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Shudokan Martial Arts Association ▪ PO Box 6022, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-6022
http://smaa-hq.com/ ▪ shudokan@smaa-hq.com ▪ 1-734-645-6441

ANNOUNCEMENTS

2012 DUES

Your SMAA dues for 2012 should be paid on or before January 1, 2012. Please send a check or money order to our headquarters in Michigan. You can also pay online with a major credit card. Drop by http://smaa-hq.com/payments.php and you can conveniently make your 2012 payment. All dues go to sustain the operation of our nonprofit organization.

2011 SMAA EUROPE SEMINAR

Thanks to all the SMAA members that participated in the 2011 SMAA Europe Seminar, which took place in London this summer. The featured instructor was Suzuki Kunio Sensei of Yokohama, Japan. Suzuki Sensei is Hanshi and eighth dan in Nakamura Ryu swordsmanship as well as a member of the SMAA Board of Advisors. He is one of several high-ranking teachers that represent the SMAA in Japan.

The seminar was hosted by John Evans Sensei, also a member of the SMAA Board of Advisors and a seventh dan in Nakamura Ryu. We appreciate the hard work that Evans Sensei and his students put into making this occasion a success.

Suzuki Sensei's weekend 2011 SMAA Europe Seminar in London focused on the practical application of the principles of Toyama Ryu and Nakamura Ryu battodo. Tenouchi ("inside the hands"—the gripping of the sword), enkeisen (the circular trajectory of the blade) and body

OBJECTIVES OF THE SMAA

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

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修道館武道会

Suzuki Kunio Sensei

movement as close as possible to walking style were explained. He stressed that the quality of Nakamura Ryu lies in its simplicity, and refinement comes from getting ever closer to minimal and natural body movement while using the momentum of the sword to move from one cut to another. This requires continuous study of the practical demands of combat together with forging of the abdominal center and hip power (tanden-tanren).

Half of the classes concentrated on detailed explanations of these principles and the

Suzuki Kunio Sensei

importance of adhering to them if Nakamura Sensei's insights are to be passed on. He stressed the great patience and subtlety that this apparently simple style requires and the easy temptations to elaborate or deviate from its severe demands. After the last session spent on tameshigiri ("test cutting") he returned to the importance of kata and his final demonstration of the ipponme technique amply demonstrated the power of simplicity.

The 2011 SMAA Europe Seminar was great preparation for the week long gasshuku in Scotland that followed. The location was the Tibetan Retreat Center on Holy Isle off the west coast of Scotland. This astoundingly beautiful island has been associated with spiritual practices for nearly 2000 years and ensured absolute concentration during the full days of classes with no distractions except

Suzuki Kunio Sensei and John Evans Sensei

nature. Every day started at 6:00 AM with a tanden-tanren session led by Evans Sensei. After breakfast this was followed by a three hour class that covered kihon ("basics") and kata ("forms") as well as sword maintenance and how to select a sword for practice. Over the course of the afternoon sessions, Suzuki Sensei gave every participant an individual class, while Evans Sensei led the rest in a practice on the seashore. On the last evening, Suzuki Sensei and Evans Sensei gave demonstrations of the Toyama Ryu and Nakamura Ryu kata and performed tameshigiri for a large audience, including retreat staff and visitors.

This was the first time one of the Japanese SMAA officials taught at an SMAA event, and we hope to

Training at the Tibetan Retreat Center on Holy Isle

feature more SMAA instructors from Japan at future seminars. Among the SMAA leadership are some of the top martial arts teachers in Japan—plus several experts in other Japanese cultural arts—including Iwasaki Hisashi Sensei (Soke of Kobori Ryu suieijutsu: samurai swimming and water combat), Otsuka Yasuyuki Sensei (Soke of Meifu Shinkage Ryu shuriken-jutsu), Omi Koji Sensei (Japanese yoga expert), and others. Their presence in the SMAA and their endorsement of SMAA ranks and policies affirms the contribution our group is making toward the accurate preservation of modern budo and koryu bujutsu around the world.

We'll be offering more training opportunities in 2012, complete with SMAA member discounts, and we hope that everyone will take advantage of this chance to train with some of the best teachers of Japanese martial disciplines active today.

TEACHING KARATE-DO TO CHILDREN – PART TWO

By Joseph Rippy and William Kelch

In *Teaching Karate-do to Children—Part 1*, we discussed the basic front kick. We emphasized that children are not miniature adults, that children tend to learn through their five senses, that they focus on the task immediately at hand, and that they should be taught in a progressive fashion where each skill is broken into component parts that are learned step-by-step. We will review the basic front kick and then move on to the basic front punch.

BASIC FRONT KICK

We discussed teaching the basic front kick by having children kick over a box about the height of each child's knee. The box has a straight stripe over the center of the top that serves to guide the path of the child's kick as the leg passes over the box. This stripe shows the correct straight path for the kick, and it also forces the child to raise the knee high enough so that the kick clears the box. The knee is raised from the ground until the knee is at least as high as the hip. The lower leg hangs relaxed from the knee. This can be referred to as the chambered position. The advanced chambering position requires that the lower leg be pulled as far back as possible, the heel touching the buttocks/hamstring.

Figure 1 – The student has begun his kick over the centerline of the box. Note that his knee is above the level of his hip

Figure 2 – The student has kicked over the centerline of the box. Note that the knee is fully extended, and, though you can't see it in this still picture, the leg has been pushed forward.

The lower leg is then snapped forward with a slight push at the end of its forward motion from the hips. The leg then snaps back to the chambered position. Balance must be maintained so that the person completing the kick can move forward, backward, left, or right – in whichever direction he/she chooses. It is critical that the person kicking remains balanced. Often beginners and children fall forward after kicking. This is not good. If the kick should fail for some reason, the person kicking may fall forward into a well-thrown punch. Definitely not good! Teachers must emphasize balance.

Figure 3 – The student's kick is withdrawn over the centerline of the box. Note that his knee has returned to exactly the same position as in Figure 1. (No, Figure 1 and Figure 3 are NOT the same photo. Look closely.) This demonstrates that a properly thrown kick must be withdrawn, under control, to the same place where it started.

Figure 4 – The student's foot is shown above the centerline of the box. Note that the box is against a wall to prevent the student from flaring the kick to his right.

Children will typically allow their kicks to flare out to the right when kicking with the right foot, and to the left when kicking with the left foot. This is very bad technique; indeed, if the kick flares enough, it is not a front kick at all; it is as if the kick were both a bad roundhouse kick and an incorrect front kick. This flaring can be prevented by placing the box against a wall to the right when practicing with the right leg and vice versa with the left.

Figure 5 – The student has begun his kick over the centerline of the box. Again note that his knee is above the level of his hip, and that the wall prevents his leg from flaring to the right

Figure 6 – The student has kicked over the centerline of the box. The wall ensures that the kick does not flare to the right.

