

Fluid Adaption Martial Arts

Knowledge Series

1. The Dojo



The Knowledge Series

The Knowledge Series are brief reflective texts on topics related to the practice of Fluid Adaption martial arts. These texts are intended to provoke thought and discussion amongst members.

All members are encouraged to write and publish under the Knowledge Series heading. Please forward all drafts to Mitch at mitch@fluidadaption.com

Contents

The Dojo	4
Introduction	4
The Traditional Dojo	4
The Sensei	4
Miyamoto Musashi, The Book of Five Rings	4
Dojo Etiquette	5
The Dojo Spirit.....	5
Dojo Heiho	5
The Fluid Adaption Dojo	7
Dojo Spirit	7
Encampment Strategy.....	7
Formal Opening & Closing Procedure.....	9
Etiquette	9

The Dojo

Introduction

The practice of Fluid Adaption Martial Arts can occur in just about any context and training groups will naturally organise as needed. Natural settings such as rivers, mountains and the Australian bush are all excellent training spaces, as are our typical training halls and gyms and all the other indoor and outdoor spaces available in our towns and cities. The spaces in which we choose to train each exude a particular energy that favours different elements of Fluid Adaption practice.

Emerging from the practice and traditions of the Bob Jones Corporation and the martial art of Zen Do Kai, which in turn had its origins in the art of Goju Kai, Fluid Adaption in its historic sense is a continuation of the warrior arts and traditions of Japan. Martial arts practice as it originates out of Japan has typically occurred in the confines of a Dojo, a space that implies martial arts as being more than about learning combative skills. Indeed, the traditional Dojo embeds a warrior culture centred on the instructor-student relationship and nurtures the development of practitioners accordingly. It is for these reasons that Fluid Adaption Martial Arts embraces the concept and principles of the Dojo, overlaying these more or less to any of the spaces where Fluid Adaption practice may occur.

The Traditional Dojo

The training area in martial arts is known as a Dojo and is the house of the Sensei. 'Dojo' is a Japanese word that has its origins in Buddhism and translates as 'way place' or a place where the way is practiced; therefore the dojo is a deeply spiritual and highly respected space.

It is within the walls of a Dojo that the beginner student is gradually transformed after many hours of dedicated training into a seasoned and well-rounded martial artist. In days gone past a student undergoing this process risks life and limb during training. Today the Dojo is governed by a code of etiquette and rules of safety that make the Dojo a safer place for all who train. For these reasons "Mokuso" (meditation) is also practiced at the beginning of training to clear a student's mind of worries before commencing practice, and then again at the end of training to reflect on the session and clear the mind before leaving the Dojo.

The Sensei

"Let the teacher be as a needle, the student as a thread."

Miyamoto Musashi, The Book of Five Rings

The Sensei is the instructor of a Dojo. The term Sensei is generally translated as 'teacher' and is translated more precisely as 'previously born' meaning one who has gone before another in spiritual life and such it is a title that signifies great respect.

The Sensei is responsible for guiding the learning of students in the martial arts; this includes not only the technical aspect of practice, but also aspects such as character development and spiritual awareness. Senior students assist the Sensei with teaching of students in the Dojo.

Dojo Etiquette

Etiquette is an integral part of martial arts learning without which practice would be little more than violence. The more training in the martial arts a person receives, it is expected the calmer, dignified and humble the practitioner should become. Etiquette organises the Dojo into a functional society providing a disciplined training environment and a pathway for students to make themselves a better people and contribute in a meaningful way to their Dojo community and by extension their family and the wider community.

