

Midori Yama Budokai: *Hanshi's Corner*  
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***Ichigo, ichi e: One life, one meeting***

**There comes a rest at last,  
Not always with life's dazzling snow  
Keep piling up so fast  
Sekiu**

***Yugen* or Profound Grace and Subtlety**

*Yugen* has three different shades of meaning. The exact translation of the word depends on the context.

1. *Yugen* may refer to mysterious skills and secrets of the master which have come from his direct experience and spiritual discipline. This concept is based on Chinese philosophy.
2. *Yugen* may refer to the power of expression, varying between subtle suggestion and explicit statement used by the master. *Yugen* suggests that beyond what can be said. However, it is not an allusion to another world, but it is about this world, this experience. *Yugen* is said to mean “a profound, mysterious sense of the beauty of the universe... and the sad beauty of human suffering.”
3. *Yugen* may refer to the ten orthodox styles of Fujiwara no Teika in his treatises. In the criticism of Japanese *waka* poetry, it was used to describe the subtle profundity of things that are only vaguely suggested by the poems, and was also the name of a style of poetry.
  - Suggestiveness
  - Charm
  - Dynamic Stillness
  - Gentleness
  - Tranquility
  - Serenity
  - Irregularity
  - Asymmetry
  - No-mind (*Zen*)
  - No-action (*Tao*)

These subtle suggestions aim at “expressing something inexpressible,” i.e. *Yugen*. *Yugen* is one of three ideals which define Japanese aesthetics. The other two are *wabi*, transient and stark beauty, and *sabi*, the beauty of natural patina and aging. If you have children (or even if you do not!) I recommend the book *Wabi Sabi*, written by Mark Reibstein and illustrated by Ed Young, which explains these concepts well – what they are and what they are not. The main character is an ordinary cat named...Wabi Sabi. These concepts are reflected in all Japanese *geido* or traditional Japanese arts: Noh (theater), *kado* (Japanese flower arrangement), *shodo* (Japanese calligraphy), *sado* (Japanese tea ceremony; aka *cha no yu*), and *yakimono* (Japanese pottery). To introduce discipline into their training, Japanese warriors followed the example of the arts that systematized practice through prescribed forms called *kata*. This led to combat techniques becoming

known as the martial arts. The Sword and Brush (*Bunbu no Ichi*), the spirit of the martial arts, shows the affinity of the martial arts with the other arts. The philosophy of these arts is referred to as *geido ron*. In traditional *dojo*, there is a particular place reserved for beauty, simplicity and reverence, known as *shindin*.

### **Wuwei or Non-interference**

This is a Taoist concept. It is the Taoist belief that it is best to let the universe function as the universe does without our physical interference in its flow and destiny. Wuwei is an accepting of this flow of life and of all things in the universe. However, wuwei is not nihilism, for nihilism has hopelessness, whereas wuwei retains hope that all will work for the best. The American adage would be, "If it's not broke, don't fix it!"

### **Chinese Physical Culture Association**

This association was formed in Honolulu, Hawaii in 1992. At first it was taught only to Chinese descendants. The association had many teachers, each of whom taught their style of ch'uan fa. The Hawaiian population could not pronounce ch'uan fa and began calling the Chinese fist arts kung fu, a Chinese phrase meaning "hard work," and may refer to any discipline requiring strict or extensive training. As this was easier to pronounce, the term was picked up by Americans living and visiting in Hawaii. The Chinese word for "Martial Arts," is wushu. Hawaii Karate Senin Kai was the first organization to teach occidentals. It was formed in 1933 in Honolulu, Hawaii by Mutsu Zuiho, Higaonna Kamesuke and Thomas Miyashiro, and lasted until 1936, when Miyashiro retired.

### **Kan or Intuition**

*Ken no me wa yowaku; kan no me watsuyoi* means "the sight of the eyes is weak, but the sight of intuition is strong." This refers to the importance of sensing danger, rather than relying only on sight. One must be aware and adaptable in dangerous situations.