Figures 1 through 6 demonstrate the use of the cardboard box to teach the basic front kick. They illustrate that the front kick should go straight out, i.e., it should cross directly over the stripe as it goes out from the chambered position and as it comes back to the chambered position. They also illustrate that the knee should come up to the level of the hip (or above) before the kick is thrown, and that the knee should also return to the same level when it is withdrawn after the kick. The kicking leg should always start and finish at the chambered position. The kick must always be controlled; it should never cause the body to be off balance.

Basic Front Punch

Correct punching is a complex maneuver involving the entire body. A punch is not just a fist and arm movement; indeed, a punch involving just the fist and arm doesn't qualify as a karate-do punch. Beginners, children included, must incorporate the hips into punches even if just standing in a basic shoulder width stance.

With the child standing in a shoulder width stance, one arm is extended forward with the extended fist between the solar plexus and the shoulders, about the level of the mid-sternum, of an imagined opponent standing in front of the child. (The imagined opponent is the same size as the child being taught.) This punch can also be delivered to the face. The other arm is held back in the withdrawn arm (chambered arm) position.

When the fist and arm are chambered, they should be parallel to the floor with a very slight tension felt in the shoulder. When the withdrawn arm punches, the hip on the same side of the punch, not the arm itself, first begins the forward movement. The punching arm is propelled by the slight forward movement of the hip and moves forward while the arm already extended comes back to the withdrawn arm (chambered arm) position. This punching movement is repeated.

Figure 7 demonstrates the basic front punch after it is delivered to the mid-sternum. (Note the shoulder width stance.) Figure 8 demonstrates a side view of the same punch, and the withdrawn arm (chambered arm) position. Figure 9 demonstrates the basic front punch delivered to the head.

Figure 7 – The basic front punch to the chest. Note the shoulder width stance

Figure 8 – Side view of basic punch to mid-sternum. Note the position of the chambered arm.

Here are some other essentials to proper punching. First, the punching arm must be absolutely relaxed until the hand reaches the target. Then the arm is stiffened to deliver the force of the "punching body." We use the term "punching body" because, though the fist at the end of the arm is the part of the body that actually makes contact with the opponent, the force delivered is not the tiny force delivered only by the fist and arm. The force delivered is the force of the entire body beginning with the forward movement of the hips followed by the recruitment of the entire body in a slight circular (rotational) movement. In other words, an effective punch is thrown with the whole body. While the fist and arm might be the delivery system, the force of the punch comes from the entire body. Though they do deliver the force, the fist and arm are almost irrelevant to generating the punch's force.

Figure 9 – Basic front punch to the head

One of the keys to generating this force, perhaps "the key," is the relaxation of the arm as it moves forward. The arm should be thought of as a rubber band with a heavy metal ball at the end of it. The metal ball is the fist. The metal ball is slung forward on the end of an extremely relaxed, and hence very fast moving, rubber band. (Think of a rubber band being snapped.) The metal ball flies at great velocity (speed) toward the target, and the energy generated by the high-speed ball is delivered to the individual at whom this missile is aimed. And remember, the punch is delivered with energy coming from an whole body, not just a fist and an arm.

Think a moment about some basic physics. Kinetic energy (KE) is one-half mass (M) multiplied by velocity (V) squared, i.e., $KE = \frac{1}{2} MV^2$. (Given that the ½ is a constant, we will ignore it.) Please notice that KE varies directly with M. In other words, if you double mass (M), you double kinetic energy (KE). So, punching with the entire body makes a huge difference. Punching with the mass of your entire body delivers much, much more kinetic energy than just the mass of your arm and fist. Amazing!

Even more amazing is the fact that the kinetic energy delivered varies with the square of the velocity! In other words, if the velocity of the punch doubles, the kinetic energy generated by the punch quadruples! If the velocity of the punch

quadruples, the energy of the punch increases 16 times! 16! Yikes! (And a stiff armed slow punch, ostensibly powerful because there is a lot of muscle behind it, is always weak when compared to a high velocity relaxed punch.)

Yes, we've just used a lot of exclamation marks for emphasis, but they are, in our view, justified. It is clear that the whole body must be thrown into a punch, not just the fist and arm. The metal ball at the end of the rubber band must be as big as possible, and the more body mass in the punch, the bigger the ball.

The punch must be very relaxed as it flies out. The metal ball must get where it's going at the fastest possible velocity. Think again of the rubber bad and how fast it flies. Think that twice velocity becomes four times the kinetic energy, and that four times velocity becomes sixteen times the kinetic energy. Always visualize a large, fast flying metal ball at the end of a snapped rubber band.

You are probably thinking now that none of this has anything to do with beginners, especially children. You might believe that five-year olds, even 10-year olds, simply don't do physics and algebra. You're right. But beginners, including children, must be taught that punches are not powered with a fist and arm. They are delivered with the entire body while the body, fist, and arm are all very relaxed until the moment of impact. Relaxation is key, and a teacher who does not say "Relax!" at least a couple dozen times during a one-hour karate-do lesson probably needs to rethink the lesson plan.

About the Authors: Joseph Rippy Sensei is a sixth dan, and William Kelch Sensei is a first dan, in the SMAA Karate-do Division. Rippy Sensei studied Wado Ryu karate-do under the art's founder, his son, and his grandson. This training has taken place in Japan and the USA, and Rippy Sensei is a member of the SMAA Board of Advisors.

NIPPON JUJUTSU: ORIGINS, MYTHS, AND MISCONCEPTIONS

By H. E. Davey

To understand the origins of jujutsu it is necessary to grasp its roots in Nippon, the island nation of Japan. While many Westerners have heard of jujutsu, it is often misunderstood. Among these misunderstandings are the actual roots of Nippon or Nihon jujutsu, and the idea that jujutsu in its original form is a wholly unarmed martial art. Other misconceptions have to do with what constitutes authentic techniques and the original ranking system used in most forms of ancient jujutsu.

"Jujutsu:" A Generic Name

Within the majority of classical bujutsu, "martial arts," the study of weaponry was of primary importance, just as it is for modern-day soldiers. However, some ryu ("systems") also included empty-handed techniques, which were married to the ryu's weapons. These forms of grappling were generically called "jujutsu." This very general word didn't exist before the Edo era, after around 1600. The word "jujutsu" may actually stem from non-samurai, who were interested in martial arts, but who weren't often well-versed in the ins and outs of the large variety of dissimilar ryu that existed at this time. It was this sort of person that referred to significantly different grappling found in unrelated ryu as "jujutsu," and the name stuck (especially after the dissolution of the samurai class in the late 1800s).

