

Comments on the Go Rin No Sho by Masayuki Imai

PROFILE

In 1956 Masayuki Imai became a pupil of Kikuo Tesshin Aoki, the eighth headmaster of the Heiho Niten Ichi school. In 1967 he studied under Tadanao Kiyonaga, the ninth head. In 1976 he succeeded to be the 10th headmaster of Heiho Niten Ichiryu. In 1976 he became a pupil of Iwao Hosokawa, leader of the Shinshu Komyo Buddhist sect. Imai Sohke's publications are: "Explanations of the Dokkodo of Miyamoto Musashi" and "Seiho of the Niten Ichi School". In 1988 he was awarded Ran Ju Ho Sho by the emperor. In 1989 he was awarded Hanshi in Kendo.

INTRODUCTION

For years it has been said that if one wants to understand Gorin No Sho, one must also understand the Buddhist sutras. Without these, it is impossible to understand Gorin no Sho's real meaning and Musashi's mind. Both Gorin No Sho and the Buddhist sutras are indispensable to Heiho Budo. My first teacher of the Niten Ichiryu (Two Heavens-as-one School) the eighth head was an expert in the Buddhist sutras. My second teacher and the ninth head, Tadanao Kiyonaga was a Monk who was allowed to teach Sodo Sect Buddhism. After Kiyonaga passed away I succeeded, to become the tenth head of Niten Ichiryu. At that time I greatly hoped to enter into Buddhism. I met Iwao Hosokawa and from him I learned the Tanni Sho (Notes Lamenting Differences) written by Shinran Shonin. Thirty years have passed since then. I have now gradually come to understand the real meaning of Gorin No Sho that Head Aoki and Head Kiyonaga had tried to explain to me.

I will explain the "Prologue", Riho (Benefit), the Nine Principles, Banri Ikku (Thousand Principles and Emptiness), and Satori (Spiritual Awakening) by referring to the words and expressions appearing in Gorin No Sho. As I succeeded to the Niten Ichiryu, I would like to explain how highly we regard this valuable book. I would like you to study what Japanese Heiho Budo is through Gorin No Sho.

ON GORIN NO SHO

Miyamoto Musashi wrote the Hyoho Sanjugo Kajo (35 articles of Strategy), Gorin No Sho, and Dokkodo (Way of Self-reliance). Gorin No Sho is the most famous of these and has been translated into many languages. I have heard that the translation of his book has become a best seller in the United States, France and Germany. People may interpret this book differently depending on their different backgrounds and experiences. Readers may regard the book simply as a sword tactics book of one of the schools, as the equivalent of Buddhist sutras, a book explaining the philosophy of spiritual awakening, or as a reference book for business.

However, if one does not study the Buddhist sutras, one will never understand, no matter how hard one reads. You will find a "Prologue" when you open the book. Niten Ichiryu believes that the Prologue is a very important teaching because it explains the process of how the book was written. It consists of two parts: Hokki Jo (Initiation Prologue) and Kikei Jo (Prologue of total devotion to Buddhist Law).

In Hokki Jo, Musashi explains why he wrote the book. The Kie in Kikei Jo means to believe in, worship and respect (the Buddhist law or a Buddhist saint). It means something spiritual that one embraces, respects and depends on. It means posture (form) as when one bows his head with his hands clasped in prayer showing his respect to a spiritual being. Musashi regarded himself as being in spiritual dependency with tendo (the natural law) and Kanzeon (the Merciful Goddess) as his mirrors. As he began to write the book he devoted himself to them with hands clasped in prayer.

The Prologue presents Musashi as a person who depended upon kie, realizing hyoho (the path to enlightenment) as a means, he stood up in the absolute world and succeeded in developing himself. Although the Prologue states "the way to Heaven, and the Merciful goddess as a mirror," the meaning of this phrase refers not to understanding "ascertain the mind by reflecting on it" but by uniting with the merciful Goddess through everyday life and believing in Heaven and the Merciful Goddess. The mirror means teaching. When we are given a teaching it is like a mirror and we recognize ourselves for the first time.

The next statement that we must not miss in the Prologue is "I came to the realization that I had won, not because I had attained the full secrets of swordsmanship." Musashi had aspired to hyodo since his youth, overcome various difficulties, won almost sixty fights at the risk of his life, trained himself severely by risking death, and won the fight against Kojiro Sasaki on Ganryu when he was twenty nine years old. However, Musashi asked himself: What does winning mean?

He realized that he had won up to that point by chance. There was no absolute promise of winning whenever, wherever or however he fought. As long as he lived he would grow older, ill and die. If a swordsman became ill at some time or hurt himself, someone who was unaware of swordsmanship could strike him down easily. As he became old even a woman or a child could win. In other words one can only win in times of good health. If this was the case no matter how hard one studies Kenjutsu and trains himself to be an expert it is all a waste of time if one becomes ill. What a hopeless situation. All the effort was in vain. He came to the conclusion "The previous victories were not due to me having mastered strategy. My hyoho was merely the result of earthly desires. It was coarse of me". In this way he suddenly reached spiritual enlightenment.

