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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

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- Nicklaus Suino Sensei
- H. E. Davey 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 about special shipping for international orders.)

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

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

FACEBOOK PAGE

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

SMAA ONLINE PAYMENTS

Did you know you can pay for your annual dues at our website using PayPal or a major credit card? You can, and you can also pay for gi patches and promotions in the same way. This is a much faster,

and in some ways more secure, means of sending money to our headquarters. We hope more of our members will make use of this feature. Just drop by http://smaa-hq.com/payments.php for more information.

THE BEST OF THE SMAA JOURNAL CD-ROM

To celebrate its 15th anniversary in 2009, the SMAA created a special CD-ROM that contained a sampling of some of the best stories and articles to appear in the *SMAA Journal* since 1994. We mailed this free of charge to everyone in the SMAA as a way of showing our appreciation to our members.

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

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

MOUNTAIN WIND AIKIKAI

SMAA regular member Peter Choles Sensei tells us he's teaching Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu iaido at a new dojo in Utah. SMAA members in his area should drop by:

Mountain Wind Aikikai

C/o Salt Lake Institute of Movement

6811 So. State St.

Midvale, UT 84107

USA

Contact: makoto.monjin@gmail.com

801-531-8742

Iaido is offered on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 8:00 to 9:30 PM by Choles Sensei, SMAA Iaido Division sandan and Shidoin. Aikikai aikido and

Peter Choles Sensei

Shotokan karate-do are also offered at separate times. Max Roach Sensei, SMAA Iaido Division yondan, is acting as an advisor for this dojo.

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.

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 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-

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

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.

SMAA Senior Advisor Kevin Heard performing Saigo Ryu

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.senninfoundation.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 an e-mail to 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 23rd. 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.

SAWAI ATSUHIRO AND H.E. DAVEY NEWS

Sawai Atsuhiro Sensei, SMAA Senior Advisor, has become the Headmaster of the Wakuwaku Hoshin Juku in Osaka. He was appointed to this position by Ikeda Hikaru Sensei, the President of this new group. Wakuwaku Honshin Juku is devoted to the exploration of meditation and spiritual disciplines, with an emphasis on the teachings of Nakamura Tempu Sensei, the founder of the Shin-shin-toitsu-do system of Japanese yoga and meditation. Sawai Sensei was one of Nakamura Sensei's closest students, and he has over 50 years of training in Japanese yoga. He is the author of more than one best selling book on this subject in Japan, and he also holds the most advanced rank in Kobori Ryu, the ancient art of samurai swimming and combat in water.

H. E. Davey, Director of the Sennin Foundation Center for Japanese Cultural Arts and one of three Primary Directors for the SMAA, recently received the highest level of teaching certification from the Wakuwaku Honshin Juku. He has studied Japanese yoga and meditation in the lineage of Nakamura Tempu Sensei since he was a teenager, and he is the author of *Japanese Yoga: The Way of Dynamic Meditation*, the first English language book on the original methods of Nakamura Sensei. (You can read more at http://japaneseyoga.blogspot.com/.) Mr. Davey has also received a seventh dan and Shihan certificate from the SMAA Jujutsu Division.

In the early 1900's Nakamura Sensei lived in Gorkhe, then a village on the India/Nepal border. He studied Raja yoga, the yoga of meditation, in Gorkhe for several years. Before his time in India, he studied medicine at Columbia University in the USA, psychology in Europe as well as Kodokan judo, kendo, and Zuihen Ryu classical swordsmanship in Japan. Eventually, he blended

Nakamura Sensei performing Zuihen Ryu swordsmanship

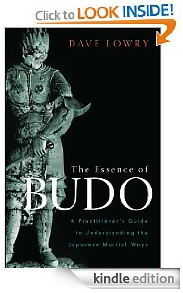
Indian meditation and health improvement with his background in medicine, psychology, Japanese healing arts and meditation, and budo. He taught for decades in Japan, wrote popular books, and counted among his students a large number of Japan's top athletes, captains of industry, famed writers and artists, legendary budoka, and even a past Emperor (Hirohito). These are some of his more well-known students:

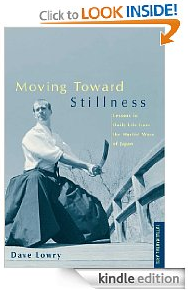
- Hara Takashi, Prime Minister of Japan
- Togo Heihachiro, Fleet Admiral of the Japanese Navy during the Russo-Japanese War (a.k.a. "the Nelson of the East")
- Sugiura Jugo, famed educator and President of Tokyo University
- Ishikawa Sodo, esteemed Zen Buddhist priest and head of Sojiji Temple
- Yokota Sennosuke, well-known politician and Justice Minister of Japan
- Prince Higashikuni Naruhiko, Prime Minister of Japan
- Ozaki Yukio, recipient of the Order of the Rising Sun and member of the House of Representatives of the Japanese Diet (a.k.a. "the father of the Japanese Constitution")
- Count Goto Shinpei, Home Minister and Foreign Minister of Japan
- Asano Soichiro, a famous Japanese businessman and entrepreneur

At this time, however, relatively few people outside of Japan have been exposed to his remarkable teachings. One of the goals of the Wakuwaku Honshin Juku is to rectify this situation. For more information about the Wakuwaku Honshin Juku, send e-mail to hedavey@aol.com.

NEW E-BOOKS BY DAVE 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 from one of the more well-known officials in the SMAA.





