various techniques and kata you're studying.

In any martial discipline, there are aspects of a technique which are specific to that skill, while other key elements in that method may apply to many techniques. For instance, in judo's O Soto Gari ("Major Outer Reaping") throw, it's useful to point or curl the toes of the sweeping/reaping leg downward. It's pretty much the opposite of curling the toes backward to expose the ball of the foot for Mae Geri ("Front Kick") in karate-do.

This pointing of the toes is an important but fairly particular point, which doesn't relate broadly to many judo skills. It's not a universal principle.

However, before the reaping action with the leg is applied, a skilled judoka creates kuzushi; they "unbalance" their opponent. This is a universal principle.

You can and should apply it in many situations in judo. And although the specific technical points of a given throw are useful, universal principles like kuzushi are even more critical to learn. Once you're aware of what these vital universal principles are, you can study them in greater depth, creatively finding ways to improve your ability to apply them.

That said, there are even broader principles underlying a martial art than those that relate to its

physical dimensions. If your mind's upset, will you notice an opportunity in judo to apply kuzushi and then successfully execute O Soto Gari? If your concentration under pressure is poor, will this impact your capacity to see an opening to apply a technique? If your mental state lets you apply the right skill at the right time, is your posture undermining your ability to move rapidly and to correctly apply power? And if you fail due to your inability to manifest those attributes, is your willpower strong enough to let you continue training until you resolve these issues?

Simply understanding a universal principle like kuzushi doesn't mean you'll be able to really use this principle in action. For that, you'll need to consider things that are even more wide-ranging in nature like calmness, concentration, efficient posture, and willpower. And you'll need to discover if these sort of character traits are only needed in Japanese martial arts.

Nope, they're not.

You need composure and attentiveness to get good grades in school, master music or art, or even just do your job effectively. These principles are so comprehensive that they don't just relate to the art of budo, but to the art of living as well. It's at this level of introspection that we encounter the spiritual and psychological realms of budo practice. Even more, it's these universal principles that are life changing and in a very broad way.

HONING THE SPIRIT

Realizing the importance of cultivating the mind for combat effectiveness, some samurai explored things like Zen meditation. In certain cases, elements of Eastern philosophy, religion, and meditation were permanently added to martial systems these samurai were teaching. An example of this is Yagyu Shinkage Ryu swordsmanship, which long ago added facets of Zen to its practice.

If you study a martial art like that, then the means for honing your spirit may already be included in its practice. If not, you might need to search for methodologies to help you refine universal character traits needed for success in budo and life. In fact, that's exactly what I did. In the process, I discovered Shin-shin-toitsu-do, a form of Japanese yoga created by the famed Nakamura Tempu Sensei, which many celebrated budo experts in Japan have also applied to martial training. It helped my budo skills, too.

Nevertheless, whether meditative practice is part of your martial art, or if you need to add meditative elements to your practice, you still have to personally figure out how to train your spirit. Nobody can do this for you. But you can approach the process in a practical manner.

First, learn to distinguish between what is universal and what's specific in your martial art. Second, keep looking deeper and deeper into your training to find the most universal parts of your martial art. Third, see how these broad-based principles and attributes relate to life in general. Fourth, find philosophies and pragmatic exercises to foster the spiritual and psychological parts of your practice.



Effective practice is fun, but it also involves intelligence and creativity.

And finally, fifth, think of how to progressively, systematically, and regularly use these methods to train yourself spiritually, so that your life and martial art are enhanced. Intelligence and creativity are needed to practice this way. And intelligence and creativity are promoted by training like this.

If what you're engaging in doesn't result in better effectiveness in dojo practice sessions, it probably isn't helping you in life either. The forms of meditation, and the principles you're working with, should have a physical expression in budo. *They should work.* You can verify your ability and understanding in this regard by noting your success in kata or shiai.

