

# Hogo Tegami

Bujinkan Malta

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Issue 3

## A wish came true

By Alfred Galea

For a long time, all of us wished to have a first Maltese Shidoshi, i.e. somebody who passes the prestigious Godan test, or as it is otherwise known, the Saki test. This is especially true for me, who was the closest to be thus tested. I had been intending to travel to Japan to perform this test for three years, but family reasons always kept me back. Finally, on the 7<sup>th</sup> May, Marvin and I left for the great journey. We were to meet Enzo Rossi and his Italian students at Heathrow Airport and from there proceed to Narita Airport.

The time for the test approached, and I started to get fearful and felt the weight of more responsibility coming.

As soon as I was on the plane I began to think of all I had heard about the Saki test and my fear began to heighten. Little did I know that I would understand the essence of the test only during the last few hours before I sat for it.

When we arrived at the Ryokan (Japanese Guest house) in Noda we laid down our bags and prepared for our first lesson with Noguchi Sensei at the Honbu Dojo. To get there I had to give a lift to Marvin on my bicycle.

As we arrived at the dojo we found people of different nationalities training or doing some stretching. At one side of the dojo Noguchi Sensei was doing some seated stretching and talking to one of his Japanese students. As he saw our group



come in, he came to welcome Enzo, who introduced me to Sensei.

Sensei opened the lesson explaining the theme of the lesson, which were five basic techniques practiced in Juppo Seisho. As the lesson progressed both Marvin and I realized one thing; the way Sensei uses to move was like the wind. His Uke knew that he was being hit but couldn't see where from. Sensei avoided blows by moving in Kamae, and without using any force he enveloped Uke in such a way that the latter couldn't move a finger! At the end of the lesson Noguchi Sensei invited us to a lesson at his personal Dojo the next day and we eagerly accepted his invitation.

Friday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2003 was a great day for me; it was the day of my test. In the morning I went

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with Enzo and some other students to a temple beautiful temple in Noda. Then in the afternoon we went to Noguchi Sensei's Dojo. He showed us many henkas of the techniques we had done the previous day.



At 19:30 we left there to go to Soke's lesson at the Honbu Dojo. It was packed with people and there was a spirit of unity, as if all of us had known each other for a long time. When Soke opened the lesson he invited a Shihan to do a basic technique. He watched how we were doing it, then explained how our movements didn't correctly reflect the theme of Juppo Seisho, and then showed the essence of what we were doing.

Two hours flew by and it was time for the Saki test. Marco, the Italian student who was also going to do the Saki test, walked in front of Soke and knelt down. Soke said a few words then let his bokken down. Unfortunately Marco failed the test, and it was my turn. I felt as if a cold wind swept around me, and on my way to sit in front of Soke I silently made a small prayer. I knelt in seiza no kamae and closed my eyes.

As I was seated I felt the urge to move out of the way, but something told me to stop, and I stood still. Soon after I felt something pushing me to move from within and I rolled to my left back to seiza with my eyes still closed. I heard the people clapping and Soke told me, "Ok. You passed."

I can't describe with I felt that moment, but all the thoughts I had when I was on the plane returned to me as I realized all the commitments and responsibilities of a Shidoshi for the Maltese Islands. I was the only one who passed the test that day and all the Shihans came to congratulate me. When Marvin came to talk to me, he was so happy that it seemed that he had passed the test himself. He described to me the way I had passed the test, as I wasn't entirely sure of what had just happened exactly.

Back at the Ryokan I explained to Marvin the way I was



then feeling as a 5<sup>th</sup> Dan. Since my first lesson in the martial arts I have dreamt of becoming a teacher and to register a Maltese Dojo in Japan. I now know that this

also carries many responsibilities and duties, not only for me but even for the black belts and all others who would like our group to keep thriving. We have to bear in mind that

now our group is independent, and that we are the representatives of the Bujinkan in Malta.