In former times, the various classical ryu commonly referred to their predominantly unarmed grappling methods using unique names often associated with their particular ryu, such as kumi uchi, kogusoku,

koshi-no-mawari, yawara-gi, hakuda, shubaku, kempo, taijutsu, wajutsu, and torite. Just as each of the classical ryu represents a distinct entity, with different characteristics, each of these names delineates a distinctive and particular form of combat. They were far from identical; all of these arts had, and in certain cases still have, their own flavor. The generic term "jujutsu" developed to give the average civilian an easy way of speaking about various related, but still distinct, grappling systems perpetuated within the diverse classical ryu. Predating jujutsu is the word "yawara." Ju is the Chinese reading of the character for yawara.

Over time as Japan entered a more peaceful era, some ryu began to emphasize jujutsu to a greater extent, while new ryu which had jujutsu as their main emphasis from the time of their inception were also developed, in many instances by non-bushi or by bushi of lower rank. As many as 725 "jujutsu ryu" once existed. This trend increased after the end of Japan's feudal period.

Previously, grappling systems were subsidiary parts of classical ryu and were practiced mainly by bushi, Japan's feudal era warriors. However, during the Edo period both the commoner and the bushi participated in yawara. Commoners, not being allowed to wear the bushi's long and short swords, concentrated on the more unarmed aspects of jujutsu and were more interested in arts relating to self-defense in a civil as opposed to battlefield or castle context. While many of the koryu, "ancient ryu," continued to be unavailable to commoners, the instructors of certain koryu offshoots provided civilians with previously unknown knowledge.

Ohsaki Jun Sensei, SMAA Senior Advisor, pinning an opponent using Nihon jujutsu

Categories of Classic Jujutsu

In general jujutsu during the Edo period was practiced by bushi, ashigaru ("foot soldiers"), torikata ("medieval police"), and civilians. Bushi yawara developed within the koryu, and it was used with weapons. In genuinely old systems it considered the fact that the bushi might be wearing armor and facing a similarly clad opponent, both of whom had to be able to fall safely as well as perform other actions while wearing two swords. The wearing of arms and armor limited how one could grapple and fall as well as the techniques that could be used. (Try a typical forward rolling fall, as in judo, while wearing armor and dual swords on one hip.)

Striking techniques were less common (to protect the hands and feet from being injured when hitting armor), and if they did exist, were sometimes done using the butt end of weapons. Grasping the clothing was less prevalent, because when wearing armor there wasn't much clothing to grip. Joint locking techniques needed to consider where different pieces of armor came together, and in this sense they had something in common with cutting with a sword. So, if you visit a dojo claiming to teach a version of really ancient jujutsu try to visualize the techniques you see in the context of two people wearing arms and armor. If you can't see how the techniques could be done under these circumstances you might want to ask the teacher about this.

Foot soldiers were often less educated, not as well-armed or armored as the bushi, and lower-ranking. As a result their yawara, unlike bushi yawara, was rarely designed to be used in a castle setting, made

Kevin Heard Sensei, SMAA Jujutsu Division sixth dan, teaching in California

greater use of their powerful bodies (particularly their legs), and allowed a freedom of movement unavailable to the bushi.

Yawara developed by the police permitted an even greater freedom of movement, because the police did not need to be concerned with, for example, falling safely while wearing arms and armor. Their techniques emphasized non-lethal (mainly) unarmed techniques as well as arresting methods.

Yawara developed by commoners was geared toward empty-handed techniques of personal protection designed for civilian life. Most forms of jujutsu which exist today, and which are not sub-sections of a koryu, stem from the last two categories.

JUJUTSU IN THE WEST

Jujutsu is uniquely Japanese as are all koryu bujutsu and budo. The old forms of jujutsu stem from martial traditions born before the ending of the samurai era in 1868. Newer forms of jujutsu, which invariably and logically must come from the pre-1868 koryu jujutsu, can still be thought of as Nippon jujutsu. There is a clear process at work here by which authentic techniques and battle-hardened principles were handed down.

You can actually compare this to classic cars, which can also have a meaningful history and lineage. The legendary Porsche brand is often thought of as an "automobile to aspire to" due to over 60 years of racing success, positive road tests, and quality engineering. It began with the 356 model in 1948. This later evolved into the legendary 911 in 1963, a car that still exists today and one that is highly regarded. Even in the pictures accompanying this article you can see the 911's clear visual connection with its predecessor, the first car being designed by Dr. Ferry Porsche, with the 911 being styled by his son.

Early 356 and 911 cars are quite valuable, and Porsches have their own car shows that are well-attended. However, putting a Porsche engine into a Corvette body and chassis, then mating it with a Ford transmission, is tough to pull off. It doesn't always run well, and even if it works great you

1952 Porsche 356

1960 Porsche 911

won't be able to enter such a car as a Porsche in most prestigious car shows, it won't command Porsche prices at auction, and no knowledgeable car guy (or gal) will think of it as a Porsche. If you tried to market a line of such cars as Porsches, lawyers from a certain German company would be contacting you in short order.

Even if it runs great and even if you stick the Porsche crest on the hood, its mishmash is just too far removed from the brand identity of Porsche to be thought of as real. Nippon jujutsu also has a brand identity.

So what doesn't qualify as authentic Japanese jujutsu is something developed outside of Japan by Westerners who never studied either ancient or newer forms of jujutsu. A mishmash of judo, karate-do, and aikido is like a kit car with miscellaneous parts that are only peripherally related to a storied brand. It may perform and handle well, but you probably shouldn't call it a Porsche or Ferrari. This sort of "jujutsu" is found in overwhelming numbers outside of Japan (and in Japan in certain cases) and outnumbers authentic jujutsu.

And this is even the case for some dojo founded in Europe or the USA by Japanese, who are using the name of an ancient form of jujutsu. Especially in the early 20th century, some Japanese took up residence in the West, and some of them really did have training in Nihon jujutsu. The problem, with a few exceptions, is that most of them heavily modified what they taught. This isn't too different from what happens to Asian food in the West.

Some of you may have gone to Taiwan or China. If you went to a restaurant while you were there, you probably discovered the food you were served was different from the Chinese food you ate in London or Chicago, even if both were served in restaurants run by Chinese people. What you ate back in Chicago was probably an Americanized version, adjusted for American tastes. This is typically quite different from what is served in Asia, even if it goes by the same name, and even if it is prepared by a Chinese chef.

In 1926, my late father started practicing forms of jujutsu and also Kodokan judo in the Pacific Northwest, a part of the U.S. which has long had a relatively large Asian population in some of its cities. He eventually landed in Japan for several years after World War II, where he continued to study Nihon jujutsu. He later practiced aikido under Japanese teachers as well.