Lack of success means more thought is needed in terms of organizing your practice so you gradually and steadily develop yourself, or it might mean you need to more systematically arrange what and how you practice. It also goes without saying that if you don't use your action plan on a regular basis, it's not going to do much for you. Don't dabble.

A LIFELONG PATH

To dabble in the martial arts is relatively simple and easy—just pick a school nearby, one that isn't too expensive, and take some classes. If you don't like it, drop out.

However, approaching a genuine dojo and a real sensei, a person and a place that can create an environment that will help you discover the spiritual aspects of martial arts training, training that will benefit your daily life . . . well, that's a bit different.

You need to know what to expect if you undertake the study of a classical martial or cultural art. The number of people practicing flower arrangement, tea ceremony, ink painting, martial arts, and similar endeavors outside of Japan is vast. Unfortunately, so is the failure rate.

Considering the relatively large turnover of Western students, looking into how to study a Japanese martial art and combat “culture shock” is something you need to consider. SMAA Senior Advisor Dave Lowry has written a number of fine books that would be useful to someone contemplating the study of Japanese martial arts as more than mere recreation. Nicklaus Suino Sensei’s *Budo Mind and Body* is another book to check out, along with Stephen Fabian Sensei’s *Clearing Away Clouds: Nine Lessons for Life from the Martial Arts*. Books by these SMAA leaders, and the works of other experienced authors, can give you useful information about how to find a sensei that can help you accomplish more than learning a few falls and throws. Check out their books to learn more about what a traditional teacher will expect from you and how to successfully negotiate the hurdles faced by newcomers to authentic Japanese martial arts.

WHO, WHAT AND WHY

By Wayne Muromoto

There are usually a couple of questions I ask potential students within the first month of training, or even before they begin training. I usually don’t ask it in so blunt a manner, but they are usually some form of “Who are you, what do you do, and why do you want to train with us?” Journalism students will quickly recognize that this is a subset of what they are supposed to search for in researching a story: Who, what, when, where, why, and, of course, why should it matter to the reader?

There are several reasons why I ask these questions, some obvious and perhaps some not so apparent at first. Obviously, I want to get some idea of who you are. My club is so small that any new person will alter the group dynamics substantially, and so I want to know from the start what you are like, where you are coming from, and what kind of prior knowledge (and stereotypes) you are bringing to the training. Who are you, what do you do?

Such research will help you to practice martial arts as a lifelong endeavor, which is an essential component for approaching these disciplines as shugyo—a form of spiritual training. The spirituality of all the classical Japanese art forms—from flower arrangement to budo—reveals itself through an ongoing process of practice that lasts a lifetime. It is a process that can only be hinted at in a short article, but it offers sincere students something immensely valuable, something that can transform their lives and benefit the lives of people around them.

About the Author: H. E. Davey is one of the founding members of the SMAA. He is the Co-director of the SMAA Jujutsu Division, with the rank of Shihan/eighth dan.

Who are you? *What* do you do? In America, we tend to categorize people based a lot on their occupation. It’s not that I’m a social snob. You don’t need to have a white-collar job. But if you are an adult, don’t have a job, and are mooching off your significant other, your parents, or some sugar daddy or mommy, I’m going to wonder if you can afford to help pay the monthly dues that covers our dojo rental fees. Also, what does that say about your ability to stick things out, to work hard at a concerted, extended effort? The economy being what it is, there are legitimate reasons why you might be out of work. There are also warning signs to me if you simply don’t have a job, not from circumstances beyond your control, but because you just want to mooch off someone else.

What prior martial arts background do you have? Some martial arts will complement what we do. Some will only hinder you learning our own style, so



The author teaching jujutsu

I will have prior knowledge of what I need to be aware of. We could sure use new members to help pay the rent, but because I don't make a living off teaching martial arts, I don't really need to pad the class with students to help pay my personal bills. Perhaps your experiences and mindset are not the proper fit for what we do. I sometimes suggest other martial arts schools that prospective students might enjoy more than ours. We're not the answer to everyone's quest for the martial arts that suit their purposes.