This awakening is a great revolution in the philosophy of Buddhism. "To turn ones thoughts toward Buddhist ends" means "to establish oneself" in the world of self realization. This mind changing "spiritual awakening" means that human beings fail when they rely on intellect. Stating further, this awakening means to take one more step forward from the hyakushuku kanto (the top of the one hundred foot pole) to reach the eternal world. Understand the Prologue's point "The previous victories were not due to my having mastered strategy" and you will understand Gorin No Sho thoroughly.

Tatsu means to awaken oneself, to free oneself and find the true spirit. Musashi's enlightenment came after having a number of confrontations with swordsmen at the risk of his life between the ages of thirteen and twenty nine, when he experienced the failure of human intellect. He could not find the utmost world in the hardest training or fights. When Musashi solved problems he had always depended

too much on his common sense, therefore his master strategy was useless for attaining self realization. For the first time he awoke and found a way he could trust himself. To feed himself through "hyoho". This is the tatsu which he meant, the utmost state and the rebirth of Musashi.

This is probably equivalent to Shinran Shonin (Founder of Jodo Shinshu). Shinran who stayed on Mt. Hiei to practice the Tendai method of salvation could not find his way. Descending from the mountain, Shinran visited Honen Shonin (Founder of Jodoshu) and came across Honen's commentary "Continuous recitation of the nenbutsu (recitation of Amida's name) is the way to salvation. He instantly realized Amida's saving power and took refuge in him saying "I am just an ordinary man who is afflicted", "Since I will not be able to master any Shugyo (austere training, hell, where I was originally supposed to go will definitely be my training place in the future."

Confucius in the Confucian Analects explains different stages of mental and spiritual growth at various ages; "At the age of fifteen I aspired to study, I became independent at thirty, at forty I was certain what I ought to do, I succeeded in the mission given to me from heaven by the age of fifty, I could begin to listen to others at sixty and did not break the natural law (did not go too far) even though I did everything I wanted to do, at the age of seventy.

Musashi's "To become independent at the age of thirty" means that he established himself. This is the beginning stage of satori (spiritual awakening), when he does not fall back (from the top of the allegoric pole) in the Buddhist law. Musashi at 29 reached this beginning stage by establishing himself and by saying "My hyoho is not utmost". From then on he trained himself night and day to seek the truth, and by the age of fifty he finally realized the way of hyoho. This is what Confucius meant when he said that he had learned the Heaven's decree at the age of fifty.

At the beginning of the "Earth Book, Hyoho no Michi to Iu Koto" (the path of hyodo), Musashi explains the principle that a swordsman should study as follows:

"In recent times there are men making a living styling themselves as swordsmen, but they only teach the standard techniques of fencing. Recently the Kashima and Katori priests have established their respective schools of sword techniques as the teachings of the gods, and tour the land teaching people. These are events of recent years. Since ancient times hyoho (swordsmanship) has been included among juno (ten skills) and hichigei (seven arts) as rikaka (profitable measures). Truly, rikata is one of the arts. Although it is not just limited to standard sword techniques. It is difficult to know the art of the sword solely by means of techniques. Needless to say, such swordsmanship can never rival the principles of hyoho."

What does Musashi mean by rikata? It means divine favour in Buddhist law, in other words the way of benefiting oneself and others.

Jiri means to seek self awakening and to be awakened. Rita means to assist others with the virtue of this awakening so that they benefit from you. By taking one more step forward, priests and monks practice Zen as a means of spiritual awakening, but the heihosha (swordsmen) have said from ancient times that

they are awakened spiritually by the way of the sword. As a result both sword and Zen aim at the development of human beings.

At the end of the "Earth Book", Musashi lists nine principles by saying, "He who wishes to undertake the study of my hyoho should be aware of the following":

First: Do not harbour sinister designs.

This means that one must think correctly from a righteous viewpoint.

Second: The way is training.

The way implies that one must train in everything and accomplish it in addition to the way of hyoho. Musashi calls one thousand day practice tan (hardening) and ten thousand day practice is ren (practice). In other words, one thousand days refers to three years and ten thousand to thirty. Musashi intends to explain that one must continue to seek the way persistently throughout one's whole life.

Third: Cultivate a wide range of interests in the arts.

Musashi is emphasizing not to limit one's learning only to kenjutsu but devote oneself whole heartedly to everything, the ten skills and ten arts. Then one can definitely find the benefits of heiho and can develop oneself.

Fourth: Be knowledgeable in a variety of occupations.

He emphasizes getting acquainted with as many occupations and skills as possible and learn the thinking of many people who have worked in them.

