

Interview with Kacem Zoughari - December 14, 2005 (Translated from the original French)

Kwoon: Following the ninja boom we saw everything and anything related to the subject, so much so that it was often difficult to separate fact from fiction. Would you be able to define succinctly for us what are ninja and in what context did they evolve, as well as if you have written a book on the subject?

Kacem Zoughari (KZ): Succinctly! On top of that, I did write a book on the subject... so you are asking me to condense seven centuries into a few words!

Well historically, and according to the oldest chronicles, the ninja was a kind of spy who lived in the margin of the Japanese warrior society. They were invited to lend their services for a very specific purpose. This purpose was, simply put, to turn the tide of a battle that appeared to be unwinnable from the beginning or perhaps one that got off to a bad start. By making use of vital information such as knowledge of strategic regions, military strategy, anything that can be called the 'central nerve' of war; information, economy, commerce, I am also talking about food, armaments, resupply, so the ninja's goal was to operate in the shadows in order to bring about a more certain outcome.

Kwoon: So then it's a very broad term?

KZ: It's broad just like the practice of ninjutsu. However, the ninja was a practitioner and not a group. That is to say that this was a person who very deeply lived the experience of defeat and sought to avoid any situation that could force him to relive that experience.

Kwoon: Have you seen Hatsumi sensei's famous densho and makimono? Corollary to that question: Many say that even Takamatsu sensei did not really possess a certain number of schools and that ninjutsu was in fact dead.

KZ: This is a question that comes up a lot, even among members of the Bujinkan, which proves that their knowledge is very limited, and that goes for their way of moving as well. This goes even for people who have received very high grades and who present themselves as direct students of Hatsumi sensei.

First of all, the densho and makimono were not written by Hatsumi sensei, these are densho and makimono that were written by Takamatsu sensei. Among the densho that Hatsumi sensei received from Takamatsu sensei we find the writing of Ishitani sensei who was one of Takamatsu sensei's three masters. There is perhaps also the writing of Toda sensei, Takamatsu sensei's grandfather, who transmitted seven schools to him, but I no longer remember all of the writing that I saw. But to respond more directly to your question, yes, and I'm being honest, I have seen the densho and makimono written by Takamatsu sensei. I didn't only see them in a video, I touched them, I had them in my hands, what I can say is that I had those of the nine schools. Among these documents, densho and makimono, each school has two to three densho and three to four makimono, but this isn't a rule, some schools like Kukishinden ryu or Takagi Yoshin ryu can have more densho, as well as Koto ryu and Gikan ryu. On top of that, Takamatsu sensei did not write only that. The relationship that he had with his sole successor over

the course of fifteen years, until the end of his life... during these fifteen years, he wrote many things that he transmitted and gave to Hatsumi sensei, this adds up to a lot.

From what I've seen with respect to the nine schools, there are about a hundred manuscripts not including those small books where Takamatsu sensei explains to Hatsumi sensei how to realize the techniques. These small books are like technical chronicles, they are technical and historical explanations, and there are a great many of these. Add to this around two hundred densho and makimono on various subjects and disciplines related to ninjutsu and budo in general... there is quite a wealth of knowledge. When we see this we can't help but admire and come to truly respect the magnitude of the work and the sum of knowledge accumulated by Takamatsu sensei... Takamatsu sensei was really quite prolific!

So yes, the densho and makimono do indeed exist and are quite real. They are structured and in addition to the densho, Hatsumi sensei received what is called jitsuden: or the real transmission. Before meeting Hatsumi sensei, Takamatsu sensei had met many people and was approached by many. Of course the nature of these relations was that of a person going to see a teacher twice a week to receive a certain knowledge. Takamatsu sensei gave out manuscripts to some people who had never even met him and had nothing more than a written correspondence and they received their manuscript from him by mail! There is proof of this. Takamatsu sensei was very well known among a circle of highly skilled practitioners but no longer accepted new students after his meeting with Hatsumi. By the end of the fifties he had stopped teaching, and to teach does mean to transmit!, for quite some time. What's more is that he kept his distance from the shobu kyoku which passed on the teachings of the Kuki family and of the Kuki-shinden ryu school. Seeing how things were changing, that is that that association was starting to become a bit like the Kodokan in that they were all judoka, Takamatsu sensei decided to remove himself to the great regret of those who ran it. But Takamatsu sensei was free and didn't want to be dependent on any one association, for him the art should be authentic and transmitted to one single person... of course, he was the chief instructor of this organization at the beginning and had many students, some of whom received documents from him, but once again, what was the true nature of those relationships? That goes as well for content which he taught them.