SATO TADAYUKI & JOHN B. GAGE U.S. SEMINAR

Great news! On August 17, 18, and 19 Nicklaus Suino Sensei, SMAA Judo Division Director, will be offering a special seminar at his Michigan dojo featuring budo experts Sato Tadayuki Sensei and John B. Gage Sensei. Both teachers are coming direct from Tokyo to the U.S., and they'll be offering instruction in three important Japanese martial arts:

- The Kodokan judo of Kano Jigoro Sensei
- The Shodokan aikido of Tomiki Kenji Sensei
- The Nihon jujutsu of Sato Shizuya Sensei

Sato Tadayuki Sensei is one of the world's leading Shodokan aikido experts. He was taught by Tomiki Kenji Sensei, founder of Shodokan aikido, in the living room of his house every Sunday before tea, and so he has an in-depth knowledge of Tomiki Sensei's aikido system. He is also an accomplished judoka. Sato Sensei, sixth dan, was granted the position of Shihan of Waseda University Aikido club in 2007. This position has been vacant since

Sato Tadayuki Sensei

Professor Tomiki's death in 1979. He is an expert in his field, and in particular, the link between Kodokan judo and Tomiki-style aikido. He also teaches aikido at the Japan Police University, and he lives in Tokyo.

John Gage Sensei has been studying and teaching Japanese martial arts in Tokyo since 1986 when he joined the American Embassy Judo Club, which was lead by the late Sato Shizuya Sensei. Following the death of Sato Sensei, he became the leader of this well-established dojo, and he has been a member of the Kodokan Judo Institute since 1991. He has earned a seventh dan in Sato Sensei's system of modern jujutsu, and he has a fifth dan in judo. He has taught seminars in judo and jujutsu in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Romania, the U.K., and the USA.

Not only have we arranged for SMAA members to be able to study with two of Japan's top budoka, their SMAA membership will allow them to receive a special discount at this event. This is due to Suino Sensei's close involvement with the SMAA, and it is just one of the many advantages of SMAA membership.

Space is limited for this special seminar, so contact Suino Sensei soon to get more details, and be sure to mention your SMAA membership to receive discounted training in world-class judo, aikido, and jujutsu. He can be reached at shudokan@smaa-hq.com or (734) 645-6441.

John Gage Sensei

ASK QUESTIONS!

By Dave Lowry

This article was written exclusively for the SMAA Journal *by Mr. Lowry, perhaps the Western world's best known budo author and writer. Writing is his career, but despite his professional status, he has never asked the SMAA for any compensation for his many contributions to our publication. He has simply donated his time and considerable knowledge to help others learn. I'm grateful for his*

years of help with our journal, his friendship, and for the fact that his writing needs such a small amount of editing!—Editor

I was teaching, having been invited to a seminar to do so, at an aikido dojo. I was demonstrating the correct ways to move in shikko, the mobile kneeling position with which most aikidoka, as well as those who practice arts like iaido and jujutsu, are familiar.

There are various ways to implement this movement; all of them commence with the toes tucked under the butt, bent back, in a crouching position. This posture, when static with the toes flexed, is known by various terms in the dojo. The most common is probably kiza, which distinguishes it from the formal seated posture of seiza, where the toes are laid flat on the floor, the buttocks resting on the heels.

As I walked around, correcting various problems, I noticed that some of those attending kept their toes straight instead of flexing them. I saw further, that the students who were doing this were all from the same dojo. There were students from at least half a dozen dojo represented—I could see that all those keeping their feet in this position were sporting patches that identified them as colleagues in the same dojo.

When one has been invited to be a guest teacher, particularly at a seminar of this size, with so many dojo and groups attending, one circumspectly does his best not to offend or embarrass anyone. I learned this lesson the hard way. I was once, many years ago, in a karate dojo that had asked me to come and give a seminar on basic sword handling. When the karateka stepped forward to make a basic vertical cut, following my instructions, I saw they all lifted the rear foot so the heel was off the ground. I stopped the class and chided them.

"If you guys lifted your heels like that when you make a stepping-in punch," I teased them, "your sensei would be all over you for it. No connection, no good chain of power established between you and the floor upon the point of contact with your punch."

The author demonstrating Japanese swordsmanship

There was a silence. The students looked confused. The teacher mumbled to me that, in fact, that was the way, lifting the heel, they had all been taught to punch. Lousy karate. Lousy body mechanics. But lousy perception on my part not to have thought of that and been sensitive to it.

Having learned to be more alert to this sort of thing, when I noticed the students all making the same error in shikko, instead of correcting them directly, I stopped the class. I gave a quick lecture on the mechanics of kneeling movement. I explained—this is crucial to my overall point here—*why* it is necessary to flex the toes when moving. I gave them reasons. I demonstrated how easily one can be stopped if the foot is left flat. I showed how it is difficult to move the body as a single unit with the feet that way. I went into some detail, to be concise but thorough in the whys of what I was asking them to do.

During the lunch break, one of the students who had been making the mistake approached me, as I was talking to his teacher, who was also attending the seminar. Right in front of me, the student asked his teacher why he was teaching the flat-

footed method.

This can fairly be described as an awkward moment.

"Well, my teacher," the teacher said, "taught that doing this with the feet flat provides for a wider platform of balance for your body."

Oh.

Now, let's be honest. There are two possible explanations for this explanation. The first is that the teacher had, when he was training with his teacher, never asked why the feet were as they were in his version of shikko movement. The man, then a student, just copied what he saw. Or maybe he copied what he *thought* he saw. Maybe his teacher didn't actually do shikko that way. The student just didn't get it right. Then, when he became a teacher himself, he taught it as he'd mis-learned it.

The second explanation is that the teacher standing beside me at that seminar had never given this particular matter a moment's thought. He didn't *know* why he taught shikko as he did. He'd learned it that way and taught it, robotically. And so, when I'd provided the explanation of why it should not be done that way, the teacher was caught off-guard. He had no good explanation to counter my points. So extemporaneously he just made up the stuff about balance in order not to look stupid or uninformed.