His instructors in the Northwest were both Japanese and American. Some of the Japanese teachers indicated they were offering instruction in venerable jujutsu systems like Kito Ryu, Tenjin Shin'yo Ryu, and others. Some simply offered "jujutsu," which tells about all you need to know

2011 Porsche 911

Wayne Muromoto, SMAA Jujutsu Division sixth dan, teaching in Hawaii

about the authenticity of what they taught. Years later, after he'd lived in Japan, my dad concluded that while the names of some of what he studied in the U.S. were associated with bona fide koryu jujutsu, the techniques were so altered from the original remaining kata in Japan that he might as well have studied another martial art. Fortunately, this wasn't true for everything he practiced.

Even more fortunate is the fact that several authentic forms of ancient and modern Nihon jujutsu can be found in the SMAA Jujutsu Division. We just might have the widest variety of legitimate jujutsu ryu outside of Japan of any martial arts group I've encountered. We're privileged to be in the SMAA global partnership of Japanese and Western martial arts experts, who represent a vast variety of contemporary and early martial arts. A large spectrum of disciplines are practiced by SMAA leaders, far more than is obvious from looking at the six divisions currently active in our group.

Jujutsu for Self-Defense

"If you really want to learn about street self-defense, you should study some kind of koryu bujutsu like jujutsu." I've read this quite a few times on the Internet, and it draws some erroneous conclusions about koryu bujutsu, which in turn makes one's understanding of at least the ancient forms of jujutsu suspect.

The implication is that as opposed to the classical and modern forms of budo, the ancient forms of bujutsu, as practiced by the hoary bushi, somehow provide people with a system of devastating street-fighting. This assumption, which influences what one expects to see when encountering authentic koryu jujutsu, is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the differences between classical bujutsu and budo, modern bujutsu and budo, and goshin-jutsu ("self-defense"). It incorrectly supposes that modern budo (judo, karate-do, etc.) is completely ineffective for civil self-protection, and that koryu bujutsu is entirely efficient in this regard.

Actually, although either combative form can be used as means of personal protection with sometimes great effectiveness, neither budo or koryu bujutsu is designed exclusively for "self-defense." Classical bujutsu is effective, without modification, only in a feudal Japanese battlefield or castle context. It was an art designed for the ancient Japanese military. Likewise, modern bujutsu is designed for the current military or police, and thus will emphasize the use of weapons such as machine guns and hand grenades, which the average civilian will not, one would hope, be carrying on the street. The operative word here is, "martial," which (strictly speaking) connotes a military usage.

Civilian systems of combat are ultimately directed to self-defense. A bar fight, a mugging, an attempted rape, a drunk shoving match, these are unfortunately not wholly unknown in any civil society. Thus, a civilian art of self-defense is directed to protection of the self. It's personal. Yet, all koryu bujutsu, including koryu jujutsu, is focused on the protection of the group, be it one's

clan or one's nation. You don't join today's army to learn self-defense, and army training is not primarily concerned with what amount to one-on-one duals. The same could have been said about the samurai and their military training.

Therefore most of the "martial arts" found today are not, technically speaking, martial at all, in that they are not, were not, and/or cannot be used by a given group in a military context. In Japan, the actual study of civilian self-protection is termed goshin-jutsu, and it is not widely emphasized as Japan is a fairly peaceful society. Individuals in the West who are interested in learning self-protection exclusively would be advised to seek out an actual self-defense or anti-rape course.

The drawback of such courses is that they rarely involve an ongoing program of instruction, which is vital for maintaining readiness, and they often include little mental training to allow students to be psychologically equipped to deal with an actual emergency. In contrast, traditional Asian combative methods, whether modern budo or koryu bujutsu, while not providing immediate gratification in terms of modern civil self-protection, offer ongoing mental and physical cultivation, which can result in effective skills of individual self-defense as by-products of extended training.

In short, modern budo is not inevitably less effective than koryu bujutsu for self-defense, but it would not be applicable in an ancient Japanese battlefield context. Neither modern budo or koryu bujutsu, including jujutsu, have civilian self-defense as their sole or primary objective, but depending on the martial art and the ryu they can be useful for self-defense.

Jujutsu Rank

"I have a black belt in jujutsu." Sometimes people call our dojo and tell me this. I often ask, "Which ryu?" Baffled silence often follows my question.

Jujutsu, as has been noted, is more or less a generic term used to conveniently describe a variety of often dissimilar minimally armed Japanese arts. Aside from the fact that classical forms of jujutsu do not always give modern black belt degrees (dan), to say that one has a rank in simply jujutsu is like saying that a person has a black belt in "predominantly unarmed combat." The word "jujutsu" is actually that non-specific.

Imagine meeting someone who states that he has a master's degree in science. When asked what branch of science he majored in, he states again that his degree is in "science." Just as no reputable university will give an advanced degree in such a broad subject, no legitimate instructor will claim a degree in simply "jujutsu."

On the other hand, it is true that some large, multi-disciplinary koryu bujutsu/budo umbrella organizations in Japan issue certificates indicating that one's ranking is in "jujutsu" without specifying the exact ryu on the certificate. This is usually because a board of senior-ranking examiners from many different arts (not just one ryu of jujutsu) has approved the rank, and the group's jujutsu division may include several forms of jujutsu. Still, even in this case the individual is graded upon their knowledge of a specific, recognized ryu. For organizational reasons, however, this is not always indicated on the diplomas issued by such groups, and the SMAA falls into this category.

While the leaders of our group have high ranks in recognized ryu, or "martial systems," each rank we issue comes from the SMAA division devoted to that martial art. It is a ranking within that division and within our group.

For example, while our jujutsu division has a member with high rank in Takeuchi Ryu, we cannot offer you ranking in this ryu. Only the current headmaster of Takeuchi Ryu jujutsu can legitimately offer such certification. In the case of the ancient martial arts, it is especially important to

Stephen Fabian Sensei, SMAA Jujutsu Division seventh dan, teaching in New Jersey

note this fact. Be skeptical of any martial arts group that indicates something different.

We can, nevertheless, offer members of our jujutsu division ranking within this division, meaning that based on your years of dedication to Takeuchi Ryu, technical proficiently in this ryu, and historical and philosophical knowledge of this ryu, we can give you ranking within the SMAA. Your certificate would indicate that you had received a "godan in the SMAA Jujutsu Division," while not mentioning a specific ryu. Such ranking is not easily earned and is of great value. This is the most any association that is legitimate can do.

In Japan famed multi-discipline associations like the Dai Nippon Butokukai and the Kokusai Budoin are only offering ranking and teaching certification from, and within, their group. They cannot, and will not, grant rank in a specific ryu as only the current head of each ryu has the authority to issue such certification.

The subject of dan, so-called "black belts," is also often not well-understood nor is the history of the kyu/dan system. People who have obtained black belts are called yudansha, "person with dan." Holders of kyu, a lower class rank, are mudansha, "people without dan."

