

# SMAA JOURNAL

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### 2012 DUES

SMAA dues should have been paid on the first of January, 2012. Please make a point of sending your check or money order to our Michigan headquarters on or before this date. You can also pay online with a major credit card at <http://smaa-hq.com/payments.php>. Prompt payment helps the SMAA to run smoothly, and it reduces the amount of labor and cost associated with sending late dues notices.

### A NOTE TO MEMBERS OF THE SMAA

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>.

### 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

### 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

**Webmaster:** Don Prior Sensei

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修道館武道会

(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*.

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](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:

**SMAA HQ  
PO Box 6022  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-6022  
USA**

## SMAA TEACHING CERTIFICATION

The SMAA offers both dan and teaching certification to qualified individuals. However, obtaining dan from the SMAA is not the same as receiving teaching certification, and *the SMAA can only fully endorse the classes presented by SMAA certified instructors.*

SMAA dan and teaching titles are based on technical ability, teaching ability, and character development. In the case of dan grades, more emphasis is placed on technical ability. Teaching titles, which are more difficult to achieve, place more emphasis on personal development and teaching ability.

Teaching titles allow instructors to recommend individuals to the SMAA for ranks within one level of their own. If you have obtained a certain dan from the SMAA, but no teaching certification, you might want to consider applying for official

recognition as an instructor. *If you have your own dojo, such documentation is especially important, particularly if you'd like your students to receive kyu and dan ranking in the SMAA.*

Applications for promotion can be downloaded at [www.smaa-hq.com](http://www.smaa-hq.com), and you can find out more about the various teaching titles and the requirements for receiving these titles at <http://smaa-hq.com/ranking.php>.

## SMAA FACEBOOK PAGE



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

## SMAA ONLINE PAYMENTS

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

## THE BEST OF THE SMAA JOURNAL CD-ROM

To celebrate its 15th anniversary in 2009, the SMAA created a special CD-ROM that contained a sampling of some of the best stories and articles to

appear in the *SMAA Journal* since 1994. We mailed this free of charge to everyone in the SMAA as a way of showing our appreciation to our members.

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

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

## SMAA ONLINE STORE



Pictured above is the official SMAA hoodie. Just the thing to keep you warm on the way to the dojo. The SMAA Online Store has mugs, shirts, hats, and a bunch of other fun items. All sales go to support our nonprofit organization. Drop by <http://www.cafepress.com/shudokan> and check out our shop today!

## SPECIAL SMAA EVENT: A FREE INTRODUCTION TO JAPANESE YOGA & MARTIAL ARTS

On August 23, 2012 the Sennin Foundation Center for Japanese Cultural Arts in California will offer an introductory class in the Shin-shin-toitsu-do system of Japanese yoga and meditation, along with an introduction to Saigo Ryu martial arts. *This*

event is FREE to SMAA members.

### What You can Experience

Shin-shin-toitsu-do is the form of Japanese yoga and meditation that will be offered to SMAA members. Shin-shin-toitsu-do, "The Way of Mind and Body Unification," was founded in the early 1900s by Nakamura Tempu Sensei. Nakamura Sensei lived in India, where he studied the art of Raja yoga, the yoga of meditation. After studying medicine at Columbia University, he blended Indian meditation and health improvement with his background in medicine, psychology, Japanese healing arts and meditation, and Japanese martial arts. He taught for many years in Japan, authored best-selling books, and counted among his students a large number of Japan's top executives, politicians, fine artists, athletes, martial artists, and people from every walk of life. But few Westerners have yet been exposed to these extraordinary teachings.



SMAA Member Kyle Kurpinski practicing  
Shin-shin-toitsu do meditation

Shin-shin-toitsu-do offers you practical forms of seated and moving meditation, breathing methods for health, stretching exercises, autosuggestion for altering negative habits, stress management, and self-healing techniques that are little-known in the West. Emphasis is also placed on the development

of ki (chi in Chinese). Ki amounts to life energy, and its cultivation has a profound effect on mental and physical health. The goal is greatly enhanced concentration, willpower, calmness, relaxation, and physical fitness.



SMAA Senior Advisor Kevin Heard performing Saigo Ryu

SMAA members will also have a chance to try Saigo Ryu aiki-jujutsu, a traditional and non-competitive martial art. While many Westerners use "jujutsu," "jujitsu," or "jiu-jitsu" to describe their art of self-defense, most of these methods bear little resemblance to the original Japanese jujutsu, Japan's oldest martial art. Both aikido and judo stem from jujutsu, and the Sennin Foundation Center is one of few dojo in the USA to offer authentic Japanese jujutsu.

Saigo Ryu features a wide variety of powerful throwing, pinning, and grappling techniques stemming from older methods originating in the Aizu-Wakamatsu area of Japan. Saigo Ryu is a sogo bujutsu, an "integrated martial system," and it also features advanced training in the martial arts of the sword, spear, staff, short stick, iron fan, and others. It is unique and unlike many more well-known martial disciplines (like karate-do, kendo, and iaido). While training is vigorous, and the practiced self-defense techniques effective, the

emphasis is on subduing an opponent without unneeded injury. Students improve their health while learning martial arts as meditation, which helps them to remain calm under pressure. Some practitioners have likened Saigo Ryu to "moving Zen."

Saigo Ryu also teaches methods for cultivating ki. Ki, "life energy," animates human beings, and an understanding of it is useful in both martial arts and daily life.

### All You Need to Know to Participate

The classes will take place at 1053 San Pablo Avenue in Albany, California, right across the bay from San Francisco. The martial arts class is not required, and it will follow the Japanese yoga program, which starts at 7:00 PM. Since the Saigo Ryu aiki-jujutsu training will refer to principles of mind and body unification covered in the Japanese yoga class, everyone will want to participate in this first part of the evening. You can read more about both subjects at [www.senninfofoundation.com](http://www.senninfofoundation.com).

