

JUTSU & DO

Jutsu and *Do* (pronounced juutsuu and doe) can be translated as ‘the *art* and the *way*.’ They can also be described as stages in martial arts training, and historically they mark the transition between times of war and peace in medieval Japan. The modern martial arts styles that we practice today have been greatly affected by the mindset behind each of these. I have trained in both the classical and modern styles. I prefer the classical styles for the study of actual combat and the modern styles for attaining enlightenment. That is not to say that one cannot gain enlightenment from the classical styles. Quite the opposite is true. In earlier times, it was found that austere training in the classical arts was the unintentional path to enlightenment. By unrelenting practice of kata (formal technique) one eventually experienced *Satori* (self-realization). This has been documented by famous warriors such as Tsukahara Bokuden who wrote about entering the ‘artless art’ using kenjutsu. He writes of *Mutekatsu-Ryu* where no hands were needed to gain victory over one’s enemies.

The *Bu* of bujutsu and budo is made up of two kanji and mean ‘to stop conflict.’ The two categories of arts are three dimensional forms with different priorities.

Classical Bujutsu: 1) combat, 2) discipline, 3) morals

Classical Budo: 1) morals, 2) discipline, 3) aesthetic form

Classical Bujutsu (the martial art of self-protection) was developed during the *Sengoku Jidai* (Age of Warring States) in Japan. The idea was to systemize patterns of offensive and defensive movements in order to kill as many of the enemy as possible, protecting your homeland and lord. This led to many different styles being developed by men who survived the actual combat. Iizasa Ienao (1386-1488) was one such master swordsman. He was appointed instructor to Yoshimasa (1435-90), the ninth Ashikaga Shogun. Because of political differences though, Iizasa declined the offer and retired from public life to enter a Buddhist order and changed his name to Choisai Ienao. He founded the Tenshin Shoden Katori Shinto Ryu. Developed during a time of war, the arts of Kenjutsu and Iaijutsu can be seen as ‘*satsujin no ken*,’ the sword that takes life.

Classical Budo (the martial way of self-perfection) developed later during the Edo period (1600-1867). With two and half centuries and no battles to fight, there was little for a warrior to do but think and train in antiquated arts. To perpetuate and legitimize his high social standing, the Samurai turned his attention inward and concentrated on becoming a better human being. This offered the lower classes a template for developing strong ethical behavior. The feeling was that man is his own worse enemy. “Though a man should conquer a thousand times a thousand men in battle, he who conquers himself is the greatest warrior,” Dhammapada. The study of Iaido (the way of drawing the sword) is considered the most philosophical of all martial ways. An incredible amount of concentration and dedication is needed to gain proficiency. Physical strength and mental awareness are byproducts while building a strong will and a calm spirit. Developed during a time of peace, the ways of Iaido and Kendo can be seen as ‘*katsujin no ken*,’ the sword that gives life.

In his book ‘*Classical Budo*,’ Donn Draeger explains how one achieves enlightenment through decades of study in the martial arts. The first level is called ‘*gyo*,’ the training stage. At this level the trainee must develop 1) a love for his chosen discipline, 2) a strong will to endure the rigors of it, and 3) an

uncritical veneration for his Sensei. He learns the etiquette of the dojo (place of the way) and is introduced to the study of training in kata. The second level is 'shugyo,' the austere training stage. At this level the trainee must start to figure out the physical *koan* (conundrum) found in the kata, seeking a way out of the dilemma. The trainee also discovers the power of kiai that combines and binds energy. The third level is 'jutsu,' or the art stage of development. Here, technical skills become a natural expression for the trainee. He experiences 'truth in action,' as he moves toward becoming a master of his physical actions, though not yet of the self. The fourth and last stage is 'do,' where gyo, shugyo and jutsu come to flower. At this stage there is no thought to physical action. The trainee has become the master, where one cannot recognize whether it is the hand or the mind producing or performing the technique. This pure mind is *makoto*, the stainless mind, which is undisturbed by external nonessentials. 'Kan no me wa tsuyoi,' seeing into the heart by means of intuition is strong and reliable, and is preferred over 'Ken nome wa yowaku,' physical sight that can be weak and unreliable. Draeger finishes the method of gaining enlightenment by saying, "Zen (to see, contemplate) permeates and invigorates all stages of a trainee's development. Zen is addressed to the individual and is like a finger pointed at the trainee's mind. At first (gyo) he can only see the hand; later (shugyo) he sees the finger; still later (jutsu) he sees that the finger is pointing; and finally (do) he sees what the finger is pointing at."

My students seem to be constantly aware of their limitations, and remark that they cannot perform a certain aspect of a technique. I point out that I can do it. My Sensei can do it. There is nothing that is really extraordinary about us other than the fact that we took the time and energy to develop the ability to do it. Do not be discouraged. Discouragement is only the defeat of the mind. Work through your difficulties, whether they be physical, mental, or emotional. There is no escaping constant practice if you want to achieve your goal. Set those goals high, but give yourself the time and energy to reach them. Do not think about a destination. Enjoy the journey. You have the rest of your life to get there.

"There is, apparently, no way open to mere human beings to educate a man, save by getting him to educate himself." Thomas Kane

Through my many years in Iaido, I have gained a deeper appreciation of the combative arts of Bujutsu. I have established individual study groups for Kenjutsu, Iaijutsu, and Karate-jutsu. These arts live only while they are practiced. We cannot let them be relegated to history. I believe that peace can only be maintained through eternal vigilance. The study of the martial arts will not make you super-human. With hard work and perseverance though, you can become super-normal.

Gordon Fisher

Source material: 'Classical Budo' The Martial Arts and Ways of Japan: Volume II, by Donn F. Draeger