

# Half a Century II

About fifty pages of thoughts from Kim Taylor.

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Kim Taylor (that's me) is a long time martial artist living in Guelph Ontario. I've written a couple dozen books on the subject, several scholarly articles, edited several magazines and generally done what I can to spread the word.

Having tried all that, I also post short essays on the 'net and these have been collected here for your convenience. Since I'm only offering these in ebook form the formatting is pretty simple, one might even say "default".

Most of these will cover the martial arts that I am concerned with, Aikido, Iaido, Jodo, Niten Ichiryu and a couple more which will probably get mentioned along the way. If you don't know about them there are loads of resources available on the 'net.

You will also find a lot of martial arts jargon. Again I refer you to the 'net where you will find definitions of most of the words I use. I don't expect there will be many non-budo types reading this so I'm not going to worry about defining the foreign words or even identifying them as foreign by, for instance, putting them in italics. My book, my rules.

If someone out there figures this stuff could be edited into a proper book and published, get in touch if you've got the editor, I thought about it once but would rather write something new than edit something already written.

If you want to check out any of those books you can do so at <http://sdksupplies.com/> where you might also find more of these Half a Century ebooks.

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## Whither Goes the Mind

Just had a question about where to put the mind while practicing the nito seiho (two swords) kata from Niten Ichiryu.

Good question, and one that will get you hit on the head if you're considering it while doing the kata, so the time to think about it is now.

Lots of folks have discussed this over the years, including Musashi in the Gorin no sho where he devotes the final chapter to "sora", "kuh", nothingness (the void).

He talks a bit more specifically in the second chapter where he says:

The preparation (attitude, intention or mood) of HyoHo

HyoHo kokoro mochi

For the way of HyoHo, the preparation has to be the "same as usual" (normal). In the normal situation, during the practice of HyoHo, without changing to any degree, have your mind wide and straight, don't pull it tight, don't give it too much play, in order to keep it impartial, place it (your mind) at the center of your being, gentle and calm. Even if you are being gentle and calm in your mind, you have to practice well not to stop being like that at any moment. If you move gently, your mind should not be gentle but if you move hard or quick, your mind has to be gentle. Don't let your mind be distracted by your movement or your movement be distracted by your mind. Even if your mind pays attention (or gives a lot of care to something), your body shouldn't do so. Don't let your mind be clumsy (or pay scant attention) but don't give your mind too much play. Even if your mind appears weak or sheepish, you must be strong from the bottom of your heart, and not be seen through the mind (don't reveal your real intention) by others.

[Your practice should be the same as usual, normal. Your mind should be calm while your body is active and your mind should be active when your body is still, keep it all in balance. Don't get distracted and don't give away your intentions.]

(Told you I was working on the book)

So your mind should be wherever you need it to be, not too focused on one thing, not wandering around distractedly. Just like when doing something in ordinary life.

Takuan Soho wrote a whole book dedicated to the question but it too comes down to the concepts of fudoshin (immovable mind) and fushin (frozen mind). While I always got a headache trying to keep those two seemingly identical terms separated, they do sort of make sense. An immovable mind is one that doesn't get distracted and go off chasing after every stray thought or getting caught up in the details. A frozen mind is one that gets stuck on something, your left hand, what your right foot is doing... that sort of thing.

Why did the punk cross the road? Because he was stapled to the chicken. Don't let your mind be the punk... the chicken is some sort of useless detail during a kata by the way, in case you hadn't figured that out yet.

So let's not take a kata and discuss it, let's take something almost everyone does, driving a car.

I suspect all of us have experienced, at least once, the rather upsetting situation where we suddenly start paying attention to "what we're doing" while we're driving. It might be caused by getting into a new car and not being able to find the defroster, but for whatever reason we start thinking, "where's the blinker switch, it has to go on now, which way is right? Up?"

It spirals out of control from there, we're having trouble finding streetlights in the visual clutter, having trouble trying to read street signs to figure out if we can turn right on a red, trying to shift without clutching if it's a manual, and on and on.

The best thing to do is to pull over and go for coffee until we "forget how to drive" then get back in the car and "just do it".

When we're driving properly, when we're doing a kata in the correct way, we're not really relying on habitual movements. Yes we have movements like reaching for the radio button that we do without thought because we've got a muscle memory of where it is, but we rarely get confused between radio volume and defroster fan. It goes beyond a habit. What we're doing is allowing our brain to take care of the non-critical motions of driving in the same way as it takes care of things like swallowing and itching a scratch. They're not exactly autonomic actions like digesting food or even breathing, but they're not something we need to think about unless there's some problem, then the rationalization (what we usually refer to as "the mind") kicks in to analyse and solve the problem.

To consciously try to put the mind in this place or that introduces a needless and often dangerous second level of rationalization into the process. Thinking about what I should think about while driving is simply a distraction.

Incidentally, that's why cellphones are so dangerous in a car. While we usually have periods of thinking space when driving, we need to call our minds back to the situation at hand fairly regularly. Most of the time when talking on a cellphone it's no different than talking with someone in the car, perfectly safe. The difference is that when we need to pay attention to something like turning at an intersection, our car passengers will shut up and help us drive. They will actually turn their heads and look with us at the traffic, and even if they don't say anything, they will tense and become more alert when seeing something the driver should also see. We pick that up.

On the other hand, the person speaking on the cellphone has no clue what we're doing in the car and will just keep talking. This occupies our rational mind, often just enough for us to miss seeing the transport truck that is running the orange as we make the right turn on our red...

We don't have cellphones to our ears while doing kata but there are plenty of other things to think about which could distract us.

Don't think at all, except when you're thinking and then don't think about your thinking, just move on.

Moving on.



*The senior class at the 2016 Spring Seminar*

# The Stock Market as a Martial Art

I've been in the market for a long time, since the late '70s when I had no job but bought a life insurance annuity from my Uncle. Been paying into that since I was 18. I also bought and sold stocks and options and made enough on one run-up for a downpayment on my house, and lost several thousand dollars in half a day another time. I got bored and bought mutual funds which are still chugging along nicely without much attention on my part. The main point is that I've seen a bit of what happens in the stock market.

The market is more like a martial art than one might think. It's a zero-sum game, which is important to understand and something that folks really don't get.

Yesterday the TSX dropped over 800 points, the "largest single day drop in history". That it was less than 7% of its total value is a bit less dramatic but there you are. The market is plunging and everyone is "getting out". Panic!

But everyone is not getting out, it's a zero-sum game not a grocery store. The price of a stock is determined by what someone will pay for it, not by what someone decides it's worth. For each and every share that was sold yesterday, someone bought it, and that's where the martial art comes in.

"Buy low, sell high". You've heard this? It's true and about as useful as hearing "Hit him before he hits you". Of course it's the right thing to do but only those that are really good at the arts can do it. The market, and the martial arts are mostly psychological. To hit someone first you have to be relaxed, confident, willing to take the risk, willing to take some damage sometimes, and alert to the timing of your opponent. You can't listen too closely to what the experts say, especially those who comment without experience, the kids and the armchair MMA experts.

In the market it's hard to buy into a dropping market, to hold when everyone else seems to be selling, and the newspapers are screaming about a new depression and record point drops. It's especially hard to figure out where the bottom is on these swings. This is the jujutsu of the market, to catch your opponent (all the sheep out there that buy at the top, sell at the bottom and run around as a herd making the market swing up and down) off balance and "let them fall", perhaps even helping with a bit of a nudge. You buy low and sell high.

Sell? When the market is going up? Buy when stocks are worthless? Stand there open and invite your opponent to take a swing at your head?

Absolutely.

And yes, there it is, this morning the news is that Europe didn't follow the US markets down, and the Dow is coming back up again as folks pour in to pick up the bargains. Two folks, you and "the market". It's all timing.

Of course, like Ebay auctions and their software bidding systems, the market isn't quite as much fun as it was. Too many computer systems kick in and out as the markets swing and the timing is getting much too fast these days for the average university kid reading a daily newspaper to move in and out of swings.

If I were to do it again today I think I'd be looking at the long term. Real estate maybe, city cores and cottages are going to make some big runs over the next 20 years. Then old age homes as the boomers move out of the cottages and into care facilities.



*From the late 1990s, Kim and some of his "capital investment"*



## Blast from the Past

Wow, found a stash of old wordstar files (anybody got a good converter, I've got one that works in DOS... you can imagine how much fun it is to try to work from command line prompts again) and included was this little gem from September of 1993 in an old Iaido Newsletter. I give you a completely obscure and rare cane school of self defence.

### TECHNICAL NOTEBOOK

This month we have a special treat for the readers. A correspondent has managed to interview a master of the famed Daidokoro Ryu and has obtained permission for us to publish these instructions on the use of the san shaku (three foot) cane in self- defence. The master, who, according to his traditions, must stay anonymous hopes that the readers appreciate the centuries of tradition that these waza represent.

1. FRONT: You are sitting on a chair, with your cane on the left side (in your left hand) when attacked from the front. Grasp the cane about 6 inches from the top with the right hand and swing it horizontally to strike the outside of the right knee, or if his other foot is forward, the inside of the left knee of the attacker.

Raise the cane overhead and using two hands in a sword or baseball bat type grip, strike down on the top of his head.

2. REAR: You are walking along when attacked from behind. Step forward with your right foot, turn counterclockwise and grasp the cane which is on your left side with your right hand. Swing horizontally to the right to catch the attacker on the side of his forward knee, then raise the cane overhead and strike downward with both hands. This technique is similar to number 1.

