

# SMAA JOURNAL



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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### 2019 SMAA DUES

Membership fees were due on January 1, 2019. Please be sure to pay your SMAA dues on time. You can either send a check to our headquarters or pay online at <http://www.smaa-hq.com/payments.php>. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and PayPal. This is a quick and safe way to make your annual SMAA membership payment.

We appreciate our members paying dues promptly. It makes life easier for the SMAA staff of volunteers, and it is representative of the type of self-discipline we are cultivating through the study of traditional Japanese martial arts.

### DONATIONS & TAX DEDUCTIONS

The SMAA is a federally tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation. As such, your donations to our association are tax deductible. Send your donations, in the form of a check or money order (made out to SMAA), to our headquarters in Michigan. We'll send you a letter back acknowledging your contribution, which you can then use for tax purposes. We hope you'll support the SMAA in our goal to preserve and promote traditional budo and koryu bujutsu.

### E-MAIL

Please make sure we have your correct e-mail address. Without this address, we can't e-mail you the *SMAA Journal*.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE SMAA

1. To promote and aid in the growth of Japan's traditional arts and ways.
2. To assist the public in achieving spiritual growth and physical development through budo/bujutsu.
3. To further friendship and understanding between Asian and Western martial artists.
4. To establish goodwill and harmony among martial artists of various systems.
5. To offer Western martial artists access to legitimate budo/bujutsu organizations and teachers in Japan.
6. To give practitioners of authentic budo/bujutsu recognition for their years of devotion to these arts.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

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

**Assistant Editor:** Troy Swenson Sensei

**Webmaster:** Don Prior Sensei

**General Manager:** Nicklaus Suino Sensei

修道館武道会

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

## SMAA PATCHES

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



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

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

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

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

**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.

### SMAA YOUTUBE CHANNEL

# 修道館武道会

Shudokan Martial Arts Association

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

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

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gg5NIka6Ge0&list=PLS11\\_XCH8RkI868tRKZ0fdJFSeFGyNZ0o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gg5NIka6Ge0&list=PLS11_XCH8RkI868tRKZ0fdJFSeFGyNZ0o)

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

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcE7zBhv9Hs&list=PLS11\\_XCH8RkIV8liNZoXI93WI79BLe1NZ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcE7zBhv9Hs&list=PLS11_XCH8RkIV8liNZoXI93WI79BLe1NZ)

### SUINO SENSEI NEWS

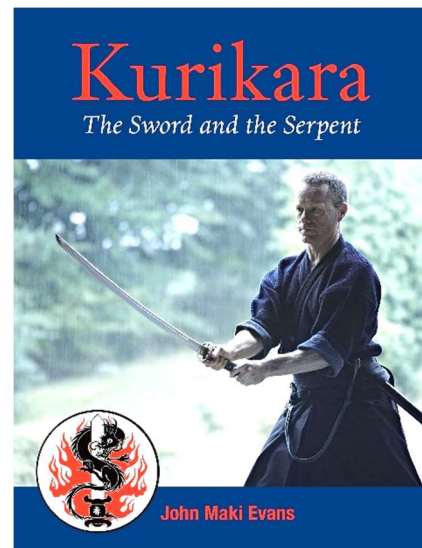
In September, Nicklaus Suino Sensei's Japanese Martial Arts Center celebrated its 13th anniversary. Located in Ann Arbor, Michigan, it offers classes in traditional Japanese jujutsu, judo, iaido, and karate-do. Suino Sensei is one of the founding members of the SMAA, the Director of the SMAA Judo Division, and the Co-director of the SMAA iaido Division as well as a popular author of budo-related books. He studied martial arts in Japan, and he is a direct student of the late Yamaguchi Katsuo Sensei (iaido



*Suino Sensei's dynamic judo*

10th dan) and the late Sato Shizuya Sensei (judo ninth dan and jujutsu 10th dan). JMAC classes are available for men, women, and children and taught by SMAA certified instructors.

### EVANS SENSEI NEWS



John Evans Sensei's book *Kurikara: The Sword and the Serpent* was recently translated into Spanish. Evans Sensei is a member of the SMAA Board of Advisors and a seventh dan in Nakamura Ryu battodo. He is based in the United Kingdom, where he leads the Fudokan Dojo in London. Evans Sensei studied Japanese swordsmanship for many years in

Japan, and he is a direct student of the late Nakamura Taizaburo Sensei, founder of Nakamura Ryu and tenth dan.

## OTSUKA SOKE NEWS

In September, Otsuka Yasuyuki Sensei traveled from his home in Japan to teach seminars in North America. Events were held in Winnipeg in Canada and Chicago in the United States. Otsuka Sensei is the current Soke of Meifu Shinkage Ryu, which focuses on the use of shuriken and other weapons. He is one of several SMAA officials in Japan, and he is a member of the SMAA Board of Advisors.

In August, Otsuka Soke was interviewed by a reporter from *Ichichi Ichikawa*, a Japanese cable TV show. He demonstrated Meifu Shinkage Ryu, and the TV reporter was shown how to throw shuriken.

## SUBMISSIONS WANTED

We're looking for writers for the *SMAA Journal*. No experience necessary, just send us your news items,



*Otsuka Soke about to throw shuriken*

information about what you practice, how-to articles, and more. We can easily edit your work, and everyone in the SMAA will enjoy learning more about you, your dojo, your sensei, your martial art, etc. This a great way that you can help our nonprofit and give back to the budo community. Send submissions to [hedavey@aol.com](mailto:hedavey@aol.com).

## PRACTICE DOES NOT NECESSARILY MAKE PERFECT

*By Wayne Muromoto*

*Editor's Note: The author originally sent this article as an email to his iaido students in Hawaii.*

### A NOTE ON TRAINING

Lately, we've been focusing on basics, going over the shoden level seiza forms over and over again. There's a reason for that. I'm still not satisfied with our basics.

In all traditional Asian combative arts, there is a strong emphasis on reaching a particular expertise in the repetition of proper form, none, perhaps, more so than in iai. Since iai proper does not have competitive matches (although lately they have instituted a kind of forms competition in some

organizations in Japan) that pit one person against another, the only way to evaluate expertise in iai is through perfection of form. This emphasis has become such a fetish in iai that even some koryu folks will admit that watching iai is nearly as exciting as watching grass grow or paint dry. It is just going over a form, over and over again.

However, that is why I keep emphasizing working on basics to all of us, myself included. Proper form is really important in iai.

When you study a particular ryu, or ryuha, you are basically trying to reach an appropriate level of "form" that indicates you are in line with a certain way of doing a kata, a series of linked movements.

There may be variations from one dojo to another, and one teacher to another in the same school, but there are some basic signposts that declare that you either “get it” or you don’t: your timing, perhaps, or the way you move, handle the sword, the angle of your chiburi, or angle of the cut with the sword. This is one step beyond simply repeating the steps or procedure. This is polishing the steps and instilling in them the particular way you move with the sword in hand.

When you begin to “get it,” your sword work begins to assume an actual personality: that of your own, of course, but also that of the ryu you are performing. That balance, that tension between individual character and the characteristics of the ryu is the hardest to attain as beginners. When you start with iai, everything may seem random and arbitrary. If you progress, however, and you observe other ryu, you should come to a realization that there are implicit reasons why you do things a certain way, and why another ryu does things a different way. You will begin to grasp the differences in timing, technique and mental kamae (posture). What many of you who have been doing it for some months need to do to break your logjam is somehow internalize the ryu’s sensibilities as your own, and subsume what your mind and body seem to want to do under the mantle of the ryu’s methods.