The Dojo Spirit

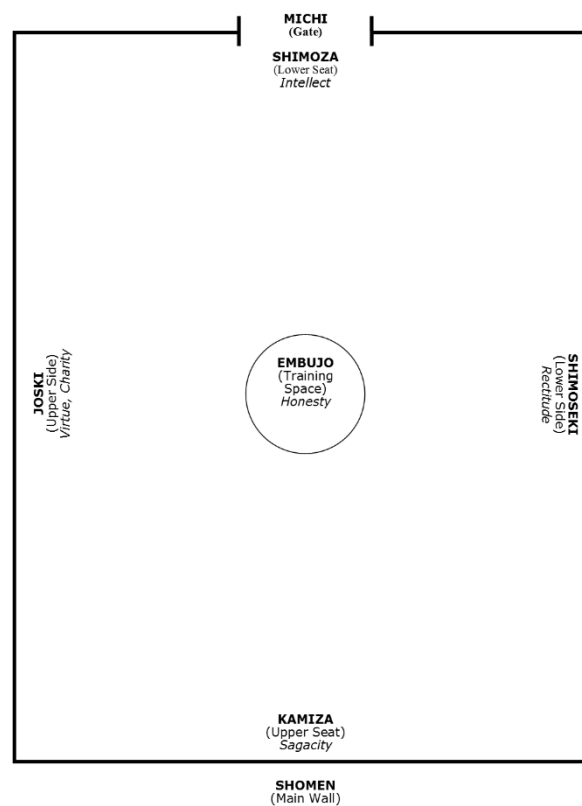
Each Dojo has a particular spirit, a type of character that is developed and exuded. The spirit of a Dojo is referred to as the Kami, the soul of the Dojo. A good Dojo spirit is important to the learning of martial arts. The development of a Dojo spirit is based on austerity, sincerity, and effort, and complemented by ceremony and etiquette. A strong Dojo spirit precludes laziness, it communicates that this is a serious place and pushes students to do their best.

Dojo Heiho

Heiho refers to the application of strategy and tactics in combat and life. The Dojo is viewed as a micro of the macro of life, a battle ground in which the struggles of life and death during combat are played out. Key elements of are Dojo are as follows:

Michi - refers to the gate though which all things pass, the threshold between life and death. All who enter the dojo must enter though the fiery Michi and in doing so enter the battleground of life and death. Entering a Dojo therefore is a serious business and not to be taken lightly, it is a place of strict etiquette where everyone must be alert to attack at any moment.

Shimoza - is the lower seat. It is where a beginner having made a decision to enter the gate



starts their journey on the martial arts path. The lower seat therefore highlights that the lowest in rank are seated closer to the entrance, facing the Shomen or main wall of the Dojo.

Kamiza - refers to the upper seat and is the home of the Dojo Spirit. The Kamiza represents the goal of training towards which all aspire and is also the place reserved for Senior Sensei.

Shomen – This is the main wall of the Dojo towards which all students bow when entering and leaving the Dojo. The Shoman represents the end of the path. Often on the Shomen is hung a picture of the training group Mon (emblem) and pictures of Sensei who have gone before.

Josuki/Shimoseki – *Josuki* is the side of the Dojo towards which the higher ranks sit, while *Shimoseki* is the side towards which the lower ranks sit, although which side is which depends on the orientation of the Sensei. When the Sensei has his back to the Michi and is facing the Shomen, *Josuki* is on the left side of the Sensei, thus the higher ranks are positioned in protection of the Sensei.

Embujo – centre, the space where all trainees meet, where conflict is initiated, engaged, and resolved. It is a place of flow and adaption, outside words and thoughts, where all that matters are what we do or fail to do. No explanation is necessary.

Fluid Adaption builds on the traditional view of the dojo described above, incorporating its own unique approach to organising practice and guiding the development of students in the Fluid Adaption Dojo.

The Fluid Adaption Dojo

Dojo Spirit

In Fluid Adaption the Dojo spirit towards which we aspire is that of the 'Wildcats' as expressed by the 'Bobcats'. Under the Wildcat Division of Zen Do Kai, the 'Bobcats' was the name given to students of Sensei Bayliss' first dojo, in the Melbourne suburb of Bulleen. Students from this dojo were known for their fighting spirit, combative adaptability, loyalty to the Wildcats and Kyoshi Raff Lanciana, and overall dedication to the practice of martial arts.