Dave Lowry, SMAA Senior Advisor

I think in many cases, this latter explanation is more likely. I think one of the biggest problems in the budo today are "teachers" who simply, honestly, do not have the qualifications required for that role.

It is not that these teachers are not technically competent. They often have a physical grasp of the movements and mechanics of their art, at least to some degree. They can, to some extent, represent the art fairly and competently. But they do not understand the whys of that art. And so when it comes time for them to try to communicate the art, the best they can do is to show how they were taught. And that is all. They can't go any deeper than that.

And that is not enough. Not for a serious budo.

At seminars, while the group is working on some exercise I have given, I sometimes will go to a pair of practitioners, stop them, and ask "Why are you doing it that way?" The answer to this is critical. You must consider it very seriously if you care at all about taking your training into the realm where progress in any Do form needs to be directed.

"I'm doing it this way because my teacher told me to."

If you are a beginner, if you have perhaps six or seven years in training, this is absolutely an acceptable answer. Students at this level do not need to know all or even many of the whys of their art. Indeed, "knowing" too much of these whys can actually be an impediment to training at their level. Knowing something intellectually and "knowing" it with your body, at an instinctive, somatic level, are two very different things in the budo. This is consistent with the thoughts of the neo-Confucian

philosopher Wang Yang-Ming (In Japanese, he's known as Oyomei), who said that "To know and not to act is not yet to know." Few dojo inhabitants are more irritating than the beginner budoka who "understands" all the theories and can explain them in detail, but who can't "do" squat.

If, however, you are a more senior student, at perhaps fourth or fifth dan, with maybe fifteen or twenty years of experience, then the reply that "I'm doing it this way because my teacher told me to" is, frankly, not an adequate one. Your answer should not be the same answer as that of the beginners.

Yes, I know. There are those who will sagely explain to you and me the very different Japanese way of teaching and learning. "You don't ask questions in the dojo," they say. You just watch and copy your teacher.

To some extent, this is true. But it is also true that Japanese students, at advanced levels, do ask questions. It is also true—and this is important—that non-Japanese students of the budo face different challenges in trying to master these arts. They do not share the culture of the Japanese budo. There is much that can be taken for granted in a Japanese dojo that cannot be assumed similarly in a Western dojo. Further, who is to say that the "Japanese" way of teaching is the best and only method of transmission? (Suffice it to say that when I insist there are too many "teachers" of budo out there who don't have the qualifications to do so, I am by no means talking about just Westerners.)

I have spent too many evenings with too many older Japanese budo sensei, sitting over sake or beer, listening to them moan about all the questions they wished they'd asked their teachers when they had the opportunity. The fact is, whether it is transmitted through some magical osmosis or through the asking and answering of ongoing and detailed questions, the finer points of

The author (right) demonstrating Yagyu Shinkage Ryu

a budo must be passed on some way. If you have access to that magic osmosis, have at it. If not, you'd better start asking questions. And your teacher better be honest and sincere enough to answer them when it is appropriate to do so. More so, he must be brutally honest and sincere in admitting when he doesn't know the answer—and he should be eager to work to find it out by asking his own teachers or other senior practitioners.

To see the more extreme results of this "doing by rote, never asking questions" approach to training, watch the implementation of supposed applications of kata in a karate dojo. Some of these are so patently absurd they would work only if the attacker were a grandma launching her assault from behind her walker. They are unrealistic, inappropriate; unworkable. They have become the standard because, probably, there just isn't anyone who really understands the kata or its development. I once saw a senior Japanese karate sensei demonstrate the kata Jutte, to show how to disarm an opponent with a staff. Laughable. The only person more clueless than the sensei was the guy who was trying to use the bo against him.

Ask. Ask again. Do not surrender your good sense. If an answer does not seem to make sense, don't be afraid to pursue it. If you're not getting answers, have the integrity to point this out to your

teacher. And if he doesn't have the integrity to acknowledge he doesn't know the answer, then is this really the guy with whom you want to train for the rest of his life?

Again, I am talking here to senior students, not beginners. If you are learning a reverse punch for the first time, or how to take a forward fall, don't be out on the mat bothering the teacher with all sorts of theoretical questions. Shut up and train. And when you are a senior student and you should be asking questions, be judicious about it. Right in the middle of a class of hard, full-out training is not the time to say, "Excuse me Sensei, why do we tie our belts with this particular knot?"

There is a time for hard training. For learning with your body and not through intellectual exercise. We should all understand that. We should understand too, however, that there *is* a place for thinking and leaning about why we do things. If you do not, sooner or later, all the hard training in the world will not keep you moving forward on the path of serious budo.

About the Author: Dave Lowry is a member of the elite SMAA Board of Advisors, and he has taught at past SMAA events. Mr. Lowry grew up in the Japanese cultural arts. As a boy, he started studying Yagyu Shinkage Ryu swordsmanship. In 1985, Mr. Lowry's experiences growing up as a Westerner, who was deeply immersed in Japanese cultural and martial arts, formed the basis for *Autumn Lightning* (Shambhala), his first book, which was widely acclaimed. In addition to Yagyu Shinkage Ryu, he has trained in karate-do, Shindo Muso Ryu (an old combative art utilizing a four-foot staff), and various modern martial ways.