You may want to slouch and hunch your shoulders because all your life that’s how you’ve stood. Or your body wants to use your shoulder and arm strength instead of your hip muscles. You have to consciously, mentally, force yourself to make the corrections. The other part is you also have to make the connection with your own body, forcing it to move that way too when you perform the kata. Again, there may be long-standing habits in your body that you have to break.

You have to see what is being done, internalize the concept in your mind, but you then have to transmit that movement to your body. A lot can mess things up in this two-step process. Be aware of what you are seeing and doing.



*The author (left) practicing Takeuchi Ryu in Kyoto*

Koryu study is basically this: you break down bad habits and try to institute new ones, hopefully better ones. I know it doesn’t happen overnight. It takes years of training, but training without thinking or self-correction produces no improvement. You are simply reinforcing bad habits and making them harder to break. I think it was football coaching legend Vince Lombardi who said something like, “Practice does not make perfect. Only perfect practice makes perfect.”

What he meant was, even if you put in time and effort in training, if you are training the wrong way, you aren’t really getting any better, you’re only getting better at doing something badly. Thus, being cognizant in training means you have to be self-aware of your mistakes and self-correct, always doing a kata and then never being happy with it, considering it from all angles, and correcting your mistakes, forever striving to approach the model of the kata demonstrated by your sempai and sensei.

Even the best teachers I know are never satisfied. Of their own kata, they would say, “Mada, mada.” (“Not yet, not yet.”) They were constantly polishing their skills. These were men and women who were superb in their arts, yet they were never satisfied. And that

dissatisfaction was what, perhaps, caused them to excel as far as they did.

I don't feel adequate in my own skills. But every time I do a kata, I try to improve it. Do I need to tip the edge one degree up or down? Am I using too much right arm in that cut or not enough left? Am I leaning too far forward? I try to remember what my teachers have told me, and work on their advice, over and over again.

Finally, going back to your mental approach: You also need the ability to self-evaluate. That means you have to see clearly whether or not you are doing things right for yourself. You need to tame your body and ego so that they do not get in the way of a truthful, honest feedback. I am reminded that the second kata of the Takeuchi Ryu kogusoku is called Sumashi Miru ("Seeing Clearly"). Ono Sensei once told me that not only does it describe the technique of the kata (looking right at the opponent and challenging his/her mental aggression) but it may

also describe a very important heiho ("martial strategy") of the ryu. You have to be able to read a situation clearly, without blinders of ego, fear, and doubt. In advancing in a koryu, you have to see clearly what you need to improve and work on it every practice session.

A teacher may guide you along the way, but a teacher can't carry you to the end. He or she is only a guide, who points the way. It's really up to you to walk that road and get to your destination yourself. The really hard work has to be done by you, as in other aspects of your life.

**About the Author:** Wayne Muromoto is a lifelong practitioner of Japanese martial arts, including modern budo and ancient bujutsu, much of which he's learned in Japan under top experts. A member of the SMAA Board of Advisors, he teaches Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu iaido and Takeuchi Ryu jujutsu in Honolulu, Hawaii. Mr. Muromoto has supported the SMAA for most of the 25 years of our existence.

## 25 YEARS OF BUDO AND FRIENDS

*Article and Japanese Calligraphy by H.E. Davey*

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Shudokan Martial Arts Association. I was present at the inception of our international nonprofit association, and I'd like to reflect on what this anniversary means to me and the goals of studying budo in the SMAA. The objectives of our group and the traditional martial arts we practice are lofty and not always understood.

Since I'm a writer, I wanted to produce something special for SMAA members: an article of length and substance to help you appreciate the history of the SMAA and what our leaders think of as the true meaning of budo. It's my anniversary gift to all of you. I spent quite a bit of time on it, and I hope you find it valuable.

### IN THE BEGINNING

I grew up practicing authentic Japanese budo. And with the exception of studying with my late father, who was Japan-certified to teach judo, aikido, and jujutsu, most of this training took place under Japanese and Japanese-American teachers. It was a great way to grow up, and the practice of budo was presented to me as being more than a hobby. Over time, and especially after becoming a teacher, I realized that not everyone outside of Japan had received the message that Japanese martial arts can and should be practiced as a method of character development. These arts are just that—art forms—and while some modern budo can be practiced as sports, this was never meant to be the main focus. Many contemporary forms of budo end in the

designation –do, which means the “Way.” Even in the case of ancient samurai era martial arts, the Do concept is not unknown, but it’s often glossed over by Western students of these arts, and this dumbing down of the Do has taken place in Japan in certain circles as well. But what is the Do and why should we care?

## FIND AND FOLLOW THE WAY

Do is the Japanese version of the Chinese word Tao (道) as in the philosophy of Taoism. We see this character used in everything from chado (茶道), the “Way of tea,” to shodo (書道), the “Way of Japanese calligraphy.” It implies that studying an activity transcends the limitations of that specific art and ultimately encompasses the art of living itself—life lessons if you will. It’s in this sense that practitioners of shodo, budo (武道), and other Do forms say they’re practicing a Way of life. Yet, frequently they just say it but often don’t live it and rarely effectively teach it.

Strong words, but after multiple decades of studying various Japanese arts in Japan and the USA, and after writing several well-received books on these age-old disciplines, I think I’m starting to understand a bit about this topic. What’s more,



*“Do” brushed by the author in a standard script similar to printing in English*

although I’m capable of criticizing teachers of these subjects (including myself), I also believe that we really can discover a new, better way of living by practicing budo and similar arts. If I didn’t feel this way, I wouldn’t have written books about these arts. I certainly wouldn’t have created this article in particular, which has among its goals the examination of how budo can function as moving meditation, the invisible forces that create beauty in martial arts, and the discovery of esoteric (but still practical) principles that can benefit our lives as much as our martial practice.

So, it concerns me that some teachers of these arts, and their books as well, offer up “fortune cookie philosophy.” This is the idea that a few pithy sayings about the Way will allow people to travel along this path. It infrequently works, and it’s a problem in Japan as well, where sensei favor less verbal instruction. There are valid historical, cultural, and philosophical reasons for this “learn it by copying it” approach but it doesn’t change the fact that this method also allows teachers to hide a deficiency in understanding the Way. Sure, most sensei pay sporadic lip service to the idea that mastering an effective mode of living is possible by studying the Way of calligraphy or the Way of flower arrangement, kado (花道), but do they actually teach this or even exemplify it? When critically evaluated, it becomes clear that many do not.

But some do, and I was very fortunate to practice martial arts with that sort of special individual while growing up and continuing into adulthood. I belonged to various Japanese and American martial arts associations over the years, and while I benefited from involvement in these groups, I also saw behaviors that were antithetical to the spirit of the Way that my teachers and sempai, “seniors,” instilled in me. (There wasn’t always, for example, much in the way of jita kyohei, an important principle espoused by judo’s founder emphasizing mutual welfare and benefit: the simple idea that we benefit by working together instead of against each other.) And I wasn’t the only one that felt this way.

As I continued to teach and practice traditional Japanese martial arts, I met other lifelong practitioners in some of the aforementioned and unnamed associations that had come to similar conclusions. Some of these folks I met in Japan, others in the USA, and still others I reconnected with in the United States after they returned from living and training in Japan. We all loved what we'd spent most of our lives practicing, but we were also concerned about whether these arts that were rooted in traditional Japanese culture would survive intact into the 21st century. And we decided to do something about it. You can guess what came next.

## THE BIRTH OF THE SMAA

During the course of studying and teaching budo I met one of the true pioneers of Japanese martial arts in the United States: Walter Todd Sensei. I discovered that my friend taught judo, aikido, and karate-do, arts he learned in Japan under legendary experts.