3. BLOCK AND DEFLECT: You are walking down the street when an attacker with a club strikes down at your head from your left side. Block his strike using your cane by holding it in your right hand 6 inches from the top and angling it so that the tip is downward to your rear. Your left foot should be forward at this point and your body should twist to face the attacker. Remember to keep your left hand out of the way by putting it on your left hip and pulling the elbow backward.

Let the cane swing around as you move your right foot up to your left, grab it with the left hand and swing down on an angle to strike the attacker on the collar bone or the side of his neck. As you do this drop your weight into the blow by sliding your left foot backward and sinking your hips.

4. STRIKING WITH THE HANDLE: You are walking along when attacked from the front and the rear. Your cane is in your left hand. Grab the cane near the top with the right hand, the thumb facing backward to point at the left thumb. Strike the front attacker in the solar plexus with the head of the cane. Right foot forward at this point.

Turn to your left and use the right hand to thrust the tip of the cane back into the stomach of the rear

attacker. Turn to the front again and strike down two handed onto the head of the front man. Both should be down by now but make sure to check the back man.

5. **RISING STRIKE:** You are once again carrying the cane in your left hand. An attacker in front reaches for your right shoulder with his right hand in order to drag you around and into a choke hold. Grab the cane with the right hand, thumb facing back and use a rising strike to hit the elbow or wrist of his arm.

Continue this movement until the cane is over your head, grasp it with the left hand and then strike down onto the left side of his head or onto the side of his neck.

6. **TWO HANDED THRUST:** There are two attackers in front of you, the closest with a knife. One more attacker is to your rear. Cane on the left again. Once more reach across with the right hand and grasp the cane to strike up and over in a diagonal arc to hit the knife from the attacker's hand. Grasp the cane with the left hand and thrust into his stomach. Right foot forward.

Turn to your left while raising the cane overhead step in with the right foot and strike down on the rear man's head. Turn back and strike down on the third man who was behind the first. Be ready to hit again as you check all the attackers.

7. **THREE SIDED HIT:** Attackers to the front and both sides. Sweep the tip of the cane across your front as you strike down right handed onto the side of the head of the man on your right. Step toward him with your right foot to reach him.

Turn quickly on your toes to the left while raising the cane overhead and strike down on the left man's head as he comes into range. Finally, step to the front and strike downward onto the last man's head. Step back and raise the cane as you make sure all three are out of the fight.

8. **FACE STRIKE:** You are attacked by two men, one close in front, one farther to the rear. Strike upward with both hands using the head of the cane to hit the front man in the face or up under his chin.

Turn to your left to face the rear man while aiming the tip at him. Thrust back right handed with a step of your right foot to hit him in the solar plexus. Turn to your left again raising the cane overhead and strike down on the head of the front man as you step forward with the right foot.

9. **PRESSING HAND THRUST:** A man close to your left side thrusts with a knife. Drop back your left foot to adjust the distance and hit down from the left side (using a right hand grip on the cane) to make him drop the knife.

Put your left hand on the cane about half way down and step in with the left foot to thrust him in the stomach. This will double him over and let you hit him in the face with a cross handed strike (like a cross- check in hockey or a baseball bunt).

10. **FOUR SIDED STRIKES:** There are attackers to the four corners, the one to the right front grabs your right wrist. Hit down on this wrist with the head of the cane using both hands. If he does not let

go, trap his wrist and pull him forward off balance as you thrust the tip of the cane back at the man to the left rear hitting him in the solar plexus.

Turn back to the first attacker and strike down onto his head with an overhead strike as you step forward with your left foot. Turn to the right and step forward with the right foot to strike down on the head of the man to the right rear and then finally turn to your left and step forward with the right foot again to strike down onto the head of the man to the left front.

Raise the cane overhead and step back with the right foot to check all four attackers. Be ready to strike again.



*Ken and Kat going all cane*

## Reverse It

Here's a technique I tell the women in my self defence classes to use. Quite handy actually to keep us honest, decide whether or not we have any real empathy for a situation or whether we're just taking on the attitudes that we've been trained into. Empathy is the ability to put yourself into the same boat as the other fellow, to feel what it's like to be in his or her shoes.

The technique comes out of the era of radical feminism that existed when I started teaching self defence but it is still valid today. Simply put, when you hear something that makes you jump up and yell "that's not fair", turn it around. For example, if you hear the statement "women have to sacrifice to get ahead in their careers", change the gender to "men have to sacrifice to get ahead in their careers" and see if it makes you feel the same way. If not, you're not very empathetic and you should think about why not.

Consider why you don't feel the same way about the two statements "when he was 10 he had sex with his babysitter" "when she was 10 she had sex with her babysitter". What's the difference? If you are coming up with all sorts of reasons why you don't (or why you shouldn't) feel the same when hearing either statement, you are not a believer in the equality of the sexes.

This technique is extensible to different racial, age, national, religious or political groups. Keep it in mind and try it out the next time you find yourself getting upset at the unfairness of this or that situation, turn it around and see if it still seems unfair to you.

If not, why not?

## Harmless Fantasy?

When beginners start talking about whether or not this or that technique would work "in real life", they often get stomped on by senior students in the arts.

This often seems cruel or at least unkind, after all many people are in the arts because they're fascinated by the Samurai or the European Knights, or into anime role-playing, and they're just indulging in a bit of harmless fantasy. What's the problem?

Folks it doesn't matter what budo you train in, whether it's koryu or gendai, jutsu or do, East or West, whatever you want to imagine you're doing, if you practice under false pretenses, if you fool yourself in any way, you're not going to get it.

The whole POINT of training is to open your eyes, take responsibility for your own actions and become a better person.

Sure the kids complain when the old farts jump down their throats, but that's why. Illusion is dangerous, self-delusion is dangerous, hypocrisy is dangerous.

If you are training in jujutsu and assume for a minute that your ultimate fighting skills will be unbeatable in an alleyway downtown, you're deluded. If you worry and fuss about whether or not you can flick blood off your blade by shaking it like an umbrella or giving it a good thump with your fist, you're living in an illusion. If you figure as an instructor that you can order your students around while not giving them the same amount of respect as you're demanding, you're a hypocrit.

All these things have serious psychological, if not physical implications and they all need to be dumped overboard as soon as possible.

Your physical skills will desert you with time, your ability to jump-kick someone off a horse will likely go first, followed by your ability to defeat six people in unarmed combat, and eventually you'll get to the point where your shoulders are so creaky that you can't lift your sword to smack that smart-alec fifteen year old. When that happens what's left?

When you get too old to do the physical techniques of your budo what is left?

Don't waste your time, you don't have that much of it. Train honestly and train with honest, GOOD instructors. Not just skillful ones.

# Things I Love About Jodo Practice

This is from Jeff Broderick, lifted straight out of his blog here: <http://jeffsbudoblog.blogspot.com/>

- when I'm doing Kasumi no kamae, the way I can feel the heat radiating off of my steaming forehead
- the way Furukawa Sensei (at age 75 or something) is the only person that I can't basically fling across the dojo at will with a strong Tai-atari
- that feeling of excitement and fear I get when he looks like he's going to practice with me
- how when I practice with him, I feel a weird combination of terror ("Don't hurt me!") and total calmness and trust ("I know you're not going to hurt me ... but you could ... but you won't... whoops, that was close ...")
- that look he gets on his face when he knows he killed me, and I know he killed me
- how he puts me through my paces while keeping an eye on the rest of the class; he doesn't even need to devote his full attention to me
- the almost musical "Spak!" sound of a good hikiotoshi-uchi
- how Mr. Watano and Mr. Kadomatsu, two of the nicest, meekest guys you'd ever care to meet, turn into demons of screaming woody vengeance when they practice together
- the fact that, in this day and age of high-technology, oak and rawhide are still the best things to make practice weapons out of
- "Ieeeeiiii!" and "Ooohhhh!"
- how, after practice, all the problems in my life seem less important. I'm up to my eyeballs in debt, but who cares? I don't have a girlfriend ... so what? It'll work itself out somehow.

How about you?

He's got it pegged pretty well. For myself I'd have to modify a couple of points.

- When I'm practicing with someone who has the ability to nail me, and we're paying attention, I want them to nail me. I'm not afraid, I want them to get closer, push harder. I want to see if I can keep up.
- If I get hit I don't notice it. I've nailed Jeff (a fellow student) and haven't cared much about his pain at the time, just been annoyed with myself that I couldn't pull it.
- I can't describe the pleasure I get when a hikiotoshi makes no sound at all, it's so soft you don't hear it, but the bokuto flies away. Well OK it's probably the same sound Jeff is talking about.

And some more of my own.

- When a student suddenly comes after me, when I see in their eyes that they're actually trying to get to me. Yet they're under control.
- The feeling I get when I see a student glide into a strike, and their hips lock in perfectly. I don't

see it so much as feel it in my gut.

- The feel of a really well balanced jo in my hand, 15/16 of an inch, light and stiff, the way it shakes ever so lightly as it moves through the air and the soft recoil as it hits a bokuto. Unfortunately, those end up being sold or given away and I usually find some warped, splintery monster in my hands.
- Shibori, I can do it as I'm typing this, nothing in my hands, just holding air above the keyboard, wringing the hands inward and it all drops away. No need for 20 minutes of sitting, just move the hands, the arms fall down, the shoulders soften, the breath drops into my hara. This stuff started happening back when I was practicing Aikido in the '80s and it's never gone away, just gets stronger, same arm shape, same drop into the hips... yummy.



*Look at that nice wrist position! With Dave Williams in Calgary*



## They Make It Up

The top instructors, the top top ones who have been practicing for decades, usually answer a question without any thought at all, you ask and they instantly answer you.

