

Sogo-Goshin-Do

WKDA KAI NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2004 issue #2 Vol. 4

What is Goshin-Do?

What style do you study? That is a popular question asked these days by martial artists and non-martial artists alike. It seems even the non-practitioner knows this is the normal first question to ask when they find out someone is a martial artist. Many students of the arts study classic named systems and when they say, "I study *karate*" or "I take *Tae-Kwon-Do*" it means something to the average listener. They may not know the specifics of the art, but they have probably heard the names of these styles from the movies and TV.

Goshin-Do does not really fall into that category. If you tell someone you study Goshin-do they might just assume that it is a form of *sushi* art, rather than knowing it is a combat system. However, the word Goshin-do is very old and was widely used in traditional Japan, but not as a system name. It was typically used as a description for how to *use* a classic art like judo or karate. The Martial Arts Encyclopedia defines *goshin-do* as such: "*In judo or karate, a form of self-defense that has practical instead of sport applications or methods*" (pg 62 Lawler).

This basically means that in years past when you were studying an art you might learn certain techniques to use in sport competition and you may then be given some of the more practical moves to use in real self-defense. Soke Shogo Kuniba introduced us to the word, but did not coin the word *goshin-do*. When he

attached his name to it then it became the name of his personal self-defense art. His expression of Goshin-do was a little different than other masters and was referred to as *Kuniba-Ha Goshin-Do*. In his seminars he usually put out flyers advertising "The Limitless Techniques of Goshin-Budo". In 1987 he brought his seminar to Hampton, SC just down the road from Walterboro and Kyoshi Earle Marvin got his first real taste of the art. Goshin-Budo had grown from a mere application into an entire sub-set martial art within the Seishin Kai's *Motobuja Shito-Ryu*. Kyoshi Marvin became one of the world's best practitioners of *Kuniba-Ha Goshin-Do* and was said to have been only one of two people to earn a 5th degree black belt in the art.

Eventually this path led to the creation of *Sogo-Goshin-Do* and Kyoshi used the word *Goshin-do* in the name of his own personal art due to the great similarities between the two arts and because one grew from the other. So this is the reason we say we study *Goshin-Do*. While we all understand what that means the average person does not. We learn very early in our studies that *Sogo-Goshin-Do* translates literally to a "Combined Synthesized Way of Self-Defense". What is being combined and synthesized though? It is hard to answer without sounding arrogant, but it is the combination of the many styles that Kyoshi studied and the styles Soke Kuniba studied to create his form of

Goshin-do. Some of the arts that have been a part of our lineage are the following: Karate, Kempo-karate, Aikido, Kobudo, Jiu-jitsu, Judo, Kali, etc. This list could go on for quite a while and could get very specific, but the point is our art did not form out of thin air. It grew from the many styles before it and traces a lineage to Japan, Korea, and China. It is a rich heritage, so be sure you know the whole story. It has many chapters.

Chinese or Japanese

Here is something you may or may not know. Centuries ago the Japanese were in need of developing a written language. The Chinese had a very advanced and refined written language already using symbols to represent different words. It was not really a set of symbols with sounds like our alphabet, but rather one symbol may mean "man" and another may mean "water". You don't sound it out; you just know that it means one thing or another. The Japanese borrowed this system from the Chinese and integrated it into their culture. The Japanese call this system *kanji*. (They have 2 other alphabets as well used for phonics.) The word Sogo-Goshin-Do on our patches and diplomas is written in *kanji* and the symbols all have specific meanings. A Japanese speaker would match the symbols with the meanings and then the words So-Go Go-Shin-Do and they would know what it meant. A Chinese speaker could also read the *kanji* since it is from

Sogo-Goshin-Do

WKDA KAI NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2004 issue #2 Vol. 4

the ancient Chinese written language. They would know what it meant, but their words for the symbols may sound different. The final symbol in our art's name, "*Do*", actually has the same pronunciation in both languages as well as in Korean, hence the names Karate-Do (Japanese), Jeet-Kune-Do (Chinese), and Tae-Kwon-Do (Korean).

So if you are ever looking at *kanji* and aren't sure if it is Chinese or Japanese just remember it is really both.

World Champions

Did you know that Shihan Will Marvin and his brother Wade Marvin are former World Champions in karate? That's right. While a lot of people these days can claim a variety of titles from state to national titles, very few can claim a World title. Back in 1988 Kyoshi took Will and Wade who were still teenagers at the time to a World Karate Tournament in Japan hosted by Soke Kuniba's Seishin-Kai.

I am sure both had visions of possibly fighting one of the great karate students from Japan for the championship, but in the end only two competitors remained. It was Will and Wade Marvin. When the two were instructed to go to the final ring they saw each other there and due to the language barrier between them and the judges they were not sure if they were done fighting or not. In fact they weren't sure if maybe they had won already. Then they were informed they had to fight each other for first place.

The event was televised on Japanese TV and it was an incredible bout that was almost too close to call. Both fought like the incredible martial artists they are and ultimately Will outscored his younger brother Wade. The two went all the way to Japan just to end up fighting each other, which was something they did often enough in local tournaments back then. The only difference this time was they walked away with 1st and 2nd place World Titles.

Colored Belts

What do the colored belts used in Martial Arts really mean? Colored belts can mean a lot of things depending on where you study martial arts and who is promoting you. The Yellow belt is one of the most common colored belts to earn after white belt and it usually means you have learned some of the basics well enough to move up in rank. Most systems have some way to decide if a person has met the requirements to test or get promoted, but those requirements can differ greatly from art to art.

Why do different styles and schools use different colors and use them in different orders? Each system chooses a ranking system based on the needs of the art. It can be harder to decide what the belts mean when comparing them across different systems, so don't assume all belts mean the same thing.

Is a green belt always a green belt? The only safe assumption you can make when you see the colored belt someone wears is what that color is. Everything else is guess-work. A green belt in karate and a green belt in judo would study two entirely different things. They may both be great fighters, but you couldn't expect them to know all the same information.

The kyu rank or numbering system we use is a better way to try and compare ranks from art to art. If you are a green belt in Sogo-Goshin-Do you are a 6th kyu. If you moved to a new town and went to another school and their green belts were 9th kyus then you might be cross graded to a different color to match your skill. Be sure you know your kyu rank in addition to your belt color.

All in all it comes down to what you know, not the color of the belt. The years you have put into your training determine a great deal. The belts just help you and the instructor know how you are doing. So remember practice makes you better, not a change in belt color.

Warriors Weekend

I need updates from the August Warriors weekend for the next newsletter. I also need info from the other dojos for current news. Please e-mail me. The newsletter will now be on my web site each month at:
www.geocities.com/ltsmann

(to contribute to the newsletter contact Shihan Sean Mann by e-mail at: Nowheremann3@yahoo.com)