Wear loose clothing and bring a notebook. Pre-registration is needed and easily accomplished. Just leave a voice mail at 510-526-7518 or send e-mail to [hedavey@aol.com](mailto:hedavey@aol.com). Leave your name and phone number, and then indicate that you would like to participate in one or both classes. Indicate if anyone else is coming with you, and then just drop by on August 23<sup>rd</sup>. Please arrive a few minutes before 7:00 PM for general registration.

The classes will be taught by the SMAA's own Troy Swenson Sensei, who has been studying and teaching at the Sennin Foundation Center for several years. He has instructor certification in Japanese yoga, and he received a teaching certificate from the Shudokan Martial Arts Association Jujutsu Division. He is also the assistant editor of the *SMAA Journal*.

Don't miss your chance to learn how Japanese yoga

and/or martial arts can help you realize better health, deeper calmness, and enhanced concentration in everyday life.

### THE JAPANESE SWORD: ANCIENT TRADITION, LIVING CULTURE, MODERN ART



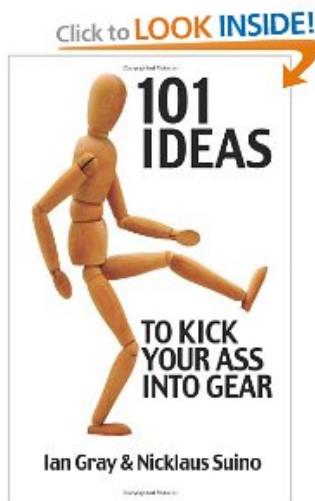
*Paul Martin Sensei*

SMAA Senior Advisor Paul Martin, a former staff member of the British Museum, author, and acknowledged authority, presented a lecture on the history and construction of the classic Japanese sword. Prized as much for its artistic beauty as for its amazing cutting ability, the Japanese sword is one of the most recognized symbols of Japan and its warrior class, the samurai. The creation of these true works of art has continued to the present through the efforts of a new generation of artisans, many of whom Mr. Martin interviewed and filmed for his documentary *Art of the Japanese Sword*.

The lecture took place on February 20 in San Jose, California. SMAA Senior Advisor Nyle Monday and Silke Higgins assisted with the event. Thanks to all of the SMAA members that participated!

### NEW BOOK BY NICKLAUS SUINO SENSEI

SMAA Director Nicklaus Suino has had another book published. *101 Ideas to Kick Your Ass Into Gear* was written with Ian Gray, and it is available for purchase at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).



Here's a quote from the authors:

*We spend more time glued to our glutes than ever. The latest numbers suggest that the average person spends sixty hours or more a week using his butt as a base of operations. That's why we've presented you with 101 activities ranging from those which would cause any rational person to tremble in fear - like organizing your office - to things that you may consider just an ordinary weekend pastime - like jumping into the abyss with a giant rubber band tied around your waist. The plan here is to put some dare in your derrière, and some juice in your caboose, some whoosh in your toosh. And to help you get out of the rut created by your butt. So what are you waiting for? Pick a chapter and put some hum in your bum, some flair in your fanny, and some kick in your can! After you've done a dozen or so of these activities, you'll look back and wonder how you ever managed to spend so much time parked on your posterior!*

## NEW BOOK BY SAWAI ATSUHIRO SENSEI

Sawai Atsuhiro Sensei, a member of the SMAA Board of Advisors, is also a best-selling author in Japan. He specializes in books on the Japanese yoga and meditation methods created by the late Nakamura Tempu Sensei, founder of Shin-shin-toitsu-do. Sawai Sensei has a new book out called

*Nakamura Tempu's Practical Way to Meditation.* Our Japanese reading members can pick up a copy at <http://www.amazon.co.jp>.



*Sawai Atsuhiro Sensei, Japanese yoga expert and Shihan of Kobori Ryu*

Sawai Sensei holds the highest rank in Shin-shin-toitsu-do, which he received from his teacher Nakamura Sensei, and he is presently the Headmaster of the Wakuwaku Honshin Juku in Osaka, a group that studies various forms of meditation and spiritual training, with an emphasis on the Shin-shin-toitsu-do system of Japanese yoga. He also holds the highest rank (Shihan) in Kobori Ryu, an ancient martial art, and he's studied Hakko Ryu jujutsu as well. Iwasaki Hisashi Soke, the current leader of Kobori Ryu, is also a Senior Advisor for the SMAA.

## A NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF *TAMESHIGIRI NO SHINZUI*

Fudokan Dojo London and the International Battodo Federation are very pleased to announce the upcoming publication of an English translation of Nakamura Taizaburo Sensei's *Tameshigiri no Shinzui* ("The Essence of Test Cutting"). This will be released by Blue Snake Books (North Atlantic Press) in spring 2013. *Tameshigiri no Shinzui* was published by Kodansha Japan in 1980, and is lavishly illustrated (800 images), containing many great photos of the late master in action.



*Nakamura Taizaburo Sensei*

This book was the culmination of Nakamura Taizaburo Sensei's life work at the age of 68 and was the foundation of his subsequent works. This is the first time a complete translation has been made of one of Nakamura Sensei's substantive books. The text is full of superb technical information and challenging analysis as well as many gripping stories from Nakamura Sensei's life as a special forces instructor, master swordsman and relentless investigator of the Japanese sword and related arts.