Now most of the time they've heard the question before or have asked it of their own sensei in the past so it's no mystery how they can snap out a response, but there are times when a senior sensei has simply "made it up". I know because they will sometimes answer, then stop and think about it, nod and say "yeah that's right".

Absolutely they make it up as they go. Or rather they will spontaneously answer a question without thinking about it, even if it's one they haven't answered or thought about before.

At a certain point these guys "own" the art in two ways, they are of course at the top of the heap so what they say is "what it is", but also they have been immersed in the art for so long "they own it" or as we ought to say as good eastern mystic types: The art owns them.

In either case, what they come up with spontaneously is what is correct.

When you're talking about a soke of a koryu, that's an absolute, what soke says is correct, is correct. Always and forever and the only way you can disagree or sometimes even discuss it is to leave. In this case they can "make it up" for real if they want. They own the art in a very practical way and can follow whatever impulse comes into their head if they desire. Those in the art hope that they do consider things carefully, and aren't simply being arbitrary when they declare this is now that, but who knows.

In the ZNKR where you've got many hanshi at the top it's absolutely amazing just how few times I've found a disagreement between one and another. Actually on those times that I have found a "disagreement" it turns out, after a couple-5 more years of practice on my part, to be simply two ways to look at the same thing.

I now hunt for these contradictions when I'm listening to instructors at seminars and use them to figure out why I think it's a contradiction. I almost always find something new to learn when I do.

Example: In So Giri I'm told by one sensei to pull the blade straight out of the saya at the beginning of nuki tsuke, straight out from where the saya sits in your obi. Another sensei tells me to draw toward teki as I begin.



Assuming always that it's not a contradiction, but that there's some hitch in my own practice that makes me think it's a contradiction, what's the lesson to be learned?

*Making up a new uniform standard, Calgary 2008*



## Dude, You're not that Important

In 1987 I, along with a couple other guys, developed and started teaching the women's self defence program for the athletics department at the University of Guelph. I still teach it. I was also on the initial First Aid Response unit on campus, and one of our self defence instructors helped start the Safewalk program. Both those programs are still running on campus.

Yet each year I have to explain what the self defence course is, I have to fight with things like hot-pole-dance-pilates for space. Each year I have to do what I did that very first year and fight for the program, even though I'm getting much too old to run it.

I keep wanting to yell "Do you know who I am?"

I first heard that about 20 years ago when chasing a bunch of old guys out of the wrestling room so we could go practice some Aikido. The fellow running the class said "Do you know who I am?" My response was "You're over-time that's who you are".

I did actually know who he was, the John Powell Human Biology building next door was named after him. Powell founded the Human Kinetics program at Guelph (later Human Biology), was an Olympic track and field coach (19 medals), member of the IOC, and developer of a lot of low impact fitness programs for cardiac and back rehab. But really, I had to look all that up on google, to me he was just an old guy who was over his time-slot and he was costing me training time.

It's a shame folks don't know who you are, but they don't, and they won't so get over it. What carries on down over the years isn't all the wonderful things you did or started, but the programs themselves. Programs and institutions have no memory, and while those who were around when you started out may remember, their kids and grandkids won't.

What carries on in the martial arts is attitude and instruction, not the names attached. Your students will teach as you taught, and the things you taught will be learned for generations past the time everyone has forgotten your name.

Understand that and you will understand how to teach.

## Over and Over Again

A lot of my students are off the net, off the discussion forums after perhaps two or three years of heavy involvement.

I find that fairly typical, and not all that unusual. In fact the surprising thing may be that there are people on the forums that have been there for years.

The process is like this. You discover a large group of people who have similar interests, some of which are experts. At least they speak with authority and others on the forum defer to them, which makes them appear to be experts.

You ask questions, get answers. After a while you stop asking questions and start answering them. You may become one of the group experts. Eventually you begin to notice that the same questions keep getting asked, the same misconceptions keep showing up. You become a bit of a grumpy expert because these guys don't seem to be learning anything at all, "go use the search function", "read the damned faq", "hey didn't you see the sticky up there?". You don't visit the forum as often as you once did. Eventually you don't look at all, "those guys are arguing about the same crud they were arguing about 3 years ago".

In fact it's not the same people at all, but a whole new crop of enthusiasts. Magazine publishers have known about the two year cycle for years. Most enthusiasts subscribe to a specialist magazine for about two years, after which they realize that things seem to repeat yearly. The April issue of the fitness mag always has "ten ways to killer abs for summer" the women's mag has "ten ways to turn him on" every third issue and the martial arts mag has its monthly story on Bruce Lee beside the latest "ten most street effective techniques" article.

Hey, this stuff isn't new, the martial arts you are learning have been taught the same way for generations, what do you figure is changing? It's not the art, it's what you know about it, you're the one who develops and moves on from one source of information to another.

What about the "stayers", the guys who have been on the forums for years and years. Why are they there and what's in it for them?

The academic may be there because posting on a forum actually counts toward his job. By posting he is fulfilling part of his obligation to educate the masses in his specialty. Tends to be pretty dry and preachy as befits his training and his job. Doesn't seem to be interested in listening to the "internet facts", that common knowledge accumulated by the masses on a forum.

The recruiter may be looking for students for his organization. The net is a great place to find fresh blood and what better, more targeted audience for a martial arts organization than a martial arts forum. Always quick to point out the nearest club to the newbies, even if his organization is totally unsuitable for what the kid wants, and is six hours drive away.

The salesman may be using one of the most effective tactics on the net, become an expert in several forums and make sure your company website is in your signature. People like to buy from people they trust, or so the advertising experts say. A more likely explanation is that folks are a bit lazy and will tend to buy from the place right in front of them... "oh here's a link". It's also said that an ad doesn't stick in the mind until at least 7 exposures so keep that link in that signature.

The teacher may simply consider the folks on internet forums to be an extended bunch of students, they may not be in class learning the techniques but they can still learn. Takes a bit of ego to believe that you have anything to teach someone on the other side of the world, but teachers are nothing if not optimists.

The petty-egotist may simply want to be an expert, to have people looking up to him. No better place to find the current internet-wisdom than this fellow. He'll spit out unattributed, uncited (and usually unthoughtful) quotes at the drop of a shift key.

The IT worker may be online all day long as part of his job and posting to the forums may be part of his routine, a way to break the monotony of keyboarding, a way to wake up and shake out the cobwebs. Let's face it, chatting about budo is better than data-entry any day.

The family guy may just like joking with the rest of his online family. May "lighten up" a forum so much that it becomes devoid of useful information.

The control freak may delight in being hall monitor / forum moderator. Now a forum run by a control freak isn't likely to have many family guys around since "off topic" posts get stepped on fast by active moderators, so does any opinion or information not conforming to the moderator's ideas. Actually, enthusiastic and proactive moderators are one the best ways to chase people off of a forum.

The troll is a rather endangered species on the net now that it has split up into a hundred million esoteric interest groups. This long-time denizen of the older days is probably not actually gone, but who in the world can drop in on 10 or 20 martial art groups a day to say "BJJ rooolz" or "Ninjas kick ass" or "yeah but what would you do against a Glock 9mm?"

I've probably missed a few long-timers but one that you don't see is "the student" the information you

get about the martial arts from a forum is fairly well defined and is easily delivered within a couple of years. Once the student realizes there isn't anything else to be learned, no new historical research to be uncovered, he will drift off to train.



*2007 Canadian Open National Championships in Ottawa*

## Bickering Old Ladies

Over the last several years my daughter has heard me talking about various martial arts organizations, modern and koryu, they are all the same.

At the top levels there are inevitably frictions, infighting and complaining. Recently as I was describing some to her and she said "it's just like High School, haven't they grown up yet?"

And then she came out with "They're just a bunch of bickering old ladies aren't they?"

Perfect, just right. Like a bunch of old fishwives, you'll get some of the top fellows complaining about each other and fighting over imagined and real slights. The best ones can go at it for years.

Just to be clear, most of the time this is funny. The sensei usually have the best interests of the students at heart and they keep their bickering to themselves but occasionally there's a problem.

When you have a boss at work that is egotistical, self-centred and unreasonable you have your salary to compensate you for putting up with him. What about the mostly volunteer organizations that are the martial arts?

If you're a member of such an organization, maybe even paying dues, it might seem a bit strange to spend years putting up with someone who seems to thrive on negative vibes and making life miserable for everyone while treating the organization as if it was all there to please him.

Sound familiar? I thought he might. It's unfortunate but we actually enable these guys by hanging around and doing what they tell us to. Why do we do it? Because they are the gatekeepers of the arts we love. That's the payoff that keeps us around, it's not a salary but it is a reward just the same.

There are several things we can do about this situation. The first is nothing at all. If the art is worth more than the aggravation we can put up with some erratic and unreasonable behaviour.

What if it gets to be a bit much? Well they say the greatest pleasure in life is to outlive those who annoy us. Eventually the guys at the top will move aside for one reason or another and if you hang around long enough, it may just be you up there. Take a lesson and behave differently.

If it's just too much to handle now? The possibilities vary depending on the type of organization we're in. If it's a one-man band, a soke and a few students in a small art, the only solution may be to leave. If there are no seniors who have left earlier this may mean leaving the art because there is nobody else



around to teach you.

For those in a larger organization, with multiple folks at or near the top, there are more choices. You might go train with another instructor, the other instructors may eventually get tired of the fellow and have a quiet word, or those higher up the food chain may step in and have the same sort of words.

