

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE: DEFINING <i>Dō</i>	3
THE WAY OF <i>Dō</i>	4
CATEGORICAL DIFFERENCES: AESTHETIC, SPIRITUAL, & MARTIAL	5
AESTHETIC DISTINCTIONS	5
SPIRITUAL & PHILOSOPHICAL DISTINCTIONS	6
MARTIAL DISTINCTIONS	7
THE HISTORICAL ROAD OF <i>Dō</i>	8
CHINESE ORIGINS	8
<i>Dō</i> FORGED: WARFARE & SECLUSION	9
THE AMBIGUOUS NATURE OF <i>Dō</i>	11
CHAPTER TWO: DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN <i>JUTSU</i> & <i>Dō</i>	12
PRACTICAL <i>JUTSU</i>	13
<i>JUTSU</i> TRANSFORMED: <i>BUDō</i> , <i>JUDō</i> , & <i>AIKIDō</i>	14
CHAPTER THREE: <i>Dō</i> & MODERN JAPANESE IDENTITY	18
CONTRIBUTIONS TO A LARGER JAPANESE, CULTURAL IDENTITY	19
UNIQUE JAPANESE CHARACTERISTICS: CULTURE, GEOGRAPHY & BELIEF	19
SELF VERSUS GROUP: COLLECTIVISTIC GOALS	20
SOCIETAL REQUIREMENTS SATISFIED THROUGH <i>Dō</i> IDEOLOGY	22
INCLUSION OF <i>Dō</i> INTO SPECIALIZED FIELDS	23
A MARK ON MODERN PRACTICES	23
CHAPTER FOUR: IMPACT OF <i>Dō</i> IN MODERN JAPAN	26
TRADITION IN CONFLICT WITH MODERNITY	27
<i>Dō</i> EXPORTED: BLURRING CULTURAL LINES & DISCERNING TRUTHS	28
SUMMARY	30
BIBLIOGRAPHY	32

All cultures each are built upon various sets of principles, philosophies, and traditions. Some principles are shared between the various cultures, displaying similarities. Other principles display the sharp contrasts between cultures separated by distance, language and ideology. Social nature of humankind is that of categorizing and organizing differences, creating an “us,” and inversely a “them.” Within these categories of difference lies human identity.

The varying identities of humanity’s many cultures and peoples are not easily defined. The separation of a personal identity from another is the basis of cultural context as a whole. Histories, traditions, and philosophical understandings of the self are a part of what composes individual identity, within larger social contexts. The crafting of a group’s cultural identity is undoubtedly far more complex.

Western cultures are a blending of various influences. Yet, there are clear distinctions between U.S. American culture and cultures of European roots. Asian cultures are equally as varied. Although ignorance often lumps all of Asia as one culture, further investigation shines light on the truth of immense diversity. As distinct as U.S. American culture is from Europe, so too is Japanese culture distinct from the whole of Asia.

From the sixth century (C.E.), during the age of immigration for Buddhist and Confucianist ideologies, through the *Sengoku* era of perpetual warfare from 1300 through 1600, the theories of a Japanese application of *dō* were beginning to take root in the cultural make-up of a distinct Japanese identity. During the *Tokugawa* era, and reaching forward into the *Meiji* period of restoration of 1868, a reformation of identity and historical placement offered a new set of tools in examining the cultural legacy of *dō* in connection with a modern, globalizing structure of society. Leading up to and beyond the victories and, ultimately, the defeats of World War II,

and into the bubble economy of the 1980's, the meaning of *dō* was again shifted and refocused to be more directly in line with the emerging conventions of contemporary Japan.

Along with Japan's cultural traditions, the concept of *dō*, and the philosophies inherently connected with it, help craft the modern Japanese identity. It is the evolution of these philosophies, which have been consistently revised for each generational era, which has allowed *dō* to continue to remain relevant in the socio-cultural understanding of the Japanese people. The philosophical principles of *dō*, through various forms and applications, continue to impact modern Japanese society, just as it has done so throughout history. Through its relationship with a historical and modern identity of Japanese people, *traditional* Japanese culture allows an avenue to the understanding of *dō*. From this understanding, investigation into the social and philosophical concepts that have contributed to a complex western understanding of Japanese identity in the 21st century can begin.

Chapter One: Defining *Dō*

“Is it not always true that reality and sincerity are to be preferred to merely artificial excellence? Artisans, for instance, make different sorts of articles, as their talents serve them. Some of them are keen and expert, and cleverly manufacture objects of temporary fashion, which have no fixed or traditional style, and which are only intended to strike the momentary fancy. These, however, are not true artisans. The real excellence of the true artisan is tested by those who make, without defects or sensational peculiarities, articles to decorate, we will say, some particular building, in conformity with correct taste and high aesthetic principle . . . Pictures, indeed, such as those of Mount *Horai*, which has never been beheld by mortal eye, or of some raging monstrous fish in a rough sea, or of a wild animal of some far-off country, or of the imaginary face of the demon, are often drawn with such striking vividness that people are started at the sight of them. These pictures, however, are neither real nor true. On the other hand, ordinary scenery, of familiar mountains, of calm streams of water, and of dwellings just before our eyes, may be sketched with an irregularity so charming, and with such excellent skill, as almost to rival Nature . . . These are the pictures in which is mostly evidenced the spirit and effectiveness of the superior hand of the master; and in these an inferior artist would only show [dullness] and inefficiency” (Murasaki, 42-43).