My dad started studying Nihon jujutsu under Japanese teachers back in 1926; he later took up judo and aikido. A captain in the US army, he lived in the Kyoto area for seven years after WWII, where he continued to learn traditional jujutsu. After he'd been in Japan for some time, he encountered a young enlisted man named Walter Todd, who came to the Kodokan Judo Institute. My dad trained at the Kodokan upon its reopening (after the lifting of the ban on budo), and he was surprised to see another American arrive. Unlike my father, Todd Sensei had no budo background, but he was very motivated, learning to speak Japanese and visiting every dojo he could find. With the help of his Japanese girlfriend, he trained at the Kodokan with top teachers, and he studied Wado Ryu karate-do under its founder. Unlike my dad, he didn't stay in Japan, but his job with the military allowed him to regularly return to Japan for extended visits.

In the 1950s, he was part of a U. S. Strategic Air Command (SAC) group that brought an assembly of

legendary budo sensei from Japan to America. They included Tomiki Kenji Sensei of aikido and judo, Obata Isao Sensei of Shotokan karate-do, along with important teachers of judo as well as other arts. Todd Sensei was also part of an ongoing SAC combatives course at the Kodokan, which employed several senior martial arts experts, from varying disciplines, including Kotani Sumiyuki Sensei (judo 10th dan). The late Todd Sensei received high ranks in judo, aikido, and karate-do from well-established federations in Japan, and he started one of the longest running commercial dojo in the U.S. We met in the 1980s through a Tokyo-based budo group, and I reconnected Todd Sensei with my dad.

Todd Sensei's dojo wasn't that far from mine, and I'd sometimes have dinner with him when we both finished teaching. On one occasion we were mutually complaining about the excessive politics in too many budo groups, martial arts training outside Japan that had lost its meaning, and other issues facing budo in the West. Todd Sensei was especially disappointed in the way martial arts federations were organized:

- American and European associations that had lost touch with the original spirit of budo and were lacking in technical understanding as well.
- Japanese federations that too rarely acknowledged the mastery of longtime Western exponents with legitimate training.
- Eastern and Western groups that were so disorganized students often never received regular newsletters, membership cards, certificates, and other items they paid for, not realizing that this lack professionalism was an indictment of their understanding of budo principles.



- Excessive levels of complexity and organizational hierarchy, all to serve the fragile egos of association officials.
- Unnecessary competitiveness between Japanese and Western budo organizations, with each side failing to realize they could accomplish more working together than apart.
- And a whole bunch more.

We often had conversations like that, but this time, in the autumn of 1993 I said, "Sensei, if you don't like it, why don't you do something about it? You have high ranks in multiple budo, you've got connections with top teachers in Japan, so why not create a better association, one we'd both like to be part of? In fact, why don't we do it together?"

Todd Sensei said, "Well, the two of us don't really amount to much of an association." I reminded him that given our decades of training, we both knew a number of talented and legitimate budo sensei, and I had contacts who were teaching koryu bujutsu. I volunteered to approach friends that were bona fide experts to see if they'd help us start a new association. Todd Sensei agreed, and we knew that it was more important to find professional level sensei to lead the association than to attempt to get lots of members. The foundation needed to be laid before anything meaningful could be built on it.

## CONSTRUCTING THE SMAA

This whole conversation took place rather late at night sitting in my tiny Toyota MR2 sports car, and we decided that all SMAA Directors would need at least 20 years of training and a minimum rank of sixth dan (or an equivalent classical teaching license). Todd Sensei offered to lead the judo and aikido divisions. His rank in judo was eighth dan, with the legendary Mifune Kyuzo Sensei, 10th dan, being one of his key teachers. In aikido, he held sixth dan having studied under Tohei Koichi Sensei,

10th dan. So those two divisions were well taken care of.

Todd Sensei asked me to lead a division for traditional jujutsu and I agreed. We both thought at the same time to ask Karl Scott Sensei to join us. Scott Sensei had decades of training in the USA and Okinawa in karate-do and aikido, quite a bit of which was under the tutelage of Mr. Todd. I called Scott Sensei, a seventh dan in karate-do, and he readily agreed to help. We asked him to head the karate-do division.

I suggested contacting Nicklaus Suino Sensei, a friend I'd met in Japan, who'd recently returned to the U.S. armed with a high rank in iaido. Moreover, Suino Sensei had just become an attorney, and I figured he could offer legal advice to the fledgling federation. He was kind enough to agree to help and head up an iaido division.

So now we had five divisions comprising some of the most popular martial arts. In January of 1994, certificates were issued in the name of the new association that appointed each of us as division heads, and the SMAA was born. We had some simple, but important objectives:

- No unqualified teachers and no promoting people to high ranks just to launch the new group. We all knew of a number of Japanese and Western associations that lowered their standards "just to get some initial members and get the new association off the ground." This never worked well in the long run.
- No selling rank, literally or metaphorically. Along similar lines, no honorary ranks; we'd all seen this cause trouble for the budo community around the world.
- No over emphasis on rank, colored belts, fancy titles, and the like. All of this trivialized the Japanese martial arts.

- No over emphasis on sports in the modern budo that feature this component. There were plenty of sport budo associations. The world wasn't in dire need of one more.
- No annual membership cards. This was always a time-consuming hassle for groups we'd been in, and it wasn't needed most of the time, especially for an association that was not going to be heavily focused on tournaments.
- No levels of organizational bureaucracy to sift through, no district directors, no regional directors, no national directors—every member worldwide would deal simply and directly with the SMAA HQ. This would streamline and speed up communication.
- No dojo memberships that had to be annually renewed. This is unnecessary if each dojo has a certified teacher. The teacher's certification should be enough, and anything more is primarily to make money off the instructor and students. We'd find other ways to fund the new group.
- Create and distribute regular newsletters to members. This was needed to serve one of our goals: educating the public about budo history, philosophy, and theory. Plus, it would help to create a sense of community among members.
- Reach out to and establish alliances with established budo sensei in Japan. The goal was not to create an American martial arts group, despite the fact that the initial officials were Americans. We wanted to have an international association that merged Japanese and Western leadership to create something new.
- Reasonably priced annual memberships for both full members with rank and associate members, who chose not to be evaluated and ranked by the SMAA.
- Offer reasonably priced seminars to members and the public.
- Thoroughly test applicants for teaching certification, but once these individuals were certified it would be important to support them, giving them the authority to recommend their students to the SMAA for promotions within one rank of their own.
- Create a logo and gi patch, but avoid a ton of different patches for every possible rank and level of teaching certification. The SMAA wasn't going to be like the Boy Scouts; we didn't need multiple budo merit badges. This, again, served to trivialize budo and was mostly to make money and bolster brittle egos.
- We could avoid many of the pitfalls of groups we'd been in by finding ways to keep expenses low, which would keep the need for ever increasing amounts of income low as well. We hoped to accomplish this with a streamlined organizational approach, no membership cards to be printed and mailed, a digital journal with no printing and mailing cost, advertising online and via social media, and the eventual creation of a nonprofit, tax exempt organization.

We eventually achieved all of these goals and more. But to do it we knew we'd need help.

### DEVELOPING THE SMAA

Too many martial arts federations put their emphasis on attracting members more than on developing a cadre of qualified teachers to lead their associations. They end up with profitable groups, with many members, most of whom have a shallow understanding of budo. This result is inevitable

when the leadership has a poor understanding themselves, and we didn't want that type of group. We wanted to be respected because of what we taught and who taught it—not because we had a lot of members. In traditional Japanese culture the quality of the students was always thought to be more important than the number of students. We felt the same.

So before attempting to gather masses of members, we focused on creating an elite board of advisors, who would help us guide the new group and avoid the pitfalls of some associations we'd been part of. To that end, I started reaching out to friends that I respected, some of whom were also known by the other SMAA division heads.