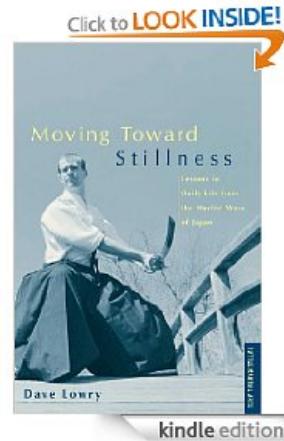
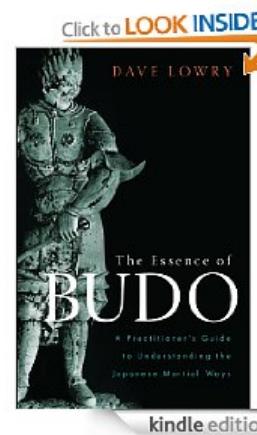
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This work has been undertaken by members and friends of Fudokan in London including Gavin Poffley (translation), Coneyl Jay (photographic reconstruction), and organized by John Maki Evans (SMAA Senior Advisor), together with Yoshitaka Nomura in Japan. For more information contact John Evans Sensei at [info@battodo-fudokan.co.uk](mailto:info@battodo-fudokan.co.uk).

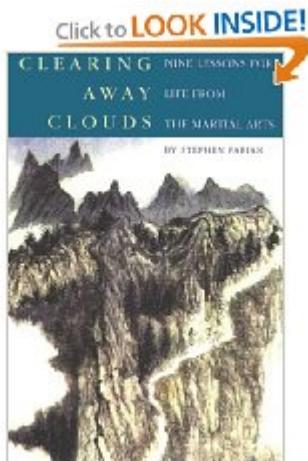
#### NEW E-BOOKS BY DAVID LOWRY



Two of Dave Lowry's most popular books, *Moving Toward Stillness: Lessons in Daily Life from the Martial Ways of Japan* and *The Essence of Budo: A Practitioner's Guide to Understanding the Japanese Martial Ways* are now available in Kindle format. Mr. Lowry is a member of the SMAA Board of Advisors, and he has taught Japanese swordsmanship at past SMAA events. Fans of the e-book format should be sure to check out these two great books by one of the more well-known officials in the SMAA.

## AN EXCERPT FROM *CLEARING AWAY CLOUDS: NINE LESSONS FOR LIFE FROM THE MARTIAL ARTS*

By Stephen Fabian



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

### CHAPTER 7: BE PATIENT AND FLOW

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

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

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

### UNDERSTANDING JAPAN

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

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

effect, the tsunami, our misnomered “tidal” wave—which have periodically leveled communities, and from which the survivors have repeatedly reconstructed their social and cultural structures.

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

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

The earliest treatise on this subject written by a Japanese (in English) for a Western audience is the book *Bushido: the Soul of Japan* by Nitobe Inazo, who based his work, in his own words, on “what I was told and taught in my youthful days, when feudalism was still in force.” In it, Nitobe describes the most salient attributes of bushido to be rectitude or justice, courage, benevolence,

politeness, veracity/sincerity, honor and personal dignity, loyalty and duty or obligation, and self-control. (Compare these attributes with the “Five Constant Virtues” of Confucian tradition: benevolence, righteousness or rectitude, propriety, wisdom, and trust or faith that Warner and Draeger list in *Japanese Swordsmanship*.) As in the case of most ideals, there are certainly deviations from and excesses in the application of these traits. But Nitobe's main point is that much of what is Japan today, indeed its very “soul” (as indicated in the subtitle of his book), derives from the tenets of bushido.

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

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

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

## IN THE LAND OF THE SAMURAI

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

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

Our apartment, known as a “2DK” in Japan (that is, two rooms, with a dining–kitchenette area), was a common type and tiny by American standards, at least for a family. Our living area was comprised of two 6-tatami mat rooms (tatami, a rush used extensively for flooring mats, is affixed to frames which measure about three by six feet [or three to six Japanese shaku lengths]), a kitchen with barely room for a card-table, a short hall, toilet and bath rooms (separate and closet-sized), an entry alcove (the ubiquitous genkan where shoes are removed before entering), and a narrow balcony. For storage, closets ran the length of each tatami room, in which the folded bedding (futon) is kept during the day, as well as all clothes and other personal belongings. The inconveniences of this apartment—such as its small size, and the challenge of heating either water or the living

space itself without a centralized system for doing so—were somewhat compensated by the tastefully decorated sliding cardboard doors (fusuma) dividing the internal spaces, and the paper window shutters (shoji) that illuminate with a pleasant diffuse light, while nevertheless concealing the inside from the out.

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

For me it was not that easy, although I was able to complement my individual language study from books and audio tapes with daily application in actual life contexts. This resulted in fairly rapid progress in spoken Japanese, especially during the first six months of our stay. My motivation was high, and there are certainly an abundance of learning aids available. But it was difficult and awkward being the only adult male among the daily groups of interacting children and mothers, which limited the extent to which I felt comfortable practicing my Japanese (it is also true that men and women speak slightly different styles of Japanese, which further complicated my learning process). Once we acquired bicycles and an attached seat for Rebecca, she and I were able to take rides, for

shopping or sightseeing, or even to the seashore (not very distant, although access to it was restricted by a high sea wall) and other parks. Even though such jaunts relieved some of the monotony and discomfort of my daily schedule, I knew that for the sake of Rebecca's socialization and normal development, she needed regular contact and play with other children, and so as often as not, we played near our apartment.

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

To be successful, such a mix does depend on an efficient ability to focus, to concentrate on the matter at hand, especially since you may be changing the subject of your attention dramatically,

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

### HONTAI YOSHIN RYU JUJUTSU

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

Master Hyong, knowing my philosophical interests in the arts, had suggested perhaps the most obvious choice, aikido. Aikido was established as a new martial style during the middle decades of this century by Ueshiba Morihei, a gifted martial artist and devoutly religious man, who elaborated upon

the base of his formal training in traditional styles of jujutsu/aikijujutsu and kenjutsu to devise a system that he felt allowed a person to harmonize with universal energy. My earliest personal contact with aikido had been the club demo at the U of I, and while the instructor had been impressive, I had doubts about my fit, at least at that time, with such a style, especially as it was practiced there. As it turned out, there simply were no aikido classes anywhere near or moderately convenient to our residence in Koshien, again stymieing my interest in that art.