Today's belt system is the product of the commoner class in Japan, not the warrior class. It was created by Kano Jigoro Sensei, the founder of judo, after the abolition of the samurai caste in the late 1800s. Kano Sensei was a commoner, a well-heeled commoner, whose family owned a sake mill, and prior to the ending of the samurai his family belonged to the merchant caste, the lowest social class. Contrastingly, koryu bujutsu evolved among the bushi, a different societal class, and therefore trying to rationalize the kyu/dan system with ancient martial arts in Japan is flawed on the basis of history.

Until recently, relatively speaking, you could recognize a modern martial art by the fact that it issued dan and kyu grades. Koryu bujutsu, including koryu jujutsu, originally did not use the belt system, instead they offered menkyo which are often teaching licenses, and this approach usually has fewer levels. Generally three to five levels of menkyo are available, compared to the modern kyu/dan system with as many as ten kyu and ten dan. People accustomed to the plethora of colored belts offered in modern budo are sometimes mystified by this limited number of ranks, wondering how quality control can be maintained and teachers certified. It's actually easy.

How many "ranks" are issued at most universities? Ten? Well, no, actually just three. Harvard and Yale seem to get along pretty well with a measly bachelor's degree, master's degree, and PhD. Originally koryu jujutsu wasn't much different.

That said, history and trends have their own momentum; the kyu/dan system is ubiquitous these days. In recent years Daito Ryu, Hakko Ryu, Hontai Yoshin Ryu, and other forms of bona fide Nihon jujutsu have started to issue kyu and dan. Hakko Ryu issues kyu and dan up to a certain level, and then switches to something approximating the menkyo system. Takeda Sokaku Sensei, for all

The author teaching shime waza, "strangling techniques."

intents and purposes the "founder" of Daito Ryu in the modern era, didn't use dan. His successor and son, Takeda Tokimune Sensei, started using the kyu/dan system despite this.

And in groups like the SMAA having two systems for ranking and certifying instructors isn't practical; the kyu/dan system makes the most sense for us as it is most well known. Plus, with several martial arts under one banner, and several styles of each martial art, we needed a common approach. Other multi-discipline groups like Kyoto's Dai Nippon Butokukai and the Kokusai Budoin in Tokyo came to a similar conclusion.

Still, the martial tradition I'm associated with has never used a system of ten dan, and we only receive a limited number of menkyo. But my students are free to apply for dan from the SMAA, and I'm grateful for my own SMAA seventh dan. So, perhaps how rank is issued in jujutsu is changing, and this is definitely the case for newer systems of jujutsu. But what is universal is the idea that there is no such thing as "jujutsu." Ryu exist and some of them focus on jujutsu, and skill is found (and evaluated) within these Japanese martial traditions. They all have unique histories and specific names.

Recognizing Nippon Jujutsu

"I'm certain my teacher is showing us real Japanese-style jujutsu (or kenjutsu, bojutsu, etc.). Some of his movements are identical to the ones I've seen in samurai movies from Japan."

I've heard this before as well. So have Steve Fabian Sensei, Ohsaki Jun Sensei, Kevin Heard Sensei, Wayne Muromoto Sensei, and a bunch other longtime Nippon jujutsu teachers in the SMAA. Speaking for myself, I'm sympathetic to anyone's desire to have faith in their sensei, but this kind of statement reveals a huge lack of knowledge concerning Japanese martial arts in general.

Samurai movies are not usually written and produced by martial arts experts. Their goal isn't educational, but aimed at entertainment, and real koryu bujutsu is often deceptively simple. It doesn't necessarily look good on film. Those aren't real swords in *Seven Samurai*, and while sometimes real martial artists are consulted in moviemaking their goal is still to entertain more than recreate.

In recent years, on the other hand, more forms of true jujutsu are appearing on video in Japan. Over 20 years ago I used to have to hop on a plane, go to the Kanda section of Tokyo, and then hunt for Maruzen, Kinokuniya, or some other bookstore to find such videotapes. And then only a very limited selection could be found. Now I can buy such films on the Internet with the click of a mouse. Some of these DVDs, often in violation of copyright, are appearing on YouTube as well. If someone wants to learn Kiraku Ryu jujutsu from a video (for instance), they can try. They can also claim to be an expert and teach this to others.

They just can't do it very well.

But their students can look at the Kiraku Ryu DVD and recognize techniques that, at least superficially, look the same. Buyers beware and

bear in mind that few legitimate jujutsu sensei in Japan will put all of their kata on video. You should be getting more than what is on the video, and your sensei should be able to offer more proof than skills that generally resemble a video. Membership and certification from a group like the SMAA, or another association with Japanese teachers among its membership, is typical of real Nippon jujutsu teachers. Be leery of people that don't have this certification.

You should be able to join your sensei's group as well. Most jujutsu groups in Japan, which certify people to teach in and outside of Japan, will also certify their "grandstudents" and offer them membership in the ryu or association. Being part of a group is a central part of Japanese culture. If you can't in some way, and at some rank, be directly associated with your sensei's jujutsu ryu, certification organization, or association be skeptical. You'll also usually get proof of rank and/or association directly from the headquarters.

In addition, it is not uncommon for koryu bujutsu and modern budo to bear little resemblance to what we might imagine them to look like. When discussing jujutsu it is not always possible to trust even the descriptions of native Japanese teachers of other combative disciplines. For instance, one of my students was born in Japan. He first came to our dojo because he had "always wanted to see some form of jujutsu." This person had twenty years of experience in judo and had lived in Tokyo for much of his life . . . but he had never seen jujutsu. Jujutsu just isn't widely practiced in Japan, nor are most martial arts without a sport element. (Aikido is a more recent exception to this rule.)

For this reason, what one sometimes hears from teachers of other Japanese martial arts is frequently based on what they *think* jujutsu looks like or what they have heard others say about it. To be blunt, learn about Nippon jujutsu from jujutsu teachers; don't automatically trust what teachers of other martial arts have to say about it or what they write. They may be right, they may be misinformed, and they may have their own ax to grind. Going to the source is best.

Explaining how to recognize authentic Nihon jujutsu, beyond asking for proof of certification from valid groups, is a huge subject. Fabian Sensei, a Director for the SMAA Jujutsu Division and seventh dan, did a fine job of addressing this for our journal. You can find his article on our website: http://smaa-hq.com/articles.php?articleid=10.

Are you researching jujutsu in general, a specific ryu, or a particular dojo? You can send your questions to leaders in the SMAA Jujutsu Division. We'll be happy to help. Just send e-mail to shudokan@smaa-hq.com, and your mail will be forwarded to some of the top jujutsu authorities in the world.