Whatever your situation, it's important for you to realize that mom and dad aren't fighting because of you, they've got their own problems and probably had them before you came along.



*Who sits where? Always a chance for a fight.*

## Self Esteem or Set for a Fall?

Haven't bothered to look up the study but I noticed in the paper the other day that the educational experiment we've been running for a generation is being questioned.

I'm speaking of the self esteem movement, where we praise praise praise the kids, telling them they are smart and talented at each chance we get. This is supposed to raise their self esteem. Now a high self esteem is associated with all sorts of good things, and is something to be desired in anyone.

So has it worked? Well the article suggested that it did not. In fact, here's the scenerio, we tell Johnny that he's talented and smart and he then goes out and tries to do something. It isn't easy, in fact it's hard and he feels that he's failed, that he's disappointed all the folks that told him that he was talented, in fact he feels that he hasn't lived up to his abilities which is just about the worst failure of all.

Now kids aren't stupid and they see through the "everybody is a winner and everybody gets a ribbon" thing real fast. If everyone is a winner, nobody is. Kids get it, and discount it as another stupid adult idea so they usually don't take anything harmful on board. But this praise for talent is something entirely different. For a kid talent is innate, something that they inherit or something that is mostly an accident. It can't be anything else since they're too young to have earned or learned any talent. So when we tell them they're talented, we tell them they've got a gift and that things ought to be easy.

Nasty, slippery stuff. Best of intentions getting a bad result.

The study authors recommended praise for effort rather than for talent. "Good work" rather than "Wow you're talented".

Now we come to the martial arts, something that raises self esteem apparently without praise. The teaching method is to criticize when something is done wrong, to encourage more effort, and to say pretty much nothing at all when something is eventually done correctly. After all, what praise is to be expected or given for doing something correctly? It's not that hard to do something as you've been taught, it just takes a bit of effort and attention.

Of course, all through this is an understanding, an unspoken encouragement to practice, to work, to learn and try. That effort is rewarded with attention and more instruction, not exactly praise but something much more powerful, respect.

So, without saying "good boy" or even "good job" the martial arts still raise self esteem. Results are not glorified or praised, the results of martial training are achievable by everyone. Everyone who displays



self-discipline and effort that is. The martial arts reward that effort, not the result and certainly not the potential. Any kid can tell when he's tried hard, he's panting and his muscles hurt. He's getting rewarded for something he has already achieved, not something he's supposed to be able to do.

He's not set up for failure, he knows he can try, he knows he can work toward a goal. The martial arts don't glorify the goal, they admire the work toward it.

So, by criticizing, by expecting, and not by praise, the martial arts manage to raise self esteem.

Weird isn't it?



# Stretching

Just saw a [NY Times article on stretching](#) and was amused to see that the popular press had finally caught up to both the "old fashioned" stretching techniques of the martial arts, and the research.

For the last 15 years or so I've been teaching self defence and during the warmups I always use "ballistic stretching" or "bouncing" or, as I see it's called now, "dynamic stretching" as opposed to "static stretches".

For just that long I've had girls in the class who are accredited aerobics instructors giving me proper hell for doing dangerous stretches, and telling me I should be doing the static stuff. That means, for those of you who never stretch, that you bend over and hold a stretch for 30 seconds.

I always told them that if they could bring in any research to prove that static stretches were a good thing I'd do them. Of course they never did. Static stretches are easy, expected, and no particular risk to fat middle-aged folks who are starting aerobics classes so they're good for providing the illusion of value for money I suppose, but I've never done them.

They decrease flexibility, weaken muscles and do nothing to help you warm up for exercise.

Ballistic stretches, on the other hand, swinging your body and limbs through the range of motion and beyond, help warm up muscles and increase flexibility. They do it fast and efficiently. Unless you're being coached by a maniac (and I've met a few) they're also quite safe, it's unlikely that you're going to kick your leg up so aggressively during these exercises that you tear a hamstring.

So good for the popular press, maybe now those who get their exercise advice from magazines will start getting some that is backed up by a decade or so of research.

# Learning Technique

*From a technical point of view, how should we practice, how should we prepare for practice, what kind of mindset should we have?*

It's obvious to me that we teach whatever it is we teach in the martial arts through the techniques. If our primary teaching method was to lecture, or to meditate, or perform some other sort of ritual than we would be best described as a temple, church or cult of some sort.

The term "martial art" brings up the image of a bunch of folks performing some sort of physical techniques which have to do with fighting, so let's assume that's how we do it.

Now as to what we are actually teaching, it doesn't really matter, the answer to this question is going to be the same. If we are learning how to be lean, mean (sword)fighting machines we are going to try to be the best at the techniques we can be. We are going to practice as if our life depends on it, we're going to warm up and cool down, stretch, do extra-curricular training like running and lifting weights, and we're going to get as tough-minded as we can about it all. Don't feel good? Go to class. Got yardwork to do? Go to class. Old girlfriend show up suddenly and wants to make up? Go to class.

After all we're talking about something that can save our life if we have to use it, right?

What if we're teaching how to be a better person? Or how to handle the stress of life? How to look really cool as a modern day samurai?

For all of it we train exactly the same, hard, as if our lives depend on it. We get as good at the technical aspects as we can. We train regularly and seriously and we don't allow anything to distract us while we're training. No matter why we're learning or what our particular sensei is "really" teaching, we learn the techniques and he teaches them.

*How should we prepare for practice?*

Come to class clean, neat and tidy. Smelly, sloppy uniforms make for unpleasant training for everyone. Arriving with a clean outfit is like arriving with a clean mind, ready to work.

If you're sick or injured, take care of it. If your instructor mentions you are weak in some area, work on it outside class, if you need to lift weights, go do it. If you don't have any stamina, do some cardio on your own time.

Most especially, do what you can to review and practice your martial art at home. Work on what you've been taught and see if you can move ahead, through books or videos, to the next section of what you're going to learn. If you can come to class knowing which foot goes in front of which, you will learn the fine points much more efficiently and your instructor will be more inclined to teach you.

Finally, practice in your head, think through the movements as if you are actually doing them. Believe it or not, this actually helps you to get it "into the bones".

### *How should we practice?*

Be in class on time, ready to practice. You can't learn if you aren't there. I have had good students who are consistently late for class but they aren't really learning to their best ability. The start of each class usually sets the tone for the rest of the lesson, and the kihon / warmups are where new ways of looking at the techniques are introduced.

Coming in late is also a terrible example for the beginners, but even worse than coming late is not coming at all if you're going to be late. Beginners need to see that the seniors are serious about practice.

The most basic, no, the only way to practice is with a beginner's mind. There are countless stories in the martial arts which demonstrate this, cups overflowing because there's no room for more tea being very popular.

The best way to get an instructor to leave you alone is to tell him "I know" when he makes a correction. The best way to make him angry is to tell him all the reasons you can't make those corrections, or why you haven't corrected it yet, or to say "I'm working on something else".

The correct response is "hai" or "oss" or whatever grunt your particular art uses and then working on exactly what your instructor just told you to do. When he tells you to do something else, do that.

Assume you know nothing. Assume you can learn from anyone. Try it, even if you know it's a total waste of your time. Try it, even if you know you'll never be able to do it.

Pay attention. If we're training for war, you need to pay attention. If we're doing "moving meditation" you need to pay attention. If we're getting ready to play a ninja in the school play you need to pay attention. I can't think of a single reason to be in class and not paying attention except maybe if your dad dragged you there because he's practicing and babysitting you at the same time.

Be respectful of other people's practice. That means not monopolizing your instructor's time. Take your

correction and work on it, don't discuss it for half an hour. That also means listening carefully when your instructor is correcting someone nearby. Chances are you can benefit from the instruction and even if you're so good you don't need to listen to that advice, you can at least give those guys a bit of space to talk and try things.

Don't teach. Sure, if you're working with someone and they just don't get which foot goes forward, tell them but don't teach. It's a waste of your time to tell your partner how you do it in some other school, or to expand on the instructor's explanations. A waste of your time and confusing to your partner. Just try it and learn from what you're doing. The constant jibber jabber of discussion or the random nattering in your own brain is nothing but a distraction.

*What is our mindset for training?*

Shoshin, have a beginner's mind. Be serious, assume every technique you practice has a meaning. Every movement you make in the dojo has a meaning. Every thought that bumps into your head has a meaning, even if that meaning is that you are trying to distract yourself from your practice.

Don't ever give up on a technique, or on a class, or on the art itself. The easiest thing in the world is to give up, do it enough and you are on the other side of the grass. Life means trying, you should train your mind never to stop, to go straight through without trying to be tricky. It's the effort of going to every class and paying attention each moment in class that teaches you how to live in the world.

If you're injured, go to class and watch. Practice the movements in your head. Mitori geiko, watching practice, is almost as good as the physical practice.

Stop. Thinking. Mitori geiko means watching and doing on the floor as well as sitting off to the side. Don't think about how to do a technique, just watch the demonstration and then do it. Too much thinking and worrying and planning gets in the way. See it / do it.

## Learning Technique II

A bit more on learning technique with some follow-up questions.

*For all of it we train exactly the same, hard, as if our lives depend on it.*

Although true, I'm not sure how people would take this statement. Too strict? or even Too unrealistic? What does it really mean to train as if our lives depend on it. I wonder what term we can use to help the current generation to relate to this idea? "...as if your job depended on it"? or how about "what you put in, is what you get out"? This puts the blame solely on the individual. Part of the self-realization process?.