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

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

me to train in, or of my acceptance as a foreigner into its ranks?

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

The Honbu dojo or headquarters training hall of Hontai Yoshin Ryu is located in a municipal building in Imazu, Nishinomiya. It shares this space with several other martial styles in an elaborate scheme of time-sharing. As it happened, the Japanese wife of an American who was an employee in the same firm as Surabela trained at the dojo. This family kindly invited us shortly after our arrival in Japan to their apartment—one similar to ours in a neighboring Sumitomo building—and it was during our conversation over lunch that our shared interest in the martial arts arose. Upon my mention of jujutsu, the woman informed us of the presence of the Hontai Yoshin Ryu at her dojo, and suggested I go see a practice session; she even offered to make the requisite introductions, highly significant in Japan. It seemed then—and it still seems—too good to be true. Barely containing my excitement, I thanked her for her information and offer, and made arrangements to go with her that very week to the dojo.

My first practice session in the Hontai Yoshin Ryu occurred on 21 July 1987, less than two weeks from the date of our arrival in Japan (9 July). Since it was a Tuesday night, and since the Hontai Yoshin Ryu is a koryu or ancient traditional system with both unarmed and weapons components, I began my actual training not in unarmed combat, but rather in the use of the 6-foot staff (cho-bo or roku shaku bo), after which several members of the style took me out for talk and drinks. Although we

had difficulty communicating (no one spoke much English, and my Japanese was still embryonic), we achieved and shared *kimochi*, the “good feeling” that is elemental for group harmony in Japan. From such talks and shared training strong interpersonal bonds were formed, and I was able to piece together some of the history and current state of affairs of my new style, a traditional school that has nevertheless changed to some extent with the times.

Although I had not known it at the time, the Hontai Yoshin Ryu, with some 350+ years of history, was then in an active state of exporting itself overseas, and had already established several schools in Europe, and during my three year stay would establish others, including in Australia. No formal contacts had yet been made with Americans, however. That several hundred students practice the style outside of Japan is ironic considering that a “crowded” night at the honbu (headquarters) dojo yields perhaps a dozen participants, and most nights have fewer. In spite of the considerable foreign interest in the style, it remains relatively unknown in mainstream Japan (or in the U.S.); considering this, is it again ironic, perhaps, that at the time of my training in Japan (1987–1990), my period of consecutive training at the dojo became the longest of any foreigner.

### IN THE HONBU DOJO

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

downs or throws. Additional jujutsu kata also include defenses against the tanto (knife) and katana (long sword), while other sets of kata involve the wakizashi (short sword), and the hanbo (three foot stick), as well as the cho-bo.

Although I was given the generous option of wearing my tae kwon do black belt, I preferred to don (for the third time in my life) the beginner's white belt. The training suit worn in practice is a simple white dogi, with either a white or black belt tied around the waist. I found the pureness and simplicity of the unadorned uniforms and lack of colored belts to produce a rather powerful and positive aesthetic effect. Occasionally in practice and always for demonstration purposes a traditional black or dark blue hakama is also worn, which adds considerable dignity to the outfit, but also requires attention from its wearer when executing movements, particularly falls and rolls, since it is not that difficult to get your feet entangled in the folds of material. Training is generally done barefoot, although for outdoor performances a simple thonged zori or sandal with or without tabi (split-toed socks) can be worn.

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

way of calligraphy), Soke is an embodiment of the samurai ethos: disciplined, physically strong yet aesthetically sophisticated and philosophical, successful in professional matters, and socially prominent as a leading local citizen.

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

In general, warm-ups, following the bowing-in, are brief, usually only a series of front rolls back and forth across the dojo, sometimes followed by simple throwing drills. The greater part of a training session is spent training specific kata with a partner. In my experience, the new student is introduced fairly quickly to the first and second kata in the first jujutsu series called gyaku no kata. Unlike most karate kata or tae kwon do poomsae which are performed by individuals and can have twenty or more movements in them, jujutsu kata are practiced between two people and may appear relatively simple: the attacker moves in (for example, grabs a wrist or lapel, or punches to the face or belly), and the defender responds, with a designated technique. Correct technique and attitude, good timing, and proper body position and movement (tai sabaki) are of major importance. The defensive motion may be a locking or throwing maneuver with or without a strike, but is over in a brief moment, after which the two practitioners retreat from each other and take up a prepared stance in a state of heightened mind-body alertness called zanshin.

That all of this appears simple is what makes the actual performance of the kata so remarkably difficult. Jujutsu movements are replete with

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

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

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

relationships of a non-physical nature, reducing aggression and conflict in these contexts. But of course all of this requires time, training and patience.

### PATIENCE AND FLOW

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

The self-discipline necessary to keep us to the task of mastery despite setbacks, pitfalls, and endless frustrations can harden us to a point where we become physically, mentally, and emotionally stiff and rigid, as I myself was in my earlier "crusty" phase. As one version of Lao Tzu's *Tao Teh Ching* (*Book of the Tao* or *The Way of Life*, Witter Bynner translation) puts it,

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

Such over-rigidity is not only unattractive to others, but it severely limits our development and abilities, and in a martial context can be deadly. In Eiji Yoshikawa's novel *Musashi*, our hero learns this lesson from Yoshino, a geisha he meets. Following a chance encounter, the highly cultivated geisha

finds herself oddly attracted to this youthful and rather uncouth but impressive samurai. As they awkwardly interact, Yoshino reveals her sadness at Musashi's affected alertness and rigidity—which he defends by claiming to be in readiness for potential enemies. Yoshino counters by suggesting that while in such a state, if he were to be attacked in force, he would be killed immediately. The geisha illustrates her message poignantly, by cutting open the valuable stringed instrument upon which she plays so masterfully. She shows Musashi how the instrument's beautiful sound is created by combining its rigid wooden structure with flexible strings. Yoshino comments:

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

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

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

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

Also, by "letting it happen" as Master Hyong would

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

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He has taught at the SMAA Seminar & Conference on more than one occasion, and he is the U.S. representative for Hontai Yoshin Ryu jujutsu and related weapons systems. Go directly to [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) to purchase this excellent book.