Reading is a good start, but direct experience is even better. Fabian Sensei, Nicklaus Suino Sensei, Kevin Heard Sensei, and other top teachers of Nihon jujutsu have presented this art form at past SMAA events. I've taught jujutsu at SMAA Seminars a few times, too. If you really want to get a feel for Japanese jujutsu come to an SMAA event that includes this art. These seminars are big fun. I can't recall hearing a single argument, which even I find hard to believe. But it's true, and I can almost guarantee you'll have a good time and learn something new. We won't usually teach you all our kata, unless you join the ryu of the teacher being featured, but you can see, feel, and try authentic jujutsu—Japan's oldest martial art.

About the Author: H. E. Davey started studying Nippon jujutsu at five years of age, and he's practiced more than one style of jujutsu in Japan and the USA. He is the Director of the Sennin Foundation Center for Japanese Cultural Arts, which was established in 1981. A Director for the SMAA Jujutsu Division, he has received a Shihan certificate and seventh dan from the SMAA and a seventh dan from the Kokusai Budoin in Tokyo.

SHU HA RI – (PART ONE)

By Jay Mijares

***Shu**: Observe the old without straying.*
The student studies directly under the teacher's way.

I would describe my first few months of training in Nakamura Ryu batto-do to be the equivalent of drinking water from a fire hose. But isn't it always like that when you're thrust into something after having a bit too many preconceived notions?

Perhaps my viewpoint was skewed by some of those movie moments that I remembered fondly, and so I imagined when I first stepped into the dojo that I'd entered a secret world where I would soon have imparted to me hidden knowledge passed down from a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away. I expected to step through a beaded curtain and into a place with high ornamented ceilings with a hazy curtain of white smoke and incense permeating the room. I couldn't wait to try out my techniques on a legion of bad guys who I knew would only attack me one at a time. Enemies who, when finally defeated, would surrender to me their "Quickening," because in the end there could be only one. And at the end of the battle, seated in seiza at the center of the dojo is a kindly Mr. Miyagi telling me with an almost ethereal voice to "Wax on. Wax off." And then reality set in.

The reality in this case is something that Guy Power Sensei always tried to impart to me during the first few years that I studied with him: In the beginning, you have to be like clay—it doesn't matter what kind of clay you came from—and you have let the potter do his thing.

"A little knowledge is a dangerous thing. So is a lot."
— Albert Einstein

Perhaps like many iaidoka (or aspiring iaidoka, "iaido practitioners"), my introduction to iai kata was through books, most notably *Japanese Swordsmanship: Technique and Practice* by Gordon Warner and the late Donn F. Draeger. I remember seeing the book in the Sports/Recreation section of the J. Paul Leonard Library when I was a student at San Francisco State University. At that time, I was heavy into foil fencing and archery. (Nevertheless, I had to be constantly reminded by my fencing instructor that the pointy end goes into your opponent; you can't slash with a foil!) When the semester of fencing ended, I spent time in the library reading through books on fencing so that I could improve my technique for next semester. And that's when I stumbled upon the Warner & Draeger book. I was instantly smitten. I'm sure if someone went back and pulled my library records they'd see that I checked this book out and tried to renew it several times, and I had, on at least one occasion, filled up my library copy card and photocopied the kata for study at home.

What began then was a somewhat haphazard adventure of self-teaching involving a razor-sharp 440 stainless steel katana with a cheap plastic handle. Somehow I managed to tie the sageo in Daimyo Musubi fashion, took my thickest belt and stashed my katana in it, and proceeded to strut around the living room like Mifune Toshiro. And then I pushed the furniture in my small living room all the way to the sides and started to practice the kata as I saw them in the book.

In the moments that followed I was rising up from seiza. (Was it a correct seiza? I don't know. All I know is that it was uncomfortable.) From there, I did a horizontal cut and brought my katana sword overhead and followed with a straight downward cut. I imagined my enemy fallen before me as I brought the katana in a wide arc to perform chiburi (cleansing the sword of blood) and noto (sheathing).

This self-taught madness continued for a few months when, much like most home exercise equipment, my stainless steel sword was forgotten, and the photocopies found themselves in a pile along with other university papers. Forgotten, that is, until I left university and got a real job. And with that real job not only came the purchase of an actual copy of the Warner & Draeger book (plus several others on the topic), but also an iaito ("iaido sword") from what was known back in the late 1990s as Cutting Edge Technologies. Somehow, the purchase of that $800 iaito started me thinking that I really needed to find an instructor.

I suppose now would be a good time to mention that I had acquired an iaito, sword bag, obi ("belt"), kendo gi, and hakama (pleated skirt-like pants) all before I had even found a qualified instructor! All of my personal pieces were in place, but I was still missing that surreal smoky training hall and the kindly Mr. Miyagi. Enter Guy Power Sensei . . .

"We make sacred pact. I promise teach karate to you, you promise to learn. I say, you do, no questions."

- *Mr. Miyagi*, The Karate Kid *(1984)*

As I first stepped into Power Sensei's Kenshinkan Dojo, I was very surprised. There was no beaded curtain over the threshold, just a small door a tad slimmer than a standard door, but only about three and a half feet high. At five foot five, I had to stoop to go in. Power Sensei entered first and I followed. He took off his cap and bowed as he entered and I bowed as he did. Power Sensei then excused himself and left the dojo for a few moments.

While I was alone in the training space, I looked around. Kenshinkan Dojo's home was a small converted racquetball court. There were high ceilings but no smoke wafting up to the rafters. Up front was a small statue of Fudo Myo flanked by a large wooden plaque with black calligraphy and a blue banner with white calligraphy that I later learned read "Kenshinkan Dojo." And on the wall to the left were various framed photos of Nakamura Taizaburo Sensei from his days in the Japanese army and a picture of him doing tameshigiri (test cutting) in the 1960s or 1970s. On the opposite wall, mounted about eight feet up, was the kamidana ("deity shelf"). A sword rack with two iaito and about eight bokken ("wooden swords"), some encased in plastic saya ("scabbards"), was mounted on the wall immediately to my right.

Nakamura Taizaburo Sensei with Guy Power Sensei

The door then opened behind me and in came Power Sensei with a bucket of water and a large mop. Immediately my brain started to chant, "Soap on, soap off. Soap on, soap off."

As Power Sensei began to clean the floor—it was my first night and I was more of a guest—he began to tell me about the history of Nakamura Ryu batto-do and his teacher Nakamura Taizaburo Sensei. I found it interesting that Nakamura Ryu was a young style, only about 50 years old when I first set foot in the dojo.

After the floor clean up was done, other students started to trickle in, about six in all. I eventually

Guy Power Sensei in action

changed into my training uniform, complete with the kendo gi, hakama, and obi that I'd gotten from an online resource. And suddenly Power Sensei, also in his training uniform, had a big smile as he walked toward me. I knew I was about to learn lesson number one.