The origins of the Bobcats' fighting spirit extends back to the warrior ethos and spirit established by Soke Bob Jones when he opened his first Dojo on 1 June 1970 in Melbourne. While appropriate for time and purpose, Soke Jones laid a foundation of strength in these early days that was transmitted by Soke Jones and his first generation black belts to the many generations that have followed. It is the spirit ignited within the Dojo of Soke Jones that ignited the spirit in the Dojo of Sensei Bayliss, and many others Dojo's of similar lineage around the country, that now ignites the spirit in the Dojo's of Fluid Adaption.

The spirit of Fluid Adaption centred on walking the warrior path with the focus on growing strength forged through the fire of adaption. Hence our vision:

Strong People – United Together – Awakening Self

Encampment Strategy

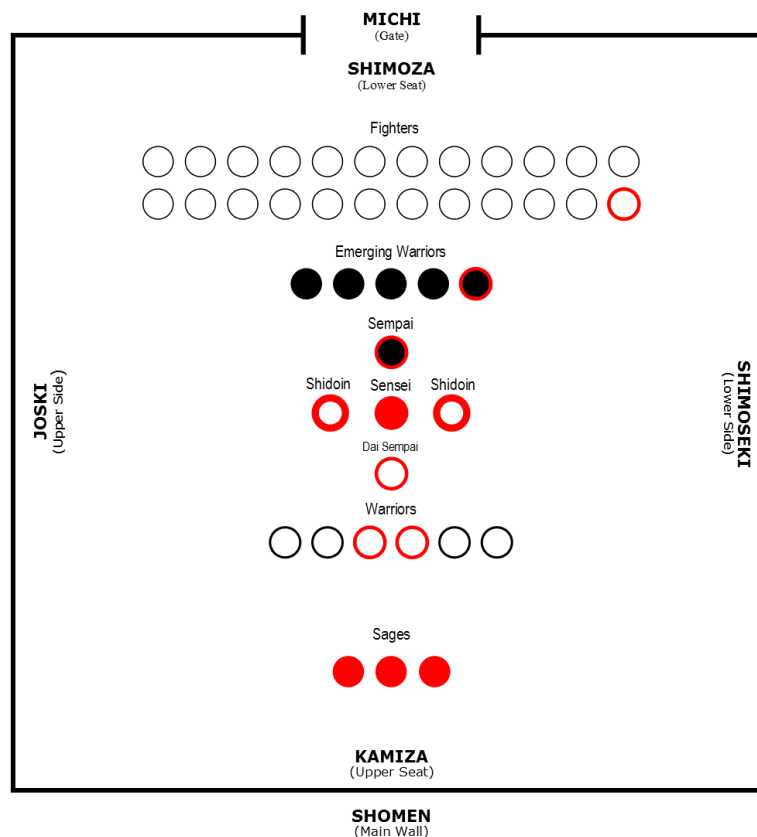
The organisation of members in Fluid Adaption training group may be referred to an encampment strategy, which services as a method for organising during both times of war and peace. It provides a foundation for organising the group towards realising the goals of Fluid Adaption practice. The approach to encampment has evolved over time as the has grown and our purpose has become clearer.

When Fluid Adaption was first conceived the way of organising for training was simply to circle up. Members would form a circle relative to centre of the training space, at this time little focus was paid to rank and title. While the circle is marvellous for emphasising principles such as unity, equality, oneness, wholeness, protection, and sharing, as a principle for organising and leading a group it was poor.

As the initial training group slowly grew to provide clarity and focus to the practice it became apparent the role of the leader in the group needed to be strengthened and a hierarchical structure integrated. While the circle still forms the main way of coming together at training, a formal way of organising has now been developed centred on the role of the Sensei and warriors path along which students are being guided.

The following Dojo outline highlights the formation of formal Fluid Adaption training session.