During our last lesson with Soke he spoke to me and I took the opportunity to ask him for his opinion about our level of preparation. He said that we seem to be coping very well with the disadvantage that our isolated geographical location gives us, and he finished with the phrase "Gambatte", meaning keep going.

I would like to finish this article by thanking all those who supported me and helped to make this wish come true. I cannot possibly mention all of these people here, as the list would be enough to fill more than one Hogo Tegami on its own, but I would like to give my special thanks to my beloved wife Doreen, and son Negai, to Marvin, who came with me to Japan, and to Lorry, Paula, Dylan, Silvio, Duncan, Glenn and Ian. Thanks also to each and every one of the rest of you who helped to make this possible.

## Japanese cuisine

By Kurt Mifsud Bonnici

I was very pleased to see in April's issue that Marvin was willing to deviate a bit from the martial arts side of things to a subject which was concerned more about the Japanese culture and way of life. This article will be just a short introduction and will be followed by more should you readers want to go into more detail.



Before I saw my first Bruce Lee movie or anything that concerned martial arts I was always fascinated about the diversity and richness of the Japanese culture. One of the most widely known diversities is their cuisine. Now don't get me wrong, I can barely boil an egg but I'm a big fan of oriental food.

You might be surprised by the variety of food available in Japan. You'll find that not only sushi or tempura are popular, but also Italian, Chinese, Korean, French, and American dishes. For example, spaghetti, hamburgers, and Korean BBQ are some of the most popular menu items among Japanese children. The current Japanese cuisine is highly influenced by other Asian and western countries. Japanese people adapted the cuisine to their eating habits, creating their own dishes from foreign fare.

Japanese people distinguish traditional Japanese-style dishes as “Washoku” (Wa means Japanese-style and shoku means food) as opposed to Western foods, which are generally called “Yo-shoku” (Yo means western-style). Washoku includes sushi, sashimi (raw fish), tempura, udon or soba noodles, and more. Washoku meals usually include rice. The beauty of the presentation in washoku dishes is well known. Also, you might easily guess that seafood is highly used in Japanese cuisine since Japan is surrounded by oceans. Seaweed, fish, and other seafood are main ingredients in



Japanese cuisine as soup stocks in Japanese-style meals is made from katsuobushi (dried bonito flakes) or konbu (kelp).

Chinese dishes are called “Chuuka.” Chuuka dishes in Japan are arranged in the Japanese-style and are often cooked at home. It’s similar to authentic Chinese food, but has its differences. For example, ramen noodles originated in China, but ramen became a typical Japanese food. It’s one of the most favorite meals among Japanese people. Regional ramen, which differs in type of soup stock, is established all over Japan.

Also, you can’t forget the regional food in Japanese cuisine. Japan is a small country, but each region or even a city has own specials: miso-katsu (deep fried pork with miso sauce) in Nagoya; okonomiyaki ( a kind of mixed pancake) in Hiroshima; sanuki udon noodles in Shikoku island; Jingsukan (mutton BBQ) in Hokkaido; and more. In addition, many dishes are cooked differently between Kansai (western area of the main island) region and Kanto (eastern area of the main island) region. For example, the soup for udon noodles is dark in the Kansai region and is clear in the Kanto region.

A popular question is, do Japanese people use spoons? The answer is yes. Japanese people use forks, knives, and spoons, in addition to chopsticks. It depends on what type of food people are eating. To eat pasta, people use forks; to eat ice cream, people use a spoon; to eat hamburger steak, people use a knife and fork, and so on. Japanese cuisine is pretty diverse and interesting!

## Qoutation from Soke

“Humans have yet to dwell upon the consequences of their actions. People have yet to admit the bad that they do to nature, for example. Actually, most people spend their time finding fault in the actions of others rather their own.”

# The Language of Budo(Martial Arts)

By Glenn Galea

Like myself, probably many of us training in the Bujinkan have heard this blessed, semi-imperative, statement of "the need to break the form". As poetic, philosophical and pretty as this sounds, it might be judged as something overlookable, or something not part of the training we work for.