In the mid-90's, I asked Mike Donnelly Sensei to join the SMAA Board of Advisors. Donnelly Sensei was a lifelong aikido practitioner, a fourth dan, and an attorney. I figured his legal skills could be useful, and I respected his judgment. He helped fund the early newsletters when they were still being folded and mailed, he helped create our logo, and he offered sound legal advice. Donnelly Sensei for a time was the general manager of the SMAA, handling our daily affairs and doing a bunch of work for us, the same position Suino Sensei holds today; bringing him in was a good decision. He's since passed away, but he was a key SMAA member and my friend.

I also asked Kevin Heard Sensei to join our board of advisors at this time. One of the original members of the SMAA, he now has over 35 years of training in Saigo Ryu, a system of Nihon jujutsu that incorporates multiple traditional weapons. Ranked sixth dan in the SMAA Jujutsu Division, he was the assistant editor of our journal for many years, the creator and webmaster of our website, and the producer of our certificates. He did all of this for free.

I asked my wife Ann Kameoka Sensei to join the SMAA Board of Advisors about this time. Ann has

extensive training in Ikenobo flower arrangement, the oldest ikebana system in the world. Along with a teaching certificate from the Ikenobo headquarters in Kyoto, she studied Shin-shin-toitsu-do, a system of Japanese yoga and meditation, for over 20 years. Both Japanese yoga and ikebana have principles that overlap with budo, something recognized by the other SMAA officials, who supported Ann's appointment. (While I've been involved in recruiting many SMAA Directors and Advisors, I've never done this unilaterally, and each nomination has been approved by our officials.)

While I was doing this, Scott Sensei approached Herbert Wong Sensei about becoming an SMAA Senior Advisor. Wong Sensei held two PhDs in psychology and an eighth dan in Shorin Ryu karate-do. He's also passed away, but he represented the type of leader we wanted: someone as successful in his personal and business life as he was in martial arts. And Wong Sensei was just that, with years of training in Okinawa directly under the late Shimabukuro Eizo Sensei (10th dan), who personally promoted him to hachidan, a rank that was also issued to him by the SMAA.

About this time my writing career was getting off the ground. I initially started writing for martial arts magazines, then I branched into automotive journalism, and later began writing for Japanese newspapers like the *Hokubei Mainichi* and the *Nichibe Times*. But given my budo background, it made sense that I first offered my writing to martial arts publications. I wrote for some of the mainstream ones, trying to present an alternative viewpoint and an explanation of what authentic budo was all about. But I eventually tried to find publications that were more interested in the culture, spirit, and meaning budo than who was in the latest kung fu movie I had no interest in watching.

To that end, I began contributing to the *Journal of Asian Martial Arts* and the late, great *Furyu* magazine, perhaps the best Nihon budo-specific

publication ever. Guy Power Sensei was doing the same thing, having recently returned from living in Japan and studying swordsmanship in the Nakamura Ryu and Toyama Ryu traditions. I'd seen his articles, and he'd seen mine, especially stuff I'd written about the SMAA. I answered his email inquiring about membership, and we later talked on the phone for a long time, happy to find another person that could relate to our mutual experiences of studying budo in the classical style. Power Sensei, Nakamura Ryu seventh dan, joined the SMAA Board of Advisors, and he eventually became the Co-director of the SMAA Iaido Division with Suino Sensei.

Wayne Muromoto was the editor and publisher of *Furyu*, a magazine I wrote a fair amount for. He did too, logically, and we became friends. My wife is from Hawaii, where *Furyu* was headquartered, and I came to enjoy hanging out with my editor when we'd visit my in-laws on Oahu and occasionally in San Francisco, near where I live, when he'd visit with his wife. Mr. Muromoto started studying various budo when he was a kid, same as me, and he's now a leading teacher of Takeuchi Ryu, a rare and ancient form of jujutsu, as well as a senior teacher of Urasenke tea ceremony. And you guessed it—he's a member of the SMAA Board of Advisors.

Mr. Muromoto introduced me to his friend, Dave Lowry, who was also writing about budo and koryu bujutsu for *Furyu*. Mr. Lowry has had a monthly column for *Black Belt* magazine for a very long time, where he writes about classical Japanese martial arts and culture. He's also had a slew of highly regarded budo books published, and he's a respected teacher of ancient martial arts: Yagyu Shinkage Ryu swordsmanship and Shinto Muso Ryu jodo, specifically. I'd long admired his writing, and he'd seen my articles. We started emailing each other and talking on the phone, establishing a friendship that led to Mr. Lowry also joining our board of advisors, writing for our journal, and teaching at our events.

And one time I was reading *Furyu* when I spotted an excellent article on koryu jujutsu by someone who'd studied Hontai Yoshin Ryu under its headmaster in Japan. His name was Stephen Fabian Sensei, and Mr. Muromoto helped the two of us connect. Fabian Sensei had just returned to the U.S. after living in Japan, and like me, he was discovering that it was tough to find anyone practicing authentic Japanese jujutsu outside of Japan. We gravitated toward each other, writing letters, chatting on the phone, sending email, and even exchanging videotapes of each other demonstrating budo. Maybe it was a cure for feeling isolated due to practicing an art that many thought they knew, but few had actually ever seen. In the end, we asked Fabian Sensei to join our board of advisors, and in time he "graduated" to become the Co-director of the SMAA Jujutsu Division with me.

Later, I asked Ohsaki Jun Sensei, my friend of many years to join the SMAA Board of Advisors. Ohsaki Sensei grew up in Tokyo, where he started studying judo at a young age. He later took up the practice of traditional jujutsu, which is what he presently focuses on, along with practicing and teaching Nakamura Tempu Sensei's unique Japanese yoga. With decades of training in budo, Japanese yoga and meditation, and classical Japanese calligraphy, he made a great addition to the SMAA Board of Advisors.

I also approached Mark Colby Sensei about joining the SMAA Board of Advisors. Colby Sensei is one of my oldest friends; we've known each other since we were children practicing judo together. He moved to Japan over 40 years ago, where he's studied judo with celebrated authorities and where he won important judo championships. Aside from a lifetime of training in classic judo, he's a successful business owner and entrepreneur.

Guy Power Sensei recommended the SMAA to his friend John Evans Sensei, who also spent numerous years studying swordsmanship in Japan, much of it under Nakamura Taizaburo Sensei. Given his



*Ohsaki Sensei teaching traditional jujutsu*

extensive training in Japan under top teachers, his knowledge of Japanese language and culture, not to mention his seventh dan in Nakamura Ryu, Evans Sensei was a natural choice to become an SMAA Senior Advisor. He's taught at SMAA Seminars in England, the USA, and Australia.

I also asked my friend Joe Rippy Sensei to join our board of advisors. Rippy Sensei and I met each other years ago through a budo umbrella organization in Japan. He'd studied directly under the founder of Wado Ryu karate-do, who promoted him to sixth dan after decades of training. When I first saw him teaching karate-do, I was impressed by his speed and flexibility, and I'm tough to make an impression on. Even more striking was Rippy Sensei's kindness and intelligence. More than just my friend, the late Rippy Sensei was a fine addition to our growing assembly of martial arts experts.

Through Rippy Sensei and other SMAA members, I kept hearing about an exceptional karateka, someone with years of training in budo and a PhD

to boot. His name was Tom Kosslow Sensei, and he was a seventh dan in Wado Ryu under the late, great Suzuki Tatsuo Sensei. I got in contact with him, and before long we also asked Kosslow Sensei to join the SMAA Board of Advisors.

Guy Power came into play again when he introduced us to Nyle Monday Sensei. Monday Sensei started practicing judo in 1965. He later studied three different systems of Japanese karate-do. In 1972, he met the late Donn Draeger Sensei in Japan, who introduced him to koryu martial arts, which he studied extensively. Given his exceptional background, Monday Sensei was a natural fit to become a Senior Advisor.

