



To attain the Way ... as a warrior you must study fully other martial arts and not deviate a little from the Way of the warrior. . accumulate practice day by day, hour by hour, polish the... spirit, heart, and mind ...when your spirit is not the least clouded ... there is the true void... (when) you ... come to think of things in a wide sense... you will see the Way as void". Shinmen Musashi, *Go Rin No Sho* (1645)

# Studying Martial Arts at The Denver Dojo

## WHY THE USE OF VOID (*Ku*)?

The **Heiho** (strategy) of Ninjutsu teaches us to be adaptive, formless and seamless in our movement through the world, to be neutral and full of potential to do and be anything. ***Ku*** is the description of this teaching.

## WHAT ARTS ARE TAUGHT AT THE DENVER DOJO?

- A. Granted teaching license and black belt ranking by Dr. Masaaki Hatsumi, the Soke of Nine Traditions of Ninjutsu, the instructors of the Dojo teach the warrior arts just as they were directly transmitted in the 1980's and early 1990's in Noda City, Japan. Specifically, we teach eight Traditions, the ninth having not been shared by Sensei. The Nine Traditions (**Ryuha**) over which Hatsumi-Sensei is Grandmaster (**Soke**) are:
1. **Gyokko Ryu Koshijutsu** Includes, basics of Nine Traditions such as Kihon Happa (8 fundamental techniques) and Sanshin-no kata (5 elemental katas).
  2. **Togakure Ryu Ninpo**
  3. **Kuki Shinden Ryu Happa Hiken**
  4. **Shinden Fudo Ryu Daken Taijutsu**
  5. **Koto Ryu Koppojutsu**
  6. **Gikan Ryu Koppo**
  7. **Takagi Yoshin Ryu Ninjutsu**
  8. **Kumogakure Ryu Ninpo**
  9. **Gyokushin Ryu Ninpo** *(not taught at Denver Dojo)*
- B. Besides the specific Traditions, our primary focus of teaching is on **Tatsujin** - "whole person warriorship" and survival. Our purpose is to be self-reliant and self-sufficient. We always assume our opponents are faster and stronger than us and our objective is to initiate those methods that make our opponents weaker and slower. The bottom line is survival in a form that we, individually, choose.

Along with the physical/mental study, **Mikkyo** is also offered for those interested.

## WARRIORSHIP AND VIRTUES

A warrior is one experienced in the Arts of War. There are many kinds of war - physical, spiritual, and psychological are just three. War is not pleasant and not fun - it is not humorous and friendly. Before there is war, there is confrontation. That is where the path begins...

### **These are the virtues of a warrior:**

Honesty (to oneself and others) and Integrity

Courage

Endurance and Perseverance

Discipline and desire to be the best

Wisdom and Perspective

Alertness and Awareness

To become one with the enemy

Acceptance of being alone

100% Personal Responsibility ("never complain, never explain")

Skill with the body, mind, and spirit

## CHOOSING A MARTIAL ART TO STUDY

- A. In general, the "Martial Arts" is the study of those methods, techniques, and strategies to allow one the option of attacking, defending, and surviving confrontation.

Martial comes from the word military. The most common practitioners of the Martial Arts then have been soldiers or those who are constantly fighting. The most common non-military practitioners have been the wealthy or priests (the obvious example being the Shaolin monks).

Art implies elegance, grace, and a level of skill that one can only attain through disciplined practice over time. One can clearly see it when it is there and when it is absent. Just as playing the piano or driving a manual transmission takes mechanical, spaced repetition to be good at it, so does the Martial Arts. There is no easy way.

There are many styles or approaches (called **Ryu**) that provide the student with options for use in confrontation. Those that have been around, or more correctly those that have continued (survived) because they are (have been) effective over time, are called **Koryu** ("old/classical styles"). Those that are derivative (come from) or only focus on one aspect of the *Koryu* are called **Shinbudo** ("Heart of the Martial Way").

For example, *Jiu Jutsu* is *Koryu* to *Judo* which is *Shinbudo*.

- B. Most people make choices based upon their comfort-zone. If there is a choice between what is pleasurable and what is painful, most people will choose pleasure.

This explains why most people choose the easiest way rather than the hard way (or the thing that takes the most effort/work/time). This is also why most people would prefer to make choices of study with those who make them feel good, rather than with those who would challenge them to do away with their lives of benign sleepwalking.

All growth and change occur when one gets out of the comfort-zone. If we want to make a muscle grow, we must take it beyond its burn-point (comfort-zone boundary), and it grows. Therefore, choosing a Martial Art that is compatible with one's non-combat comfort-zone is not very useful. Besides, confrontation is likely to REALLY CHALLENGE THE COMFORT-ZONE.