Fluid Adaption Dojo



The circles represent the positioning of students, with the red ringed circles indicating the highest ranking student in that line or group.

The organisation of the Dojo beings with the Sensei who occupies the centre of the Dojo facing the gate (Michi). Michi is the principal source of threat which orientates the positioning of students in the Dojo, the purpose of which is to protect the Sensei and the fighting spirit of the Dojo (Kamiza).

The Sensei of the Dojo occupies the centre with the Dojo's assistant instructors or Shidoi seated either side. Fighters (White to 1st Degree Black), Emerging Warriors (Probationary 2nd Degree Black Belts) and the Dojo Sempai (most senior fighter) sit between the Sensei and the gate, while the Dojo Dai-Sempai (most senior warrior), Warriors (2nd Degree Black Belts and above) and Sages (Senior Sensei) sit between the Sensei and the main wall.

Warriors sit facing the gate to indicate their awareness of the threat it represents. The role of the Shidoi, Sempai & Dai-Sempai are to lead the fighters and warriors in protection of the Sensei and Dojo Kamiza. When the Sensei bows, those fighters or warriors facing the back of the Sensei only perform a half bow, keeping their eyes open and watching for any threat to the Sensei.

Formal Opening & Closing Procedure

All Fluid Adaption classes or training sessions begin with a sequence of opening and closing ritual bowing then broadly follow the same structure of Movement, Targeting and Adaption, with frequent circling up for instruction and reflection. The opening and closing procedure is as follows:

1. Kiosuki - line up, gather together – *Dojo Sempai*
2. Seiza – kneeling position – *Dojo Sensei*
3. Mokuso Hajima – begin meditation – *Dojo Sensei*
4. Mokuso Yame – end meditation – *Dojo Sensei*
5. Shomen Mawatte – turn to face the main wall – *Dojo Sensei*
6. **Shomen Ni Rei** – bow to those warriors who have gone before – *Dojo Sensei*. Sensei & Warriors full bow, Shodoin and Fighters half bow
7. Michi Mawatte – turn to face the gate – *Dojo Sensei*
8. **Sensei Ni Rei** – bow to those who guide us on our path – *Dojo Dai-Sempai (highest ranking warrior)*. Sensei remain upright, Shidoin and fighters full bow, Warriors half bow
9. **Otagi Ni Rei** – to those who help us on the path – *Dojo Sempai*. Sensei & Fighters full bow, Warriors half bow

In Fluid Adaption students of different ranks bow differently, with higher ranks bowing lower than lower ranks, as was the practice in the Wildcat Division of Zen Do Kai. This symbolise growing humility as one progresses in the practice of Fluid Adaption. The bows are as follows when sitting in Seiza:

- *Fists clenched on thigh* – All ranks below Blue Belt
- *Hands open on thigh* – Green belts & Brown Belts
- *Half bow - Left hand open on the floor, Right hand clenched behind the back, eyes slightly open watching for threat* – Any student facing to the rear of the Sensei, including Shidoin whenever the Sensei bows.
- *Both hand on the floor* – all black belts

Etiquette

General Rules

Adherence to standards and proper etiquette is a necessary element a Dojo's successful operation. The Dojo is a place for the dissemination of teachings and each student must make a commitment to honor and follow those teachings.

1. Every student is responsible for creating an atmosphere of harmony and respect.

2. Respect what is taught by your Sensei.
3. Respect the dojo, respect your training tools, and respect each other.

Dojo Etiquette

Upon entering a traditional martial arts dojo, some people may find themselves uncomfortable with the unfamiliar bowing and the many forms of etiquette. Many may feel the bowing and the rules of etiquette are exaggerated and unnecessary. However, just as daily life in the Western world is filled with social manners and customs designed to enable communication without misunderstanding, so too is life in a traditional martial arts dojo. Etiquette and social manners allow us to practice safely as well as develop compassion and mutual respect. The martial arts are a discipline and physical technique is a vehicle for your personal refinement and spiritual growth. The dojo is not a place to display your ego but a place for uplifting and cleansing one's body, mind, and spirit. Although there are many forms of etiquette to remember, they will become natural as you continue to train. Please do not be resentful if you are corrected on a matter of etiquette, this too is a part of your training. Practicing proper etiquette goes a long way in promoting an ideal atmosphere of harmony and respect. The correct attitude of respect, sincerity, and modesty creates an atmosphere essential to the learning process and safety of each student.