— Excerpt from *Genji Monogatari (The Tale of Genji)*

Written around 1000 C.E. by Lady Murasaki Shikibu, the famed *Tale of Genji* provides insight into an emerging Japanese cultural self-awareness. The passage details a discussion between various fictional aristocrats. Initially discussing the ways of men and women in the realm of romance, the discussion shifts towards that of the philosophical methodology of aesthetic expression. The ways in which an amateur and a master approach their environments are connected to their dedication and intent.

Composed during the height of the *Heian era*, the *Tale of Genji* is heavily influenced by Murasaki's experience with court life. Court life of the *Heian* era offered fertile ground for the development of culture, philosophy and an emerging Japanese identity, newly separate and unique from a Chinese identity.

The Way of *Dō*

Japanese *dō* (道), often translated as “way” or “path,” is most commonly understood as a spiritual or philosophical principle. This principle implies a deep body of knowledge and tradition with an ethical, moral and aesthetic system connected to Japanese identity. While not original to Japanese culture, *dō* has been adapted into a distinctly Japanese principle.

The disciplined aesthetic perfection of mundane, yet intentional actions mirrors the Zen principles important to the *dō*. The purpose of such regulated actions are not only done to learn new skills, but to work toward building better character and a sense of internal harmony. The form is available to help the practitioner to discard thoughts, moving into *mushin*, or “no-mind” This attitude allows one to accept the world as it is, reaching the core of learning in *dō* practice (Davies, 76).

Though it might appear that *dō* was developed in conjunction with martial, or military, philosophies, it was instead fostered out of an exploration of the origins of reality. *Dō* is the Japanese philosophical evolution of an earlier Chinese exercise at a creation of a unifying theory of existence (Chen, 83). Beginning as a Chinese cultural concept, *dō* has been adapted and reorganized for various time periods' limitations and necessities.

Categorical Differences: Aesthetic, Spiritual, & Martial

Aesthetic Distinctions

Dō can be applied to a variety of purposes. While most things do hold an aesthetic quality, the practice of honing an aesthetic discipline inherently sets it apart from other forms. An aesthetic distinction, in terms of an effect by *dō*, continues along the same premise of “way” or “path.” The Japanese sense of aesthetic quality is immensely subtle in nature.

Japanese traditional aesthetics have a deeply rooted connection with the natural world. Not too unlike the European artistic quality and meaning of *vanitas*, Japanese *dō* conceptions are concerned with imbuing an ideal of the natural in existence. Beyond the natural, the ideal of the moment, and its impermanence is made consciously aware. Subtle associations, and an interplay between various components connect the practitioner/creator to the natural element being invoked and focused (Binyon, 31).

Specific examples of Japanese inclusion of *dō* in aesthetic include *shodō* (書道), calligraphy, *kadō* (花道), flower arrangement (also referred to as *ikebana*), and *sadō* (茶道), tea ceremony. This addition of the *dō* spirit into the artistic and aesthetically expressive forms in part has its roots in Zen Buddhism. The Japanese aesthetic is subjective in nature, and is represented in the subtlest of ways. A valued element in Japanese language and artistic expression is the

space between the actions. This allows the feelings of the practitioner to discover a personal, hidden meaning and value (Davies, 37).

Sadō, and its related etiquette, was influenced by the actions of *samurai* as well as actions in the forms of *noh* (Japan's oldest theatre form) dances. The *bushidō* ideals of respect, and selflessness are highlighted to some degree. Furthermore, the inner spirit of the host must be balanced, to fulfill the ceremony (Yasuo, 239-241). The tea ceremony is an exercise in subtlety and an expression of natural beauty.

Dō meaning has an implied vision of morality, and an aesthetic quality of simplicity and elegance as an ideal of beauty is further expressed with the Japanese term *wabi-sabi* (侘び寂び). *Wabi* emphasizes a serene, transcendental frame of thought, while *sabi* connects to a principle of beauty in silence and a reverence for age. In relation with *sadō* and the tea ceremony, *wabi-sabi* represents the beauty in the quiet cultivation of the mind (Davies, 224-227).

Spiritual & Philosophical Distinctions

Dō is, regardless of its other definable attributes, a philosophical concept. Spirituality and philosophy share a great deal of overlapping bonds. Each, as ideologies, shape how the world is interpreted and navigated. The Japanese spiritual system most often directly associated and identified by *dō* is *Shintō* (神道), or “way of the gods.”

While *dō* is not expressly connected with Buddhism, Zen Buddhism has had an effect of the evolution of a Japanese understanding and application of *dō*. As a philosophical expression, Buddhism traverses a similar landscape as that of *dō*. The strongest philosophical extension of *dō* is the quest for refining personal discipline in the mental, spiritual and physical avenues of a given endeavor.

Unlike Buddhism, and to a lesser extent, Confucianism, the importation of *Taoist* thought was never an official endeavor. *Taoist* principles were ‘piggy-backed’ within the philosophies of Buddhist traditions during the sixth century, and were further developed in Zen Buddhism thought the *Kamakura* period (1185—1392). The Japanese of the ancient and medieval eras applied their distinctly Japanese culture towards the traits from the Chinese imported principles. Focusing key concepts borrowed from the amalgam of Chinese and Japanese cultural precepts into the principle of Japanese *dō*, the Japanese fostered a method to meditate on life. By acting in a manner that is based on freedom, the Japanese, as Zen practitioners, achieve movement toward a realization of the *dō*.