He was pointing at my hakama bands, which I had taught myself to tie: a knot tied off in a nice cute bow, not unlike a bow you'd see tying Little Bo Peep's bonnet to her head. As I gave him my best deer in the headlights look, Power Sensei proceeded to tie off my hakama bands in a quick knot, and at the end of class he showed me how to tie it properly.

"Somewhere something incredible is waiting to be known."

- Dr. Carl Sagan

After the initial embarrassment of the hakama band bow incident, class began in earnest, and I witnessed a living art, one my (soon to be) teacher had studied directly under the creator of the style, a creator who was then still alive and still teaching the art which he had created. Power Sensei proceeded to teach me how to hold my iaito in chudan no kamae, the mid-level guard stance. I held my katana with the tip right at the level of my eyes. Power Sensei told me to lower it. Initially I protested, saying that's not what I learned from the book. Ah, but then Power Sensei reminded me that even if it was something from a book, it wasn't the way it was done in Nakamura Ryu. So I adjusted the angle. He fixed it some more.

I was gripping the tsuka too tight. He told me to loosen my death grip on it. My stance was too wide, and my left foot was turned at a ninety degree angle from my leading foot, a tip of the hat to my old fencing days. Power Sensei told me to point my toes towards my opponent. Now my grip on the tsuka was too loose and when I moved my arms, my katana wiggled with about as much grace as a pool noodle. Then Power Sensei told me that I needed to square my hips and shoulders towards my imaginary opponent. Huh, I thought, you mean I actually have to face my enemy directly? All of this adjusting was just over the basic engarde stance. I felt myself start to get overwhelmed as my shot glass-sized brain was about to absorb a pint's worth of information. Then Power Sensei told me that there were seven more defensive stances. Had I been a balloon, I would have deflated into a shriveled mess before his very eyes.

As class continued I bore witness to some of the many facets of Nakamura Ryu batto-do. Power Sensei demonstrated many of the kata for the class and me. I was awed by the control he had over the katana and at his presence as he went through each kata. Never having attended a martial arts class before, I thought the kiai was just some focused yell, like a grunt when a weight lifter tries to lift twice his body weight over his head. But this was something more. Something deeper. There was a power and a focus in his kiai that shot through the dojo like a thunderclap over a wide and vast plain.

Despite the embarrassment and the overwhelming tide of information that rushed over me, something wonderful happened that night. I learned! The

following day was a workday, but I hardly slept that night because my mind tried to process the very brief, but extremely complex, lesson I had learned. I went over the basics of the defensive stance I learned and tried to decipher the many cuts which I had seen Power Sensei do.

It was still a few more months after that first lesson before I started to attend Power Sensei's class regularly, but when I did it became an inseparable part of my Sunday evenings. Despite living 35 miles away, and getting home after 9:00 PM, and having to get up for work at 4:45 AM the following morning, I diligently made an effort to attend class despite the traffic, rising gas prices, bad weather, and the weariness of some weekends.

For nearly three and a half years I absorbed all I could about Nakamura Ryu batto-do, learning from Power Sensei and doing my best to incorporate what he said. At his recommendation I began observing the old videos of Nakamura Sensei preserved on VHS and DVD, and I started studying the photos in Nakamura Sensei's published books. Most important of all, I put the other iaido books aside and focused strictly on my own Sensei's teaching.

This all culminated in the summer of 2001 when several members of the International Batto-Do Federation in Yokohama, Japan came to San Diego, California for a taikai (group event). Most of Kenshinkan Dojo's regular members, including myself, traveled to San Diego with Power Sensei to participate. It wouldn't be my first public demonstration of batto-do as I had done a demonstration for my office with Power Sensei two years before, but it would be the first time that I would demonstrate what I learned of batto-do in front of my sensei's teachers and colleagues. The highlight of the seminars that long weekend was when Sato Shimeo Sensei, the highest ranked of the visitors, chose me as his "model," showing the several dozen iaidoka at the seminar the proper parts of the body to strike with the katana. It was

Guy Power Sensei and Suzuki Kunio Sensei in Japan

an honor to be chosen for the role, and after those years of training under Power Sensei, I didn't flinch as Sato Sensei used my sword, with a sharpened blade, to show the rest of the folks gathered there where to strike.

Also at the seminar was Suzuki Kunio Sensei, who joined the SMAA in 2010 as a Senior Advisor. As I watched him demonstrate his kata, I saw the same strength and precision in how he handled his katana that I saw in Power Sensei the first night I visited Kenshinkan Dojo. Even more interesting was how Suzuki Sensei performed noto, the re-sheathing of his katana. There was a certain mannerism about it, the movement of his hands across the tsuka (sword handle) that Power Sensei had incorporated into his noto as well. How interesting, I thought, to have seen even such subtle mannerisms passed down from Suzuki Sensei to Power Sensei and then eventually to me.

The seminar came to a close quickly that weekend

Suzuki Sensei (left) performing at the Meiji Shrine

in June 2001, but the training was not yet over. A few days after the events of San Diego, Kenshinkan Dojo had the honor of having a special training session with the visitors from Japan. For a single afternoon the visiting sensei, minus Suzuki Sensei who had to return to Japan right after the San Diego Taikai, trained with us in our dojo back in the San Francisco Bay Area. They taught us, and we trained among them, side by side, learning from them and absorbing all that they were giving us. It was like a symphony in motion, in sync, moving towards a rousing finish. What I learned in that one afternoon reinforced what Power Sensei had taught me over the past four years. It was confirmation for me from the visiting sensei that I had learned well under Power Sensei.

As that wonderful summer came to an end, it seemed like I had reached the height of my batto-do studies. To have trained with Power Sensei, and to have trained with his teachers and colleagues, and to have even exchanged some parting gifts with them, it seemed like a part of my training had come full circle. (I was given a sword bag previously owned by Nakamura Sensei, plus an obi.) To reach such a stage in my training, once the euphoria faded away, caused me to wonder, what's next? Not long after that, I had my answer. I was promoted to nidan ("second dan") in Nakamura Ryu batto-do and, with Power Sensei's encouragement, started down the path to another part of my training. And this part of the journey proved to be even more interesting than the first.

About the Author: Jay Mijares is an associate member of the SMAA. He lives in California, and he studied Nakamura Ryu swordsmanship under Guy Power Sensei, Shihan/seventh dan and the Co-director of the SMAA Iaido Division.

NIKO NIKO SENSEI

By Wayne Muromoto

Before he retired from his position as an elementary school principal, he was known as Niko Niko Sensei to his young school children. "Niko Niko" is one of those onomatopoetic Japanese words that sounds like what it means, in this case, someone who's always smiling. Hence, in translation he could be called "Principal Smiley Face." He looked that happy and kind to little kids. They just loved him.

