

First Drafts

Several months ago I wrote two articles entitled *Creative Budo* regarding some rudiments of creativity in styles and in kata interpretation. This article is a deeper look at creating a system of budo via the aspect of creative writing.

If you were to write a poem, a short story, a novel, or a play, you would inevitably create a first draft. Few works of literature spring fully formed from the pen, typewriter, or computer. The implication of a first draft is that there will be another draft and probably several more after that until some sort of publishable structure is attained. In fact, virtually all screenplays are considered first drafts until ready for production, and then change may still slip in during the process of shooting. A novel trilogy I began writing a decade ago has gone through nine and a half drafts—I say “a half” since the last draft was more or less a revision of grammar and typo corrections with the addition of several small scene extensions.

We expect that our martial arts, having been created before we were born, have attained perfection by the very fact that they have been “published”, i.e. known to the martial arts world. However, consider how some arts came to be and you may wish to reconsider the idea of first drafts.

Gichin Funakoshi went out of his way to learn kata from lineages other than his own so that he would better represent all of Okinawan karate in Japan. However, once in Japan, he sent students to Kenwa Mabuni to learn even more kata, since Funakoshi was obviously not satisfied that his early karate was the way he wanted it to be. He originally did not want his system named, but now that is known as Shotokan, it has gone through at least three “drafts”: (1) What Gichin brought from Okinawa, (2) the Japanized version developed by his son Yoshitaka, (3) and the post-war version headed dominantly by Masatoshi Nakayama. Which was the perfected, or at least the “published”, Shotokan?

Morihei Ueshiba changed the name of his art several times, from Ueshiba-ha Daito-ryu to Ueshiba-ha Aiki-ju-jutsu to Aikido. With each draft, he changed the emphasis and the performance of techniques. In fact, an original Ueshiba Aikido student Tadashi Abe quit the art when he returned to Japan after seven years in France to find that the self-defense aspect of the Aikido had all but disappeared. Even though Aikido remained under the same founder, that founder had changed his attitude toward self-defense and training. Should we then assume that Aikido at O-Sensei’s death was the Aikido he wanted to world to experience?

Well, at least we have Judo. Founded by Dr. Jigoro Kano, Kodokan Judo, a clever combination of Tenshin Shinyo Ryu and Kito Ryu Ju-jutsu, managed to make safer the older and more deadly battlefield arts and develop them into a sport. Well, not quite. Kito-ryu was appreciably old although it was founded after the warring states period, but Tenshin Shinyo was only 30 years old, albeit a self-defense art, when Kano began to study it.

While Kano definitely founded the art of Judo, its techniques evolved as adherents found ways to counter its techniques. *Harai-goshi* (sweeping hip) is a famous example of a technique developed because students would vault over Kano's *uki-goshi* (floating hip). Not only were techniques modified and added, not only was the curriculum (the *Go-Kyo-no-Waza*) adjusted, but also Kano had a real problem with Judo becoming a martial sport rather than a modernized martial art. Add to that the idea that early judoka were able to use their skills in self-defense and defended themselves against group attacks on occasion. Kano did not like this either, of course, because it did not show proper deportment and self-control, but it did illustrate that the Judo that became an Olympic sport in 1964 was not the Judo he created, nor the Judo that the last of his tenth degree black belts, Kyuzo Mifune, practiced in the 1950s. One could argue that Judo went through at least three "drafts". Is the current sport version the Judo that Kano wanted to issue to the world?

More on this subject next time.