*Don't ever give up on a technique, or on a class, or on the art itself. The easiest thing in the world is to give up, do it enough and you are on the other side of the grass. Life means trying, you should train your mind never to stop, to go straight through without trying to be tricky. It's the effort of going to every class and paying attention each moment in class that teaches you how to live in the world.*

It truly does seem like one of most helpful benefits of training is to understand how to "give effort". Same as going to University is not about "Learning", but more about "Learning how to learn". I've already noticed how maintaining the effort in making every class and practicing hard has paid off in other parts of my life. Sports/Work/Relationships. I think this can and should be expanded on to the average person as well. To really understand how you are building character and becoming a better overall person by doing something that is essentially "playing with swords".

While a beginner might relate more to "like your job depends on it", we don't actually end up training like this in the martial arts, at least those who get serious about it don't. Learning budo is an all day, all week process. We train each day and every minute "as if our hair was on fire". We constantly live as if our life may end in the next minute. This type of practice isn't restricted to the martial arts and actually comes out of spiritual practices such as zazen.

It is this very powerful concentration, the ability to ignore everything else in order to accomplish a task that improves our lives as well as helps us survive that fight on the battlefield which may never come. The idea of being "in the moment" to "be here now" to "be present" to our jobs, our loved ones, ourselves and anything else we turn our attention to is fundamental to both our practice and our improving selves.

No matter what we are trying to learn in the martial arts, practicing as if our lives depend on it will be the correct way to train. This works even for playtime. How many people have gone on vacation as if they were heading off on a military expedition? Each and every minute planned, schedules to be kept exactly, and at the end, exhaustion.

To go on vacation as if we're planning a business trip makes as much sense as trying to do business from a deck chair with a beer in our hand. Play is play, be serious about it, it's important. If we're "playing at swords" in an iaido dojo then really play, be serious, learn how to swing the sword. There are places where you can simply mess about with sharp things seeing what you can cut, or where you can jump about hitting each other with foam boffers. If that's what you want from your sword practice, do that, and do it seriously. Each dojo will have its own way of playing, find what you want and join in without reservation, play hard.

When eating, eat, when sleeping, sleep, when playing, play, above all don't worry. It is the endless cycling of our thoughts that exhausts us, creates stress, shortens our lives and makes us miserable. It's the worry, we worry our thoughts like a dog worries a bone, gnawing on our own peace of mind as if it were a piece of meat.

When we practice as if our lives depend on it we have no room for worry, the cycles are broken. We practice as if our lives depend on it because our lives do depend on it. I have heard that studies of heart

disease always control for stress because stress is such a massive factor it swamps anything else we want to study. I'm inclined to believe this.

*If your instructor mentions you are weak in some area, work on it outside class, if you need to lift weights, go do it. If you don't have any stamina, do some cardio on your own time.*

Again, to be realistic, who does this? Good idea definitely, one that I've actually been following (doing squats and ab work to give my lower body more power and stability). How can we relate this to the average student who's only time working on Iaido is in the 2 hour classes. The only non-class time they have available would be the 5-15 minutes pre-class where most people just stand around. Perhaps a workout plan for that period would be helpful. Focus on Muscle tension could also be implied during the actual class, but there's usually enough to think about with the senseis' instructions.

I do it, obviously you do it. If you are serious about your budo practice you will cross-train for improved performance and for recovery from injury. Iaido and similar martial arts can cause a lot of repetitive strain injury, cross-training will help prevent this.

Beyond this, however, is again the idea that a martial art isn't something that you train a couple hours a week. You train all day every day. As an example, in aikido (and in iaido for that matter) we have the idea of an "unbendable arm". This is the arm in an almost fully extended position, where the muscles are firing at the most efficient length, it's used to control the opponent, and it's used to grip the sword while we're cutting. A very useful position and one that we can practice each time we go through a swinging door. Drop the elbow, hit the door with the little finger edge of your hand and push with your hips. I don't care how heavy the door is, it will fly away from you once you figure out the most efficient position of hand, arm and body.

When driving, use the correct grip on the wheel, learn to anticipate the large movements of cars around you by observing the microscopic twitches and speed changes that happen before the move. When walking down the street practice small shifts with the feet to one side or the other so that nobody runs into you, or on another day and depending on your mood, practice walking in a straight line while making everyone ahead of you move aside without realizing they are moving.

All this is practice outside class.

*The most basic, no, the only way to practice is with a beginner's mind. There are countless stories in the martial arts which demonstrate this, cups overflowing because there's no room for more tea being very popular.*

I like that tea example. This concept is very foreign for most people. So the more examples the better. I remember somewhere you mentioned that there were many examples for describing Jo-Ha-Kyu feeling as well. Each one teaches me something more about the concept.

I last saw the teacup in the Jackie Chan / Jet Li movie "The Forbidden Kingdom" as Jackie pours tea into the hero's cup until it overflows. Without room in the cup you can't pour anything in, your cup is

full already, how can you learn? You mention Jo Ha Kyu, and a story I got from my sensei is very similar to the teacup.

Throw a hose into a barrel and turn on the water. By the time you come back the outlet is under an inch or so of water, you look and nothing is happening. Go away and come back and again, nothing seems to be happening so you don't worry about it.

Some time later you look and you can see the water rising as it's getting near the top but it isn't so fast and you don't worry about it. Next thing you know it's rushing up to the edge and no matter how fast you scramble you can't get to the tap to turn it off before the water is flowing down the sides and all over the ground.

## The Jo Ha Kyu of Learning

There is a jo ha kyu of learning. As a beginner the knowledge is flowing into us but we aren't aware of how much is coming in, it seems like we're learning nothing. A bit later we are amazed at how much we know but there is no urgency, we have our whole life and there is, for some, comfort in seeing how much water we have in our barrel. For others the comfort is in knowing how much space is left, how much time they have to learn. As the years go by we start to realize that our barrel is only so big and it gets a bit rushed as we try to figure out what to do, then it's over and we are no longer around to accumulate knowledge.

Those who share a bit of their "water" can learn a bit more.

Let's look at our first iaido kata. When we throw that hose into our barrel, when we start to learn, we get a nice rush of water that swirls around chaotically for a while, then settles down. This is learning the dance steps, which foot goes where, how to swing the sword.

Now it seems still and for a very long time we practice but don't notice anything happening. It is easy to assume we know all there is to know about the kata so we consider ourselves done and look around for more hoses, more kata, to throw into the barrel. Each hose that goes in makes a little splash but quickly nothing, we have lots of hoses but don't seem to be learning much more.

Eventually of course we get toward the top of the barrel, toward the end of our lives and we realize that we are still learning but now the information is coming way too fast. We start jerking hoses out, savouring every moment we have left to learn what that original kata is still teaching us until finally we're done and the learning just washes by our cold, cold bodies.

Think how much more pure the water would have been if we'd only ever had one hose in our barrel, how much more water from that one source we'd have had.

Give a kid a cup at the soda fountain and he'll make "mud", mixing all the flavours together. As he gets older he starts to mix less and eventually settles on one flavour.



## Learning Technique III:

### Mushin and Creativity

*Beyond this, however, is again the idea that a martial art isn't something that you train a couple hours a week. You train all day every day.*

You gave examples of how to work your body (technique). Are there any examples you can think of to translate the mindset of training into real world applications? i.e. Beginners mind when getting advice from co-worker/supervisor, calmness when driving in a winter storm..etc. Any specific instances you found yourself in that your training took over to help you deal with the situation?

I've been practicing the martial arts seriously since 1980 so I really can't identify anything about my life that relates to the martial arts. That would imply that there are parts of my life that have nothing to do with the martial arts and they simply don't exist.

For instance, one thing I do that you wouldn't think had anything to do with budo is photography. You'll find a link to my blog on that subject above and in it you will find several instances where I talk about the similarity of my photography to my budo. A quick example would be the way that I shoot in the studio.

I usually walk in with a model, turn the heat up, turn the music on, ask what the model would like to do that day (most of the time I hear "whatever you want to do") and then start playing with the lights. As we go along I see the model is in the mood for this or that, is good at certain poses, and we move in that direction.

I don't really think about it much, I might have an image of light falling a certain way in my head, certain light combinations or physical lights that I want to try out but there really isn't any plan. Each time I do a shoot I invent or re-invent the lighting and the sets. I have all confidence that I will find something that delights me as I work, and I'm rarely disappointed. I also find that my work does fall into a certain style as I look back on it, but that was never my intention. I simply "kick the lights around".

When I teach a class of iaido I walk in, ask the students what they want to work on that day (most of the time I hear "whatever you want to do") and then start with some basics. As we go along I see that several students need to work on this or that aspect so I teach in that direction.

I don't ever have much of a plan, I may have a certain feeling I want to explore, or I may feel like partner practice over solo practice but I mostly have nothing in my head at all. Each class I teach I invent or re-invent techniques, suburi or stories to demonstrate what I want to teach, or to allow the students to work on this or that aspect of a kata. When I teach I simply start talking or demonstrating with every confidence that I can come up with something that will get the students a bit further along in their study, and will delight me in a new discovery for myself. It's a given that everything I do is in the particular "style" that I'm teaching at the time, even those exercises that I've never been taught, the ones I'm making up as I go along.

Last weekend I spent three days in meetings. I had no plan or anything I really wanted to accomplish, my base purpose was to do the best for the organization holding the meetings. I simply listened carefully most of the time, got passionate about some things, tried to keep everyone else calm when they got passionate. I spoke when I thought I had something to contribute and shut up when the topics turned to things I had no stake in. Above all I had faith that we would find a way to push the organization forward.

