

## **"ESCAPE"**

### **THE ATLANTA GI YU DOJO 2019 SPRING WORKSHOP EXPERIENCE**

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ShoDan Gi Yu Honbu Dojo 02/15/19

We were generously hosted by WS Bumgarner Sensei for a challenging weekend seminar put on by Sukh Sandhu Sensei, Kancho, The Gi Yu Kyo Kai Dojos.

We covered techniques that come from the "Ninja" aspects of our lineages, specifically Togakure Ryu Ninpo Taijutsu. We also studied Jinen Ryu Nito Jutsu which involved utilizing katana (long sword) in right hand and wakizashi (short sword) in the left hand. I want to focus on the "ninpo" part of the training for this synopsis.



Myself, Sensei and several other students from the Dayton dojo left the negative cold temperatures of Ohio early in the morning to head to Atlanta GA.

As we traveled through the different states of The United States of America, we had great robust conversations and lots of laughs along the way. The conversations of each other's personal lives and going ons, were only topped by the discussions with Sensei about budo and history of our Kyo Kai.



I never ceases to amaze me the depth of what we have, right here in Dayton Ohio! On the way down we decide to stop at one of our sword supplies, CAS Iberia in TN. They gave us a warm welcome, showed us

around their facility and their prototype swords. It was quite amazing to be surrounded by thousands of blades!



Now to the crux of my thoughts about the workshop. The western thought of the Ninja originally was that they were hired assassins with no lord. However, this is not completely accurate. Yes, they could be asked to depose of a leader or individual, they also had many other purposes. They also had a strict hierarchy of command. Over time ninja tactics were taken on by the Samurai for specific skill sets. In fact, many samurai were ninja and vice versus. They had many skills, inclusive of espionage, infiltration, intelligence gathering, and assassination. According to Sukh Sensei, their role was much like our modern military Special Forces branches in modern day militaries. Much of what was done was with the goal of infiltration, information gathering and then safely exiting the area that is so treacherously close to the enemy. The techniques we studied at this workshop were in line with what was necessary to escape and survive if discovered. This could frequently involve one or very few ninja up against multiple opponents. One example of tools used for escape are shuriken (throwing spikes) or senban (flat throwing stars) “throwing stars”. The utilization of such tools is not what is commonly shown in movies or martial art magazines. The use of these tools was primarily in the combat situation of needing to escape if unexpectedly discovered during a mission. The shuriken often were of shape and size to allow convenient concealment and handling. These small instruments carried a large psychological advantage in the samurai society. The senban were typically exposed to water so they would be rusty. There was not a tetanus vaccine at that time, thus once a few enemy combatants suffered the gruesome death of acute tetanus, “lock jaw”, and those gruesome deaths flowed through the societal “grapevine”, it became known that any contact with such weapon must be avoided at all cost. Even a small nick in the skin could be mortally dangerous. Poison could also be used. Thus psychologically, if you saw an intruder, dressed in dark clothing, covered face and had these disease delivering blades, you kept your distance.



Another escape methodology was to throw out a cloud of dust, dirt, shaved metal filings, or hot pepper dust. This could be contained in an emptied egg shell or could be dirt thrown from the ground at the opponent's eyes. Again, this was a diversion tactic to escape in the presence of multiple attackers. The term for this is Metsubushi. We incorporated these ideas in our training using specific set ups and techniques. What we were really studying was tactics and the concept of escape in dire circumstances. An example could include being hemmed in to a closed area by four attackers, three with katana and one with spear or Yari. The defender or shidachi would have the right hand in the accessible fold of the keiko gi; the other hand could also be concealed behind the right elbow. The tactic would be to go left and right and backwards to bait the opponents to come closer together. At the opportune time, the right hand would come out exposing multiple senban. From there a decision would have to be made regarding which opponent to target with the first thrown senban. In rapid succession the projectiles would be thrown, aiming at the face. The uke, training partners, would respond by backing out emergently due to the dire danger. This creates the correct dynamics of the opponents backing out. Decisions are made moment by moment as to the best exit point: the "open seam" of distance between opponents. At that point we would simulate the dispersing of powder from low to high (Metsubushi) across the field of opponents to create further confusion and fear. At this point the quick exit would be somersaults, handsprings or rolling through and rapidly egressing to an escape route. As such, these were not typical kata we study as there was more moment by moment decision making involved. As with other advanced training, we had to keep in mind the reality of what was historically done. We had to "keep it real" by pretending these were rusty or poisoned shuriken and real dust that could be very irritating to the eyes or even deadly if it contained poison. The shidachi had to keep in mind moment by moment that these uke were holding razor sharp Katana or Yari. Thus, we cooperated together for training using "give and take" kake heki bringing out the tactical reality of the combat situation.



How do we bring these tactics forward to contemporary reality? We are not likely to encounter samurai coming at us with katana. We hopefully all have our tetanus shots updated. What if we are at a gas station late at night and there are three thugs that come around you while you are pumping gas? There is only one attendant inside the station behind a counter and they are not paying attention. What assessment do you make of your opponents and their positions around you? What tools do you have at the ready to damage or confuse the attackers? What weapons might they have? If you conceal / carry, that may be the best tool if the distance is right. It may work against you if your opponents have encroached too much. Maybe you could pull the gas nozzle out and spray their faces with gasoline? You could beat them with the gas nozzle or enwrap an attacker's neck with the hose. Keeping one damaged attacker between you and the others would be good strategy. Maybe you have a knife to make jabs after that. You really would have to repeatedly reassess. Perhaps the attendant called the police and you already hear sirens. That may lead to a certain action like running inside the gas station and getting the attendant to lock the door. Otherwise, should you jump in the car and lock the doors. Perhaps....



Ultimately, these are just my thoughts and perceptions of what this type of training triggers in your mind. The thought evoking training is a very valuable way to train along with the normal day to day training we do in the dojo. Take advantage of these opportunities, they don't come around as much as you think they do.