

Interview with the chairman of the board of ITKF, Hidetaka Nishiyama

Definition of Budo

In 12/11/2005, inauguration for the US Budo Athletic Meeting was held in Los Angeles by the leaders from various styles of Budo (martial arts). Following text is a summarization of the speech given by the chairman of the board of ITKF, Hidetaka Nishiyama.

He is one of the very few Japanese leaders in the world, who are able to accurately explain the definition of "Budo".

Profile of Hidetaka Nishiyama

- Born 1928 (Showa 3) in Tokyo.
- At age 11, entered the Shudokan (Kanken Toyama) in Meguro.
- Also received coaching directly from Gichin Funakoshi at Shotokan.
- As a Captain of the Takushoku University's Karate Club, took part in the organization of Japan Student Karate Union (former Japan Student Karatedo Federation).
- Took important part in the start up of the Japan Karatedo Foundation and also its spread and expansion to overseas.
- Relocated to Los Angeles in 1961.
- In 1974, founded the International Traditional Karate Federation (ITKF).
- To this date, continues to coach the true essence of Budo Karate that Japan takes pride in.
- Also deeply involved in today's unresolved issue of Karatedo's participation in the Olympics.
- Chairman of the board of International Traditional Karate Federation (ITKF).
- President of American Amateur Karate Federation (AAKF).

What is Budo?

Budo is a physical art with the objective to pursue Kakugi (combative sport) with mind, physical technique and without relying on one's muscle. And build one's character through the training process that does not allow the opponent to attack and achieve victory without a fight.

History of Budo development

In the early 10th century, Japan began its civil war era starting with the Jyouhei Tenkyou war (936-941). These civil wars developed the Kakugi (combative sports) such as archery <yumi>, archery on horse <kisha>, partisan <naginata>, sword <ken>, spear <yari> and grapple <kumiuchi>.

With the introduction of guns in 1543 (Tenmon 12), being heavily equipped with the armor became meaningless and the pursuit of these Kakugi shifted into achieving agility and technique.

In 1615 (Keicho 20), Ieyasu Tokugawa conquered the nation and for the next 250 years under the stable Tokugawa regime, no large scale war took place. Due to this, during the Edo era, what was originally a group combat based Kakugi began being studied as an individual Kakugi. In the hands of excellent professionals in Kakugi, high level art <gijyutsu> with mind and physical technique that does not rely on muscles, was established. Also its teaching method was systemized. This is what is referred to as "school" <ryuha>.

Around this time, Kakugi started being referred to as Bugei (martial arts), and was widely used as a fundamental education mainly in the Bushi (samurai) class. This also started the studying of Bugei by various academics.

In the years on Kan-en (1624-1644), religious (Buddhism, Shinto, etc.) groups put philosophical meanings to the way of Bugei, the Confucian <jyugaku-sha> groups valued Bugei as a way to build character that evolved the nation, and trainees found physical training value in Bugei.

With these academic observations becoming a part of Bugei study, Bugei became not just a technique but also a way (method) to accomplish human character (humanity) through the pursuit. And Bugei matured into a culture, Budo (martial arts).

Why is Budo an art?

Budo's Waza (technique) is executed when opponent's mental and physical state is in "Kyo" (unpreparedness). "Kyo" happens in-between the mental and physical movement. This moment is very short. Technique to take hold of "Kyo" must have no unnecessary movement and be the smallest possible body movement to create power.

Body movements perfected and refined with these conditions are socially looked upon as "Bi" (beauty) and considered an art.

Aristoteles(BC38~322), who is believed to be the founder Kinesiology, also a Philosopher and a Biologist stated "It is beauty when small movement can create big power."

Competitions of Budo

Today, many Budo still do not have competitions but some with many fans like Judo, Kendo and Karatedo have both domestic and International competitions.

Judo began its participation in the Olympics in 1964 (Showa 39) at Tokyo Olympics. Since then, Judo has come into a social spotlight with the TV broadcasting of the Olympic Games and major competitions.