AN INTERVIEW WITH NICKLAUS SUINO SENSEI

This interview was for the website Ikigai: Blogging the Martial Way*. The interview took place in 2009—Editor*

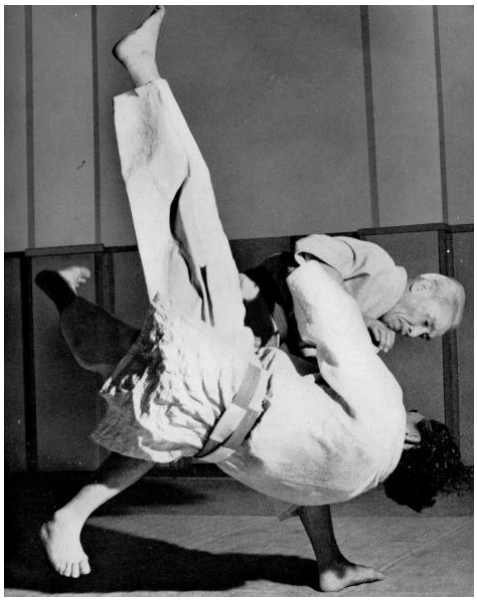
MA: Suino Sensei, could you describe your early experiences with martial arts in Ann Arbor? Did you fall in love with the study right away or was it gradual, and what caused you to sample different styles initially?

NS: When I was eight years old, my parents took me to watch a judo demonstration at the Ann Arbor Y. I was enthralled. Over 40 years later, I remember the demonstration as if it happened yesterday. I started attending classes and, after some minor success in shiai ("tournaments"), I was hooked.

We had terrific instructors at the Y—they worked hard to teach us quality skills while keeping the practice fun. Nobody talked about the character development aspects of judo in those days, however. We just trained hard, hung out with our friends, and competed whenever possible.

A recent photo of Suino Sensei teaching Kodokan judo

I had one seminal experience in 1969 or 1970. Ito



Mifune Kyuzo, judo 10th dan

Kazuo Sensei, one of Mifune Kyuzo's contemporaries, was traveling the world to introduce judo, and came to give a demonstration at the Y. For some reason, Ito Sensei picked me out of 100 young judoka and showed the crowd that an 80-pound kid could throw "a fat old bastard like me" (his exact words!). He had with him a young Sato Shizuya, who later became Chief Director of Kokusai Budoin. Sato Sensei was my jujutsu and judo instructor at the American Embassy Judo Club in Tokyo between 1988 and 1992. I didn't remember that Sato Sensei was Ito Sensei's assistant until he and I discussed the tour in 1989. Sato Sensei remembered the tour, but didn't remember me throwing Ito Sensei.

Ito Kazuo throwing Sato Shizuya

In 1979, influenced by Bruce Lee and Chuck Norris movies, I became interested in the striking arts, and began taking Shorin Ryu karate classes at the Asian Martial Arts Studio in Ann Arbor. I later dabbled in Hung Gar kung fu and aikido before heading to Tokyo in 1988. In Tokyo I studied kyudo, Nihon jujutsu, judo, and iaido, and attended seminars in various other Japanese martial arts.

MA: What inspired you to move to Japan? What is it about Japanese culture that ultimately captured your imagination and heart?

NS: Two things inspired me to move to Japan. One was my romantic idea that Japanese people looked and acted like the characters in old samurai films. I loved the idea of living with people who dressed in kimonos and lived by a code of honor. The other motivation was my intense desire to get better at martial arts. I believed that, if even half of the hype was true, there had to be some really extraordinary martial artists in Japan, and I wanted to study with them.

Bushido (the "way of the warrior") attracted me for the same reasons it attracts lots of young people. There's a lot of uncertainty and unfairness in life. Bushido seems to provide a lot of answers, and I liked the idea of a moral code driven by honor. Of course, I was to find out that modern Japan is very unlike the Japan of Kurosawa movies, and that very few Japanese live by the code of bushido, but those were my thoughts as I set out for Tokyo.

MA: Could you talk a bit about Yamaguchi Katsuo Sensei (your main iaido instructor) and what led you to train under him? What was your training regiment like?

NS: My plan upon reaching Japan was to study kyudo archery. Karl Scott Sensei, my karate teacher up until 1988, suggested that I look into iaido. I didn't think I'd like iaido as much as kyudo, but I

Yamaguchi Katsuo

attended a seminar in Las Vegas in 1988 in which iaido was taught by Yamaguchi Sensei. Other than being impressed with his demeanor (he was extremely centered and radiated energy), I can't say I fell in love with iaido at that point.

After reaching Tokyo, however, I pursued a meeting with Yamaguchi Sensei. The first time I asked Sato Sensei if he would introduce me, he turned me down. But I trained very hard, and when he saw that I was serious he agreed to arrange a meeting.

My first training session with Yamaguchi Sensei was a remarkable experience. Sensei and his wife welcomed me warmly into their home, and we hit it off right away. We trained for three hours the first day, and iaido become the first and only martial art that felt almost completely natural the first time I tried it.

The training was simple. We'd put on our iaido gear, Yamaguchi Sensei would demonstrate a form, and I would try to repeat it. If I did reasonably well, he'd demonstrate another. If not, he'd make a single correction and I would repeat the move until he was satisfied. After a year or so, he began to talk a bit about power sources, movement theory, the relationship between kendo and iaido, and the tactical and strategic aspects of the forms. But 90% of each session was silent, concentrated repetition.

MA: That's very interesting! His methods seem to have payed off—you placed very well in the All-Kanto tournaments during your stay in Japan. Could you talk about that experience a bit?

NS: Compared to demonstrating solo in front of Yamaguchi Sensei, gradings and competitions were easy. I was much more concerned about pleasing my teacher than I was with winning, and he emphasized that testing and competing were simply aspects of training – whether I won or lost was of little consequence.

Still, we used a good formula to prepare. We picked a set of forms that I was able to perform without major mistakes. Starting about six weeks before an event, I would practice the set as many as 100 times a day. Sensei would review every detail of every form and make careful corrections. By the time of the event, I could perform the sets in my sleep (in fact I often dreamed them). The proof of this method is that I was double promoted in my first shodan shinsa ("first dan examination") from mudansha (no rank) to nidan, and won the All-Kanto tournament every time I entered.