When I start writing to answer these questions or to discuss anything else on the blogs or in articles I simply start writing. I don't usually have anything plotted out, beyond a vague idea that I need to think about this or that. It is while writing that I discover what I really think about a topic, and sometimes I find a wonderful new idea waiting for me at the end of the article. I mostly just write straight through and go back later (often years later) and edit the text so other people can follow it more easily.

All this would come under the heading of "mushin", sometimes translated as "no mind" but really should be translated as "no extraneous rationalization". In other words, stop thinking about it and just do it. I hope I don't get dinged with a lawyer's letter over that last phrase.

## Shu Ha Ri

One of the keys to creativity is to let yourself create. Stop thinking and plotting and planning, allow something to appear instead. All your rote learning, all your training, all your precision and strength training, all the sweat and blood you spill on the dojo floor trying to do something exactly as it should be done is to build up the baseline, to provide you with the tools and techniques to be able to create. A kata isn't the end of things, it's the beginning.

I have been taking photographs since I was 7 years old, I have taken well over half a terabyte of images at about 2mb apiece since I started shooting digitally in the studio. I know how to shape light, how to achieve an effect, so I don't think about it any more, I just shoot. If the goal were to achieve a certain ideal light (for instance a rembrandt light, a butterfly light, a flat light and so on) I would have quit years ago. I can create all those light patterns but they're not the point.

I have been practicing iaido since 1983, and very seriously since 1987. I have learned several schools of sword, hundreds of kata, and I have every confidence that I can learn a new kata within two or three minutes. When I practice iaido I rarely think about which kata I'm doing, and I am not surprised in demonstrations to find myself creating entirely new kata as I perform them. This doesn't bother me, nor should it bother anyone else, it's the intent of practice. I can do a certain kata "in the style of" this or that specific teacher within a school of iaido. I can copy and demonstrate a kata exactly as it should be done according to my organization but if that were the point I would have moved along years ago. That's just the baseline, what allows me to go beyond the techniques and understand what they are teaching, what they allow me to learn. That's the Ri of Shu Ha Ri. I am amazed at the number of people out there that figure keep break leave means copy it, understand it, go found your own art. What a waste of time, you won't learn anything new in a new art, you'll spend forever recreating what you already know. A blacksmith forges his personal tools once, not for every single job he does. When one breaks or when he needs a new tool he surely makes it, but one doesn't throw out a perfectly good hammer simply because it's been made. The point isn't to make new hammers, it's to make other stuff...

unless of course you want to make a living selling hammers.

Where does that analogy get us? Oh yes, those who wish to make a living selling their "brand new and improved budo". As the founder you get to be the chief decider which means you get all the profits right? But how many of the brand new sword schools that have appeared in the last generation have anything new or more interesting to say than the traditional schools?

## Purity of Style

*Think how much more pure the water would have been if we'd only ever had one hose in our barrel, how much more water from that one source we'd have had.*

I love this statement. It is so much more applicable to the Western audience as well. Nowadays everyone gets bored easily and wants something new. The use of the word "pure" also reflects the Taoist influence within the martial arts. It's obvious that with all the styles available that a person has the opportunity to "fill their barrels with many hoses" and the choice inevitably is up to him/herself. But does training in the martial arts help you realize that the alternative may be more beneficial to the self? i.e. does training in one or more styles help you realize that it's better to train in fewer?

I think people get the wrong idea about style. Most people assume that your style is something that you choose. This is very common in photography where new students are even told to "develop your own style" so that clients can then understand what they're going to get when they hire you. The problem is that "picking a style" means developing and exploiting a gimmick. That isn't really what style is.

In photography a true style is what someone else says you have. You just shoot and years later someone looks at the totality of your work and says "hey all this stuff has a certain integrity, a certain common ground that identifies it as coming from the same photographer. This is your style."

In the martial arts the kihon define the style. In iaido your cut has a certain shape, the way you draw the sword and put it away is done in a certain manner, this is the style of your school and you adapt yourself to it. When learning, your sensei has a timing which you pick up, this is the style of your dojo. Eventually after many years of making wildly uncertain movements you start to make certain movements, your iaido becomes stable and after all the adjustments you have had to make to allow for your weak left knee and your short right arm and your rotund gut you come down to your own personal style. It's not what you choose to add on, it's what you're left with after you take everything else away.

Style is the core, not the frills you add on top. It's what you can't change, not what you choose to do.

Around here we have a lot of different sword arts to play with, more than most places I know actually. Within practical commuting distance we have Itto ryu, Niten Ichi ryu, Katori Shinto ryu, Buko ryu, Muso Shinden ryu, Muso Jikiden Eishin ryu, Shindo Muso ryu, Mugai ryu, Kendo, and a few others I am likely forgetting. All these are Japanese budo, all involve the sword to greater or lesser extent but all would be considered different styles.

In one sense of course they are, and their core principles would be different enough to confuse a beginner. Most members of each school would state quite severely that their school is greatly different than another school and they would be correct on a certain level.

But compare the bunch of them to something like German Longsword and you're going to find that they are actually not that different.

But compare all two handed sword styles to the English cutlass, or to the singlestick or another one-hander and again you start realizing how much more similar than different they are.

There are really only so many ways you can use a sword. While we may think that learning a lot of different styles and schools will only confuse us, in fact we would likely not have as much trouble as we would first think. It would be entirely possible to learn several schools and not confuse them.

If we had 24 hours a day to train.

What I really meant about reducing the number of kata (and the number of hoses in the barrel) was that you can distill the learning of any particular art down to a single kata since that kata will use the kihon of that school. In fact you can distill a great number of Japanese sword schools down to common kihon as well. Cut on the centreline, cut from the hips, grip with the left hand at the pommel and the right hand at the tsuba...

The purity I was thinking of was the purity of a single kata, Mae for choice. I'm talking about what all the old farts talk about when they say, at 80 years old, that "I think I'm starting to get the hang of Mae". They aren't kidding. There is a lifetime of study and learning that you can extract from a single kata.

The problem with learning dozens of kata (or even different sword schools) isn't really that you'll get confused, you can come to the same base style, the same base kihon by studying 100 kata. The problem is the time you spend learning the dance steps for those hundred kata. It's as if our blacksmith made a hundred hammers before starting to make the horseshoe. You don't need all those hammers, you need one good one.

Purity is achieved by refinement. The entire curriculum of Muso Jikiden Eishin ryu can be refined to Mae. All you can learn technically can be taught in Mae, but more importantly, all those things that you learn beyond the dance steps can be learned as easily from one kata as from a hundred. In fact, by spending all your time on a single kata you don't waste all that time learning the dance steps of all the other kata, and keeping them in your head, and keeping their names straight and keeping them in order and...

Life is short. One hammer, spend your time learning what you can make with it. One kata, how much can you learn using it?

# Spirit

*I've always wondered how I would explain to someone who thinks "as long as I have spirit, i don't have to practice" or "Musashi created his own techniques, why should i be so focused on doing yours correct", etc...*

I used to think about this sort of thing a lot but it doesn't bother me so much any more. A very long time ago my Tae Kwon Do instructor said to me "nobody trains in TKD for 10 years on the off chance they will be in a bar fight" and that just about sums it up right there. I teach women's self defence, a simple 10 week course that we developed over 20 years ago and I make no apologies for it. It works, 10 classes at an hour and a half each, and it works. It doesn't take that long to learn this stuff.

Beginners focus on the techniques. Instructors focus on the techniques when they're teaching beginners. It's easy and it's necessary. It's the techniques we teach through so we use them.

But at some point, actually fairly early in the process, the concentration on technique falls away.

How much time does it take to learn how to swing a sword anyway? What do you really need to do, chop through an arm or a neck? Well how long does it take to be good at tameshigiri? Not long at all, once you can get through a couple of mats or a straw bundle it's all just fancy curtains on the windows.

How long does it take to learn how to bust someone in the chops while covering your own head? Not long at all, boxers learn how to punch pretty hard and cover up in a couple weeks, from then on it's a matter of getting better at it to beat other boxers, not about being able to pound someone in the local bar.

So learn the basics in a few weeks and then go out and invent your own techniques? There's no real problem with that, if that's all you want out of the martial arts then go for it. As they say, "Musashi did it".

Now the idea that you can substitute spirit for technique is something a bit different when it comes from the mouth of a beginner. This is someone who has no technique at all but has read about folks with spirit overcoming great odds. It might happen, but damned seldom. The classical story is the tea master who offends the ronin and must fight a duel. He goes to the swordmaster who asks him to serve tea. The master does of course and his instructor says "grasp the sword firmly, resolve to die and face your opponent in the spirit of serving him tea".

OK you have to grab the sword. The spirit of serving tea is a calm, untroubled one, but the key to the story is the middle part, to resolve to die. Grabbing the sword and being untroubled is what saves the tea master's life as the ronin mistakes the calm for skill with the sword, but it's the resolve to die that allows the tea master to be untroubled.

He got by on spirit? Absolutely not! He had a lifetime of technique practice in serving tea to call upon. What does a beginner have to call upon? A story? Can someone at the beginning of his life resolve to die? About the best a youth can do is have a conviction that he will never die. And thank the gods for

that, if young men didn't believe they were invincible we would never get them to go die for the tribe and humanity would have been wiped from the earth 50,000 years ago. Unfortunately being convinced you won't die only works until you get busted in the chops or feel that first bone snap under the stone club, then you're ready to run and only the old men who are standing behind you with their own clubs will keep you on the battlefield.

A lifetime of trying to perfect the techniques is what gives the martial artist that determination to "just do it" when the chips are down. It's that endurance that makes the old men in the bar much more dangerous than the kids who can barely stand after a few beers. Take a swing at one of those guys and you'd better connect heavy because if he comes back off the floor you're going to wish you were in the next county.