On the other side, the loss of the Budo element in Judo has been pointed out and its appeal has been decreasing for the Budo followers. To begin with, Judo received the world's attention due to its Budo mystique of a small person throwing a big person (gentleness gets the better of brute force). This Budo mystique is almost lost since the sports competitions were introduced to Judo. The reason for the loss is due to the following 3 differences in sports competition and Budo competition.

1. It is to improve oneself

In sports competitions, you set rules and by moving your body within the boundaries of the rules, you exhale your energy and enjoy the play. Budo competition is based on "Shiai (match)" since long ago. In "Shiai", you choose the opponent and fight within certain promises (sometimes it is earnestly fought until one's death). In other words, you improve yourself effectively by putting yourself in life or death situation.

In Budo competition there is a joy of learning what cannot be easily obtained but unlike the sports competitions, it is not to enjoy the play. There is an essential difference in the two.

2. It is not for pleasure

Competitive sports are arranged with various events and levels. Victory or defeat is determined by statistics of subdivided points. This is a natural arrangement since the primary goal of sports is to enjoy the play and to entertain the audience.

On the other hand, Budo's primary goal is to disable as many men from the battle in the battlefield. The objective is to defeat the opponent in the shortest amount of time and with the smallest possible movement. All that is unnecessary from movement and technique must be removed to crush the opponent's attack with single movement. Therefore, adding variety in order to enjoy the competition would be a big derail from the essence of Budo.

3. The exhalation of energy must be restrained

One of the objectives of sport competition is to exhale energy, and its ability to ease the stress is highly thought of in society.

In Budo, after the using the reserved energy, one must immediately restore energy in body to prepare for the next situation (Zanshin (unrelaxed alertness) is very important in Budo). It is a human nature to joy the victory but in Budo, it is against its principle to constantly exhale energy.

Budo applies the method of focusing the mind and by affecting the brain with power of Ki (mental power) to drive out negative mental element and stabilize the mind. This is highly thought of in society as a way to get rid of stress.

4. Reigi (courtesy) is absolutely essential

In Budo, the opponent in Shiai (match) is not an enemy but Shi (teacher) who will test your skills and in order to learn, you must face with modest attitude. For this reason, Reigi (courtesy) is the most important element in Budo's Shiai (match).

On the other hand, in competitive sport's manner is a respect for the opponent, in giving importance to the rules in the play and also friendship. It is fundamentally different from Reigi in Budo

Japan first participated in the Olympics in 1912 (Taisho Gan-nen) at the Stockholm Olympics. Japan's Judo team leader was Jigoro Kano sensei (the founder of Judo). After his return from the Olympics, although he highly valued the Olympics, it is believed that he stated, that the Judo would lose the Budo spirit with its participation in the Olympics.

Kano sensei established Judo by reforming Jujutsu into competitive sports. He became the member of the International Olympics Committee (IOC) and also the founder and the chairman of the Japan Sports Association. Considering his past records, his statement has a clear view of the (Budo's) difference from the competitive sports.

In sport competitions rules are the definition of the sports. In Budo competition, it is extremely difficult to express the noble mind and technique within the boundaries of the rules. To withhold the Budo element in the competition, we must overcome the difficulty and the rules must be carefully compiled by those who have mastered the mind and technique of the Budo.

How Budo attracts people all over the world?

After World War II, Budo rapidly attracted people all over the world. It was because Budo had something no other sports had. It gave confidence and courage to people in despair after the war. There were 2 primary factors:

1. The mystic power of a person with small muscle (physically small person) to control the bigger person.
2. Its objective to achieve victory without fighting and ability to strengthen the mind power in the training process.

Even in Budo that holds competitions, only less than 5% are said to be interested in competing. Therefore, if Budo's competitions imitated common sports and lose its characteristic and it would lose trainees who are pursuing Budo, which would mean Budo would lose majority of its population.

Bushido and Budo

Bushi (or Samurai) were hereditary professional soldiers during Japan's feudal era.

Bushido pointed to the way of life as a soldier and the way of Bushi who's life is based on the loyalty to the master. Bushido is a physical art that builds one's character through the training process. It actually has no direct relation to Bushido.

Bushi, as a professional soldier, naturally also trained in Budo but most training was just basic practice and very few mastered the advanced technique. Budo was also practiced amongst the commoners and some did master the advanced technique.