Martial Distinctions

Budō (武道), the “martial way,” and *bushidō* (武士道), the “Way of the Warrior,” are obvious applications of *dō* as a martial principle. Developed in the thirteenth century, *bushidō* was not only concerned with martial mastery, but of the ideals of loyalty, honor, duty and courage. These ideals were to be upheld, as they stood as the cornerstone of the *samurai* culture (Davies, 41-42). The pursuit of self-discovery and improvement drives the martial practitioner.

While Buddhism is not the only source of influence on the development of *bushidō*, it offers a spiritual element to the practice of *bushidō*. At the same time, Confucian ideology adds a humanistic element, emphasized in loyalty. This loyalty acted as a distinctive element in feudal Japanese society. In turn, it established the framework of a complex social hierarchy, of which has shaped modern social conventions in the twentieth century. (Davies, 43-45)

“The business of *samurai* is to die.” This is an adage, which illustrates the levels of responsibility in living as well as dying. As much as the spirit of *bushidō* is concerned with the

behavioral aesthetics and morality in life, death was an ever-present reminder of their martial role. To live a life prepared for death at any moment is at the heart of *Bushidō* (Nobuyuki, 26-28).

Martial arts, sports and other physical activities are integrated with the *dō* with a martial distinction. *Judō* (柔道), the way of subtlety, and *aikidō* (合気道), the way of harmonizing energy, both are enhanced by the inclusion of the *dō* spirit. Martial legacies of ancient and medieval Japan hold little relevance in practical application today. However, through the inclusion and application of *dō* principles as a vehicle for personal development, these martial legacies can retain value in a modern age.

The Historical Road of *Dō*

Chinese Origins

One of the most influential ways of thought directly related to *dō* is *Taoism*. *Taoism*, dating back to the fifth century B.C.E., is a Chinese philosophy associated with the ideas of Lao-tzu. *Taoism's* access to Japanese culture is a result of its influence on Zen Buddhism. The translation of *Tao* (the Chinese equivalent to *dō*) aligns with the same sense of “way” but further extends to include the way to be *followed* (Davies, 72).

Borrowed cultural ideologies and concepts from non-Japanese sources are wonderfully prevalent in the whole of Japanese culture. Although Japan is only a fraction the size of Asia, many key elements have been taken from various Asian cultures and adapted to fit the principles of Japanese philosophy. This assimilation from outside sources is referred to as *itoko dori*, and can be seen as a crucial element in the formation of the Japanese cultural identity.

Foreign elements adopted into Japanese culture are critical in shaping Japanese identity and perception. The earliest origins of *itoko dori* are associated with reconciling the differences

in religious and philosophical thought of ancient Japan. An example of such adoption and adaptation of varying beliefs was expressed by Prince Shokoku, in the seventh century, “*Shinto* is the trunk, Buddhism is the branches, and Confucianism is the leaves” (Davies, 128). To some degree, *iitoko dori* appears to be conveniently selective, but serves the purpose of unifying various cultural concepts under an umbrella of ‘Japaneseness.’

Within the *Tao Te Ching* (道德經), the Chinese concept of *Tao* is asserted to be an important source for understanding the reality of the world, directly connected to human lives and interactions (Chen, 82). Critical to most Chinese philosophical principles, *Tao*’s societal and moral intentions would change from a seemingly literal ideology into an arena of metaphysical exploration. Originally composed around 220 B.C.E., the *Tao Te Ching* spent roughly 700-800 years maturing in China into a metaphorical comprehension of the universe and reality. As such, upon the Chinese *Tao*’s inclusion into Japanese culture as *dō*, a great wealth of philosophical density associated with the “way” could be explored by method of *iitoko dori*, establishing an interpretation of a uniquely Japanese *dō*.

Dō Forged: Warfare & Seclusion

The *Sengoku* period, or Warring States period, created an arena of sorts for the *samurai* to develop and sharpen their skills and temper their values. Between the 15th and 17th centuries, the various feudal lords fought for power, and as one *daimyo*, or lord, grew weak, the power vacuum would be filled by another *daimyo* growing stronger. The ever increasing, constant warfare put a good deal of strain on the Japanese people as a whole.

In a powerful bid to consolidate power, *daimyo* leader Tokugawa Ieyasu stirred his *samurai* forces to win at the battle of *Sekigahara* (1600), and shortly thereafter established

himself as *shogun*, or commanding general. With the ending of the *Sengoku* period, the *Tokugawa* era was recognized. Tokugawa was able to successfully consolidate all power into one location, and under one banner, marking the beginning of a period of relative peace.

Tokugawa, as *shogun* closed Japan from all forms of foreign trade and exchange. By doing so, he subsequently created an environmental opportunity to cultivate a distinct Japanese nation, with the *samurai* at the helm. The *samurai* were professionalized under Tokugawa, locking their position in the social hierarchy, and distinguishing specific roles for *samurai* in the Tokugawa era (King 57).

Samurai of feudal Japan were instrumental in creating and solidifying a distinctly Japanese cultural perspective. From this perspective, a myriad of traditions were established and refined. By means of aesthetic pursuits such as *kadō*, spiritual exploration afforded by Zen Buddhism and *Shintō*, and the martial traditions of various forms of *budō*, the notion of *dō* was intricately woven into the social fabric of Japanese tradition, history and identity in the pre-*Meiji* period.