- C. Many decisions are made based upon Cost-Benefit Analysis. If the benefit is greater than the cost, we think we have a good deal. If the cost is higher than the benefit, we think the deal is a bad one. The study of the Martial Arts is an intangible commodity. Because one cannot weigh it, touch it, compare it easily, most prospective students will simply look to the cost of attendance or the time commitments as the only cost components, but that is not true. There is the cost of a changed life, the cost of confronting fears that one would probably never normally confront, the cost of injury, the cost to the ego, the cost of becoming a better person. The benefits of empowerment all surround the value of one's life. If each of us truly has significance, surely we are worth so much more than the simple costs of money and time.
- D. A third factor in making a decision to study is asking "why?" Why the Martial Arts and why this particular Art? There are many reasons for studying Martial Arts. Probably the biggest reason is for self-defense. A second reason is to balance one's life by the elimination of fears (becoming "fear-less"). A third reason is physiological - athletic/getting in shape, etc. A final reason might be educational - understanding a tradition or enhancing another aspect of your training (e.g. studying different kinds of swords and their uses that are not covered in your normal Art). One needs to be clear why one studies.
- E. A fourth factor one should consider is lineage, training of the instructor and the instructor him or herself. If there is no clear lineage (who learned from whom?) one should leave immediately. If the instructor is evasive in their answers about where they received their training, leave.

How they were trained is important. If they got their promotions in a seminar environment without the promoter really knowing them, leave. If they petitioned to have a rank, leave. If they created an Art, leave. If they are really young, leave. If they talk about themselves a great deal, leave. If they are name droppers, leave.

If there is any hint of a cult (blind allegiance), leave. If they expect you to get them food, buy them gifts, like them, leave. Life is too short to pursue phantoms that do not go anywhere.

All this is common sense, but there are those who would take advantage of you.

### WHAT ARE OUR METHODOLOGIES?

- A. There are two general ways to teach: **waza** based (technique based) or **kata** based (form based). We teach in the waza manner. In order to achieve **Ku** at the earliest point, it is imperative that each little piece of a movement be understood. Once the movement is understood, then the kata will be shown.

These Arts emphasize "returning to zero" and not being bound by conventional, rigid judgments, and preconceived notions. The student must be an individual. Therefore, studying waza as opposed to kata, allows the student to adapt the sequences of a confrontation (scenarios) to what speaks to them personally almost immediately.

- B. You will be taught the curriculum Hatsumi-Sensei has provided to 4th degree Black Belt.
- C. The complete collection of techniques transmitted are known as the **Ten Chi Jin Ryaku No Maki** (the book of Heaven, Earth and Man). Techniques are taken from all the Nine Traditions per Sensei's direction. Students can only be recommended for promotion in the Denver Dojo up to Yondan (4<sup>th</sup> degree black belt). (All ranks are awarded by Dr. Hatsumi based upon our recommendation). After 4<sup>th</sup> degree, one must seek advancement through Sensei directly.

For the grades up to **Shodan** (1<sup>st</sup> degree), the student will be required to learn and demonstrate techniques from the **Ten and Chi Ryaku No Maki**. The manner and rate of instruction will depend on the ability, spirit, and knowledge of the student.

Up to and including 7th Kyu, the student will learn how to move their body and how to position themselves. At 6th Kyu the curriculum introduces the first of the "fighting" forms. Students will start with a white belt. When they are accepted as a student they will be given a green belt. By the time the student reaches 1st Kyu level, a basic knowledge of the useful Japanese terms should have been acquired.

The title of **Shidoshi-Ho** means assistant teacher. A Black Belt graded student who is looking to earn such a title, will have to show the ability to explain the curriculum and teach the students to become Warriors within the Tradition. (Shidoshi means teacher.)

- D. If we accept the premise that the purpose of a Martial Art is dealing with confrontation (on all levels from mental to physical) then an appropriate method of study is how others have done it successfully in the past. Theoretically, if I do (act, think, and believe) exactly like someone else, over time, I should get similar results. This is what is called

mentoring or role modeling. This is the dominant way culture is passed and the basis of much of our learning patterns. If I act, think, and believe like my successful Art tells me, I should be able to duplicate its success for me.

The critical aspect of modeling is that if we can just choose the right models in any area, we can get the right results we seek. If we choose poor models, we get poor results. Also by modeling, we have a way of measuring (because we have a standard) whether we are moving in the right direction (becoming more successful at dealing with confrontation) or moving away (failing). We make changes by using better models. We never change to a model that is uncertain (and we rarely "re-invent") because we have no way of predicting and measuring the results and besides there is no lack of models.

Since *Koryus* have survived over time, in many types of situations, it is logical that there we might find the strongest and most defined role models for the Martial Arts. It is also logical to assume that because of how they survived, these Arts may provide a complete approach to confrontation as opposed to *Shinbudo* approaches since *Shinbudo* is a derivative.

