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Bujinkan Malta

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From the editor

As all of you know last week we had a lot of gradings and I was really happy in seeing the improvement some students made, especially the beginners even though some of them have been with us for only a few weeks. Something I noticed and I'm not so happy with is that there are students who are not understanding what we, the instructors, are trying to explain; they just see the outer part of the technique and study it by heart and by doing so they miss the Ninjutsu of it.

What I mean by "Ninjutsu" is when seeing a technique you have to see it as a whole. There are a number of important factors that one must see and feel in a technique.

- First there are the punches, locks etc., which form a technique.
- Second the taijutsu of the technique, body movement and distance.
- Last and the most difficult to acquire is timing and balance.

The above three points are what makes any technique a good technique, if one of them is not present the practitioner is not taking the full pleasure that Ninjutsu can give, which subconsciously helps in everyday life.

By mentioning this I'm not saying that it is easy to acquire them. It took me approximately 12yrs just to realize what Alfred and all the other instructors meant by the phrase "feel the Ninjutsu of a technique". When

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I came back two and a half years ago after the accident I had where I tore off the cruciate ligaments of both knees, I was so greedy to catch up for those the three years I missed that I started studying everything by heart, always running after Alfred to show me more techniques from the syllabus..... and believe me I really bugged him. When he showed me everything there was in the grading syllabus and I wrote down every single technique, I realized that I knew every technique by heart but I missed all the Ninjutsu there is in each and every one of them. I did that to try to show Alfred that I was good, but I was wrong, I was studying for Alfred to give me the next level grade or belt. But he still kept me low till I came in the right way and there is when I noticed that the belt is only there to keep the jacket closed and for the trousers not to fall, it does not make any difference cause I'm still the man I was before just a couple of years older. The only difference that I noticed is that I'm living my life a little bit different, cause that is what Ninjutsu really is to me, a way of life.

Duncan Cauchi 1st dan

A brief history of Japanese fine arts – Part I

by Marvin

Before you start wondering, this article doesn't have anything to do with martial arts, but hey, have a break. This is written for those of you who are fascinated by the Japanese culture, and in addition have a liking to the visual arts. I had originally intended to write just one article at first, but after looking around and adding this and that, I ended up with one huge lump of text and pictures which would have terrified all but the most devoted art lovers out there. And I still haven't finished. So don't ask me if this will be a 2 part or 3 part article; I simply don't know. Might even take more than that.

First of all, by fine arts I'm considering architecture, painting, and sculpture. Let's start to subdivide these arts into their chronological order.

We start off our journey back in the good old 7500BC with what is known as the **Formative period** which extends all the way up to the mid-sixth century AD. Japan's prehistoric culture during this period can be further subdivided into three periods. The **Jomon period** (c. 7500 B.C.-c. 300 B.C.) is so called after the cord pattern often found on the neolithic earthenware from that period. This is generally unpainted pottery

distinguished by relatively unrefined vessel shapes and sharp relief decoration. Other artifacts from the period include highly stylized clay figurines known as *dogu*. These enigmatic dogus have puzzled many people since they have been discovered. Many say that they are in fact carvings of alien suits and tools because some have likened details on these statues to safety harnesses, bolts, and what not. Some experts have even gone so far as to say that these dogus are funeral depictions or sex objects. Judge for yourself from the pictures, but if they're right about the latter, ancient Japanese must have really had a wicked sex life in my opinion!



hey, I can see a family resemblance – must be another dogu!



In the **Yayoi period** (c. 300 B.C.-c. A.D. 300) we find quite different earthenware pottery displaying a more restrained and sophisticated aesthetic characterized by refined shapes and light, geometric decoration. Also dating from this period are bell-shaped bronzes known as *dotaku*, which were probably derived from Korean musical instruments and are thought to have functioned as symbols of authority. These bells were about 50cm tall and were mostly uncovered near burial sites of religious or clan leaders. It is thought that these bells were designed to be worshipped not sounded. So much for that era's musical talent.

dogu... alien representation or sexual fantasy?



dotaku – I wonder what it sounds like...

The **Kofun, or Tumulus, period** (c. A.D. 300-c. A.D. 500) is named for the mound-covered tombs of clan chieftains built during these centuries, which saw the gradual consolidation of central authority. Artifacts from these tombs, including armor and a variety of ornamental objects, reflect close contact with the Korean Peninsula during the period. The tombs were bordered by clay cylinders called *haniwa*, which were often mounted by simple but expressive clay sculptures, most notably human and animal forms. These figures were believed to serve as guardians and attendants to the buried for the afterlife - and their union never complained about it.



Haniwa bust



Meet Mr. Haniwa and his deadly sword



No, not a toy - just another priceless haniwa

Following the Formative period, we roll into the next two stages, namely the **Asuka** (552-645) and **Hakuho** (645-710) periods. These two periods are heavily influenced by the introduction of Buddhism into Japan (538AD). This new religion also brought many architects from the Korean Peninsula with new techniques reflecting the Chinese (Northern Wei) style of Buddhist architecture. The *Horyuji* temple in Nara, whose main hall and pagoda date back to the Asuka period, was built in this style. Sculpture in the Northern Wei style also flourished, as Buddhist images were in great

demand for worship. In its architecture, paintings and statues, this temple perfectly symbolize these periods, and incidentally is also the oldest wooden building in the world



Horyuji Golden Hall (Kondo)



Horyuji Wall Painting of Amida Buddha



Horyuji Ise Shrine sculpture detail

That's it for this edition. I must confess that personally I prefer the art of later eras, which we'll see in the next parts of the article. Any of you interested to find out more about what I've only briefly outlined can look for [*The Art and Architecture of Japan*](#), by Robert Paine and Alexander Soper (Pelican History of Art, Penguin Books, 1975), or [*Japanese Art \(Revised and expanded edition\)*](#)

Kamae

by Hatusmi Sensei

The body posture of Taijutsu are then utilitarian stances or formal ways of positioning the trunk and the limbs. The kamae of Ninjutsu can be best described as the physical embodiment of the mental outlook. In any living or fighting situation, the body and the consciousness it houses are constantly being subjected to the ever-progressing development of a series of present instant. In order to be the most effective in any of these given situations, the "mind" and "body" are mere arbitrary terms that we apply to made-up divisions of one single entity.



When properly applied, the kamae reflects the ninja's heart. This means that our physical nature conforms to our intentions, and there is no division between our interior and exterior aspects. This state of integrated mind and body action is totally natural, and can be observed readily in the movements of the movements of animals as they interact with their environment. Only human beings seem to develop the need to be trained in natural body motion.

The kamae themselves are mere guides or suggestions for the most effective use of the body weapon. As such, they are physical attitudes, and are by no means to be adhered to in precise imitation. Each individual body, with its unique configuration of muscles and bone alignments will naturally determine its own pragmatic and comfortable variations of the basic fighting postures. As the student progresses, the kamae become less and less significant as specific poses, as they are gradually assimilated into the character of the individual. Once these fundamentals are internalized, the most advanced fighting posture becomes a "no fighting posture".

Find your equilibrium - Yin and Yang

Sometimes in life you feel like you are living in hell, everything goes wrong and you think that it is the end of the world. This is when you lose your equilibrium