As the *Tokugawa* period brought relative peace, several hundred thousand *samurai* were without direct purpose, or any direction on how to occupy themselves. Without purpose, many warriors of the previous era took governmental administrative positions, entered into various levels of law enforcement, or wandered in search of purpose. While still receiving their stipends for loyal service to their *daimyo*, this connection (as it could be passed on hereditarily) became more and more abstract (Gordon 16-17).

Without a focus, the *samurai* ideals were reexamined. As such, the roles, values and expectations of the *samurai* evolved. The chief tool of the *bushi*, or warrior, class was their expert mastery of martial dominance. Those *samurai* who were present and a part of the

Tokugawa consolidation campaigns were keenly aware of how Japan had changed, and how the *samurai* must change as well.

The Ambiguous Nature of *Dō*

While in English, *dō* can be quickly assigned a translated meaning; the solidity of that meaning is questionable. *Dō* is a highly objective conceptual idea, built on a framework of ambiguity. The *dō* is structured as a contradictory notion, such as weakness over strength. To become strong with *dō* is to advocate the superiority of being weak. As soon as something leads to an extremity (strength, speed, etc.) it can only reverse course. Emulating the *dō* “blunts its sharpness, unites its tangles, and softens its light” (Chen, 90)

In an interview on *aikidō* and its inclusion of the *dō*, Endō Seishirō, 8th degree black belt, and original student of the founder of *aikidō*, explained, “...When it comes to *dō*, I feel it means something immense, deep, wide, and unclear. In my desire to somehow make it clearer, I sought books relating to *Taoism*... *Tao* can also be found in Confucianism and its virtues: *Jin* (仁), humanity, *Gi* (義), righteousness, *Rei* (礼), propriety, *Chi* (智), wisdom, *Shin* (信), faithfulness. It is said that *Tao* is to seek and realize, and thereby equip the self with, these virtues” (Pranin, 1).

Throughout the various applications, contradictions, and manifestations of *dō*, the purpose remains rooted in self-improvement and mastery of forms. If a specific explanation or translation cannot be found, then it can be said that the intention can be realized, at the very least. *Dō* can be used as a device to foster growth, creativity and transcendence, regardless of how each practitioner defines the “way.”

Chapter Two: Distinctions Between *Jutsu* & *Dō*

“Balance in most people is extremely poor: they try to align themselves in accordance with supposed vertical and horizontal lines in the objects around them. Experiments have been done in Japan in which a man tries to stand upright while a vertically striped “tent” hangs around him; when the tent is revolved the untrained man invariably loses balance because the visual cues are disturbed, whereas the *Judo* men with their *inner* sense of balance can stand steadily even on one leg” (Leggett, 8-10).

— Excerpt from *The Demonstration of Throws: Nage-no-Kata*

In *The Demonstration of Throws: Nage-no-Kata*, *dō* communicates beyond martial aptitude. Using physical balance as a metaphor for social or personal balance, the study and practice of a particular way can strengthen and expand an understanding of the self as related to the inhabited environment. While there is a clear structure of technique and artistic form, the mastery comes from a place within the practitioner, a part of an inner awareness. The pervading nature of *dō* in modern Japan can be discussed as a means to acquire spiritual satisfaction through training and consideration of intention (Davies, 77).

Practical *Jutsu*

Japan's cultural history is tied closely to its military history, as previously explored. From the era of Japanese feudal control of the late ninth century, to the Meiji Restoration of 1868, specializations in the art of combat were developed and perfected. These specializations, called *jutsu*, were individual methods systematically set apart from one another. *Jutsu* (術), best translated as “method,” “art,” or “technique,” implies a sense of perfected, measured actions (*Secrets of the Samurai*, 21-22).

Japanese identity's proximity to Zen Buddhism resulted in the structures of the *methods* and *paths* explored by the *jutsu*, and the *dō*. While the *jutsu*, its techniques, might be quick to learn, understanding the philosophy and path towards personal betterment is found to take far longer to grasp. The *jutsu* represents the practical applications of martial traditions. *Dō*, on the other hand, represents the transcendent potential of the martial tradition, in addition to and concert with aesthetic and spiritual themes. Both are required for martial mastery, but the scope of *jutsu* is far narrower.

During the Tokugawa era (1600-1868) of relative peace, the military and warrior mentality needed an outlet for release. The specializations of the various *jutsu*, no longer needed in military terms, shifted towards an ethical and spiritual exploration. Thus, the “art” or “technique” became the “way” or *dō* (*Secrets of the Samurai*, 24). The practical nature of the martial traditions were assessed and reapplied in the direction of the principles of *dō*.

Miyamoto Musashi, a *samurai* who avoided direct service to any single *daimyo* in his lifetime, lived during this period of martial assessment. In his life’s work, *The Book of Five Rings*, Miyamoto alludes to the topic of a changing Japanese martial sense. The relaxed responsibilities of the *samurai* were examined, and the importance of their tools, methods and social standings were contrasted against the practical applications of their abilities. Miyamoto explained, “What is called “martial art” is the standard of the military clans. Commanders, in particular, should put it into practice, and common soldiers should know its Way as well. Yet there are no warriors who clearly understand the Way of the Martial Arts in the world today” (Miyamoto 39).