## RIAI: THE MEANING OF THE MEANING

By Wayne Muromoto

It was, as I recall, one of those hot, humid, oppressive summer days that Kyoto is known for, when just standing in the shade will elicit buckets of perspiration. We were taking a sorely needed break from training and drinking iced tea in the little meeting room in the back of the dojo, gathered around a low table with a hibachi burner set in it, and I absent mindedly picked up a *Kendo Nippon* magazine that had been left on the table. I flipped through the pages and found a photograph of a rather well-known teacher demonstrating a short, bladed weapon. I showed the photograph to my sensei.

“Oh, him,” he said, nonchalantly as he gulped down his iced tea and glanced at the photograph. “He’s okay. But he doesn’t understand the riai of that weapon.” Then he turned away to talk with another student.

I was somewhat taken aback, because I knew this teacher had a whole big crop of students in Western countries waxing eloquent about his masterful techniques. I thought, cynically, that perhaps there might be a bit of professional

jealousy in my sensei’s rather blithe, off-the-cuff statement. Or, perhaps, he could be right. I couldn’t tell at the time.

However, some ten years later, I was engaged in some impromptu, informal cross-training with a senior instructor of another koryu, and in the course of our talking in between physical training, we somehow got on the subject of this teacher. Without my prodding, he said, “Oh, yeah. Well, X sensei is okay. But he’s like a journeyman teacher. He can teach the techniques but he really doesn’t understand the real riai.”

Amazed, I told the instructor that my own sensei used the very same words in describing that teacher. “Huh!” he replied. “Well, I guess great minds think alike!”

So inasmuch as Chuck Clark prodded me to talk about riai, I was somewhat hesitant, because I myself am still wrestling with the core riai of my own style. I wouldn’t want to have the same rep as that teacher.

On the other hand, while it may be really hard for me to discuss the particular, individual riai of my own styles of budo, I may be able to say something about the general notion of what riai is. I think. Well, let's see...

My trusty Nelson kanji dictionary defines the two kanji that make up the word as meaning "reason," or ri- ("principle", "truth") with "coming together, meeting, or harmonizing (-ai). In other words, in budo, riai are the underlying principles behind a technique. That's as simple an explanation as I can give, and in most cases, that's enough. Riai, in a way, is similar to the word bandied about frequently in karate-do schools: bunkai ("analysis," "reduction," "parsing"). However, as the Nelson translated meanings make clear, they are somewhat different.

In any case, on a superficial level, riai is simply an explanation of the "meaning" of a technique, or waza.

Okay, Grasshopper, you're waiting for the other shoe to drop right now, right? It can't be as simple as all that.

So here it is. That definition of riai is good enough for most students. Certainly, for the average middle-class, suburban kid taking a "kurrottee" class in a shopping mall dojo, it's plenty sufficient. We're talking about students whose willingness to alter his/her mental, emotional, and spiritual attitudes to delve further into the culture and ethos of combative arts as precariously limited, after all. So there's nothing wrong with stopping there and letting them enjoy the experience, if that's what the dojo is aiming for.

"Ya step forward and do a jodanzuki, which means you close the gap and punch the guy in the face! That's the riai!" yells the sempai ("senior"). Makes sense to me, the kid thinks. And for a maturity

level and understanding of a preteen, maybe that's all he/she can absorb. So let's not be too harsh. For a lot of folk, that's all they need. Step, punch, kick. Make some noise. Go home and don't think about it until next practice.

Or let's say you're in an aikido workshop and there's some 50-plus people in attendance, with varying skill levels. You explain a kote gaeshi technique. The guy grabs your right wrist with his right hand, and so you throw him down. The riai? Well, the guy is grabbing you so you throw him by stepping a certain way and twisting his wrist, forcing him to either take a tumble or you dislocate his wrist and elbow. For a large audience of mixed levels of understanding, that should suffice.

But let's take apart the notion that riai is an understanding of very, very core principles. In fact, if you were to drill down into that one technique, you would come up with some pretty heavy duty core principles that underly all of aikido.

First of all, why in heck are we starting that way? I mean, why let the guy get close enough to grab you, and then why does uke (the "receiver" of the throw) grab your wrist? One criticism non-aikido folk make of the art is that it's "impractical," it relies on the notion that people will grab your wrist, or take these huge, arcing swings at you with an open palm, like a sword attack. If somebody nowadays wants to fight with you, they don't attack like that, critics say. They'll come at you with boxing punches, or be hunched over and try to grab you MMA-style, or kick you...

The mistake critics make is based on a lack of understanding that the kote gaeshi forms not only teach a particular reaction to a particular attack (a wrist grab), it teaches a generalized reaction to many forms of attack, be it a grab, punch, or kick: irimi ("enter"), contact, control the attacker and control the timing and distance, become the center

of the movement, and execution of a defense that renders the attacker unable to counter, in fact the attacker is yanked off balance by his own momentum. Understand these general principles in kote gaeshi, and you begin to see a glimmer of insight into nearly all the other kata of aikido. Miss it, and no matter how many forms you know, you are still not doing aikido right, because you don't really understand the riai.

The same, I would hazard, goes for karate-do, or any other budo. If you don't understand the core principles behind the art, your techniques won't look coherent. You'll be doing something, but there won't be a unity or cohesiveness. The techniques will look like disparate, unrelated actions. It will look choppity-chop.