Why do you want to train in our dojo? There's actually no pat and simple answer for this. Of course, if you say something like "Because I need to fight the ninjas that are coming out of the walls in my padded room," I may ask that you focus on taking your medication regularly instead of learning how to fight invisible ninja. (Seriously: I encountered someone who wandered into our dojo, feet encrusted with street dirt, asking about ninjas coming out of the walls, and I said they don't do that in our dojo anymore. He got offended at my flippant remark and began to get belligerent until I pulled out my cell phone and told him I was calling the police. He must have had prior encounters with the

boys and girls in blue because he immediately changed his tone, got very conciliatory, and backed away and disappeared down the stairs as fast as he could.)

But when I thought about it, even I have a hard time establishing my reasons for doing budo into a set of short, simple sentences. So why even ask when I can't answer my own question succinctly? And why ask the other questions if the case is that more often than not, I allow students to train, usually regardless of their social status or occupation?

The reason that's not so apparent is that in the asking, I'm not just recording the quantitative answers: what your job is, what prior training you've done, why you want to train (even if you struggle on that last answer). I'm looking at your answers in a qualitative way. *How* are you answering the questions? What kind of emotional and personality traits are you exhibiting when you talk about yourself, past teachers, past training? Are you SAYING all the right words, but are your mannerisms and body language in opposition to the words coming out of your mouth? Then there's something not quite right with what you're saying.

Again, I've rarely told people to leave and not come back after I talk to them, save for that guy, who wandered in off the streets. But it does give me a quick handle on how you will fare, and after accumulating years of experiences with different kinds of people, I've gotten a pretty good idea of how long you will last.

Two people can say the same things, but how they say it and their body language may tell me totally different things about those two.

"Oh, I trained/am still training in X martial arts, but I'm really not that good at it..." That's the usual way people will talk about their martial arts experience. There's humble, though, and there's false humility. One person can smile self-deprecatingly, shake his head, and the entire body language will show

humility and a willingness to learn something new. Another person, like a short-term student I encountered some months ago, said the right words, but he puffed out his chest, stuck his chin out and looked down his nose when he said it, as if his words were saying, "I'm humble and willing to learn," but his body was saying "But I'm a badass!" He didn't last all that long. His cup was too full, and he had a hard time adjusting to our training. Moreover, he didn't think anything about showing up with patches up and down his training outfit promoting his other martial arts style. And he wasn't a badass. He was just bad.

Then again, there are those students who I thought wouldn't last past one month, and for some odd reason, they keep coming back and training, year in and year out. I can't figure those people out. And I've also been conned in the past. As I tell my students, my b.s. meter is not totally foolproof. But it's a lot better than it was ten or twenty years ago. So maybe I'm not perfect, but my meter is getting more and more calibrated.

In a way, talking to prospective new students is like speed dating. How do you get a handle on this new person in only a few minutes, who might barge into your life and stick around every training session, three hours a week, week in and week out, through a cursory interview? You can end a speed date right away if your creep-o-meter senses that the potential partner is a jerk. But a jerk in the dojo may hang around for a long time. That's something I'm still learning to fine-tune, I must admit.



Muromoto Sensei teaching bojutsu

And if you are that new student, are you self-aware enough to know what kind of impression you are conveying to other people, not just in the dojo, but also in the rest of your life? Is that impression positive or negative? Are your words saying one thing, but is your body language giving away your true nature, and is that nature something you actually like or is it time for a change in attitude?

About the Author: Wayne Muromoto is a frequent contributor to the *SMAA Journal* and a member of the SMAA Board of Advisors. He has decades of training in Takeuchi Ryu jujutsu and Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu iaido under leading teachers in Japan.

**Shudokan Martial Arts
Association**
PO Box 6022
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-6022

Phone:
1-734-645-6441

E-Mail:
shudokan@smaa-hq.com

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Ann Arbor, MI 48106-6022