Later John Quinn Sensei, another student of the renowned Draeger Sensei, also joined our ever more prestigious board of advisors. Quinn Sensei studied budo in Japan for 20 years, and he's a disciple of Nawa Yumio Sensei, a well-known martial arts expert in Japan. He's one of few people in the West legitimately teaching Masaki Ryu, a samurai era martial art using a weighted chain and a chain and sickle (kusari gama).

One day, Quinn Sensei informed me that he was having a seminar at his dojo with an incredible teacher from Japan, who had remarkable skill using antique Japanese throwing spikes (bo shuriken). That teacher was Otsuka Yasuyuki Sensei, the current Soke of Meifu Shinkage Ryu. Quinn Sensei and I conversed with Otsuka Sensei, which led to him joining the SMAA and becoming a Senior Advisor. He's a highly respected teacher of historic weapons in Japan, and he travels the world teaching Meifu Shinkage Ryu.

I also asked one of my Japanese yoga teachers to join the SMAA Board of Advisors, in that SMAA Senior Advisors need not be martial arts teachers. Budo is one of many Japanese cultural arts, and all these art forms have principles that overlap. They are generally mutually supportive. Budoka can benefit from studying arts like brush calligraphy,

flower arrangement, tea ceremony and more. All which at least some samurai practiced as a supplement for bujutsu training. That said, Sawai Atsuhiko Sensei is also a Shihan in Kobori Ryu suieijutsu, a rare feudal era martial art. Kobori Ryu focuses on samurai swimming and water combat.

Since Sawai Sensei held the highest rank in Kobori Ryu, he knew its current Soke well. That's how Iwasaki Hisashi Sensei came to join our board of advisors. Iwasaki Soke is one of the highest-ranking teachers of martial arts in Japan, and what he teaches is uncommon and unique. Of course, we asked him to join our group, and after Sawai Sensei visited him in Kyoto to explain what we were doing, he was eager to help.

Sawai Sensei and I knew Omi Koji Sensei, a fellow teacher of Nakamura Tempu Sensei's distinctive Japanese yoga, an art that influenced a number of prominent budo sensei in Japan, especially aikido experts. Aside from holding the highest rank in Japanese yoga, Omi Sensei was then the head of the largest association representing Nakamura Sensei's teachings in Japan. But more than that Omi Sensei was a famous and respected Japanese politician. He was a member of the House of Representatives of Japan and the former Finance Minister of Japan, among other current and past important posts. After Omi Sensei visited me in California, he became an SMAA Senior Advisor. Having a prominent politician endorse a budo organization and the ranks it issues is common in Japan, and Omi Sensei would fulfill this function for our growing group.

Mark Colby Sensei and I knew an important teacher of classical judo, someone we both studied under in the past. Richard Yamamoto Sensei was a seventh dan, certified by the Kodokan, the birthplace of judo. Yamamoto Sensei practiced judo since childhood, and he spent decades teaching children and adults after working long hours each day as an electrician. He never accepted money for teaching judo and concentrated instead on helping his students grow as people. One of the highest ranking

Kodokan-certified teachers outside of Japan, he was the senior member of our judo division, endorsing our ranks and activities, until he passed away at over 90 years old.

It was Burkland Sensei that introduced Warren Agena Sensei to our group. The two had practiced judo together in Colorado, where Agena Sensei is the head instructor of the Northglenn Judo Club, the oldest judo dojo in Colorado. It is also one of the largest judo dojos in the USA. Agena Sensei is a sixth dan with the Kodokan, and he's now a member of the SMAA Board of Advisors.

Evans Sensei suggested contacting his instructor Suzuki Kunio Sensei about joining the SMAA Board of Advisors. I immediately agreed, knowing that he was one of the highest ranking budoka in Japan, an eighth dan, and a senior disciple of the founder of Nakamura Ryu. Suzuki Sensei came onboard. He's taught at SMAA events in the United Kingdom.

Later, Evans Sensei helped out again when he recommended Paul Martin Sensei as a Senior Advisor. Martin Sensei started karate-do as a child in England, winning European championships, but for years he's focused on Japanese sword arts, which he studied in Japan and where he's lived for a long time. Presently a fourth dan in kendo and iaido, Martin Sensei is a Trustee for the Nihonto Bunka Shinko Kyokai. He works with many sword institutions in Japan, including the Nihon Bijitsu Token Hozon Kyokai, providing translations for books and exhibitions.

Over the course of all of this, my friend Todd Sensei passed away. His student Karl Scott Sensei, aikido sixth dan, became the new Director of our aikido division. Nicklaus Suino Sensei, judo sixth dan, became the Director of the SMAA Judo Division. And like most major decisions in our group, these appointments were approved by our Directors and Advisors.

Assembling this impressive group of budoka took years, but some of our general SMAA members are just as remarkable. They may not be Directors or Advisors, but folks like Cyndy Hayashi Sensei are internationally renowned martial artists. Hayashi Sensei, Aikikai aikido seventh dan, is one of the highest ranking female aikidoka in the world, and we're honored to have her in the SMAA, just as we're happy to have Hunter Armstrong Sensei as a member. Mr. Armstrong is an expert in koryu bujutsu, focusing on Yagyu Shinkage Ryu and Owari Kan Ryu. He's also essentially the successor to Donn Draeger Sensei, an American budo pioneer and a celebrated exponent of judo, Tenshin Shoden Katori Shinto Ryu, and Shinto Muso Ryu. Along similar lines, Paul and Lee Masters live in Europe, where they are SMAA members and expert teachers of old-style jujutsu. Paul Masters Sensei received a menkyo kaiden license from his late teacher Kubota Toshihiro Sensei of the Tenjin Shinyo Ryu.

And while I was deeply involved in bringing a number of the illustrious individuals above into the SMAA, this isn't about me (aside from the fact that I'm reminiscing about my involvement in our group.) A quick read of the previous information makes it clear that a whole horde of people have contributed to the SMAA, and this isn't the Davey Martial Arts Association. It's because of members like you and our leaders that our nonprofit organization has lasted 25 years and acquired members in many nations around the world. Now what are we going to do with the next 25?

### LET'S REALIZE THE MEANING AND PROMISE OF "SHUDO"

We call our group Shudokan, and kan simply means 'building, institution.' But shudo is to "cultivate the Way." This is not the Do of karate-do or really any budo at all, but rather the Way itself, the path that links all Do forms from budo to shodo. If SMAA members fail to grasp the significance of cultivating the Way, our association will become hollow even if it continues for 25 more years. And we will have let

down our members who've passed on, because from Walter Todd to Richard Yamamoto and others, every one of these experts sought to find and follow the Way in their lives. So how can we do that, too?

We need to start by understanding that modern budo and ancient bujutsu are not equivalent to fighting. "Fight, combat" in Japanese is actually sento (戦闘) not budo or bujutsu (武術), and sento is not about finding and following a Way, it isn't focused on delving deeply into the martial arts to discover the art of living itself, which is the main difference between fighting and budo. One is a Way; the other is not.

But these are just definitions. Understanding how words are defined, in English or Japanese, isn't necessarily to understand what they really aim to indicate. The definition is never the thing being defined but at best an approximation. Case in point, most of us can define the word "peaceful," but how many are genuinely at peace?

Comparably, most Japanese can use the word "budo" in a sentence, but not everyone—even people supposedly practicing this art—deeply understand what budo is. As proof, note some people's inability to distinguish fighting from budo. But don't some forms of budo—and especially koryu bujutsu—teach how to defeat an opponent, sometimes under battlefield conditions? They do, but fighting still isn't equivalent to the traditional marital arts.