On the other hand, the mistake defenders of aikido often make is they try to defend the *particular* method (like defending against the wrist-grab) and not stressing the riai, or core principles, that the particular form teaches. Sure, maybe you don't see a lot of wrist grabs in a MMA bout. But you do see some fighters attempting some Muhammad Ali-type slipping and entering to counterpunch, some sophisticated fighters with jujutsu training using rudimentary but effective principles of disbalancing and control, distancing, and attempts to control and put pressure on the opponent's joints. Those are core aikido principles, and are the riai to aikido, only in a different, more pugnacious expression.

But why grab at all then? I think here's where to understand the riai, you need to have a cultural perspective as well as a technical one. Aikido was founded by Ueshiba Morihei Sensei. His main jujutsu teacher was Takeda Sokaku Sensei, who taught Daito Ryu. Takeda Sensei was a formidable swordsman, and Ueshiba Sensei also had grounding in many weapons arts. As someone who came out of classical jujutsu and kenjutsu, Ueshiba

Sensei might have been teaching what he thought was a breakthrough, novel approach to budo, but his thinking had a heavy imprint from older, classical martial arts. And one of the main axioms of jujutsu schools was that, before the age of guns, the most formidable attacker you might face if you were unarmed was a swordsman. Sure, spears or halberds could kill you too, but swords were really scary. Imagine a two-foot long razor coming at you. Even a shorter tanto ("dagger") or wakizashi ("short sword") could hurt like the Dickens. And "back in the day," a lot of people carried some kind of bladed weapon around for self-defense, if not for status. A person bent on violence would just as soon cut you than punch or grapple with you.

So, if you were going to attack someone, what was the biggest worry? His sword hand, his right hand, would grab his sword and cut you in retaliation. Hence, you'd grab his right hand first, nullify it, and then punch him, kick him, slap him or dance with him. Whatever. Maybe, if you grabbed him with your left, you could draw out your own sword with your right hand. Just don't give the guy a chance to draw his sword out.



*The author, on the right, demonstrating Takeuchi Ryu*

The fear of the opponent drawing his sword out was why a lot of attacks in jujutsu begin with a wrist grab, and why it carried over into aikido. That's what an attacker might do, way back in the old days.

Seen in that light, the reason why so many attacks by uke in aikido are those large, somewhat "unrealistic" swings with a knife-hand is that they replicate a sword attack.

The riai, therefore, can be superficial: it can mean, well, here's the guy grabbing your hand. So you turn, twist his wrist and throw him. That's what it means. Period. End of story.

Or you would have to dig deeper and deeper. WHY is uke going for your hand instead of trying to wrestle you down? Because in principle, in the old days, if his right hand was free, he'll just take out his dagger or sword and stab you.

Now that we have that explained, why twist-turn and throw? You could just as well punch uke in the face and run away. Well, because uke could just as well have a very tough jaw and when you're running away, there's nothing to stop him from chasing after you and continuing his attack. Plus, by training in aikido, you might be able to subdue the attacker without resorting to methods that would lead to permanent damage. So you need to learn methods that will deflect the attack and then control the attacker in a substantial way, without putting yourself too much at risk. You are committing to trying to end the violence, not run away from the violence. That is, I think, a fundamental principle in aikido that even many aikido people don't understand. Aikido may espouse "blending" and "peaceful" budo, but it doesn't mean you run away from violence or allow yourself to be destroyed by it. It means you face aggression and meet it with redirection and blending, not giving in to violence and laying down and dying.

So you learn entering methods, or irimi. He grabs, you move off the center line and enter to a side, creating a new line of movement and direction, but without giving him an advantage. Rather, by entering, you render his frontal attacks more awkward. Whether it's a right-hand-grab, a punch, uraken ("back fist") or kick, the PRINCIPLE of irimi will still hold true. Enter by slipping in. Aikido impractical? How many boxers would give their eye teeth to become really good at slipping a punch to the outside?

As you enter, you use your movement and the attacker's own momentum to help pull the attacker off balance (like judo's kuzushi, "unbalancing," principle) even before you execute the throw. The twist of the wrist is only the topping to the cake, which is the total body-control and disbalancing, and includes pressure on the attacker's elbow joint and shoulder.

In kata form during a regular aikido session the throw can seem suspiciously lacking in brute force to really work, but that's the way you learn the principle of maximum efficiency with the least amount of exertion (another judo principle, actually). If you can do the technique with a maximum use of body movement, irimi, kuzushi, angle and timing, then you are focusing on technique, and refining your technical abilities, and using a minimum of brute strength. Strength, as the saying goes, can of course enter the picture, but much, much later after you have figured out the more important (and harder to acquire) parts of the technique.

What you might find, if you practice kote gaeshi long enough, is that the entering, disbalancing and joint pressure/throw can be applied in different situations, in different counters, and in different applications, IF you truly understand the underlying riai, or principles, deeply enough. Consider that a leg is simply another kind of mammalian limb, like the arm. So you can apply the PRINCIPLES of a kote

gaeshi on even a front kick. Or a jab or a grab to the head. It's just that aikido started with a wrist grab due to cultural baggage, and it's a good way to still start now, in the present day. But for the curious, consider looking at variations, perhaps after regular practice. I'm sure you'll find it will still work. A kote gaeshi can work against a karate-style stepping punch, if done with proper timing and disbalancing. What if it's a jab and the arm is retracted too quickly for grabbing? Did I say you only had to grab the wrist? There are other parts of the body (other arm, neck, upper arm, etc.) you can grab, disbalance and apply pressure to in order to knock the person off balance.

Core principles of a martial art were once often contained not just in the first few kata and the most advanced kata, but also in succinct, but mysterious, poems and sayings. Muso Gonnosuke was supposed to have figured out how to create the Shinto Muso Ryu jo ("four-foot staff") when a vision told him to "Seek the suigetsu with a log."

That one simple phrase may, in fact, contain the core principle behind most of the jo methods, if you know what they are.