So yes, these "famous" densho, I had the chance to see them and read a few. Now to say that Takamatsu sensei created these schools is hard to say, and to prove... Even Hatsumi sensei says openly that he doesn't know. In the DVD on Takamatsu sensei (Takamatsu Toshitsugu saigo no jissen ninja, Quest) we see Takamatsu sensei move, we see that there does exist a certain way of moving, which is unlike what we see in the other bujutsu of Japan, classical kenjutsu or jujutsu, which were synthesized in the form of kata, and the modern budo, judo, karate, all of the other styles as well, aikido, jodo, shorinji kenpo, etc. and that proves that this was something that existed in Japan already. This 'something' was very different from the other styles and it was transmitted in secret, in fact so secretly that if no one can understand it or see it, it isn't even a secret, it's the inability of the people present to understand and receive this art.

Now, to say that ninjutsu is dead or that it no longer exists is an error and it demonstrates the misinformation on the part of those who propose this hypothesis... it would be like saying spirituality is dead or that any kind of esoteric teaching is dead. In fact, much like gnosis and other esoteric forms, ninjutsu is an art in which you must show nothing, allow nothing to be heard and nothing to be seen, and the knowledge is transmitted to one worthy person. We can already find mention of this sincerity and secrecy in the oldest inka () in bujutsu or heiho, called Hitori ikkoku inka () written by Kamiizumi Ise no Kami, the founder of the Shinkage ryu in 1566.

Naturally, we could discuss this subject for hours but I doubt it will get us anywhere since in the end, the most important thing is still the practice. In spite of the reality there will always be people around who say and believe the opposite. When Moses parted the Red sea thanks to the power of God, there was a crowd behind him and many couldn't believe what was happening before their eyes. They surely must have felt that they were watching a special effect worthy of the biggest Hollywood blockbuster!... I am not comparing Hatsumi sensei to Moses, far from it, but people who don't want to accept, or refuse to recognize that which must be, in spite of the arguments that they present, the "what ifs" and "but hows" etc. have always existed.

Takamatsu sensei had three masters and the closest to him was Toda sensei, his grandfather. The next two were Ishitani sensei and Mizutani sensei. He speaks of them in his autobiography that has never been revealed to the public. His autobiography is entitled **Meiji Moroku Otoko** (), and I believe that I am the first to cite it in my humble book. While I was in Japan I had the immense privilege to spend two hours with this autobiography in my hands. So even though I am not so intelligent and my level of Japanese is still quite rudimentary, I was able to read enough to see that these masters existed and to assure myself of the basis for their existence.

Kwoon: Umm... Simple question and pardon my ignorance, but what is the difference between a densho and a makimono?

KZ: That's a very good question, and excuse me for not answering it earlier: *den* () is an ideogram that has two readings, one of which is *tsutaeru* which means "to transmit". The ideogram *sho* () suggests a book or writing. It is therefore a notebook where combat techniques are written along with their different applications. We also call this more generally the "mokuroku" (); index or glossary of techniques. There are several types of densho, there are kudensho where the oral transmissions, that which we heard, is written, there is also "oboe gaki", that which we remember, so there are different types of densho.

Finally, the makimono () are in general, scrolls that open length-wise. We also write on these the mokuroku, the history of the school, etc... there exist several kinds in the martial arts. This is too long to present here but it could be a good subject for an article in the future. Again, like the densho, we see makimono containing either kuden, technical drawings, etc... but there may or may not be drawings or explanations, there is no set formula. Here again, everything is dependent upon the social status and quality of the practitioner, whether or not he had the money and knowledge necessary to obtain

the required material, the right type of ink, paper, the ability to present his ideas, and what were his spiritual influences, etc.

Kwoon: Would you say that the densho are more personal than the makimono? That the makimono were more of a technical orthodoxy whereas the densho would have been the interpretation or more or less the personal expression?

KZ: No. In fact the two were given at the same time. Once the follower became *menkyo kaiden* he would generally receive several documents namely the *menkyo*, the *maki-mono*, and the *densho*, and one of the oldest forms of *menkyo* known in Japan is the *hitori ikkoku ikkajo* which means: "One act of transmission to one person per province".

This type of document is the first known form in Japan and was first signed by Kamiizumi Ise no Kami, the founder of the Shinkage ryu, but we suspect that he received one as well from the Nen ryu school and that this method of transmission came from this school but it was not restricted to the martial arts, it was also used in No, Buddhism, etc...

One does not go without the other, they are related, the only difference lies in the object itself, one is in the form of a book and the other is in the form of a scroll. They can complete one another or can exist separately but again this all depends on the financial means, of the transmission and of the spirit of the author.