Walk up a dirt path to his ancestral family martial arts dojo, however, and you would find that Mr. Smiley Face's real name is Takenouchi Tojuro, the thirteenth master of the Sodenke line of the Takenouchi school of martial arts, a lineage that goes back more than 450 years. (My own line of Takenouchi or Takeuchi Ryu is the Bitchuden line, an offshoot of the two main lines of the Sodenke and Soke).

Some martial arts folk might think the nickname somewhat odd, given the stereotype of a martial artist in the West, due to too many scowling, dour martial arts actors who mumble their way through

scripts in which vengeance ("You killed my master/family/lover/tribe/dog/goldfish!!!!") is the prime motivating factor in the story arc.

The kids loved Niko Niko sensei, however, because he was always smiling and kindly, hardly the epitome of the angry, violent-prone, bulging-muscle tough martial arts guy. When he did do *embu* (martial arts demonstrations), however, his warrior's gaze (*kaeru no me*) and *kiai* were frightening. Even before a technique was applied, his focus and presence could scare the heck out of an opponent.

Some might call this something of a split personality. I would call it practical and down-to-earth. The older I get, the more I realize that to get through everyday, normal social interactions, a good sense of humor, mutual respect and gentle humanity is the best way to live. Forever being on edge, tense and nervous, as portrayed in some martial arts movies and even in some dojo, is simply a cause for hypertension and an early demise due to stress throwing your hormones out of whack.

That is not to say that a budo dojo is a place where you just yuck it up. Far from it. But neither should it be a place where students fear that they are going to get their heads kicked in by their seniors if they forget to address them properly once or twice, or where their teachers act like unreconstructed military boot camp drill instructors from the bad old days before hazing was made illegal.

For me, a dojo should embody the best, classiest social attributes of the society it's in. As a place for studying a martial "Way" (meaning a method of self-discipline to attain physical, mental and spiritual well-being), the atmosphere should be focused, disciplined, attentive and respectful. Students should be self-motivated to try to excel themselves. This being the case, there should be no need for negative reinforcement or verbal or physical punishment to motivate a student because he/she is already self-motivated to learn.

This sense of humane-ness, of humanity and gentleness within the obviously and *a* priori accepted conditions of physical danger and grueling regime of a budo dojo, was also a topic of conversation the last time I had a long conversation with my own Takeuchi Ryu teacher, Ono Yotaro Sensei. He was commenting on the fact that after he had knee surgery a year before, he had gotten frustrated over the time it was taking for him to get back into some amount of physical shape so that he could do jujutsu again.

Then, he said he realized perhaps he had to stop grumbling to himself and use the time to THINK more about martial arts.

"I used to always say to my students, you start from one and go to ten, and then go back to one, as far as techniques went," he said, referring to the old saying about how it's important to always go back to basics no matter how advanced you got. But Ono Sensei said that when he was laid up for a while, he realized the saying also referred to one's spiritual training in budo.

When you are a child, you are innocent and wide-eyed, accepting of many things. Then you begin to make distinctions and develop into a discerning adult. Sometimes we become too rigid and dour, he said, and we have to realize that we have to return to the simple happiness and joy we experienced as a child.

It's not exactly a return back to being as naive as a child, he noted, but more like a spiral upward. You return to the feeling of acceptance and youthful happiness, even though you do not discard your maturity, knowledge and experiences. Hence, you can be child-like, but not child-ish. So when you love, you love fully, without conniving or dissembling. When you train, you train because it is just so much fun to train, not because you are

constantly worried about beating someone up or being beaten up.

Having a proper attitude will affect how well you advance into the higher levels of techniques, Ono Sensei argued.

"Before the surgery, I used to stop at my thinking, where I thought, for example, having a powerful ki ("spiritual energy") and presence was the essence of one's mental and spiritual abilities when doing a technique. Now I don't think so…I think the essence is having nyuunanshin ("a flexible spirit"), which is like being like a frog, or a baby…"

He explained, for example, the "kaeru no me," or "frog's gaze." That's a term our system uses for how your eyes are fixed. When doing a technique, one should have the unfathomable gaze of a frog, as it is ready to capture an insect. The insect has no idea it's about to be dinner because the frog doesn't let on what it's thinking through its expression or eyes.

Ono Sensei said he used to think the kaeru no me was because you were so tough, your eyes would display a tough, hard gaze.

"But you know what? A frog doesn't know tough. A frog just knows being a frog. So whether it's about to swallow an insect, or whether you grab it in your hands and it suddenly has to jump away, its eyes and expressions are the same. You see no pretense, no expectations. A frog's gaze is just like a baby's eyes. You look in the eyes of a contented baby, that's the same gaze a true bugeisha ("martial artist") should have. The eyes will see everything and react naturally, out of his own years and years of training, without pretense, foresight or falseness. You don't have to look mean or tough, because 'looking' or 'acting' is just that. You're just acting. You're not BEING. You have to arrive at a point where, like a frog, if someone tries to grab you, you just get away. A frog doesn't have to spend time thinking, oh, gee, he's grabbing me. I need to execute kata number 45. No. The frog just jumps to escape. It's already in its nature to jump. Your jujutsu has to be in your nature so you can react naturally."

I recalled this conversation because a friend and I were discussing the video of Takeuchi Tojuro Sensei we saw on YouTube. As I mulled over the discussion and the video, I recalled the many different videos I saw of top martial artists doing iai and grappling. Some of them had that kind of kaeru no me, some of them didn't.

Looking mean and tough, by the way, is different from having kaeru no me. The former is not kaeru no me, it's just looking so hard, you look like you're brittle and easily shattered. Having kaeru no me is having a sense of focus, but also being elastic and able to improvise, react easily and counter. I found some master teachers with the same kaeru no me who were in different ryu, such as the late Iwata Norikazu Sensei, who was a Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu teacher that my own iai teacher, Ohmori Masao Sensei, highly respected. I also saw a number of iai teachers who were so rigid-looking in their gaze, they looked as brittle as glass about to be shattered.

Technically, the latter may have been pretty good. But they weren't super-good. They still looked like they were too tight and rigid.

How many dojo have you entered and observed a teacher and/or sempai strutting and puffing his chest out like a proud peacock, acting tough and ready for a brawl? If you want to ACT tough, I suppose you can learn how to strut and prance like that kind of martial artist. As for me, I'd prefer studying under someone like Niko Niko Sensei. He doesn't have to act tough. He IS tough. He has nothing to prove, so he's as happy as can be.

In martial arts, some people want to learn to act. I'd rather be.

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

Phone:
1-734-645-6441

E-Mail:
shudokan@smaa-hq.com

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

http://smaa-hq.com

About the Author: Wayne Muromoto is a sixth dan in the SMAA Jujutsu Division, with decades of training in Takeuchi Ryu jujutsu and other martial arts. He also has extensive experience in Urasenke tea ceremony, and you can read about his many insights into budo and koryu bujutsu at *The Classic Budoka*: http://classicbudoka.wordpress.com/.