Yamaguchi Sensei, 10th dan

Tony Springfield Sensei, Head Instructor of the Ann Arbor YMCA Judo Club

MA: When you visit Japan these days, do you return to Yamaguchi Sensei's old dojo, or do you travel around to different locations (or perhaps both)?

NS: Yamaguchi Sensei passed away in 2006 and his dojo is actually no more. When I visit Japan, I train in iaido with a few of his contemporaries and/or students. I also try to visit other instructors with whom I have trained over the years, either socially or for training. Luckily, I have good martial arts contacts in Tokyo, so I'm able to visit a variety of instructors.

MA: It's quite sad to hear that Yamaguchi Sensei's dojo has closed its doors. It's a bit like losing a second home, no doubt. Could you talk a little bit about those contemporaries who have helped shape your martial arts training? Who would you say have been your main influences?

NS: I try to pick up something from every martial arts teacher I meet, and many, many people have helped me along the way. A few of the most notable figures have been the following:

Mike Kroll, Ed Fronczak, and Tony Springfield at the Ann Arbor Y Judo Club in the late 1960's and early 1970's, who taught me to have fun with training and to have confidence in my abilities.

Karl W. Scott III of the Asian Martial Arts Studio, who taught me how to analyze martial arts techniques.

The late Walter Todd, one of the early pioneers of martial arts in North America, for his irreverent attitude and deep understanding of the principles of judo.

Sato Shiyuza, Chief Director of Kokusai Budoin, for his undying devotion to the ideals of his martial arts forefathers and his enormous patience.

Tabata Sensei, former President of the Fuji Judokai at the Kanagawa Kenritsu Budokan, who could tell you which technique he was about to throw you with and then do it, every time (I threw him three times in four years).

John Gage, highest-ranking Nihon jujutsu deshi ("apprentice") of Sato Shizuya, training partner of many decades, who I have thrown and by whom I have been thrown as many times as we have hoisted beers together.

MA: What made you decide to become an author, and has the process of writing books been a large challenge?

NS: I wrote *The Art of Japanese Swordsmanship*

Karl Scott Sensei

John Gage Sensei

mainly to help me remember the major checkpoints of the techniques of Eishin Ryu iaido. Three major publishing houses expressed interest in it, so it was fairly easy to get the book out. It turned out that *AJS* became a hot seller, so Weatherhill approached me about writing a practice drills book (which became *Practice Drills in Japanese Swordsmanship*).

When that book also did well, it was easy to convince them to publish *Budo Mind and Body* and *Strategy in Japanese Swordsmanship*. I've been lucky that a lot of martial artists have taken an interest in my writing. With all the positive feedback and support, it's easy to get motivated to write. Of course, you have to be prepared to put in a few hours every day for a year or more to get a book written.

MA: I'd like to switch gears just a bit and ask you some concept questions. We have a lot of budo and sword practitioners out there and I'm sure they'd love to hear your take on these issues. First, do you believe swordsmanship should be studied as a combative art, an art of character perfection, or some mixture of the two? (The focus on jutsu vs. do).

NS: I believe the best benefits of martial arts training come from training very hard over an extended period of years with the combative aspects informing your practice. When an art is practiced as a pure movement art, without the implicit goal of defeating an opponent, it becomes decadent.

At the same time, when one has reached a fairly high level of expertise, only careful reflection about the relationship between character and practice can help one further improve. In other words, there is no "do" without "jutsu" and "jutsu" cannot be fully realized without "do."

MA: You stress great importance on duty and selflessness in budo. Are there any guidelines or rules that you constantly remind yourself in order to stay true to the way?

Yes.

1. Every person is a manifestation of the universal spirit. Therefore, treat others well.
2. Nothing in martial arts (or in life) is possible without the help of many other people.
3. Being a "sensei" is a privilege that must be earned every day, not a right.
4. Extraordinary skill requires extraordinary effort.
5. Avoid self-deception; truth is the best teacher.

MA: Although swordsmanship doesn't bear directly on modern day self defense needs, have you found it useful in increasing your day-to-day martial abilities?

NS: Absolutely. Effective martial arts require a clear understanding of how the human body generates force. Iaido is a highly systematic method for applying force with a sword through proper alignment of the body. The principles learned in iaido can be directly applied in every other martial art I have learned, including karate, jujutsu, and judo. Likewise, practice of those martial arts has helped me become a better swordsman.

MA: In your mind, what can Americans do to better follow the original intent of budo and the study of martial arts?

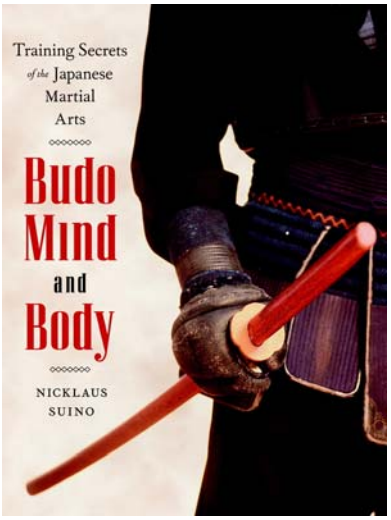
NS: There are some really extraordinary Americans in the martial arts. In general, however, we don't seem to have the patience to get really good. While martial arts training can be a lot of fun, the most profound benefits of training come only through years of concentrated hard work and selflessness.

The old rules still hold true: find a really great teacher and practice ceaselessly your whole life!

MA: Suino Sensei, thank you again for taking time out for us! This peek into the world of budo is extremely valuable for those of us trying to follow the way!

