

The Essence of Budo

The ancient precepts of Shinto (神道 Shintō) is the traditional religion of Japan that focuses on ritual practices to be carried out diligently to establish a spiritual connection between their present-day and their ancient past. Budo, or Japanese martial arts collectively, as used in the ancient temples of Japan, was an adopted ritualistic practice with a similar religious attitude as Shinto.

However, from my point of view it is not the ancient past that is connected through ritual, but the kami, or spirit inherent in all things. This is at the very essence of both Shinto and Budo. It means that all things past, present and future are imbued with kami.

Budo kata and techniques are also a means of making that same connection to the kami. It does not follow from this that Budo is Shinto, or that people practicing Budo should observe Shinto per se, but it cannot be ignored that one is inextricably linked with the other.

This makes Budo an 'internal' art that has been mistakenly interpreted to mean the art of war. This goes against the fundamental character of the priests who trained in the temples of ancient times.

There is no art in war, and the aim for me has, and continues to be, an exploration of budo in the Shinto sense of kami and bring that forward into the modern world.

Using Budo in tournaments is not ideal. In the view of world history, wars are scars on the evolutionary path. The internal aspects of Budo however have existed for as long as people can be identified as humans. Kami, therefore, is a symbolic archetype embedded in the very core of what it is to be human.