Because fighting is just fighting. It's nothing more than combat techniques.

Budo is a Way, a path beyond the purely utilitarian act of combat. It melds physical art with classical Japanese culture and aesthetics, blending in profound philosophical elements that can improve performance not only in martial arts but our daily lives as well. But of greater importance are the spiritual benefits of budo, something rarely found in self-defense courses. Fighting deals primarily

with the hands holding a weapon. However, many SMAA authorities feel that budo includes the mind, echoing sentiments of martial artists eons in the past.

It is my mind that influences my hands holding a sword, that gives birth to movements so efficient and so rooted in traditional Japanese aesthetics that they can be described as martial *art*. But it isn't just our conscious mind that creates art in budo.

### REVEALING THE HIDDEN

What's in my subconscious mind appears in any martial arts technique I execute because *my body reflects my mind*. Understanding this crucial point allows us to use budo to see into our true nature, the first step in cultivating our character and a step not dissimilar to meditation. Each of us has an unconscious aspect that we maybe only see directly while dreaming each night. It's the subconscious mind, a perhaps infinite storeroom of our past experiences and suggestions from our environment, our feelings, and so on. The elements housed in the subconscious continuously influence the conscious mind and our actions/reactions. Not only are we not always aware of this influence—it's *subconscious*, right?—the elements stored in the unconscious aspect of ourselves aren't inevitably positive. And since this is where our habits reside, our habits may or may not be helpful. If we improve our habits, we cultivate our character.

But how do we know what's in the unconscious? The first step is to bring the mind into the present, the only moment that has reality. It involves waking up to see not just the world as it really is, but us, too. We're inseparable from the existence that we perceive.

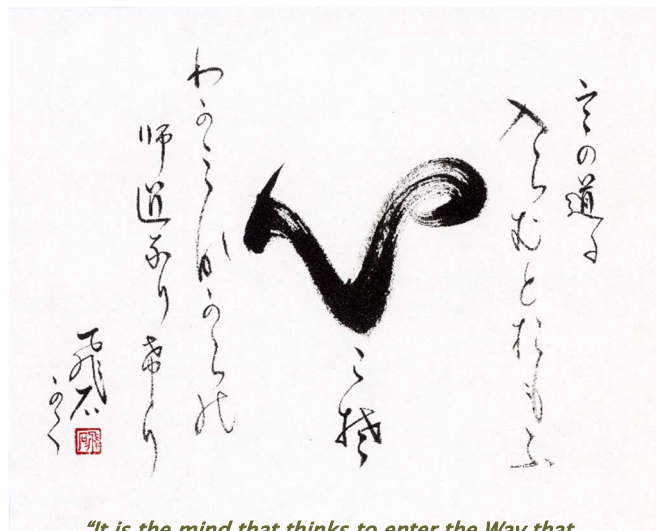
Real budo requires such extreme concentration that its repeated practice brings the mind into the present. When you do it right, time seems to stop, and 90 minutes may feel like a half hour, because in the moment the mind isn't centering on a

progression from the past into the future. It's right here, right now.

Just this helps us to stop sleepwalking through life, if only for the period that we're using a sword, staff, other weapons, or even our bare hands. It's immensely valuable, because without this awakening, there's no perception of the subconscious or even the conscious mind and our habits ... good or bad. It's when we wake up that we see ourselves for what we are—not what we imagine we are or what others think we are. It's at this point that we can change and grow, which means on one level the elimination of negative habits.

So, through intense concentration we bring the mind into the instant, and I've implied that because budo is difficult we're motivated to focus the mind on what we're doing. As we do it more, we get better at it. That's the theory. It's traditionally espoused, and it is valid for many practitioners. But not everyone.

What if you're one of those people that genuinely struggles to concentrate? Won't it be hard to even practice something like budo, won't it frustrate you to the point that you don't want to do it, won't the sheer ugliness of your off-balance techniques discourage you? Sure, it will. Been there, struggled with that.



*"It is the mind that thinks to enter the Way that is actually my ultimate teacher." Sen no Rikyu*



And that's why I introduce my martial arts students to a simple meditation created by Nakamura Tempu Sensei. You can do it almost anywhere. It doesn't engage your emotions like budo sometimes can, and it helps to train your concentration. This, in turn, allows you to focus in the moment, more easily execute effective and beautiful techniques, and in the end see into the real nature of your subconscious to alter destructive habits.

### MUGA ICHI-NEN HO

Muga literally means, "no self" or "beyond self," but it's more easily understood as "no self-consciousness." The self it references is the impermanent part of us, especially that which is perceivable with the five senses. Ichi-nen refers to "one thought," while ho equates to "method, exercise." Muga Ichi-nen Ho is the simple meditation alluded to above, and it starts with concentration.

We often think concentration involves some kind of mental action, and a difficult one to boot, one that must include straining. No wonder loads of us feel that concentration is difficult, which means that budo practice, in turn, is equally grim. No surprise as well that I hear from novice budo students that they have to force themselves to practice, just as I notice the public talks about forcing themselves to concentrate, while others tell me that they can't pay attention to anything. If this is true and inescapable, then only a select few will become genuine budoka, be able to see into and modify their subconscious (and thus their martial arts as well as habits), or even achieve success in life.

We typically assume that what the majority thinks is true and that what we've always believed is based in fact. But we've all met folks that were deluded, at least about aspects of their beliefs, and the truth isn't decided by majority vote. When the majority thought the earth was flat, it remained as round as the rocks in their heads. So, let's look at these commonly held suppositions about attentiveness,

because concentration—its use and deliberate development—is one of the elements separating fighting from budo.

Despite what lots of people claim, I doubt their assertion that they "can't concentrate at all." In fact, if you've read up to this point, I'd assert that you can concentrate, even if you don't believe this. How can I make that assertion?

Easy, if you couldn't focus for more than a few seconds, you'd forget the beginning of a page by the time you got to the end of said page. You wouldn't be able to read this article or do much of anything else in life. You'd be virtually incapacitated.

OK, so most of us probably can focus to a degree, but why is that significant? It's noteworthy because having limited capability to do something is different from being born without this ability at all. If we have at least some capacity to concentrate, then this can be developed further, a heartening idea. And we need to be positive to cultivate ability in anything, including concentration and budo. Here's why.

Most of us have little trouble concentrating on a favorite movie or videogame. Paying attention to what we view as boring or worthless is another matter, right? Therefore, single-mindedness is related to the attitude we have about the object of concentration. Negativity makes concentration harder and becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

So, let's positively explore how to develop attention, to enhance budo and life. Without this positive attitude, many of us will unconsciously give up before we even start. That makes progress in budo or anything else tricky.

Remember: almost all of us can concentrate; at least enough to know what it feels like. This means we can improve mental focus using the following meditation.

## PRACTICING MUGA ICHI-NEN HO

Meditation is most easily realized while sitting still. This eliminates the distraction of maintaining correct posture through the ever-changing series of postures we call movement. But if we only study calmness and concentration in repose, we may be incapable of manifesting these qualities in life, which involves motion. Fortunately, budo includes action. It gives us an opportunity to discover *do chu no sei*, an old Eastern idea relating to serenity in the midst of action.

But let's start simply with how to sit still. To do that we'll commence with the sitting posture itself, and I can't recall seeing top budoka in Japan slumped over while practicing nor do I remember most of them standing rigidly with a military-like carriage. And not every advanced martial artist in Japan teaches using words.

It's often up to us to not just vaguely look at a teacher, but truly see what he or she is teaching. Not everyone notices, but the secrets are hidden in plain sight. The teachers are *shihan*, models for us, and as such some Japanese sensei teach more by example than with words. It's especially common among older Japanese instructors.