Fifth: Be discrete with regard to one's financial dealings.

Musashi is advising one to know the difference between gain and loss in worldly matters.

Sixth: Nurture the ability to perceive truth in all matters.

It is important to build intuitive judgment and understand true values.

Seventh: Perceive that which cannot be seen with the eye.

This means to strive to develop intuitive judgment, and a mind that can freely control one's body.

These seven principles show a life style and a style of interpersonal relationships. Simply saying, it means to associate with many people, learn about their lives, understand their thinking, and have a good relationship with them.

Eighth: Do not be negligent, even in trifling matters.

This means to pay attention even to small matters, keep them in mind all the time so as to avoid unexpected failure.

Ninth: Do not engage in useless activity.

Don't argue about useless things. Concentrate on your own duties and give up other things.

As a result of these nine principles which Musashi presents, one can live in a world of hyoho.

Musashi describes the fundamental concepts of the hyoho as "profitable measures" which are not limited to the standard techniques of swordsmanship alone. He clarifies that the utmost world of master swordsmanship is to establish oneself, to guide others, to gain benefits, and to make peace with others. Comparing the nine principles with hasshodo (the eightfold path), Shakamuni taught Buddhists the way of aesthetic training. Both teach the same concepts. In the words of Bodhisattva, in order to save people, one must serve an infinite number of Buddhas, understand their thinking, and acquire them to oneself. Musashi explains the nine principles with his own words.

Musashi the swordsman, mastered the utmost spiritual awakening without using a sword. He developed himself and reached the first stages of this world. Musashi the hyohoist describes himself in the section of "Iwao No Mi (the body of a massive rock)" at the end of the "Fire Book".

"When you have mastered the way of strategy you can suddenly make your body like a rock, and ten thousand things cannot touch you. You will not be moved. This is oral tradition."

Body like a rock means that as soon as a swordsman reaches the utmost world and is awakened spiritually, he is united with natural law. Like a rock is the law which does not refer to either objects or materials. The meaning of the massive body of the rock is an "immovable place" "an immovable mind", the mind which is free from other things, a natural, peaceful, free ranging mind.

This state of mind is similar to Shinran's spiritual world shown in notes in the Tannisho: "Mugi o motte gi to su" (in order to recite Amida's name the practitioner must recite it with the other power, referring to the power of a Buddha instead of the practitioner's power). Shinran emphasizes the world in which one must surrender human intellect and leaves one's judgment with nature.

Thus Musashi reached the body of a massive rock and was spiritually awakened. He reached tsudatsui. What does tsudatsui mean?

Ascetic practices of the Buddhist law consist of five different stages: shiryoi, kegyoi, tsudatsui, shuju, and kukyoi.

Shiryoi means to listen to, to read the teachings (thorough reading and observing) and is the most important starting point. Kegyoi means that while studying the teachings one must do the following: worship, recite the Amida's name, praise, and take memorial service. Tsudatsui is the beginning of self awakening but it continues to the stages of study, training and extremity. There are fifty-two stages in becoming a Buddha.

Musashi spiritually awakened at twenty-nine, had increased the depth of it at forty and fifty by training day and night. At the age of sixty when he wrote Gorin No Sho, he had reached tsudatsui. The hyoho and the body of the massive rock are both shown in Ku (emptiness). He says to make your emptiness your way, and your way emptiness.

The world of Ku is entirely good and contains no evil. It is a world of great wisdom which goes beyond human intellect. It benefits yourself and others. It is the world of Daijoh (the great vehicle). It is a world in which one agrees to the true way, at any time, in any place, and agrees with many people. However, the mind presented in Gorin No Sho is the spiritual world which frees itself from ego. Musashi called his hyoho the "hyoho of jissoenman" (the ultimate reality and perfection). Jiso is the hyoho one receives peacefully, thankfully, everything in the world for what it is, good and bad, to the benefit of oneself and others.

Thus Gorin No Sho is the means and the hyoho is the way of freeing oneself from ego, of accomplishing, of developing oneself.

I sincerely hope that people from other countries will increasingly study this tradition and the spirit of Budo.

This article was originally a lecture given by Imai Masayuki Sohke. My grateful thanks for allowing me to edit and print it in English. I visited Ganryu Jima with Imai Sohke in 1992 to do a demonstration and visit the memorial of Sasaki Kojiro. Another article perhaps? Imai Sohke tells me he will be visiting Tokyo to demonstrate at an International Budo Festival.

Copies of Tannisho are published by my University (Ryukoku University) and available from me. Of course in English. The text is in English, Japanese and Romanized Japanese. Price is 4000 yen, (postage included). For those in the West, it may possibly be purchased at the Institute of Buddhist Studies, 2717 Haste St. Berkely California 94704... Colin Watkin, Matsubara 4 Chome 6-19, Saga City, Saga Ken, Japan 840