AN EXCERPT FROM *BUDO MIND AND BODY: TRAINING SECRETS OF THE JAPANESE MARTIAL ARTS*

By Nicklaus Suino



THE SKILL OF THE MASTERS

After a hard day of martial arts practice, while enjoying a cold drink with training partners, we sometimes share stories of the masters of old. These are stories of men and women who were able to perform feats of martial skill that seem almost magical to us today. The stories are an inspiration to train harder, and they hint at what might be possible if we keep practicing long enough. The images are so compelling that whole systems of study have grown up around certain masters, men like Ueshiba Morihei, the founder of aikido, who was said to be able to throw his students to the ground with the strength of a single finger. Ueshiba could casually drop two, three, or even ten attackers. At the same time, there was more to the old master than mere physical skill. Considered as enlightened man, Ueshiba was known for such sayings as "Love is the highest principle of the martial arts," and "To injure an opponent is to injure yourself." According to the stories, there was always something about these masters that resonated beyond their great skill. Mifune Kyuzo, perhaps the greatest technician ever to come out of the Kodokan (the original judo institution), was known for the softness of his techniques. He was able to defeat students twice his size while barely seeming to expend any effort. People who trained with him later said, "It was like fighting with an empty jacket." Mifune was a great historian of the martial arts, and developed theories of physical interaction that are still studied by judoists.

There have been swordsmen in Japan's samurai history who reached a point in their training where they were able to say, "I cannot be defeated by anyone in the world." The legendary Miyamoto Musashi and Yamaoka Tesshu each reportedly made this claim—in different eras, of course—and nobody was ever able to prove them wrong. Other swordsmen who engaged these men would face them and be unable to detect any opening for an attack. Both men were great artists with a brush, and Yamaoka was a preeminent statesman.

A similar story is told about a martial artist named Matsumura Sokon, one of the pioneers of Okinawan karate. A skilled opponent, determined

to fight him, tried three times to mount an attack, but each time was driven back by the sheer physical energy emanating from Matsumura. The actual physical battle never took place because Matsumura's challenger was unable to gather himself to strike.

It would be easy to dismiss these stories as legends, exaggerated by the admiration of students for their teachers and by the passage of time, had I not witnessed similar feats by living martial arts masters. These were not the kind of tricks you see when you watch a martial arts movie; any well-motivated and talented athlete could learn the spinning kicks and flips you see on film. The feats I saw were impressive not so much as physical skills, although such skills do require years of practice to master, but as reflections of inner strength. If you saw these masters in action, you wouldn't necessarily be impressed by a show of great physical strength. Instead, their proficiency and presence would cause you to think that something profound was taking place before you.

One living example of such modern masters is a man named Sato Shizuya, a judo and jujutsu teacher. Like his own teacher, Mifune Kyuzo, Mr. Sato has an uncanny ability to throw his students around the mat like rag dolls. Further, when he does it, he is relaxed, apparently thinking about something else. I know that he hardly uses any physical strength because he used to toss me around when I trained with him in Japan. I was thirty years old at the time, and he was around sixty-two; this was over fourteen years ago, and he is still a source of great energy and wisdom.

Another of my teachers, Yamaguchi Katsuo, is a swordsman known around the world in martial arts circles. He underwent treatment for stomach cancer in 1993, and is very elderly now, but between 1988 and 1992, watching him perform formal exercises with the sword was an almost religious experience. During demonstrations in Japan, hundreds of swordsmen and women will perform in groups of four or five at a time, and the audience often loses interest after an hour or two, even when watching some of the most famous swordsmen in the country. When Yamaguchi Sensei began his sword cuts, however, everyone was rapt. A calm would fall over the audience and the air would become charged with a feeling of reverence—and these were people quite used to seeing swordsmanship demonstrations.

At a special event held at the American Embassy dojo (martial arts hall) in Tokyo, a group of twenty five or thirty North American kids had a chance to see Yamaguchi Sensei perform. These kids were holy terrors; we worked hard to keep them busy and to tire them out during their one-hour judo lesson each week, but they were never quiet and never still. You can guess who was more exhausted at the end of each class! Even this rambunctious group, however, fell silent when the old master began to swing his sword. There were absolutely entranced for the entire fifteen minutes of his demonstration. The only sound they made was an occasional gasp when his sword whooshed through the air.

The physical ability of all these men is indeed impressive, but there is something more to them. They have a rare presence, a kind of calm strength which some would say has a spiritual source. Indeed, many of these men would themselves say that the source of their unique skills is in the spiritual realm, and an important part of Japanese martial arts philosophy is that students learn to let nature, or "spirit," generate their techniques. Even if one doesn't believe in such concepts, however, one can watch the masters and see that they are extraordinarily focused, their movements are very efficient, and that they radiate a quiet inner strength. They express martial spirit in every motion, real martial spirit, not the kind you pay to see in the movies.

How do they get to be so exceptional? This question has fascinated martial arts students in the West ever since students started returning from

Japan with incredible stories of their teachers and the legendary masters. Asian martial arts have become widespread outside the Orient in the past sixty years, yet there are very few Western teachers who merit the title "master" in the same way as do the elder teachers I met in Japan. Even outside the martial arts, Japan seems to have a surprisingly large number of these calm, quiet, and deep older folks. There are some crucial elements in the training and culture of the Japanese masters not easily transplanted to foreign soil. What these enlightened people have in common, at least those I have met, is that all were involved in one of the traditional art forms of Japan, and had been involved in their practice for at least of couple of decades. Besides the martial arts, some of the well-known traditional arts are tea ceremony, calligraphy, classical musical instruments (such as the shakuhachi, or bamboo flute), and the practice of Zen.

While I lived in Japan, where so many people are improving themselves through different types of traditional activities, I began to believe that there must be some useful characteristics shared by all these arts, particularly the different forms of budo (the general Japanese term for martial arts). Maybe, I thought, it would be possible to extract these characteristics and make them available to those who wanted to become better martial artists. In fact, in nearly four decades of practice, I have learned that most of what once seemed mysterious or esoteric about budo is actually fairly simple and practical. My teachers have shown me that the principles of one martial art are usually found in the others as well.