1. Upon entering and leaving the dojo, always perform a standing bow towards the Kamiza.
2. When entering and leaving the training area, always perform bow facing the Kamiza.
3. When addressing a Dojo instructor always excuse yourself and use their correct title, e.g: Sensei, Shidojin, Dai-Sempai, or Sempai.
4. Respect your training tools. Your Gi should always be clean and in good repair. Out of respect for your training partners, always wash your uniform after no more than two training sessions. Weapons should be in good condition and stored in the proper place when not in use.
5. Use good personal hygiene. Finger and toe nails should be trimmed short and kept clean to avoid injury.
6. Do not be late for class. Getting on the floor after class has begun is disrespectful to Sensei and is a disruption to your fellow students. Arrive at the dojo early enough to be changed and on the floor 10-15 minutes before class starts. Use this time to warm up or sit quietly in preparation for class. Do nothing to disturb others who are waiting for class to begin.
7. Class opens and closes with meditation and a bowing ceremony and it is important for you to participate. If you are unavoidably late for class, wait quietly, at the edge of the training area, until Sensei gives you permission to join the class. When stepping onto the floor perform a bow facing the Kamiza. Do not disrupt the class when entering the training area.
8. The proper way to sit is in seiza. If an injury prevents you from sitting in seiza, you may sit cross-legged with your feet underneath. Never sit with your legs outstretched or lean against walls and posts. You must remain alert and aware of your surroundings at all times.

9. Do not leave the training area for any reason without first receiving Sensei's permission.
10. If you must leave the training area or have a question for Sensei regarding practice, go directly to the Sensei; never call Sensei over to you. Bow respectfully and wait for Sensei's acknowledgment.
11. While Sensei is demonstrating a technique, you should sit quietly and attentively in seiza. After the demonstration, bow to Sensei, then bow to a partner, and begin practice.
12. When Sensei signals the end of a technique or practice session, stop immediately, bow to your partner, and line up with the other students.
13. When receiving personal instruction during class, listen attentively, then bow to Sensei when he has finished.
14. If someone near you is receiving personal instruction from Sensei, you may stop your practice and observe. Wait quietly and bow to Sensei when he has finished.
15. Never stand around idly on the floor; you should be practicing or, if necessary, attentively waiting your turn.
16. If you know the technique being studied and your training partner does not, you may lead your partner through the technique but do not assume the role of the instructor.
17. During class keep talking to a minimum and directly related to what you are practicing.
18. It is everyone's responsibility to keep the dojo clean and in good repair. If you see something that needs to be done, show initiative and do it. If you're not sure what to do, alert a senior student to any need you may uncover. If you would like to volunteer any personal skills that might be an asset to the dojo, please speak to a senior student.
19. There is no eating, drinking, or gum chewing in the training area. There is no smoking anywhere in the dojo.
20. There is to be absolutely no swearing when in the Dojo.
21. In order to prevent injury or damage to personal property, no jewellery should be worn during practice.
22. All visitors should be treated as prospective students and training partners. Everyone should make a concerted effort to make visitors, and new students as well, feel welcome. If a visitor enters the dojo during practice, either excuse yourself from class to greet them or alert a senior student who may not have seen them enter.
23. If you are unsure of what to do in a particular situation, ask a senior student or simply follow their lead.
24. Most importantly, always have fun and enjoy your practice!

Fluid Adaption

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