

## Chikusho Budo

A term from Buddhism, “*chikusho*” implies “bestly or brutal”. The seventeenth century swordsman ODAGIRI Ichiun suggests chikusho martial skills are applied when the martial artist wins with brute strength and, by implication, has chosen an opponent based on his relative weakness.

The existence of *chikusho budo* provides both a training lesson and a moral lesson.

**The Training Lesson.** Every contemporary martial artist believes that his art increases his skill so that he will not have to depend on brute strength, yet few martial artists are willing to train long enough or hard enough to develop a skill that can overcome a strong opponent. There is a logical reason for this, but at the same time, it shows shortsightedness. Trainees feel that they want to learn something they can use without investing too much time to perfect it. After all, what good is a 20-year-technique if you need to use it tomorrow? As a result, once they can do the technique so that it roughly approximates its ideal form, they are satisfied. They don’t realize that in practical application they will have to use excess strength to make the technique function and that excess strength might exhaust its user. Using chikusho types of applications also means that martial artists who are bigger and stronger will be the most successful martial artists even though the whole idea of studying a martial art is to overcome size and strength with superior technique.

Trainees know that, as they age, their strength will diminish, yet they are not sure that the quality of their technique will improve at a rate that will replace their diminishing physical power. If they favor easier-to-learn power techniques (rather than refined techniques), they doom themselves to being able to use only power at an age when their power is dissipating.

**The Ethical Lesson.** The successful use of brute force requires that the person to whom it is applied is not equally forceful. Of course, one cannot choose the no-goodnik that will assail one on a moonless evening in the city parking garage, so using force on an attacker is much less an ethical dilemma than it is in training. But, how do you ethically use brutal, forceful techniques on fellow students in the dojo? Obviously, by simulating the technique rather than using it full force. You emulate the movements without intensity while minimizing contact (picture a pre-arranged *kumite* in Karate), or you teach your partner to receive your techniques in a way that, although unrealistic, will protect him while you are free to apply more speed and power (think of fast Aikido).

In the act of training ethically, however, we cannot train with brute force. Even the nastiest MMA pro athlete does not train nastily all the time. If he did, he would, at the very least, run short of training partners, and could easily get himself hurt in the process. Where brutality exists, there is always a question of ethics. So, if you train in simulated brutality and intend to upgrade to real brutality when you need to, I understand the necessity of your toned-down approach, but I also see that you are doomed never really know how well that simulated brutality will convert to chikusho budo. And, simulated waza

will never develop the technical excellence that, although difficult to keep honed, is ultimately no more difficult to maintain than an aging brutality.

Since brutality can only be simulated in the dojo, I suggest that a person consider training in detailed, minimal effort technique and then occasionally simulate realism with harder, faster, less-cooperative (and less safe) drills. We need to keep apace with our own ability to get down and dirty in a life-threatening situation, but if we think our nasty attitudes and dependence on chikusho budo will save our backsides when we are on the backend of fifty, we may find ourselves having to seek out those less-skilled partners in the dojo just to prove our toughness to ourselves.