

From: Shizuo Imaizumi

To: All the persons concerned

Subject: New Year's message

Date: January 1, 2019

Happy New Year (謹賀新年) — Akemashite omedetō gozaimasu!

The year 2019 is the year of the “inoshishi” or “wild boar” as the twelfth of the twelve signs of the zodiac of the lunar calendar. The lunar New Year begins on February 5 this year. If the year of your birth matches with the year below, that corresponds to the year of the wild boar: 1911, 1923, 1935, 1947, 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995 or 2007.

As you know, Shin-Budo Kai 30th anniversary seminar was held at the Albuquerque dojo in October 2018 and went off very well by the support of many people. I appreciate it very much. Although Shin-Budo Kai literally enters the 31st year, the event of the 30th anniversary has reinforced my determination. I should think that this year is the 1st year the same as I personally experienced in 1988. Only the difference between the 1988 and 2019 is that I no longer think that there is a distinction from Aikido instruction among Aikido-related organizations although the criteria of Aikido “shinsa” or “examination” of each organization may differ. Therefore, all I want to do is teach the ways I can handle, including various subjects of using bokken and jō. Also I would like you to do what you personally want to train further.

Here is a Japanese phrase: “Hibi arata ni.” The word “hibi” means “day by day,” and “arata ni” “newly.” Thus “Every day is a new day.” In other words, you should handle everything as if they were fresh to you every day. There is no same breath. You breathe in and breathe out, inhale and exhale, in and out, and continue to do so whether you are conscious or not.

This year I will reach the 60th anniversary of Aikido training since my “nyūmon” in Aikikai honbu dojo on May 2, 1959. The word “nyūmon” literally means “to enter a gate,” that is, “to get a permission to study something” in Japanese culture. Also this year corresponds to O’Sensei’s 50th anniversary since his death on April 26, 1969. That reminds me of my night duty at his bedside at home from the night on April 24 to the morning on April 25. That was the final moment of listening to O’Sensei’s words to me. As I want to finish my life as an aikidoist, I continue to do so through my daily Aikido teaching. I will conduct both Aikido seminar at the Albuquerque dojo and the special Aikido session at the Durango dojo this fall.

Next, I would like to announce a good news for you. Although I have stopped issuing the newsletter of Shin-Budo Kai for a long time, I decided to reopen the newsletter under the new title: “The Quarterly AKBD” that will start this spring. “AKBD” is an abbreviation for “aikibudo.” As its title suggests, “The Quarterly AKBD” makes a feature of martial arts, including Aikido and other martial arts. In addition, I may write other subjects to this newsletter.

Thirdly, I would like to introduce to you one of the books translated by William Scott Wilson. If you are not familiar with his name, I recommend that you have access to www.shambhala.com and then type William Scot Wilson in a search column. Eureka! You may be surprised at finding a lot of books translated by W. S. Wilson there. For example, they include “Hagakure” by Yamamoto Tsunetomo, “The Book of Five Rings” by Miyamoto Musashi, “The Life-Giving Sword” by Yagyū Munenori, “The Unfettered Mind” by Takuan Soho,” etc.

In 2014, William Scot Wilson and Shambhala Publications made a clever plan and materialized the publication of the new book: “The Swordsman’s Handbook,” translated and edited by William Scott Wilson, and published by Shambhala Publications, [paperback: \$19.95]. That is what I want to introduce to you below. The cover art of this book is designed by a woodblock print of a noble samurai raising his sword with both hands for dedicating to the sea. If you are a student of the New York dojo and pay attention to the dojo wall where several woodblock prints are hanging, you may be familiar with this cover art. All the photo copies of the NYDJ are the ones selected from woodblock print series: “Tsuki Hyaku Shi” or “100 Aspect of the Moon.” When you come to the NYDJ, you should take a look at the frame hanging on the wall closer to the entrance of ladies changing room, next to the newly added rectangular frame of Shin-Budo Kai 30th anniversary poster. The caption explains: “Inamurasaki no Tago no tsuski” or “the moon over Tagonoura located at Inamurasaki [in Kamakura, Japan].”

“THE SWORDSMAN’S HANDBOOK,” Translated and Edited by William Scot Wilson

The author of this book, William Scot Wilson, abridged and edited several books he had translated before. Therefore, the contents of this book consist of 7 persons’ texts he has translated. The following is a list of their names in the order they appear in this book.