Our own Takeuchi Ryu has several poems and sayings that are supposed to aid us in understanding our methodology. The longer I trained in the ryu, the more I realized that, like other martial arts, the key to really getting good at it was to constantly go over the first basic kata and keep on trying to perfect them. The moves

contained the entrée to all the other subsequent kata.

Then I finally was taught the okuden jujutsu methods, or the "secret" techniques, that were the foundations for our entire grappling curriculum. These turned out to be extremely effective, but simple, general principles that, in some ways, returned you to the beginning, but with new insight in the mental and attitudinal states of mind. However, the only way to really grasp the okuden techniques was to have a solid understanding of the raii of the most simple, most basic kata in our school.

Just as kote gaeshi is a foundational technique in aikido, there are foundational techniques in other martial arts that, if properly understood, will enable an understanding into the raii not just of that technique, but of the entire curriculum. And the wonderful thing about understanding raii is the discovery that it can go from a simple notion to great complexity, but in the complexity there is a beautiful simplicity, if understood correctly.

**About the Author:** Wayne Muromoto has studied modern budo and koryu bujutsu for most of his life. Based in Hawaii, he teaches Takeuchi Ryu jujutsu and Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu iaido. A member of the SMAA Board of Advisors, a sixth dan in the SMAA Jujutsu Division, and one of the original members of the SMAA, he is a valued contributor to the *SMAA Journal*. Be sure to check out his blog *The Classical Budoka* at <http://classicbudoka.wordpress.com/>.

## UKE: THE RECEIVER OF THE TECHNIQUE

*By Tom Kossow*

You are training in class when your sensei wants to demonstrate a leg sweep defense against jodan mawashi geri ("high roundhouse kick"), and he chooses you to be his uke. You have to attack with

jodan mawashi geri, and you know when you make this kick, he's going to sweep your supporting leg out from under you, and you are going to hit the floor hard. Even worse you're not on mats, so you

know the landing is going to hurt even if you land properly. But you kick anyway.

BANG! You're on the floor, and it hurts just as you knew it would, maybe worse. You get up the best you can, and your sensei says, "Again!" So you kick again and hope the landing will be softer this time. It isn't. This goes on until he finally says, "OK. Enough."

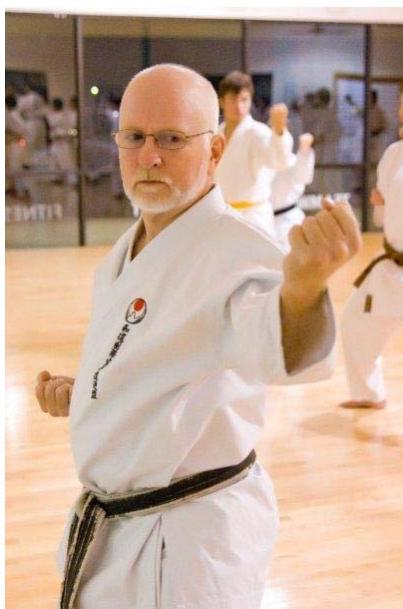
Most of the other students in the dojo are glad it's you who was chosen as uke and not them. They see you taking the fall, and they think about the pain. They can't see what is going on inside. They don't understand that when you are uke, your sensei will take you to the edge. You have to be totally there when you're uke. If you are too slow, or have bad aim, or do something else wrong, it's your fault, and your sensei won't allow you to get away with it. You can't be sloppy, and you can't be afraid. You cannot train properly, or be a good uke, if you're sacred. If you are a bad uke, your teacher is going to leave you alone and get someone else to help him or her in front of the class. That isn't something a good student wants to have happen. In a traditional dojo you're only rough on the

people you like. The rest of the students you treat with kid gloves.

Over the years, I've lost students because they had a hard time with getting hit. They were doing fine until they got popped, and then they decided karate-do wasn't for them. If you practice karate-do for any time at all you are going to get hit. It goes with the territory. You have to learn to deal with a certain amount of pain in karate-do, because there really isn't any way to avoid it. And there's another reason for learning how to take a hit.

If you ever have to fight an opponent who will not give in, who just keeps coming at you; then you're going to have to take some hard licks. You'll need a resilient spirit to fight back when it gets tough. Clint Eastwood in the movie *The Outlaw Josey Wales* tells his companions that when everything looks bad, and it seems you can't win, then you must get "mean, mad dog mean," in order to survive. It's when your stamina starts to wane, and you wind up battered and bleeding—but alive—that you'll realize the value of having learned how to take a hit.

If you can face up to your sensei when he looks you straight in the eye, and you know pain is forthcoming, then you aren't going to be scared of other people. They can't possibly do anything to you like your sensei has already done. So while others are thinking they're glad it isn't them, a good uke is thinking something different. He or she is glad to have such a great opportunity.



*Tom Kossow Sensei, performing Wado Ryu karate-Do*

**About the Author:** Tom Kossow Sensei is a Senior Advisor for the SMAA. He has been training in Wado Ryu karate-do since the 1960s. In 2005, at the Wado World Cup in Plano, Texas, Suzuki Tatsuo Sensei promoted Mr. Kossow to the rank of seventh-degree black belt. This promotion made him the highest ranking Wado International Karate-Do Federation teacher in the United States.

## 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 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



*Mark Colby Sensei*

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 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 nearly 40 years of training in classical Kodokan judo, much of it in Japan, where he's lived for roughly the last 20 years. 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*. He is presently working on a new book called *The Budo Chronicles*.

## JAPANESE WORDS YOU SHOULD KNOW

By Nicklaus Suino

At the Japanese Martial Arts Center (our dojo), we use many Japanese words and expressions. These help create the cultural atmosphere for serious training, and express some concepts that are important in training in iaido, judo, or jujutsu. Among the important Japanese terms you should know are: *hai*, *rei*, *onegai shimasu*, *arigato gozaimasu*, and *sensei*.