Furthermore, Miyamoto concluded his introduction to the *Book of Earth*, in *The Book of Five Rings*, by expressing a purpose for the martial way for the warrior of the *Tokugawa* era. The use of *bushido* ideology was reevaluated to fit into an evolving social system. Highlighting the possibility that the martial value of the *jutsu* could be of value in the arena of *dō* principles, Miyamoto asserts, “There are many people who, even when studying the Way of the Martial Arts, think that these skills will not be useful in real situations. In fact, the true Way of the Martial Arts is to train so that these skills are useful at any time, and to teach these skills so that they will be useful in all things” (Miyamoto 40).

Jutsu Transformed: Budō, Judō, & Aikidō

While there is a suggested evolution from *jutsu* to *dō*, it is not wholly accurate. Like so many things now a part of a Japanese cultural understanding, *dō* is a borrowed concept made to be Japanese. During the time when *jutsu* ideologies (another topic in its own right) were developed, the concept of *dō* was also taking shape, independent as well as in association with the *jutsu*. *Jutsu* origins, and the origins of *bujutsu* (武術), the art or science of war, are connected to the historical record of the emergence of mankind. Although in Japan, in particular, these *jutsu* origins reach back to the earliest Japanese clansmen, continue to be forged through history (*Secrets of the Samurai*, 42).

The differences between the *jutsu* and the *dō* can be attributed to the designation of their qualified locations. *Jutsu* is qualified by an external display, directly related to physical action. *Dō* can be thus qualified in contrast as an internal display, centered upon mental control and internal energy (*Secrets of the Samurai*, 183). The change from *jutsu* to *dō* (*bujutsu* — *budō*, *jujutsu* — *judō*, and *aikijutsu* — *aikidō*) is connected to the changes during the *Sengoku* to the *Tokugawa* in terms of opportunity of use. This change is also significant to the exploration of the internal displays these martial forms offer.

Within the development of unarmed *bujutsu* disciplines such as *jujutsu* and *aikijutsu*, merged with the principles and strategies of armed combat forms to coexist with them, fostering the principle of *haragei* (腹芸), mental concentration or force of personality. While this directly led to the creation of styles of educating the various *bujutsu* forms, it marked a distinct philosophical shift in the approach of technique and method into way and path (*Secrets of the Samurai*, 346). *Jutsu* is not merely a show of external application. It is the study of the inner factors, esoteric and abstract, that moved *jutsu* to derive the forms of *dō*.

Haragei is the carrier of tradition from the *jutsu* to the *dō*. While the *hara* is literally the abdomen or belly, it holds a connotation of being the central core of the body. Strengthening the *hara* has practical applications in martial situations. However, understanding how to manipulate the *hara* is to cross over into the realm of abstraction. Abstraction is the locality of the *dō*.

The histories of both *judō* (柔道), “the gentle way,” and *aikidō* (合気道), “the way of the harmony of energy,” are relatively short lived to this point. The organization of *judō* as a separate, unique form came in the early *Meiji* era, around 1882, with the establishment of the *Kōdōkan*, under direction of Kano Jigoro (Watson, 43). With the existence of the *Kōdōkan*, the term of *judō* became favored in use over that of *jujutsu*.

Aikidō is perhaps the youngest of the martial forms of Japanese tradition. Ueshiba Morihei, the founder of *aikidō* tradition, opened the *Kobukan Dōjō* in 1930, to be renamed *Hombu* after World War II (Saotome, 10). Based on a legacy of *aikijutsu*, the same structure of meeting energy in a harmonious way is present, and the principle of ‘*aiki*’ dates back to more than 700 years.

Dō maintains a moral grounding. The ethics of various paths share a common string; they all value the harmonious betterment of the individual for the betterment of the group. As a contrast to a growing “material culture” in Japan, *dō* spirit questions the aesthetic values of the culture; the loss of tools necessary to reunite our minds with our spirit, so as to speak in a unified voice. This is the value of *dō*.

Dō maintains a link to a distinctly Japanese historical identity. The history of Japan’s creation and evolution of *bujutsu* moved beyond the mere physical discipline. The *jutsu* became more integrated into the development of man’s personality as it shifted into an expression through *dō*. Adoption of philosophical ideologies concerning the meaning of existence and the

role of group within that framework is the structural support for *dō* as a portion of Japanese identity. The ideas behind the practices, regardless of the various natures, could be integrated on nearly every level of self to society (*Secrets of the Samurai*, 462).

Chapter Three: *Dō* & Modern Japanese Identity

“He who stands on his tiptoes does not stand firm. He who stretches his legs does not walk (easily). (So), he who displays himself does not shine, he who asserts his own views is not distinguished, he who vaunts himself does not find his merit acknowledged, he who is self-conceited has no superiority allowed to him. Such conditions, viewed from the standpoint of the *Tao*, are like remnants of food, or a tumour on the body, which all dislike. Hence those who pursue (the course) of the *Tao* do not adopt and allow them” (Lao-tzu, 13).

— Excerpt from *Tao Te Ching*, verse 24

The *Tao Te Ching*, the Chinese classical text, is the basis for the philosophical belief system of *Taoism*. While wildly ambiguous, the *Tao Te Ching*, perhaps designed as such, allows a variety of interpretations to be made from its words. With no one correct answer, and many wrong ones, the words of Lao-tzu are subjective, and have a temporal impermanence. The reader, and seeker of the *Tao* (*dō*) must apply himself in a humble fashion. The contradictory nature of the *Tao Te Ching* forces introspection, and with hope it offers direction towards the way.

