

## Midori Yama Budokai: *Hanshi's Corner*

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*Ichi go, ichi e: One life, one meeting*

**“Be master of mind rather than mastered by mind.”**

**Zen saying**

### ***Kinomichi* (氣之道): The Way of Energy**

*Kinomichi* is a derivative of *Aikido*. It was founded in France by Noro Masamichi in 1979. The emphasis is on natural order and how man is a link between heaven and earth. Movements Noro relates to the Sky are projections; movements related to the earth are immobilizations. Its ultimate goal is the realization of harmonious peace through a stylized method of combative techniques done in flowing slow motion. “Each movement must tone, loosen, and sensitize the bodies of both practitioners, thus shifting the very nature of the movement itself from opposition into partnership”. When the Way of Man, the Way of Earth and the Way of Heaven are united, ascending energy is released from the ground upward. This energy moves through the feet, to the hands and beyond. Noro relates that he came to this realization from observing a tree. He realized that a tree ascends toward heaven with no centering, but full of energy. For Noro, the *hara* is a simple point of passage. This was the genesis of his art. This begins with intent, moves through the *hara* and is modulated by the heart (*shin*). Noro states that this condition of the heart is empathy, and gives meaning to Ueshiba’s statement that “My *Aikido* is love.” According to Noro, this means that Ueshiba considered his *Aikido* to be empathetic toward his fellow man. Noro’s style combines the straight line and the circle into the spiral, which is the basis for implementation of technique. This is represented on the patch used by *Kinomichi*, which is two interlocking swirls of energy. In the center of these is silence or stillness – the calm needed to practice non-violence. Noro was an *uchideshi* (live-in disciple) of Ueshiba Morihei and retains close ties with *Aikikai*, now headed by Ueshiba’s grandson Ueshiba Moriteru. Unique to this system is the deletion of *dan* rank. The students are not graded and, as with most forms of *Aikido*, there is no competition. In regard to a question, Noro replied: “If I were able to explain my art, I would no longer need to study it.” One of the credos of the style is “Not without the body. Not solely with the body.” This refers to the fact that Noro’s system is a “hands-on” style. The techniques must be done physically, but must be carried beyond the physical to encompass the heart of the art.

Based in part on *The Way of the Warrior* by Chris Crudelli.

### ***Tsuki Waza Renshu: Thrusting Techniques Training***

One of the most common mistakes in *choku zuki* (straight “punch”) is for the student to raise the shoulder. To help eliminate this error, have the student concentrate on tightening the muscles below the armpit. When this is done, it is difficult for the shoulder to rise, and the punch will be straight.

### **Traditional Karate – Modern Karate**

The following excerpts are from *Moving Zen, Karate as a Way to Gentleness* by C. W. Nicol. Nicol Sensei lived in Japan, training at the JKA. During this time, he met and

married a Japanese lady. His thoughts are given as follows: “Karate as a sport is fast developing [the book was written in 1975], and we will end up with weight divisions, rounds, fouls, champions (actually we already have those), heroes, and worst of all, spectators...armchair Karate men who have never stepped onto a dojo floor.”

In regard to traditional *karate*, he recalls an incident when he fought with an injured arm. The following is what his *sensei* told him: “We are like soldiers. When a soldier puts on his uniform, carries a weapon and goes to war, he is obviously willing to fight and kill his enemies. If he is willing to kill, then he must be prepared to die.”

The lesson learned was that if he (Nicol) went to the *dojo* and put on his *karategi*, he must be willing to fight. If the injury was such that he absolutely could not fight, he was not to come to the *dojo*. No favoritism would be shown on the street and none would be shown in the *dojo*.