**Hai!** means "Yes!" or "I'll try!" when used in response to an instructor's advice. It is more energetic and polite than the English expressions "Okay," or "Yeah."

**Rei** means "etiquette" or "bow." Although you usually only hear the term when asked to bow during the opening and closing ceremonies at each class, the entire experience of training at a traditional dojo should be one of courtesy and joy.

**Onegai shimasu** is used when we bow to one another, and is a request to cooperate in training. In some schools, the expression is shortened to "*Osu!*" and can be used to express one's enthusiasm for training.

**Arigato gozaimasu** is a polite way of saying "thank you." We generally say it to the instructor at the end of the last bow when closing class. *Arigato* by itself is too casual for this setting. *Domo arigato gozaimasu* means "thank you very much," and is



*The author teaching Kodokan judo*

also acceptable to use when addressing the instructor.

**Sensei** means "teacher." Append it to the end of an instructor's last name, as in Smith Sensei. The suffix *-san* is appropriate between peers (Smith-san), but should not be used when addressing a teacher.

# BE INCREDIBLE NOW... IF NOT SOONER

By Nicklaus Suino

Do you want to understand new ideas more quickly? Do you want to become an expert at new activities with less wasted time? Do you want to help your business succeed faster and with fewer false starts? Here are seven critical ideas that you should make sure you understand if you want to become one of those "switched on" people who are not just good at what they do, but outstanding, and outstanding at a lot of different things. I'm not going to go into a lot of detail in this article, but you can expect to see more about these ideas in the near future.

## DISCOVER THE THEMATIC CORE OF YOUR ACTIVITY

The best activities in life have a thematic core. That is, a set of concepts, motions, or power sources that are found in most of the different parts of that activity. In the best heritage martial arts, certain movements are repeated in many different techniques so that balance and physical power are achieved in essentially the same way despite very different applications of force. In the best marketing plans, the core message can be found across various media, and that same core message closely corresponds with the mission statement of the business. Each great work of literature contains just a few thematic elements that hold together the plot and drive the action forward.

Discern the thematic core in what you do and you will put yourself in a position to achieve mastery much more quickly.

## STICK TO THE BASICS

It seems like every high level athlete, business owner, and martial arts expert I've talked to believes deeply in the idea that "There are no advanced techniques, just advanced applications." What this means is that focusing on the basics and

doing them very, very well will almost always get you better results than will trying to find some mystical force or extremely complex system for doing what you do. In business, increase market share and control expenses. In golf, study the geometry of the swing. In skydiving, make sure you know where the ripcord is!

## START WITH STRUCTURE

When you're confronted with a system that seems complex or overwhelming, start by looking at the structure. Very esoteric martial arts seem mystical and convoluted, but the truth is that the core movements are very efficient ways of maintaining balance while delivering physical power. Study foot placement, hip rotation, posture, the amount of knee bend. In music, a wild plethora of notes can be confusing, but pay attention to the chord progression (or intentional lack thereof) and you'll immediately have a context for understanding where to go next.

## OWN IT

As soon as you can after starting a new activity, get away from a passive mindset. Learn to own it. Don't wait for your superiors or your teacher to tell you how things are done; figure it out for yourself. There are two really important reasons for this. One is that your soul delivers more energy to you when you are intensely involved in what you're doing. The other is that in every worthwhile activity there are more nuances than a teacher could ever point out to you, and the only way to discover and master those nuances is to grapple with them yourself. If you want to become a master, start acting like one as soon as you can.



*The author teaching Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu iaido*

## SIMPLICITY

This is a corollary to the idea above about there being no advanced techniques, and it's this: even the most complex concept or activity is composed of simple parts. Figure out the parts and do them well, and the whole thing will go well. Moreover, recognize right away that the greatest people in every field make things look simple—the reason is that they are doing just what it takes to succeed. Many of the beginners I work with in business and martial arts find ways to over-complicate things, so that they are not only doing a lot of things that don't help them, but they are also not doing the things very well that will help them.

## DON'T BE MISLED

If you accept the idea that most worthwhile activities have a thematic core, then once you figure out what that core is, don't let media hype, competition, or your own insecurities mislead you. Stick to making sure you can execute all the fundamentals.

Recently I heard a golf announcer say something along these lines: "Golf is really boring these days,

everybody has the same swing." When I heard that, I about fell on the floor laughing. It shows such a flawed understanding of the game that it's hard to understand how that guy could have gotten hired to comment on the game. Here's why: golf is a game that depends on geometry and physics. Every swing has to adhere to the same universal rules; when it departs from those rules, it will be less efficient. In an era where there are billions of dollars being generated in the sport, where technology can measure virtually every aspect of the swing, it would be an absurdity if the top golfers' swings were getting less similar. Don't be misled—if you really understand your activity, you'll notice tremendous similarity between how the best players play the game.

## KNOW WHAT THE PURPOSE IS

Finally, make sure you know the purpose of your fundamentals. If the best people in your line of work all use cash flow accounting, figure out why. Then, if you need to tweak what you do to make it better, you'll know what you're aiming for rather than having to simply guess. Why do so many good public speakers use the three-part system (tell 'em what you're going to tell 'em, tell 'em, and tell 'em what you told 'em)? It's because most human memory is imperfect, and being reminded of topics and themes in a speech help the audience organize and remember it. I can't tell you the number of times folks who have attended my presentations have contacted me later to thank me for using the three-part system. And guess what, not only do they remember the subject matter better; they also come away with a better opinion of the guy who gave the speech, which gets me referrals! (Pointing out another wonderful benefit of understanding the fundamentals—when you do the simple stuff well, you get a manifold return.)

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leading the SMAA. He lived in Japan for several years, where he studied judo under the late Sato Shizuya Sensei (ninth dan) and iaido under the late Yamaguchi Katsuo Sensei (tenth dan).

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