### **DO WE TEACH FORMALLY, INFORMALLY, TRADITIONALLY OR NON-TRADITIONALLY?**

- A. We teach Ninjutsu as it was transmitted in Japan when we first received it. This includes bowing, using titles and all the formal rituals common to that time and which link us to past traditions of the Art. (Look at Ninja Secrets from the Grandmaster, Hatsumi/Hayes, pp. 150 ff. to see if it really was this way; ditto, Ninja and their Secret Fighting Art and Ninjutsu, Art of the Invisible Warrior, both by Mr. Hayes)
- B. Is this any different than other Dojo's and other instructor's do? Yes.
- C. Why would others do it differently? Any one who has seen Sensei move or seen Sensei in the context of a seminar will conclude that in this Dojo, we are far too rigid, formal and combat oriented . But one must understand that Sensei had to start with this same solid discipline, hardness, and formality in order to get to a place where he could become so graceful, light and almost gentle.

"Completion of formal training is really a form of new beginning." (Hayes) "The only way to learn this Art is to be willing to give up, let go... (what) may have (been) practiced or done in the past" (Hatsumi Sensei in Secrets p. 100). In other words evolve toward *Ku*.

Our objective is to become more like Sensei through modeling like he did. There must be the pounding of the metal and exposure to flame before a piece of metal can become a sword. There must be preparation.

No one has a monopoly on truth. If another instructor interprets a general seminar environment as the way to pass on this Art, if they want all their students to be buddies, that is their choice. We have chosen a different path. You are encouraged to study with everyone and evaluate every position. You are particularly encouraged to study with those who disagree with our approach in order to have the proper perspective. We are very clear about why we do what we do.

We don't measure ourselves by comparisons. We measure ourselves by our individual successes and by the fact that our students survive - in any form they choose.

## **RANKS**

Ranks are a measure of knowledge, spirit, and skill of these Traditions. If you have any of the three measures but not all, you will not be promoted. No ranks are given for time. No honorary ranks are given for service. No one gets credit for other knowledge outside of the Art you are studying. Your ego means nothing. Like the judgment of the Universe, ranking must be impersonal and objective.

If you have been promoted by a recognized instructor to a specific rank and that instructor follows Hatsumi-Sensei's curriculum, then you will have no problem joining right in. If your previous instructor did not follow the curriculum exactly, your integration will be different. We will work with you to make this transition as efficacious as is reasonable.

## **DISCIPLINE**

If you don't like our approach/method/philosophy, you are always free at any time to discuss it outside of class and you are free to go elsewhere. There is no shame or dishonor to leave, or to disagree. You will not be put on "list" or gossiped about on the internet chat rooms. We wish you well in your search for answers wherever that takes you.

When you join you will be given Sensei's guidelines for admittance and attendance in the Dojo.

You will also be dismissed if you consistently fail to follow directions, seek to disrupt the orderly conduct of classes and instructions, are a risk to yourself and others, needlessly create problems for yourself and other students, are mentally unstable or tend toward confusion, have flagrant disregard for protocols set forth in the **Hombo Dojo** guidelines, hurt/compromise the Art, or have no honor. If you are asked to leave, you may not return after you "correct yourself."

We are apolitical. We do not participate in the latest gossip or who has been promoted/quit/started a new Dojo. You will be informed of visiting instructors to the area. If you hear of their arrival, and we have not, let us know so that we might notify your colleagues. You are encouraged to go to Japan and go to the **Tai Kai's**.

You are not required or obligated to attend any seminar. You will not be put behind if you do not attend - just like you may not necessarily be accelerated if you do attend.

We care only what Sensei does and says to us.

You are expected to take full responsibility for everything you do, when you will be here, how you will practice, how you will learn, how you will interface with other students, etc. Actions speak louder than words.

We will ask more of you than anyone and we will take you out of your comfort-zone. We will ask nothing of you we do not ask of ourselves.

We ask that you re-affirm each time you study what is your purpose is here - you must be clear. Life is a journey of decisions. You must be serious. Life and death are serious issues. Your decisions are important.

### **Of Special Importance**

Because what we offer is considered a gift, we don't allow people to simply come in and "see what is what". We maintain a high level of professionalism by granting prospective students an interview with one of our instructors.

We prefer to teach only those over 18 years of age, but will consider slightly younger students depending upon the maturity and the level of responsibility exhibited.

The Dojo is a place for doing work on you. Doing work on you is a personal thing first and foremost, not a social thing. One must have private victories first before having public ones.

All interviews are in the evening. To set a time for an interview, you may call us at 303.232.2429 or we may contact you in the near future to make an appointment time convenient for you. Attached is a map to the Dojo. Please keep it for future reference.



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