Contributions to a Larger Japanese, Cultural Identity

Unique Japanese Characteristics: Culture, Geography & Belief

As strongly as the *Sengoku* period shaped the identity of medieval Japanese, the past 150 years have shaped a contemporary Japanese identity for a drastically more globalized world. As part of an international network, Japanese identity is ever-present and just as unique. Making use of cultural traditions, such as *itoko dori*, Japanese identity has not lost its ‘Japaneseness,’ only enhanced it.

The creation of an independent Japanese culture, historically, is connected to the *Tokugawa* period of isolationism. From 1600 to 1868, Japan intentionally isolated itself from foreign influence. This effectively limited the scope of Japanese cultural growth, and as such, led to a refinement of ideologies into distinctly Japanese cultural identity.

The isolation mentality of previous generations informed the Japanese identity to a greater awareness of the importance of harmony in the collective communities of Japan. The size of Japan’s total land area is less than that of the state of California in the United States. In contrast to its relative size, the Japanese population (2010) is less than 50% that of the entirety of

the United States. The population density of the Japanese people, in relation to its size directly relates to the operations of Japanese society, and its need for social cooperation (World Bank).

The importance and necessity of cooperation in Japanese society has historical as well as practical roots. The area available is markedly the most pressing restriction, but beyond that, socially, the structure of Japanese government has instilled the principles of catering to the authority of hierarchical positions. Reasons for this may be attributed to the philosophical inclusions of Confucianism into Japanese social thought, and the value this has placed on the individual in Japanese social structure. A common adage often used to express the differences between Japanese and Western belief in regards to social harmony and conformity is, “*deru kugi wa utareru*” (出る釘は打たれる). Translated as, “the nail that sticks out is hammered down.” The weight given to the group as an extension of the community, informs how the Japanese value the importance of the individual.

Within individual identities are connections to specific aspects of Japanese culture, and a means to access the traditions of the generations that precede them. The social culture in Japan is generally understood in terms of its collectivistic nature. While this collectivistic framework stresses the importance of the group, there is not complete negligence in the reality of the self, or the individual’s role within society. The cultivation of the self is a step toward the cultivation of the group. *Dō* is a way to cultivate the self, and thus, cultivate the group.

Self Versus Group: Collectivistic Goals

An individualistic culture (like that of the United States, and much of the western world) is a culture that tends to value the identity of an individual, as opposed to that of a group. Independence, personal achievements and particular uniqueness are valued traits that define such

a culture. Ties between individuals are generally loose, while everyone is expected to look after him or herself, or their immediate family. Individualistic mindsets are thought to foster and maintain levels of competition used to further the goals of the society on the whole. The concept of “I” is highly valued. This constant distancing, emotionally and societally, is prone, however, to loneliness and the pressures to continue to compete for wealth and standing.

A collectivistic culture (in relation to the culture of Japan), on the other hand emphasizes the identity of interpersonal relationships in terms on harmony and the over all well-being of the “in-group.” Many people make up, and are integrated into a strong cohesive group, referred to as this “in-group.” Conforming is the norm, and individuals are encouraged to identify completely with a group. The rules and mindsets of collectivistic cultures are in place to maintain order, stability and obedience for the greater society involved. A “we” orientation is the collectivist model. There is a possible downfall inherent in this model. With a strong emphasis placed on being accepted into the group, or similar source necessary for the individual to identify with, the fear of rejection may weigh heavily on the individual.

In an individualistic culture, standing out and being noticed for your skill or ability will ensure success. As everyone in the society does this, it is hoped that the best of the best will work its way to the top. For collectivistic cultures, the team effort is valued to move the entire group forward in a stable and reliable way. “The nail that sticks up the highest, gets hammered down first,” is a proverb that addresses an Asian mindset towards standing out in a society.

Much of the differences between individualistic and collectivistic cultures are connected to economic models, religious theory and geographical positioning. In a capitalistic system, everyone is competing against another to get the best price, value or deal. In a highly agrarian culture, teamwork is nearly mandatory for a large group of people to survive together. Religious

theory of the western world (largely associated with individualistic culture) is often centered on the salvation of individual. In Japanese religious philosophies, the group is valued, and in some cases (Buddhism) the self is nearly completely ignored. Due to the geography of Japan, areas able to be used to cultivate food, and raise livestock, are limited. This forces, in some respects, people to work and live near one another. In North America, and much of Western world, the room to expand and intentionally alienate one's self is widely available.

Dō philosophy maintains a place for the sense of self to exist and flourish, allowing the Japanese identity to be a part of a collectivistic model. By way of cultural borrowing (*iitoko dori*), the philosophical systems of *Taoism* and Confucianism uphold the self in relation to the group in fundamentally different ways than the west.

Societal Requirements Satisfied Through Dō Ideology

The *dō* offers the Japanese identity a means of social structure. Within the structure of society, awareness of various hierarchical strata allows a methodology to navigate complex social and cultural expectations. *Dō* is a means towards comprehension and mastery of the complexities of the world. Without the *dō*, it is not to say that Japanese people would be unable to understand their individual roles in society, but the principles inherent to the *dō* act as an avenue (a *way*, if you will) to understand the ways of conducting the self in society.