*Ken wa me de miru; kan wa kokoro* means "the eyes have ordinary sight, but the heart sees." This is another way of emphasizing intuition, which may "see" danger sooner than the eyes.

### **Kongorishiki or Guardians**

These were the statues guarding the entrances to Japanese gates of Buddhist temples, and were often in *karate* stances. They originally came from India where they were known as nio Bodhisattvas. The term *nio-dachi* is derived from these statues. *Nio-dachi* is better known as *gyaku zenkutsu dachi* (found in *Shotokan's Enbi*), or "Okinawan back stance." Usually there are two Bodhisattvas, one representing the *in* aspect and the other the *yo* aspect. Also, one is breathing in and one breathing out, the *a um (om)*, or breath of Buddha.

### **Sunyata or Emptiness**

Sunyata is the Sanskrit pronunciation of the "*kara*" in *karate*. This is the "*kara*" meaning "empty" as adopted in 1936 by a council of karate masters. These masters knew and accepted the Buddhist association of sunyata with *kara*. As most of them were at least nominal Buddhists, there was no problem. This does not mean that *karate* is a "Buddhist religion." First, Buddhism is a philosophy, not a religion. Secondly, the idea of "*kara*"

was the salient point, not its origin. “*Kara*” of course means “empty,” “emptiness,” or “void.” In regard to its metaphysical concept, *sunyata* holds that all basic principles of life emanate from within an infinite and pristine Being, and that man holds no power separately. This is the meaning of “empty.” In this context, there is nothing contrary to other beliefs. Buddhism is a philosophy; *karate* is an art.

### Eratta

*Kawa no kokoro* or a “mind like a river, which is ever flowing refers to continuity and the idea of being unstoppable. *Mizu no kokoro* or a “mind like water,” refers to a mental state in which the mind is like the surface of a calm body of water. It absorbs everything, reflects everything and is attached to nothing.

*Kun tow* denotes a modified Chinese form of *ch’uan fa*, when practiced outside of China. It especially refers to arts studied in Indonesia and Malaya. For example, *Soetji Hati* is a central Java form of unarmed combat based on Chinese *ch’uan fa*, and as such is a form of *kun tow*.

*Makoto* has at least three distinct meanings: 1) a “pure” or “stainless” mind, undisturbed by external nonessentials, 2) “sincerity,” as in “the word of a warrior, and 3) enlightenment by hard work.

*Narande* is a command to line up in any order, even disregarding rank. This is usually used when classes are taught and the instructor wants to make a point. *Seiretsu*, however, is a command to line up in order of rank. *Yasume* (more politely, *o-yasume*) is a command to relax during training. *Yame* is a command to stop what you are doing.

*Shodan-ho* is used as an intermediate rank between *Ikkyu* and *Shodan*. This is referred to as a probationary rank, and usually relates to the age of the *budoka*. That is, due to how young s/he may be, some time is used to judge the maturity level. Some styles use *shiro-soto* and *shiro-naka* as further probationary ranks. This gives two intermediate ranks between *Ikkyu* and *Shodan*. *Shiro-soto* is a black belt with a longitudinal white stripe running the length of the belt on the outside, as the black belt for women within the *Kodokan*. *Wilson Kanchō* was instrumental in having this dichotomy of rank stopped in the United States, beginning in the Southeast. Consequently, all women trained by him wore the solid black belt just as the men. When questioned about their belts, the women would state “my *sensei* gave it to me,” which *Wilson Kanchō* would verify. He stated that if he trained a black belt, s/he was a black belt, not a black and white belt. At the second probationary level, the belt is reversed, placing the white stripe inside (*naka*). There some schools who use the probationary levels (*Nidan-ho*, *Sandan-ho*, etc) for all ranks up to *Godan*. In many instances, these are more concerned with the monetary rewards from extra ranks, rather than testing the candidate for his or her next rank. The test for correct use would be – is the candidate actually being observed and, more importantly, will they advance to the actual rank at the end of the observation period without additional testing or payment!

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