Personally I had a very basic idea of the meaning of this, so I proceeded to try to understand more of it from Hatsumi's and others' articles and writings on the internet. After having understood more why the importance of this "breaking of form" business, I talked it over with Fredu and he suggested I should write an article explaining my understanding of this from my point of view. So what's coming next is simply my version on the matter and as you all know I am no authority on the subject.

To start off, if anyone can recall what happens whenever we hold a sparring session in our dojo, we end up trying to use the techniques we have practiced in taijutsu on our opponent and probably feel quite let down when the technique we had in mind does not work out in the same way we have practiced it. And this might lead to the thinking that the techniques we learn in the dojo seem inapplicable to real life combat situations. So is it because taijutsu is only good for inside the dojo?

You might also have tried to carry out an Ukemi(break fall) or a Kaiten(roll) on hard ground and carried it out as perfectly as you remember

Fredu or the other instructors showing us, but still somehow you felt pain as you slammed into the ground! So does this mean that rolling and breakfalling is not good when done on concrete, tarmac, or other terrain? We also, have all experienced different techniques appearing under the same name, or the same technique appearing under different names. And for instance we would have asked why? or voiced our opinion on the technique being different in another kata. So is it that the Bujinkan's syllabus is a flimsy or disordered one?

The answer to all these questions; our teachers, local and foreign would have us believe is in the importance of "breaking the form". Oh ok so that has left us where we began... still confused or not sure!

The way I understand this breaking of the form is now clearer than it was before so for my future forgetfulness and your possible uncertainty I will now attempt to get to the point of this lengthy article.

The best way to picture this I have found is in comparing Taijutsu to Language (any language for that matter). To be fluent in a language one needs to have good practice in it, and simply studying all the words there are in a

dictionary is no way to study a language. As you would still not know how to communicate with the proper grammatical forms. Also were you to get a phrase book in the language and study that, you'd still be far off from calling yourself fluent. So comparing the words and phrases in a language to the katas and techniques in a martial art one may start to understand what the breaking of the form is all about.

When you are fluent in a language you have the power and control to construct totally original sentences, ones that you have never heard, or written before. Now this comes very naturally to us and we take it for granted, and we might not realize that every time we put together words to form a sentence, we are breaking the forms(grammar forms) that we have learnt previously (from school/parents/other). And as I understand it the breaking of the form in Taijutsu is similar in principal, in that, practicing the forms so that they become part of our nature, we can adapt them and use them for any given situation. So obviously mastering this breaking of the form is crucial. We shouldn't think that the proper practice of ukemi and kaiten would not save our necks were we to fall or be pushed down a flight of stairs. And this obviously leads to the answering of the question about the Bujinkan syllabus, which is not necessarily one of an endless number of katas and techniques but more one that can teach the natural language of Budo. So how does one learn to break the form? Easy send this to 30 people in your mailing list and within 4 days you should have broken the form... hehehe!

No seriously, I would guess now its obvious one has to practice hard enough, and for one I am one of those who need that the most.



## In the next Issue

Marvin's Japanese History Part II  
Japanese Swords by Duncan  
and alot more

## New Gradings

Alfred Galea	5th dan
Marvin Zammit	2nd dan

**CONGRATULATIONS, AND  
KEEP IT UP!**

## Where and when do you train?

### Training is held as follows:

Monday: from 19:00 till 21:30 Adults beginners  
Tuesday: from 19:00 till 21:30 Higher grades  
Wednesday: from 18:30 till 20:30 Children's class  
from 21:00 till 23:00 Black belts  
Friday: from 19:00 till 21:30 Adults (all grades)  
Saturday: from 14:30 till 16:00 Children's class

Special class to cover outside training will be held during the last week end of every month

**Our Dojo (training hall) is at:  
14, Triq l-Italia,  
Naxxar**

To Subsrbe sent an E-Mail to  
[duncan.cauchi@global.net.mt](mailto:duncan.cauchi@global.net.mt)