Kwoon: This is a special question from a particular Kwooner (because I do not possess the culture necessary to understand it):

Apparently, the state sought in ninjutsu is one of non-spirit, closer to Taoist wu-wei than to Zen mu. If this is the case, are there any specific exercises in ninjutsu to develop this?

KZ: First of all, there is NO state to be sought in ninjutsu. If we seek, we will not find it. This is common knowledge.

You will certainly accuse me of being too sectarian, spiritually narrow minded, or too square, but this doesn't come from me, it is known: When we seek something, we find it only very rarely, not to say never. However, and the experiences of the masters and sages of the past prove it, it will come once we have overcome our little self, our ego and our own self-interest.

Is there a state in ninjutsu? Yes, the state of being at peace at all times. To be at peace all the time you must be empty. I am not inventing anything here, we find the same idea in many religions, philosophies, and in other martial traditions, only the method differs.

Wuwei or mu are concepts that come from Taoism and Zen, so they are from a specific philosophical framework within which we do not search, for example: To kill in Buddhism, or in Taoism: To become one with the Way that is the source of everything and is found everywhere... Is there a way or a method to get there? Moreover, is there a

way or a method to grow, to mature, to become a good father, a good practitioner, a good friend, or a first-class jerk?

It is basically the same question isn't it?

I think that we should practice while being sincere, without seeking a result, it will be the degree of this sincerity that will allow us to get there or not.

Now, as for ninjutsu, in my humble knowledge of the subject, I don't know of a means or a method of achieving this and Takamatsu sensei does not speak of it directly. The only thing he does say is: "Practice with sincerity". It is the nature of this sincerity and how long it resides within us that is essential I think. The majority of grand masters speak of this but in the end everything depends on the level of sincerity and the deep personal convictions of each individual... but once again, my knowledge is extremely limited and so I don't really know.

Kwoon: In an interview with Hatsumi sensei published a few years ago by KB, Hatsumi spoke of the mystery of man; with respect to these kinds of things, do you have the same point of view?

KZ: I don't know, I have no idea what interview that is from, on top of that I have read everything that can be found on ninjutsu in France and in many other countries, so it's all a blur...

Hatsumi sensei speaks in Japanese, and he says quite a bit. The question is who was the translator, what was his level of expertise, how was it translated, on what occasion? Was it at a Taikai? Hatsumi sensei is a man who knows how to adapt, so you have to understand that he would have said whatever the interviewer wanted to hear, he tells people what they want to hear: You are good, you are strong, you are the best... that is one of the reasons for grading that often makes him the target of rumors.

In any case, the mystery of man, that is to say the mystery of life, was not invented by Hatsumi sensei, it has been around for a long time... that's not such a bad phrase, I should reuse it in an article! (laughs)

Kwoon: Speaking of Taoism, we attribute Chinese origins to several bujinkan ryu. Have you explored this much?

KZ: Yes, I have explored this idea many times for various schools. Not only for ninjutsu but for many classical bujutsu as well. It's always the same old song. The martial arts come from China for the Chinese... in short, the Japanese say the opposite. It's a rather stale argument.

That there may have been a Chinese origin, that depends on what one means by origin; in the context of the bujutsu that is often subject to many factors. For many, ninjutsu was born in China and developed in Japan with the Chinese and Japanese.

Kwoon: This is a hypothesis that is often heard...

KZ: This is one hypothesis. Of course a hypothesis, we should stress, does not mean that it is true... and secondly, we could also say that these were people who fled China for some reason and became “naturalized” Japanese citizens. So they married a Japanese woman, had children, adapted to the Japanese society and culture, and practiced with the Japanese. This is an even more probable hypothesis in my opinion. If there are in fact Chinese origins then we should be able to find, for example, styles from the north, south, and central China, but unfortunately there is no resemblance whatsoever. Occasionally we can say that ‘this’ resembles wushu, but resembling does not mean that it is.

So there is of course a distant influence by those who came... However, it is difficult to say what style, where, and how, in the same way it is difficult to speak about the origins of shaolin or certain styles of tai chi, especially with all of the legends that have been created and spread over the years.

As far as ninjutsu is concerned, it was born in Japan, the term comes from Chinese as the characters come from China, but the nine schools themselves as well as Iga and Koga ryu and the methods of moving, utilizing weapons, and behaving are purely Japanese. Now, parallel to this, there was also a certain style of ninjutsu that developed in China thanks to the texts by Sun Tzu, the seven classics on military strategy, etc. However, I am sure beyond the shadow of a doubt that, among our nine schools, if there is any Chinese influence, it has died out over the ages.

Kwoon: Even though China is so close to Japan...