All this suggests that the principles underlying these different arts are common to an even wider variety of physical arts, but since I am no expert in tea ceremony or traditional brush painting, the descriptions and explanations in this book will center on martial arts. Thoughtful readers could apply them to other areas of life, however, and I encourage them to do so.

The real secret to becoming an expert in martial arts is realizing that training is a process of self-discovery. Further, it is a means of modifying one's personality to make oneself healthier, more well-balanced, and more efficient. Outside of Japan, this idea has for the most part been lost, and the budo forms are typically taught as nothing more than specialized fighting methods. This approach is wasteful, however, for in the short term there are much more efficient ways to teach fighting than the highly ritualized practice of traditional martial arts. Only when an art is considered as a whole system, including its "internal" aspects, can all the cultural content be justified. Ironically, taking this larger view, the "excess baggage" of ritual and spiritual components in these arts makes them better, more efficient tools for personal cultivation even while complicating the process of learning how to fight.

This apparent contradiction is not as troublesome a problem for serious students of budo as it would seem, since there is not much real need for most of us to learn how to fight. In contemporary society, we have a much greater need for calm wisdom than for efficient killing skills. The budo forms, having been created or molded during a time when Japan was deciding that it had a similar need for a higher sort of person, are ideally suited for developing human beings with those characteristics.

This doesn't mean that everybody who reads this book and tries to follow all the advice found in it is going to become a great master or guru. To become really great at something requires luck and talent, as well as the same long years of practice that everybody must put in to become merely good. Following my suggestions for learning a martial art should help you become better at it. You will become more efficient at your chosen art, and hopefully get more enjoyment out of it. If you keep at it long enough, you should find that other areas of your life are improving, too.

If you want to go further, however, if the spiritual

and philosophical accomplishments of the people I have described appeal to you, then you will have to give serious thought to the deeper issues that are raised here, and probably do a lot of other research as well. As I advise in later chapters, students who want to become great martial artists must read everything they can get their hands on, train fanatically for an extended period of time, and reflect deeply on the relationship between budo training and their lives.

Some material that relates to the inner aspects of budo will be too esoteric from a few readers. I have tried to present it in a straightforward manner, without too much religious or spiritual content, for those who think such issues less important. It is, however, well worth anyone's time to give serious thought to those matters as well as the practical matters inherent in martial arts training.

Real budo mastery is not for everyone. The path is too hard for most people, and some of the rewards are less than obvious. Traditional martial artists do not make a lot of money, and there is little recognition of great budo practitioners, even in Japan. Most who idolize martial arts teachers are needy people who require a great deal of attention themselves.

If you want to find a path with heart, however, and are sure that money and praise are not too important to you, budo may be the right place to look. Even those who practice budo as a hobby will realize many of its benefits. The rewards—better health, increased confidence, calmness, and insight—are evident even in the short term. The benefits of a lifetime of practice are deeper than those more material rewards that come from common pursuits.

Once you start making progress along the martial arts path, you will find that the things you learn allow you to prosper in your work, your hobbies, and in relationships. You will find that your ability to handle crisis improves, and that your satisfaction with life increases. These improvements can be brought about if you immerse yourself in the study of real budo and commit yourself fully to the ideas found in it. The triumph which you may have thought would come through defeating others, you will find comes instead from learning to love the training itself, and from living honestly, without self-delusion, in the real world.

The person to whom this book is most likely to appeal is one who believes that, in some way, he or she could be a little better, physically, mentally, or spiritually ("better" here meaning closer to what one expects for oneself). Such a person must believe that improvement is possible, and that success, in some form, is worth striving for. He or she must believe in something larger or more important than him or herself, such as the dojo, family, God, or country, be willing to work to benefit that larger concept, and to take satisfaction from doing that work every day.

The bottom line is that almost everybody wants to make his or her life better in some way, and this book is both a practical guide to one way of accomplishing this and an exhortation to undertake the task with as much commitment as possible. Budo is a pursuit that provides infinite opportunities for growth; it gives back as much as you put into it. Even if you don't have five hours a day or a lifetime to devote to practice, you can enjoy training and reap some of its benefits. The simple key to realizing those benefits is throwing yourself into practice with great enthusiasm.

About the Author: Nicklaus Suino Sensei is one of three Primary Directors for the SMAA and the author of several great budo books. If you don't have a copy of *Budo Mind and Body*, drop by www.amazon.com and get one soon. It will help you to more deeply and effectively study any martial art, and its lessons can be carried into your daily life as well.

RACE, RELIGION, AND GENDER IN BUDO

By Wayne Muromoto

One would think that in this day and age, this subject shouldn't even need to be mentioned. Unfortunately, there are times when people still don't live up to color-, race- and gender-blind ideals. Here's what I think: race, religion, ethnicity, and gender should not be barriers to training in martial arts, especially traditional and classical Japanese martial arts. However, the reality is that it sometimes is a terrible stumbling block, even now, in the 21st Century.

Prejudice can cut many ways.

There are some folk who will not look at a teacher twice if he doesn't happen to be Nihonjin, a "real" Japanese. They will immediately make a value judgment based on the slant of the teacher's eye and the color of his/her skin. I've seen this in Americans, but some new friends told me of an instance over lunch in which they observed potential students from Japan walking away from their dojo because the teacher was Caucasian. I guess they thought nobody could teach classical Japanese budo unless they were ethnically Japanese. Hogwash.

There's something to be said about knowing the culture in which a traditional art was embedded in, of course. But here's the thing, and it's something I argue all the time whenever culture vs. ethnicity is brought up. Culture is not the same as ethnicity. You can be born and raised in Japan, but that doesn't mean you know diddly-squat about traditional Japanese culture if you spent all your time playing video games, and dressed up in cosplay and hanging out in Shinjuku. On the other hand, a non-Japanese budo teacher might have spent half a century training in his budo of choice, he might have studied tea ceremony, or flower arrangement, or any number of Japanese cultural traditions, he might have learned the language and studied its culture, and thus in many ways, he would be "more Japanese" on the mats than a 21-year-old Japanese kid with punked-out Harajuku hair.