A practical application, or distinction, of *dō* is its semantic use to differentiate the *jutsu* from philosophical pursuits. As previously discussed, *jutsu* is not without a philosophy. However, the range of ideology that *jutsu* can take a practitioner is limited, without the inclusion of the *dō*. It is this evolution of intellectual awareness that builds the Japanese identity from the *Tokugawa*

on to today. The values, beliefs, language and social mores inspired and directly sprung from the *dō* create connections to the identity of Japan in the view of the ‘outside’ looking in.

Established norms in any society generally include a stance on moral authority of a particular system. *Dō* principles provide the structure for the moral and ethical basis of Japanese society, showcased in the legacy of the *samurai* class of the *Tokugawa* and its carryover into the *Meiji*. Morality and ethics have various sources in Japanese society, and in any society that has access to an international culture. The Western desire, connected with the Christian traditions, has difficulty in seeing the realms of philosophy and religion as one. *Dō* offers the view that morality exists as a correct, true path, regardless of (and despite) any spiritual or religious belief.

Inclusions of *Dō* into Specialized Fields

A Mark on Modern Practices

Modern Japanese business still follows some of the cues of the *samurai* era as *bushidō* principles continue to permeate modern culture. Ranking by seniority is synonymous with increased ability in modern Japan. Employment positions are generally directly hired from universities, based on current requirements (not a particular job ability), and hired as a career position. Time invested is required, along with demonstrating ability or aptitude, for further advancements (Yasuo, 137-141).

This hierarchical view of business mirrors the hierarchy of feudal Japan. The individuals hired on work for a leader (lord) adopting similar ideas as that of the *samurai*. A sense of *giri* (義理), or self imposed obligation drives them to fulfill their duty for the sake of honor. Honor, as an extension of *face*, is valued, and in order to maintain their desired reputation, employees will make sacrifices for the good of the company (Nobuyuki, 26-28).

Ringi seido (稟議制度), or “*ringi system*” is used in conjunction with this intercompany hierarchy. By following the chain of command, the hierarchy is maintained, while also further establishing it. While it may be criticized, it offers a *safe* way to express opinions and concerns. In addition, it achieves the collectivistic consensus, allowing immediate implementation. (Yasuo, 135-137)

The *rinji* system leads toward an understanding of the business or company as family, with management in the role of the father, and employees a role as that of children. This is strengthened by the relationship of *on* (恩). *On* refers to a feeling of indebtedness toward those in positions superior. With this demonstration of *on*, respect and loyalty are communicated to those who will prove to aid you on your journey through the social ranks. Loyalty, responsibility and compassion help to foster a strong bond, necessary for maintaining *wa* (和), or harmony, within the group (Nobuyuki, 116).

In association with shame, Japanese tend to find it unpleasant to have too much free time. *Ganbaru* (頑張る), which can be understood best as working hard and remaining patient, is illustrated in the Japanese proverb, “The monk who does not work should not eat.” This free time, afforded by not working, is wasteful and even shameful to Japanese morals (Davies, 84-85). As a result, some feel *giri* (obligation) to work harder in the Japanese firms, giving up breaks, holidays and time with their families. Some of this has led to what the Japanese call *karōshi* (過労死), or death from overwork. *Karōshi* can be a heart attack or a stroke, and could be contributed by the demanding schedule and lifestyle of the modern Japanese businessman (Davies, 88-89).

Courage and wisdom are thought to boost morale within the company and in employees. While many work to fulfill their duty, and others make (at times) serious sacrifices, the modern

businessman acts as an ancient warrior. Figurative language used, such as, “to commit *harakiri*” and, “to show a *samurai*’s mercy” are examples of the weight of responsibility and compassion for the modern Japanese (Nobuyuki, 28).

Recreation, leisure and valued aesthetic expressions with a link to the *dō* still make up a portion of contemporary Japanese identity expression. While the pursuit of *dō*, in a modern sense, has a less practical impact if understood merely as a Japanese extension of *jutsu* principles, it remains connected with the ideal of self-discovery and personal improvement. The aesthetics of Japanese tradition (tea ceremony, flower arrangement, and calligraphy, etc.), while not mainstream, are a part of Japanese identity and remain relevant to those that practice them. The same can be said of the martial traditions. Few in Japan use the (*jutsu* derived) skills of *judō* or *aikidō* in any military or confrontational way, but the philosophy of these activities hold weight in a modern way.

Chapter Four: Impact of *Dō* in Modern Japan

“Those who are enlightened never stop forging themselves. The realizations of such matters cannot be expressed well in words or by theories. The most perfect actions echo the patterns found in nature.

Day after day train your heart out, refining your technique: use the One to strike the Many! That is the discipline of a Warrior” (Ueshiba, 52-53).

— Excerpt from *The Art of Peace*

The Art of Peace is a sort of treatise on the true Way of a Warrior, re-imagined by Ueshiba Morihei. The *Meiji* Restoration was a period of incredible change and adaptation. The ideology of *bushidō* was forced to change. Many Japanese (scholars, politicians, philosophers, etc.) would carve out of Japanese tradition an approach towards a modern identity for the Japanese people as Japan came upon the world stage. The *dō* was to be reinterpreted, by many, just as much of the Japanese identity was.

Tradition in Conflict with Modernity

As the world consistently changes, adapts, and evolves from one point into the next, so must the people of the world. Very little stays exactly the same, as change is a certainty in all things. Opposing change are the values of tradition. Amalgams of traditional and modern elements ensure the principles of tradition are carried into future generations.