Spirit is a bank account, it's something that you contribute to little by little each class you attend, each disappointment you overcome. You accumulate some every time sensei tells you your form is crap and you nod and try again, you earn a bit each time you get back up off the floor and toe the line to be knocked down again.

Ever wonder why sensei never praises the seniors, why he only finds fault with what looks pretty damned good to you? It's his job to find something to criticise, something that will make that senior push a little bit beyond what he can do today, to push them beyond what sensei can do. Praise may keep you in the dojo for a while, but eventually you stay because sensei tells you to do it again, you stay because you have to do it again.

Musashi created his own techniques? Bollocks. Musashi practiced what his father taught him, what he learned from experience, and eventually he went beyond technique. He wasn't exempt from technique when he was learning, he went through to the other side. You can't get there from here. As a beginner you can't jump to the end any more than you can teleport from here to Tokyo. We don't have that kind of shortcut, you have to make the journey. Musashi made the journey, and at the other end he found what the tea master found, that if you practice the techniques of any art long enough you become open to all art, you can penetrate to the core of technique and punch through the bottom of that well into the place where all art originates. Musashi could swing a sword, wield a paintbrush, hammer metal and write.

That's the lesson you need to learn from Musashi, not that you can pull a sword school from your rear end. He wasn't the "lone wolf" legend says he was, and he certainly didn't tell us he was in his writings. Read them as a technical manual, not as some esoteric philosophy of life. He wrote to his students, not to a beginner in the 21st century. Read him from that point of view and what he says becomes very plain. Practice. Think about it. Practice.

It is only through practice of the techniques that you acquire spirit. It is only by mastering the techniques that you can go beyond them, that you can invent them.

## Tennis Elbow in Iaido, 5 steps to more practice.

1. Tennis elbow is quite common and most people move through it eventually. You can ice your elbows, take aspirin, do deep friction massage on the painful spot and around the area (just dig your finger into the muscle and rub it back and forth over the fibres).
2. To stretch the muscles after massage, put your thumb and index finger (the back of your hand) on your leg and make a z shape of your arm, now push so that your elbow is stretched (if you know aikido it's the nikkyo pin with the arm stretched out rather than bent).
3. Check that your sword isn't too heavy. Use a bokuto or a lighter iaito if possible, or take a break.
4. Check that your grip is correct, if it's around to the side you are likely using those muscles to try to stop the blade, instead use your little fingers and your armpits to stop the sword, and put your hands further onto the top of the hilt. This is the key to doing iaido in the future.
5. Check your keyboard, typing and mouse use will aggravate the injury. Cross train, lift weights, squeeze a rubber ball or do some other rehabilitation exercise.

Above all, don't give up, if you stay in iaido long enough you get tennis elbow, and if you stick with it, you can keep practicing.

*Sei Do Kai in Japan, 2015, Maya and Martin's elbow*



## Neanderthals and Us

Somewhere around 30,000 years ago paintings started to appear on cave walls. At the same time beads, statues and other forms of decoration showed up.

These were found in places occupied by our ancestors and much less frequently in the places occupied at the same time by Neanderthal man. This difference may be one of the most significant things that separate the two groups of humans.

What does it mean, this decoration? It is of course "art" just as we recognize it today, something that is done which is not associated with basic biological needs, food, shelter, sex, that sort of thing. It is symbolic, it is abstract, something beyond, something that resembles or represents something else but isn't that thing.

What we can do, that no other animal seems capable of doing, is to abstract, to represent an idea, to take the particular (the sun comes up) and categorize it (the sun comes up every day), abstract it (the sun moves around us) or create a new, symbolic meaning for it (the sun is Apollo driving his chariot of fire across the sky). It's the most powerful biological tool / weapon yet developed on this planet.

It's quite possibly why we're here and why Neanderthal man is not. Let's look at those two groups. They both came out of the same base humanoid, *Homo heidelbergensis* which lived 600,000 to 200,000 years ago and had brains that were twice the size of ours. They were up to 6 feet tall and heavily muscled, and hunted large game.

From this group came *Homo (sapiens) neanderthal* who lived from 230,000 to 28,000 years ago. Shorter (about 5.5 feet tall), still heavily muscled, with a brain that was quite a bit larger than ours, this group dominated Europe from the Atlantic to Asia and from the Mediterranean to Germany. They had no trouble taking down the large game to be found during the last ice age in Europe.

The Neanderthal would have had little trouble in a fight with *Homo sapiens*, who also came from *heidelbergensis* around 150,000 years ago and moved into Europe at the end of the ice age. *Homo sapiens* had a brain that was 12 percent smaller, had less muscle and almost went extinct during that same ice age that Neanderthal man seemed designed to endure. How is it that we survived?

Abstract thought, wide social networks, a more sophisticated culture... art.

What has this to do with martial arts you ask? Well I'd like you to consider the "art" rather than the "martial" for a moment. Once again there are arguments online about the Japanese ryuha and how they



prepared their students for war; are kata the best way or should we have free sparring too. It never ends, this argument, yet the problem always seems to revolve around the assumption that preparation for warfare is the basic function of the martial arts schools. There are some folks, Karl Friday being one of the best examples, who suspect that the ryu-ha might have been about something else, perhaps more about the art than about the martial. About what makes us different from the rest of the animals and perhaps from the rest of the humans that came before us.

Perhaps martial arts aren't really about training people to fight, but are instead about the abstract, the symbolic, perhaps they're about culture and passing on sophisticated ways of thinking through seemingly basic actions. After all, the same technique that makes a stone scraper can also make the Venus of Wallendorf. Why can't abstract ideas be passed along through the same techniques that once were used for fighting or for killing food?



# Salsbury Hill and Brotherhoods

I just caught, by accident, the Peter Gabriel song Salsbury Hill.

Every time I hear that song I think of the University of British Columbia, and specifically a lounge in one of the residences. I heard that song there and I think I wrote a poem while listening to it, but I couldn't tell you what I was doing there or when it was. I haven't a clue which residence it was either.

I have similar impressions of Trent University, The University of Calgary, U.P.E.I., Dalhousie in Halifax and many other Universities across Canada. The reason being that I did some traveling when I was a student and I would always drop into the local University, hit the gym for a shower and then follow the noise of the parties to the residences where someone would offer me a place on the floor, either in a room or in the lounge. It was the Brotherhood of University Students, one looked after a traveller, let him into the gym and gave him a towel, let him crash for a night and maybe even cooked him breakfast in the morning, certainly fed him beer the night before.

I have no idea if the Brotherhood of University Students still exists but I'd like to think it does. Roll into a town, hit the gym and say "I'm hitchiking across the country and would really like a shower, can I go in". In my case, I was never turned away, the student on the desk would look around, throw me a towel and say "go through". I suppose these days that kid would be risking his job but still, I'd like to think it happens.

A bit later I started practicing the martial arts and I discovered another brotherhood, the dojo. To this day I travel from place to place practicing and teaching those who are my brothers in the arts. I have been doing this since I was a beginner, I remember sleeping on a floor in England, in a jail in Ottawa (the local hostel), eight to a hotel room in Toronto (take the top mattress off each of two double beds and you've got eight spots for a great night's sleep) and even getting acupuncture treatments on the tatami of a dojo after a night's sleep that froze my neck. It was on the third floor over the Future Bakery on Queen Street West in Toronto before the neighbourhood went upscale.

People talk today about the communities that are created on the internet but these are not new. I have rolled into strange towns and found brothers willing to lend me a dry place to lay my head since the 1970s.

As we roll into a new year I'd like to think that these Brotherhoods will continue for one more generation at least. My son practices judo and my daughter is a damned good violinist. When it comes time for them to throw a backpack over their shoulder and hit the road I hope they will find a floor to

crash on and a shower to enjoy after a long day on the dusty road.

Hell I may even join them, so if you see a big bald guy with a bokuto bag over his shoulder and his thumb out, stop and give us a ride to the next town. We may have a good story or a tune to trade.



## Quitting Time

My sensei has quit teaching at least once a year for the last 15 years, and now is talking about being allowed to retire honourably.

I get it. I really do.

All the University students are back at the gym, I've got a demonstration tomorrow morning (looks like me and maybe our newest beginner if he remembers to show up) and it just occurred to me that the two seniors who have been running interference for the club with the administration may both be gone next year.

Not for the first time I'm feeling like I'm just too old for this stuff. All I ever wanted to do was practice, I never wanted to teach and only ever did so because I needed bodies with cash to get a practice space and teachers from Japan for my sensei. I sure never wanted to do all the organizing and...

Well let's face it, I'm now old enough that I just don't want to be bothered with remembering where I have to be. I've been here, there and six other places every day at a certain time for half a century and I'd like to be noplac for an unspecified period of time, with no need to worry about who's going to do this or that next week.

Quitting time? I totally get it.

Here's my dream for the never-to-be-here future, I own a dojo that would be open from 6am to 9pm for anyone to come practice at any time. I wander in whenever I feel like it and help anyone who's there. If there's nobody there I practice.

That's it..... no wait, my knees work again. Better get that in just in case the budo gods are paying attention.

## Effective Martial Arts

A student was asking about unarmed martial arts last evening and I mentioned the Aikido club, which is a very good one here at the University. One of the fellows who teaches was at the very first workshop in 1980 which is also when I started. I drifted to iaido and jodo after I tried it out for a decade, but he stuck with it and got good at it.