This interplay between ethnicity and culture may be clearer to me because of my living in Hawaii, perhaps. Cultural identity, ethnicity, and culture can be pretty complex and contradictory. I have seen a Caucasian kid intoning traditional Hawaiian mele ("chants") in Hawaiian, and if you closed your eyes, you would swear he was an 80-year-old Hawaiian kahuna (spiritual teacher) from the back country. He was taught, properly, the hula and chanting traditions from when he was an elementary school kid, and was as conversant in Hawaiian as he was in English. So how should his race bar him from being culturally "Hawaiian" since he lived, ate, dreamed, and loved the tradition? My answer: it can't. Culture is not something in the blood, it is in the heart. If someone will show me a gene that makes someone more culturally inclined to being a martial arts master, then I'll change my mind, perhaps. Until then, I rest my case.

The same goes for a person's religion. Barring extreme fundamentalism of any religion, traditional

Wayne Muromoto performing Takeuchi Ryu kogusoku

budo, and even koryu deeply influenced by Mikkyo (esoteric Buddhism), should be an endeavor that anyone can study. This is particularly true of the modern budo, which were MEANT to be transportable and international, in a way, so that more people of whatever denomination (or lack thereof) could practice them. If your own religious beliefs are so strict, however, that you can't follow some of the basic tenets of etiquette, however, we have a problem. But that's YOUR problem, not the system's. Most budo are very egalitarian when it comes to religious points of view. Don't want to bow because it runs counter to your religious beliefs? That's like saying you don't want to shake hands, or you don't want to touch unclean members of the opposite sex, or you want women to always be inferior to men in the dojo, or you won't work out with certain ethnic groups because your religion considers them inferior to you. It just won't fly in the face of, not just of a modern dojo, but in modern Western society. If you can't deal with that, you can't do modern budo, end of story.

A koryu may be more tied into particular Shinto and Buddhist deities, but I know devout Christians who see no real dichotomy between their practice and their religion. They tend to see it as a different expression of universal attitudes towards spirituality. If you are a strict religious fundamentalist, you may find trouble bowing to a guardian deity from the Shinto and Buddhist pantheons, but again, that's not the koryu's problem. It's your own. By way of cross-religious interchanges, I've heard of devout Jesuit priests visiting the Daitokuji Zen temple in Kyoto, Japan, to learn Buddhist meditation techniques. Jesuits are deeply Catholic, but they apparently found in zazen ("sitting Zen") a valuable way to understand their own spiritual attempts to better understand their meditative practices.

As far as gender goes, there are differences between the sexes, of course. That's what makes the world go 'round. And the courtesies and etiquette should extend to the dojo, but as far as treatment per training, it should be more or less equal. I say more or less, because I believe we do have to make allowances for physiological differences. I wouldn't do a chest grab on a woman right on her breast, for example. That would get me a slap in the face or worse. I'd grab higher up on the collar for courtesy's sake.

I learned a lesson in gender equality early on when I met my first woman black belt in judo. I was fresh out of high school and doing judo in a rural plantation community dojo, where the only practitioners were young boys and grumpy old Japanese-American men. My first encounter in randori (free practice) with a woman was on a college judo club's mats. The black belt woman who wanted to work out with me looked like a young, tanned Julia Roberts-big toothy smile, long brown hair, slim sexy figure. How tough could it be? I thought, even as a brown belt, I should cut her some slack because, hey, she's a WOMAN. Bad idea. She foot-swept me so fast I landed on my rear end without knowing what happened. What she lacked in weight and upper body strength, she made up for in speed and timing. Then she took me to the mats in newaza (ground grappling). When I was about to get out of her kesa gatame ("priest's scarf hold"), she switched to a shiho gatame ("four-corner hold"), right on top of me.

Getting smothered by her was at first surprising, and then, well, heck, it's not too bad a deal to be held down by a pretty woman. But I just realized she had snookered me with her smile and beauty. She made me totally unprepared for her skill, and she beat me with a little stratagem that I learned not to get caught by again.

So I don't place much reliance in using race, religion, gender, or ethnicity as factors in the worth of a teacher or fellow student. I've been lucky in having teachers, especially Japanese teachers, who tend to think like that too. It makes for a much more egalitarian atmosphere.

And finally, one amusing observation: I recently met up with a fellow student of iaido who worked with me reviewing some of my late teacher's techniques. He's Caucasian. The person I considered my main iai teacher was Japanese. But you know, the older people get, the more wrinkles and the balder they get, the more they look alike, regardless of ethnicity. And as I was training with him, I thought, geez, there's something that's familiar about him, like he's channeling our old sensei … not just in his technique, but in his whole character.

I told another budo friend about my revelation. My senior had studied with our sensei, and another famous Japanese sensei, for so long that when he did iai, even his facial expressions, and some of his English and Japanese phrases, came out looking and sounding like those teachers.

As a saying goes, if you study a traditional art long enough, your mind and body become endowed with, become dyed with, the colors of your teacher's techniques, personality, and spirit. My friend's techniques, spirit, and character were full of the expansiveness of our late teacher. Such traits were conveyed beyond culture and ethnicity. He even LOOKED like our old teacher, in a way, with the set of his jaw, his focus and facial expression while doing the kata.

That, I thought, was argument enough against any prejudice. Transmission of proper form, heart, and spirit is a one-to-one human thing. It has nothing to do with the color of your skin, your gender, or religion. It has everything to do with your heart.

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/.

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