

## The Concept of Intellectual Budo

I wrote in [\*The Road to Mastery\*](#), that “The Greek athlete, the Mandingo warrior, the Shaolin monk, the Japanese samurai...were Renaissance men with muscles, uniting the physical and the mental. They were also something else — they were civilized savages. They had the mental capabilities and moral judgment to live in society, could enjoy culinary creations, could take their ease in luxury, but maintained the honed reflexes of jungle cats.” I could have emphasized the inverse as well: that these men were the jocks that also happened to be on the dean’s list.

When instructors of my generation were working their way through the ranks, they were taught either by Japanese who could not speak the native language well or by their students who could speak the tongue, but were taught in a nonverbal, non-analytical, action-oriented manner. Whether because of Asian tradition or because of our Asian teachers’ unfamiliarity with our languages, we did not discuss or research. It was a martial art, after all, so we owned up to the “martial” and got in line, quietly and unquestioningly.

We also know, however, that two generations before us, masters like FUNAKOSHI Gichin and MABUNI Kenwa published books on their styles, and one generation before us, masters like NAKAYAMA Masatoshi, MABUNI Kenei, UESHIBA Kisshomaru, TOHEI Koichi, and institutes like The Kodokan also published books on their arts. They may have been rather basic picture books, but they were the start of a semi-intellectual approach to the understanding of *budo*.

Today’s world has inherited both the non-intellectual and the semi-intellectual approach, but some of us are not satisfied with that. To become the martial ideal aspired to by the Greeks, the Mandingos, the Shaolin monks, and to some extent, the Japanese Samurai, a martial artist should embrace an intellectual element. I am not suggesting spending more time sitting in the library or facing a computer terminal than in the dojo, but I am suggesting something somewhat similar. Today’s fully realized martial artist should not be satisfied with two 2-hour sessions per week on the mat. There is so much information available in books, DVDs, downloads, and websites that there is almost no excuse not to become familiar with various martial arts and their common elements.

In the 1970s, I worked on three history charts: karate, aiki, and my own personal training history. In order to confirm lineages, I bought numerous books, took notes from the half-dozen magazines to which I had subscribed, wrote letters to other instructors (there was no email back then), and traveled, when I could, to talk personally to those who knew more than I. And I was certainly not alone nor had I gone to extremes in my pursuit of information. Hanshi Patrick

McCarthy not only settled in Japan, visited Okinawa and China, but also would go almost anywhere he could find information about fighting arts. My Shotokan instructor Lou Demas, who was a history buff, inspired me. Richard Kim, a famed American karate instructor of Japanese/Korean, originally from Hawaii, who travelled to Japan to train, inspired McCarthy Sensei. In his generation, Sensei Donn Draeger, did the same thing. Both produced books that take a decidedly more intellectual approach to budo than the early instruction manuals did.

And yet, budo is seldom considered an intellectual endeavor. I suppose if martial artists gave up the physical training and spent all their time in the library or in front of a computer terminal, they might be more respected for their intelligence. Modern day Renaissance men like Draeger and McCarthy, the authors of many books, who brought truths about Asian martial culture to the West, unfortunately are not thought of as intellectuals — except by martial artist like you and I. And that's a start.