Unlike certain Japanese teachers of budo I studied with decades ago, I went to college to become an art teacher, centering on fine art and education. This gives me different tools for teaching, allowing me to effectively use both actions and words. In this sense, I merge the Eastern emphasis on learning through intense observation, copying, and heavy repetition with a Western use of clearly elucidated principles and point-by-point explanations. And that allows me to put into words what my teachers demonstrated throughout their lives. This is what they taught through their actions ...

For meditation as well as budo, we need a posture that's not tense, not limp. That's not overly erect but not slumped into a C-shaped curve. A natural

pose, one that's poised between tension and collapse, which looks expansive but not stiff. That's a balanced posture. Without finding our own balance, we can't create balanced techniques and kata, because budo is a reflection of us.

Find a firm chair, one that doesn't cause you to distort the shape of your spine from its natural, slight S-shaped curve. Lower your buttocks gently and lightly onto the chair, adopting a position that looks and feels expansive. Keeping the lower back straight, open your chest naturally. While relaxing and dropping your shoulders, focus your mind on a spot four finger widths below the navel. Relax to allow your upper body weight to settle and follow the mind down to that point, which is often called *hara* (腹) or *seika tanden* (臍下丹田) in Japanese martial arts. You should feel bottom heavy and stable instead of top heavy and wobbly. This is crucial for calmly, but powerfully, balancing the body and mind.

This point in the lower abdomen is considered the seat of power in traditional Japanese arts, including Zen meditation, martial arts, and Japanese yoga. In fact, you can read more about it in my volume *Japanese Yoga: The Way of Dynamic Meditation*. Functional and dynamic relaxation, as opposed to the more common limpness, is connected with calming the mind in the lower abdomen. It also relates to the maintenance of a correct and natural carriage, thus the emphasis on an upright, dignified posture in most of the Ways.

Western people may be unfamiliar with all of this, but the ideas in this article are found in numerous Japanese arts. No teacher/writer has a copyright on them, but they aren't always well explained.

Finding proper posture, real relaxation, calm composure, and an optimistic outlook, are attributes needed for success in martial arts, healing arts, brush painting, and other Japanese Ways. They're also important for living everyday life and vital for meditation.



*"Hara" in a semi-cursive script brushed  
by the author in Ranseki Sho Juku style*

Once the meditation posture is established and balance is found, you can begin Muga Ichi-nen Ho (and this same carriage will directly enhance your budo performance in the dojo). This posture is good for your health, and the more we do it in meditation and/or budo, the more we carry the habit into daily life. We influence the subconscious via repetition.

Now that we've got some idea of how to sit, what else is needed for Muga Ichi-nen Ho? There are just three steps:

- Get a piece of unmarked white paper. Use a black felt pen and make a dot in the center of the paper. Then, focus your eyes softly on this dot, concentrating so deeply that it fills your mind to become one thought. You'll know when you've accomplished this because you won't be thinking about yourself, getting a break from the mind's constant self-referential chatter. This is muga ichi-nen: "beyond self, one thought." It's also concentration.

Once you can focus on this dot for a minute or so, close your eyes gently. You'll see the reversed image of it on the retinas of your eyes; the spot will be light against a blackish background. Keep watching intently with your eyes shut, letting it fill your mind. It will fade away, but don't break your attention as you move toward objectless concentration. Continue watching until you're looking at nothingness. Simply do nothing and keep observing this imageless scene for as long as you can comfortably. This is muga munen: "beyond self, beyond thought." It's also meditation.

- If you daydream, open your eyes, look at the dot for a minute or so, and begin again. Sit like this, doing nothing, for 15 minutes daily, especially before budo practice to calmly prepare the mind. You can start again several times over the 15 minutes if you need to. Starting over is fine, because it's more important to experience a state "beyond self/beyond thought," even if just for seconds at a time, than to sit and struggle with your thoughts for a long period. As the experience of transcending your attachments to your impermanent self and its transient thoughts deepens, you'll sense and merge with a genuine, eternal self that's none other than the universe. This is zanmai (三昧): the Japanese rendering of the Indian term samadhi, which indicates profound concentration leading to yoga, or all encompassing "union." It's also related to enlightenment and oneness with the universe.

The benefits of Muga Ichi-nen Ho include enhanced concentration, willpower, calmness, and relaxation. All of that's not only useful in budo but life as well. If you want to learn more, one of the best works on the subject is *The True Paths to Meditation* (Michi Publishing). It was written by koryu bujutsu expert

Sawai Atsuhiro Sensei, an SMAA official and Japanese yoga lecturer in Kyoto.

It takes time to successfully traverse the three steps of concentration, meditation, and oneness with the universe in Muga Ichi-nen Ho. Be patient and avoid thinking in terms of time and goals. Just practice regularly without making any judgments about what takes place.

As you get the hang of meditation, you'll shift into this mindset naturally in your undertakings, including budo. In terms of Japanese martial arts, this means letting the action that is taking place—the movement of the kata—become the one thought. You'll know when you're truly concentrating because your awareness of time will cease. Your senses will become acute, even though you won't be attached to what they report. Gradually, the action becomes free and spontaneous, arising from deep in the subconscious, and it's then that there's seemingly "no mind," a condition valued in most classic martial arts.

### SEEING THE SUBCONSCIOUS IN BUDO

Earlier I referenced the subconscious mind and its relationship to art and habit. I also mentioned how some students look at their instructors, but they don't really notice what they're teaching, because some sensei teach primarily through their bodies. To actually see what a teacher's demonstrating and to look into the subconscious, we need to concentrate. That's not straining or even thinking as much as simply letting the mind rest in the present moment.

Meditation can help with this, and once my students can center their attention on what's taking place in the instant, then I encourage them to notice what their performance of kata is saying about them. It's always telling us something, because every action in life is an act of creative self-expression. In this context, life is art.

As the mind controls the body, with the body following the mind, we can't help but express what's within us each time the body acts. However, I'm not sure we always realize what we're communicating, and it may not be skillfully conveyed. Martial arts aren't just self-expression; it's beautifully accomplished expression.

Concentration in the instant not only allows us to objectively see what's in the mind, it provides the ability to hone our technique, letting us masterfully convey what emerges from the mind. We notice what we're expressing; we can then change it if it isn't working for us in life and budo. And when it is expressed, it's done with such effectiveness that others deeply feel what we feel. That's art.

That's also why people react to budo even if they don't know much about it. They're reacting to the positive and dynamic ki ("life force") of the martial artist; to his or her deepest feelings at the instant a technique takes place. When budo is performed at a



*"Ki" created by the author using an abstract and abbreviated cursive script*

high level, no words or explanations are needed for its beauty to be appreciated.

That's how budo works. Despite all the text above, the experiencing of it isn't an intellectual activity. The same can be said for Japanese flower arrangement or an expert performance of Japanese calligraphy.

Where are the words? There are none. Flowers and swords don't talk. What's it supposed to mean? It means what you feel when you see it.

Now look at your judo kata or the quality of your iaido sword drawing. How does it make you feel? As a whole kata? As individual techniques? What are your body movements saying to the world?

Certainly, when I look at my students' kata, I can't tell if they have issues with their mother, although they might personally arrive at this level of introspection. But I can notice sword movements that seem panicky vs. cuts that look assured; hip throws that are off-balance, and ending postures that are far from still and calm. I can get a general sense of an individual by looking at their budo. They can do the same. But only if their mind is in the moment, not evaluating their skill based on what they've always believed it to be or what they hoped it might become ... only if they see what it is—right now—as it really is.

This isn't to say that I can see everything about the person. What I see is what they expressed at a specific moment in time. Maybe they had a really great day; maybe they had a really bad taco. Either way, their sword will move differently. Kata performance is a snapshot of a few moments ... not all moments.