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| 1. Ito Ittosai Kagehisa | pages 21-41 |
| 2. Takuan Soho | pages 43-68 |
| 3. Yagyu Munenori | pages 69-105 |
| 4. Miyamoto Musashi | pages 107-133 |
| 5. Iba Zesuiken Hideaki | pages 135-147 |
| 6. Issai Chozanshi | pages 149-180 |
| 7. Yamaoka Tesshu | pages 181-203 |

You don’t need to read this book from cover to cover because this is a reference book as the title of this book says. So you read “Preface” (pages xi-xviii), “Introduction” (pages 1-20), “Afterword” (pages 205-207), and scan “Notes” (pages 208-250). That is enough to read so far. After that, all you have to do is select the person who you think is best suited for your current interest.

In October 2018, after the Albuquerque seminar, Atsuko and I went to Ralph Bryan’s summer house in Ouray, Colorado. On our way to Ouray, Atsuko and I stayed at the home of Philip and Adele Riffe in Hesperus on the outskirts of Durango overnight (also one more day on our way back to Albuquerque) to avoid a long drive between Albuquerque and Ouray.

At their home after Ralph drove to Ouray without a rest, I have gotten a rare opportunity to encounter with two kittens with gray one and brown one. Although I had a good time to play with kittens, they reminded me of a story of “Neko no Myōjutsu” or “The Mysterious Technique of the Cat” that I had read in Japanese and translated it before. So I would like to introduce to you the outline of a story of “neko” or “cat.” Later on, you should read the entire text of “The Mysterious Technique of the Cat” that you can find in “The Swordsman’s Handbook” whether you like a cat or not (see for the entire text on pages 171-180).

“The Mysterious Technique of the Cat” above consists of two scenes if I dramatize it.

Scene one: a noisy farce unfolding among one swordsman, one large rat, and several cats in a swordsman’s house

Scene two: a quiet panel discussion-like gathering in a swordsman’s house

At scene one, a swordsman named Shōken found a large rat showing up in his house. Although Shōken wanted to see his cat catching that rat, his cat eventually had lost to the rat. In other words, it was a case of a cornered rat attacking a cat. So Shōken asked his neighbors to borrow their cats and brought them back to his house. When one of the best cats among them approached the rat, the rat attacked that cat. After the other cats witnessed that, they all ran away quickly without challenging that rat to a fight. Shōken got angry and he decided to kill the rat with his bokken. However, he also had failed to catch and kill the rat. Shōken muttered to himself, “As I hear that there is a cat that is first-rate, I had better go to borrow that one.” When Shōken looked at the cat, it did not appear to be wise or active. But Shōken decided to put the cat into the room. When the rat saw the cat, the rat was in a panic and could not move. The cat walked spontaneously and had caught the rat as if nothing were happening there.

At scene two, all the other cats gathered at Shōken’s house that night by anticipating to listen to the old cat’s story of how he had caught that rat spontaneously. After they guided the old cat at the top seat in the room, they begged the old cat to tell them the mysterious technique the old cat had used. The old cat laughed at them and then suggested them saying something about their own stories such as their experiences, techniques, etc.

First, the black cat started to say its experience. Then the old cat replied. Next, a brindled cat came forward and said something. Again, the old cat replied. Then a gray cat advanced and said something. The old cat replied in the same way.

After having listened to all the stories in his house, Shōken went over to the old cat and asked about how to improve his own skill of swordsmanship. The old cat said, “No, I’m just an animal. Rats are my meals. What would I have to do with the actions of human beings? Still, there is something I heard in secret. That is that the art of swordsmanship is not exclusively in making efforts to defeat others. It is the art of dealing with the Great Transformation, and being clear on the matter of life and death. A man who would be a samurai should always maintain this kind of mentality and should discipline himself in that art...” [The portion of “” mark in this paragraph was quoted from the above book on page 177.]

Finally, I have guided you in the highlight of a story of “The Mysterious Technique of the Cat.” Now it is your turn to read the remaining portion of the text by yourself. The text of “The Mysterious Technique of the Cat” was modeled on “mokkei” or “a cock of wood” that had appeared in one of allegories in Chapter 19 of “Sōshi” or “Chuang Tzu.” If you are interested in reading about “a cock of wood,” you can find it in Thomas Merton’s book: “The Way of Chuang Tzu” that I introduced to you in my New Year’s Message in 2018 (see for “The Fighting Cox” on page 109). Or you should read “Notes” in “The Mysterious Technique of the Cat” on page 243. Otherwise, you must have access to the internet using your own superior searching skill like the old cat. “Miau! Miau! Ich bin alte Katze. Viel Glück!”

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