Jutsu concepts were traditional in many respects. As *jutsu* traditions were adapted into the principles of *dō*, the philosophical belief of the way has been incorporated into a contemporary understanding. Since World War II, Japan has experienced little of actual martial conflict. The wartime era, and its legacy, is in part responsible for the direction of a modern Japan. The losses taken in the war, from lives lost, to the cities destroyed, and the honor tarnished, returned the understanding of the *dō* towards an advocacy of the cultivation of self, for the greater community of the country and the world.

Ueshiba Morihei, the founder of modern day *aikidō*, took note of the intention to change the application of *dō*:

“The Way of the Warrior has been misunderstood as a means to kill and destroy others. Those who seek competition are making a grave mistake... The

real Way of the Warrior is to prevent slaughter — it is the Art of Peace... What we need now are techniques of harmony, not those of contention. The Art of Peace is required, not the Art of War” (Ueshiba, 8-9).

Quite aware of Sun Tzu’s writings (*The Art of War*), Ueshiba worked his whole life trying to foster an understanding of peace in a chaotic world. The tradition and inheritance of *dō* from the *Sengoku* and *Tokugawa* periods were reformulated into use with modern principles of postwar Japan.

Refinement of Japanese culture through repetitious actions, as constructed by a belief in only *one* way towards mastery of cultivation leads towards non-indulgence. The fear that such form following actions will not foster creativity pushes many away using *dō* as an ideal way of thinking. Creativity and a growing awareness of individualism in a collectivistic society are directing many to question their need for *dō*. As a result, emphasis on this spirit is being forgotten in the mainstream cultural awareness, with little to replace it (Davies, 77-78).

***Dō* Exported: Blurring Cultural Lines & Discerning Truths**

Cultural exportation in the form of colonialism, tourism, or any other form implies that the cultural aspects being exported are indicative of, and unique to that culture. Deductively, if aspects of *dō* ideology are in effect shared outside of Japan as a form of Japanese culture, it stands to reason that these forms are used as a means to identify Japanese versus non-Japanese identities. The most commonly shared principles of *dō* are those in direct connection to the martial categorical distinctions.

Judō and *aikidō*, along with *karate-dō* (空手道), are martial systems of Japanese development that have been made popular outside of Japan by many participants and advocates. *Judō* has even been recognized as an Olympic sport, offering opportunity for non-Japanese to become distinguished in a uniquely Japanese system. *Aikidō*, not practiced as a sport, is widely practiced outside of Japan (some suggesting more so, outside of Japan). As either of these *dō* connected practices come into contact with Western philosophies, the identities of each are reconciled, and form a blended understanding.

Dō is not a concept that is only Japanese or Asian, or for that matter a method only those of Asia can take. The principles of *dō* are of a larger moral, ethical, and philosophical ideal. These ideals cross individual cultural identities. Practices of Japanese origin have made their way around the world. But those that are connected to a direct traditional origin rarely stay the same, unchanged by the culture they enter into. As *judō* and *aikidō* came into contact with the West, a glimpse into Japan was gleamed.

Often, a misconception that all of Asia is the same culture has had an effect on how Japan is understood. Other misconceptions, concerning martial aptitude, scholastic achievement, and other generalizations (bordering on ridiculous) have been attributed to a wide range of uniquely Japanese methods. Although a fallacy, the roots of these beliefs are connected to a distinct Japanese psyche. Whether or not these confusions of true ‘Japaneseness’ inform on the truth of actual Japanese identity is not really the concern. The goal is understanding how the *dō* has continued to have an effect on the formation of Japanese, and thus, how Japanese identity has been established.

SUMMARY

As cultures are built on differing principles, philosophies, and traditions, these categories of difference contain the multiple varieties of human cultural identity. The separations between individual identities, as a basis for cultural context, craft the group's cultural identity as a whole. Exploring and understanding the histories and traditions of any society, leads to the uncovering of identity.

From the *Asuka* period (sixth century C.E.), through the *Sengoku* era, followed by the *Tokugawa* unification of 1600, the philosophical base of the Japanese connection to the ideology of *dō* was formed by a developing, and distinct, Japanese identity. It was during this early stage of the evolution of a Japanese *dō*, which allowed the structure of *dō* principles to become a part of the cultural legacy of the Japanese people. From 1868, to the closing of the *Meiji*, and into the post war period, the new set of cultural tools was used to explore the legacy of *dō*. It is during the post war era of occupation and into the economic rise of the end of the 1980's that the place of *dō* in a modern, contemporary world shifts. Modernity in conflict with tradition, and the subsequent evolution of neo-traditionalist ideologies, will carve out the next cultural and historical spaces that will house *dō* philosophies into the coming generations.

Western cultures are a blending of various influences. So too is Japan a blending of various influences, from Asia and the West. From this awareness, the investigation into the social and philosophical concepts that have attributed to a complex Japanese identity showcases a greater wealth of insight into contemporary Japanese culture. *Dō* philosophies have influenced and shaped the identity of the Japanese people through the arts, thought, and martial application. From its Chinese origins, filtered through Japanese tradition and history, and into the modern

world, the path of *dō* has continually had an effect on the creation of identity of contemporary Japan. While *dō* affects an outside interpretation of Japanese identity, it is a cultural export that will continue to have an effect of the world beyond.

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