The response was that a friend had done the class for three or four weeks and quit because while the instructors were very good the students were all "blind leading the blind". In other words, it's a University club, perpetually full of beginners. Beside that though, Aikido was "a bit soft" nowadays, with folks spinning around two or three times before throwing.

Fine I said, what about Judo?

Tried that but what if the guy doesn't have a gi on?

This went back and forth for a while. Eventually he mentioned he'd like to do some good koryu jujutsu and said there was one fellow he'd heard about who was supposed to be doing the most authentic stuff around and I asked what it was. "A combination....."

Right there I knew we were talking about apples and oranges. He couldn't remember all three arts the fellow did but the first was a thoroughly modern form so I launched into an explanation of what koryu jujutsu is and why he wasn't interested in it.

It's old. It's full of techniques to deal with folks who are wearing armour, or attacking with a sword or a stick. It often assumes the defender has a knife tucked away in the front of the belt. It often involves even more little weapons that would be positively silly to have about your person these days.

But worst of all, it's done in kata. I suppose some styles have randori but one doesn't practice the way one practices modern judo, aikido or jujutsu, by kihon and randori, one practices by kata. Full setpiece fights from start to finish. A limited number of them, no new ones, no adjustment or discussion of applications in the modern age, no adaptation to modern clothing, just kata.

I may be simplifying but you get the idea. Koryu jujutsu is something you should probably practice for any reason EXCEPT effectiveness if you're looking for an effective jujutsu.

Much better to go with something that you can practice anywhere, and that you can run a quality test on.

Judo for instance. A judo instructor will look pretty good to anyone who walks in off the street, but if you're there a week and you see the fellow getting trashed by a green belt, then a week after that by a blue belt (assuming they are serious matches of course) you can pretty much assume your instructor may not deserve his black belt, or may be past it. What I mean is the competitive sports (judo and kendo) are pretty hard to fake, you can either perform the techniques or you get your ass handed to you. There isn't much room for BS.

Yes but they're just sports.

Yes they are sports but there's no reason anyone should get all worked up about winning and losing and doing all the little sporty things like muscling a throw or dodging a shinai so it hits you on the shoulder instead of the head. Compete purely and cleanly, have your ass handed to you for years and years and say thank you after each defeat. If beginners really listened they'd hear their sensei telling them that anyway (the ones who are of high enough rank that is). After enough time your ass may not be so easy to beat.

Aikido all big and soft and swirly? Sure it is for practice and for beginners but trust me, there are some nasty things in there if you pay attention. Anything big and slow can get small real fast.

Can't punch someone in Judo? Well no you can't in class or in a match, but who says you can't on the street? It doesn't take long to learn how to throw an elbow. No judogi? So grab his shirt. If by some strange circumstance you're fighting someone who is naked, grab his hair, or lock your hands around his neck, or hook his arm....

In a few years you won't be practicing any art for effectiveness and self defence anyway. Waste of time, you learn all the nasty fighting techniques in about 6 months and from then on it's just practice for the next forty years.

Still interested in the koryu jujutsu but want effectiveness? How about six months of judo and then forty years of koryu kata.

No, better yet, six hours of judo and four hours of koryu jujutsu per week for forty years.



## Is that a Real Difference

There is a little bit of a discussion on Kendo-World about the jodo kata Ranai. It was triggered by a youtube video and there were some comments about differences between this kata as done by students of the Jodo Federation and what is done by the Kendo Federation (Jodo section of course).

The differences are visible, and seemed quite large to me at first but on second look they were really such things as the sword moving the jo out of line provoking an attack as vs the jo simply moving to attack again.

One comment was about some small steps which may or may not be there in the kata, in other words "Is that a real difference?"

Interesting question on a couple of different levels.

1. Was that something that particular jodoka did only in that film or is it something in the kata as he practices it? Watching youtube videos should always be done with this question in mind. Looking at someone doing a kata once on film may show you a perfect example of the kata, or it may show you a few mistakes that are so skilfully moved through that you are getting a perfect example of an "incorrect" kata. Both these possibilities are there when you are looking at advanced students. Of course you may also get something that is obviously flawed, in which case you are probably looking at beginners and everything should be taken with a grain of salt.

2. Is it a real difference between two lines of practice? Is this done in this line and that done in the other line and perhaps a third thing done in yet another line?

How much difference makes "a difference"? If one line takes an extra step and another does not, or a full step in one organization and a half step in another, is this a real difference?

This is going to depend on whether or not you're talking to a beginner. For a beginner there is only one way to do a kata. One correct way and that's the way the beginner was taught. A half step vs a whole step is a difference, and, since a beginner can't judge what's important and what's not, it's an important difference by default.

On the other hand a senior may well look at you with a puzzled look when you ask about the difference. He might say "it depends on how far away the other guy is" or he might say "never thought about it, I suppose you could do it both ways". What is a real difference to a beginner might not even be noticed by a senior.



3. What's a real difference to a senior? Now there's the important question and it may well be answered in such areas as timing, intent, feeling and intuition, things a beginner can't even detect.



## Don't Practice by Yourself?

One of my students told me the other day that his former teacher told him not to practice the techniques he was learning at home because he might develop bad habits that he'd have to change later.

A couple of the seniors winced and one of them told me to sit down before I even started to comment. OK I may get a bit heated about a couple of things, and this is one of them.

Only in the martial arts have I ever heard this advice and I'm darned if I know where it came from. Can anyone imagine a violin teacher, a dance teacher, a language teacher or any other instructor you can think of telling someone not to practice on their own?

It's just unimaginable to me, but I hear it over and over again. You may develop bad habits!

Folks you won't develop any habits at all if you don't practice, but hey, habits aren't all that good an idea when practicing the martial arts, what you want to develop is an understanding of the art you're learning, not a bunch of reflexes that an opponent can trigger and then use against you. To go home and practice something in one way, come back to class and be told to do it a different way, is a good thing. It will prevent reflexes and habits.

Yes, we tend to be comfortable with what we learn first, I've proven this over and over with my self defence classes where I teach each new bunch to roll on the right side or the left side first depending on my mood. Whichever side I start them on they are most comfortable with for a while. But always, with practice they even out and it doesn't matter, or they go to their natural side. Yes what we learn first tends to be what we favour as a beginner, but all that says is that if we know how to do it one way, we know how to do it that way.

So what? If we can learn one way we can learn another, and another.

It's hard enough to keep students around without discouraging them in their first flush of enthusiasm, and it's DAMNED hard to get students to practice enough to become good at these arts so why would you stop them from doing it?

Makes no sense to me at all.

## Why go to Japan?

I have had several students head off to Japan over the years, and of course have read lots of advice on the net that you can't learn the martial arts without going to Japan.

It absolutely used to be the case that you had to go to Japan to learn Judo, Karate, Kendo, or any of the other Japanese arts which did not exist in North America, but I seem to recall that the last World Championships of Kendo were won by the team from Korea with the USA taking second place. Japan took third with Chinese Taipei. Eventually, every Japanese martial art of any size has been exported successfully to other countries where it is learned and taught without the need to go to Japan to study.

Are there good instructors in Japan? Top competitors? Absolutely. Should the top folks in any martial art practice in Japan? Probably, or at the very least they should practice with the top instructors from Japan. However, it does not seem to me that it is necessary to go to Japan to learn a martial art if that art is being taught by competent instructors in your home country.

In other words, if the art only exists in Japan, you must go to Japan but if it is not taught exclusively in Japan it would seem you have a choice.

Not only that, but I have had students head over to Japan and then complain that they can't find any instructors near where they end up teaching English. They now practice less than when they were in Canada. Of course that can be remedied but again, I have had more than one Japanese student join our class and comment that there was more opportunity here to practice different martial arts than back in Japan, either because of distance or because they had more access to top instructors here than they would have in Japan.

So why the attraction to Japan? It seems that some folks believe that you must go to Japan to learn "in the culture" of the samurai or at least the culture of the originators of your martial art. I've always had a problem with this, the general culture of Japan is no more attuned to the samurai than the culture of Alberta is attuned to the sodbusters, or that of New England is attuned to the whalers. Unless you can soak up past cultural knowledge from the landscape I have my doubts that you can do it from mining the modern culture for those remnants of the past that still cling.

While it may be true that Japan has remained rather more homogenous than Canada or the USA, I would still not expect that the modern Japanese would be any more in tune with an Edo period swordsman than a modern German would with a longswordman of the same era. Despite Germany being a lot more homogenous than the new world countries. We just don't carry that much forward from our past when it comes to our everyday culture.

Think about how similar your life and belief system is to your grandparents.

If you're going to go to Japan to learn the culture, that's great. If you're going to go learn the martial arts in the modern culture of Japan, that's even better. Going to Japan to learn the martial arts in the same culture in which they originated? Perhaps a little bit more difficult.

Don't think I've got anything against going to Japan to study, I really don't. I just don't understand the attitude that you can't learn the arts elsewhere. In fact, I can see a real benefit to going to Japan and studying full time, the same benefit that a monk gets in a monastery. It's easy to meditate in the temple, and difficult to be a monk in the world. If you can find a situation where you can practice the martial arts full time and concentrate without distraction, you've got a great chance to learn.

On the other hand, if you are in Japan working, worrying about your next visa, trying to communicate and find your way around and generally fighting all the same distractions you face back home, your progress in the arts may not be any more rapid than if you had stayed home and kept studying with your teacher.

Living requires the same attention and demands the same payment no matter what country you're in.

*If you want to check out any of Kim's instructional books you can do so at <http://sdksupplies.com/> where you might also find more of these Half a Century ebooks.*