On the other hand, if I keep seeing the same thing in my kata, then it probably means something. It might be something positive; it might not. Regardless, I need to be focused in the instant to see anything objectively. It's then that I can decide

what I want to do with such insights into myself. And it's only when I'm in the present, not planning or dissecting, but simply and spontaneously acting from the subconscious, that I can wholeheartedly express anything in martial arts.

We can't fake this. Even if we consciously try to create techniques that are confident, if deep down inside we're scared, some of that appears in our kata. Plus, kata can't be "sketched out" in advance nor "touched up" after the fact. What you see is what you are.

How is budo different from mere fighting? Start to answer that and you'll start understanding what the Do truly is.

Helpful hints: It differs in that in budo what you do isn't more important than how you do it. It's the difference between fine art and something purely utilitarian, although the two overlap. Budo was created with a different motivation than mere combat.

It differs because budo can be used to gaze into the subconscious and also to positively alter the unconscious. It differs because budo is in the end moving meditation, because it is a Way, complete with my now predictable capital W.

### **AN ACTION PLAN FOR FOLLOWING THE WAY**

To understand the Do and how to cultivate it is to grasp the spirit behind the Shudokan Martial Arts Association. I outlined some crucial concepts and one form of meditation that can make it easier for you to find, follow, and develop the Way, an idea that resists written descriptions, that must be discovered firsthand during training. You'll need to work with these ideas and principles yourself to deeply understand the Do, and to help you do that here's a summary of what I explained in this article:

- Discover in life and martial training the difference between fighting and budo,

between something solely utilitarian and an art that transcends its utilitarian function to arrive at something more. In the same way that brewing a cup of tea doesn't equal chado, the "Way of the tea ceremony," combat training doesn't equal budo.

- The mind controls the body, and the body reflects the mind. We approach the Way when we realize this and look deeply into what our body movement is saying about our subconscious habits. Are they positive or negative?
- To look deeply we need to concentrate and calm the mind. Muga Ichi-nen Ho meditation can help you do just that, and it can help establish a correct posture that facilitates coordination of mind and body, something that's advantageous in budo and life.
- With enough training you can bring the concentration and calmness experienced in meditation into martial arts practice. This makes it easier to see yourself clearly through awareness of what your body expresses during budo. It can also help you discover do chu no sei, "calmness in action," and to notice when this quality is lost.
- If your kata and techniques express lack of confidence, nervousness, and other negative patterns, use your new found awareness to restructure the manner in which you perform to consciously create a style of movement that projects focus, calmness, and positivity. Work long enough and seriously enough on trying to look poised and you'll find poise within yourself, but you'll need to use your awareness of your techniques as a form of biofeedback, as means of seeing into the subconscious.
- Our subconscious is altered through repetition; it records repeated actions and

suggestions. That's how we get habits good and bad. Use meditation to cultivate a mental state that will let you notice what your martial movements express. Change them to create positive, calm, confident actions, and then repeat this style of movement as much as possible to further implant positive suggestions into the subconscious and alter your habits. Daily dojo training is best.

- Finally, the Do isn't just the right and natural way of doing a particular thing; it's a Way of living. Take the positive habits that you've cultivated in budo into daily life, and you're beginning to genuinely follow budo as a Way that benefits your whole life, not just a particular part of it.

All of this is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to cultivating the Way, but it can help you get started. It's helped me.

### WHAT'S NEXT?

So, 25 years ago Todd Sensei and I decided we should launch a martial arts association that we'd like to be members of, one that would help budo and budoka, one that wouldn't embarrass us in the future.

There's nothing special about that.

Martial arts groups spring up all the time. They disappear just as fast. And that comes down to disfunction among their leaders, which in turn points to them not really getting the message of the arts they claim to teach.

But the SMAA is still here after 25 years. That's somewhat special.

Yet longevity alone is meaningless in martial arts associations and even people's lives. It's not how

long you hang around, it's what you do with your time and how you do it. Quality more than quantity.

And we've got that quality. The SMAA is a remarkable partnership of Japanese and Western experts, who've by their example helped create a unique association that embodies cultivating the Way. Many are successful professionals, others are highly educated, while some are respected authors. But they all are exceptional sensei that can pass on the time-honored Way through the practice of classic martial arts.

Aside from divisions for modern budo, SMAA members and officials practice Hontai Yoshin Ryu, Takeuchi Ryu, Masaki Ryu, Kobori Ryu, Yagyū Shinkage Ryu, Shinto Muso Ryu, Ono-ha Itto Ryu, Kashima Shinto Ryu, Owari Kan Ryu, Tenjin Shinyo Ryu, and other feudal era forms of bujutsu. That's fairly rare in Japan. It's almost nonexistent in the West.

But more than that, in 25 years nobody has ever been expelled (hamon) from the SMAA. No SMAA official has ever resigned, especially not in anger. I've never seen or heard of a nasty argument at an SMAA event. Not much in the way of bad politics has infected our nonprofit, we've never had to compromise our principles for money, rank has not been over emphasized and certainly not sold, our certified teachers are qualified, and I've yet to be embarrassed by our organization.

And all of that is very special.

But no association is perfect, and we can work to help our group continue to improve. Here are some personal suggestions:

- The leaders of the SMAA are aging. (Not me, of course, but those other guys.) In the next 25 years, let's develop and promote younger folks into positions of leadership.



*The author teaching an advanced form of Aiki Nage*

- Several wonderful SMAA Senior Advisors have died, most of whom were my friends. In the next 25 years, let's find and appoint new board members to help our group flourish.
- We don't have enough diversity among SMAA officials. In the next 25 years, let's try to rectify that and especially get more female leaders in the SMAA.
- We have quite a few exceptional budoka in the SMAA that serve to inspire our membership, but only a few people that are putting real time into our organization, and that's all too common in nonprofit groups. In the next 25 years, let's all try to make some contributions to the SMAA, maybe even host an SMAA Seminar or two.
- Our journal is something members enjoy but not many people contribute to. In the next 25 years, let's have more articles written about a wider variety of martial arts, by a wider array of writers.

Budo has been a huge part of my life since I was in kindergarten. In practicing it I've met incredible teachers and seen the high points of human existence, but I also saw human foibles prominently displayed in several martial arts associations I was part of.

The SMAA is the group I hoped it might find when I was young. It's what I dreamed of, and yet I never dreamed I'd play a role in creating it.

But I did and not by myself. I'm deeply grateful to my friends in the SMAA that helped bring this dream into reality, who put up with my quirks, and to our members who've patiently waited for issues of the journal that didn't come out as frequently as we'd all like, and to the SMAA members and teachers that treated me well when I've taught at our events. I hope this group is your dream too, and I really hope you realize that the dream isn't finished.

Each of you will need to contribute to truly share in this dream, to make an even greater SMAA

and ultimately a better world. As the founding members of the SMAA—like me—turn to dust and merge with the universe, another generation will need to continue to cultivate the Way and share it with society through the practice of budo. Just as we've shared it with you, in turn you have a responsibility to pass this Way onto others, and I hope you'll do it within the SMAA.

**About the Author:** H. E. Davey is one of the original members of the SMAA, a Director for the SMAA Jujutsu Division, and the Director of the Sennin Foundation Center for Japanese Cultural Arts. With several decades of training, in Japan and the USA, he has earned an eighth-degree black belt and the title of Shihan from the SMAA. One of three SMAA Primary Directors, he specializes in a form of Japanese jujutsu that also includes various weapon systems. On several occasions he has presented demonstrations in Tokyo, and he is the author of multiple books on Japanese culture, traditional arts, and forms of meditation.



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