### ***Kata and Zanshin***

The following quote is from the previously mentioned *Moving Zen*. It is Takagi *Sensei*'s explanation to Nicol *Sensei* about *Zanshin*. Nicol was learning *Tekki Shodan*. “When the movements of a kata are finished, you must have ‘zanshin.’” When asked what *zanshin* meant, Nicol replied, “a perfect finish.” Takagi replied: “Yes, it does, but what exactly is a perfect finish? *Zanshin* is comprised of two characters. The first one, “zan,” means to remain, to continue. The second one, “shin,” means heart or mind. When the movements of a kata are finished, do not think that the kata is finished, do not relax your attention and spirit. You must come to the closing position, keep your eyes ahead, your body and spirit ready for anything. You must be aware of all that is around you. Kata is not just a practice of movements, and neither is it a way of retreating into your own self. When you practice kata you must be acutely aware. You must have a mind like still water [*mizu no kokoro*], reflecting all things. Finish your kata with *zanshin*, otherwise, no matter how brilliantly you perform it, it will be considered a failure.” Nicol continues by stating: “Without good “*kamae*” or readiness at the beginning of the kata, and without *zanshin* at the end, the kata was only a physical exercise, and not a moving practice of Zen.”

### ***Shogo: Master Title System***

Though your professor has included *mudansha* grades, *Shogo* refers to *yudansha* only. The following should not be considered “official,” but a compilation of “titles” from different styles. Also, the titles of *Renshi*, *Kyoshi*, *Hanshi* and above are much more difficult to achieve than *dan* ranks, and are not automatically given when the specified *dan* rank is awarded. Many organizations require a written thesis for these ranks and then a practical demonstration of the thesis. When awarded, the individuals are given a *Shogo Shomeisho*, or Certificate of Master Title.

*Mukyu* is a beginner; literally, “no grade.”

*Kohai* refers to a junior grade; that is, any *mudansha* grade below *sankyu*.

*Sempai* means senior grade, referring to *sankyu* (3<sup>rd</sup> *kyu*), *nikyū* (2<sup>nd</sup> *kyu*) and *ikkyū* (1<sup>st</sup> *kyu*).

**Kohai-Shodan** is a black belt awarded to a person under the age of fourteen. Upon reaching fourteen s/he may be awarded full *Shodan* based on technique and maturity.

**Kohai-Nidan** is a black belt awarded to a person under the age of sixteen. When the age of sixteen is reached s/he may be awarded full *Nidan* based on technique and maturity.

**Kohai-Sandan** is a black belt awarded to a person under the age of eighteen. At the age of eighteen, s/he may be awarded full *Sandan* based on technique and maturity.

**Sensei** means “one who has gone before” or “born before.” This title is traditionally for *Yodan* (4<sup>th</sup> *Dan*) and above.

**Kyūcho** is the senior *mudansha* in a *dojo*, usually of brown belt rank.

**Tashi** means “proficient,” and requires a minimum rank of *Sandan* (3<sup>rd</sup> *Dan*). At this level s/he should have the ability to teach practical methods and basic techniques. S/he is dedicated to *budō* and long-term teaching.

**Renshi** is a “polished master,” a martial artist of 4<sup>th</sup> *Dan* or higher who has been awarded their “teacher’s license.” Although possessing a great level of expertise and competence the *renshi* still perseveres in practice toward “perfection,” knowing s/he will never attain it in this lifetime.

**Kyōshi** refers to a “proficient master” or “assistant master teacher” in the martial arts who has been awarded their “senior teacher’s license.” Requires a minimum rank of *Rokudan* (6<sup>th</sup> *Dan*). In some schools they are referred to as *Shihan*. This person has an outstanding knowledge of the traditions and methods of *budō* and can demonstrate technique and teaching methods with excellence. In addition, the *Kyōshi* is capable of teaching *budo* philosophy.

**Hanshi** is a “model master,” or “wise master.” Traditionally, this is an instructor who heads his or her own organization. This is an individual of outstanding moral and personal character who has proven leadership and exceptional contribution to *budō*. S/he has a deep understanding of the techniques, history and spirit of the martial arts. When the sounds (not the characters) are reversed, the term is **Shihan**, which is regarded more as a position of “Chief Instructor” rather than a title. As *Shihan* it may be awarded from *Godan* (5<sup>th</sup> *Dan*) upwards.

**Seiko-Shihan** refers to an International Master Instructor.

**Meijin** applies to someone who has attained “spiritual perfection”; this would be the equivalent to a “living saint.” Another term used would be “Grand Master” and only those of *Jūdan* (10<sup>th</sup> *Dan*) may hold the title of *Meijin*. This is someone who has surpassed all physical manifestations of an art, and is capable of infinite techniques based on intuition.

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