KZ: Well, just as Greek Gnosticism was influenced by the philosophical concepts of Socrates and Plato which in turn influenced Islam, and there are similarities for other religions as well; everything comes together in the search for oneness and knowledge! As long as it tends towards some singularity, everything comes together.

Now, to say “Oh, that looks like this northern or southern style, or it looks like karate...”, is a little weak and very human of us as we are always afraid to say that we don’t know what it is. It is unique to humans to find similarities in things in order to reassure ourselves, isn’t it?

However, if we are talking about karate, any style, the answer is yes (regarding Chinese origins) and it is evident even in the kata that are transmitted today and even if they’ve been watered down over the ages. Right away we can see the Chinese influence, it’s even a little “bastardized” and crude when we consider the richness of the Chinese martial arts. The fact that karate was considered to be a native dance by practitioners of bujutsu during the Taisho period when it was introduced in Tokyo and Kyoto is proof. We have to be honest, it was by losing it’s Chinese origins that karate rigidified. In certain styles of karate, we notice right away the influence of northern (shorin) or southern (hahkutsuken or wing chun etc.) Chinese styles.

But in ninjutsu even the weapons are completely different. So to find a Chinese relationship there still remains quite difficult. However, the important thing is that ninjutsu can

adapt itself to encompass anything and to copy it. Although this can cause problems for a practitioner with little depth.

How do you go about uncovering from who to who, and to what? It's very difficult. Especially since Takamatsu sensei spent ten years in China, we could imagine that he picked up combat knowledge and techniques over there and brought them back to Japan. However, before arriving in China he had already received transmissions from three masters. He left for Japan at the age of eighteen and he had started practicing at the age of nine under the guidance of his grandfather.

Many people propose theories without actually knowing the history of Japan and China or they just dabble in conjecture and forget the essentials. Japan invaded Korea in 1909 as well as Manchuria and China and they were viewed very poorly by the Chinese due to the Nanking massacre, among other things, and they behaved in an extremely brutal manner. It should be noted however that the Chinese elite did not necessarily feel this way, they were in fact quite open to the introduction of the Japanese in China and helped them a lot. It was primarily the common people who had feelings of disdain towards the Japanese which is understandable in light of the daily persecution and harassment. Therefore to believe that a Japanese person would be able to gain the trust of a Chinese master and learn secret techniques from him lacks any logical sense not to mention knowledge of the history of this period and of this region of the world. It suffices simply to consider the example of tai kiken; everyone said Sawai was the favorite student of Wong Jiang Jai but we need to be careful not to confuse historical reality with the dream of a disciple who wants to believe that his master is the best. It is possible that Sawai was his best student but this assumption is subject to caution especially since he was a Japanese soldier in the invading army, a colonizing force. Moreover, Takamatsu sensei was not in Japan as a soldier and even though he wasn't he never had such a transmission from a Chinese master. Well, never say never...

Kwoon: I have the feeling that this might cause some controversy on Kwoon...

KZ: It may start something... but I'm talking about history. Now, if certain people say Wong Jiang Jai loved Sawai, why not... but Sawai was not a 'gentleman', he was a soldier in the ground force sent to China. I don't mean to put all Japanese people of this era in the same pot, but it is good for everyone to question these things. Just to be clear, I am not against other people's arguments, that is their responsibility, however we have to avoid saying things like: "I heard according to some Chinese master that it seems that, etc.", to defend our point of view we have to use tangible, historical proof not continue to spread the rumors that are so sacred to guys at the dojo and which blind students. Once again, I am not accusing anybody, nor am I trying to stir controversy, each individual can think as they choose. Again, I am only presenting history. However, if we travel around Nanking, even today, there are waves of protests against the Japanese...

Kwoon: You seem to be steady at fourth dan even though, from what I know, progression in the Bujinkan seems to be much faster in terms of dans and menkyo. It

definitely appears to be something which is voluntary on your part, can you explain this?

Corollary: How are your relationships with other shidoshi in the Bujinkan?

KZ: Who is that question from? (laughs)

I started when I was quite young with Sylvain Guintard, it was in 1986 and I remember before this my father had been transferred to Algeria and I was studying at a French high school. I even kept my first registration paper from the dojo. I started in a club called the Yamatsuki club and it was located in Charonne. Four years later, in 1989, I left for Japan. Just before leaving for Japan the atmosphere in the dojo (Sylvain had changed the dojo three times, first the Sanshin dojo in Portes des Lilas, then one at Main d'Or in Bastille, then at Vincennes) had changed a lot, and technically speaking I had my doubts, especially after having seen Hatsumi sensei's videos. I saw that there was a mixture of techniques from the different schools in order to cover up a flagrant lack of knowledge, and he also wanted to become part of the FFKMA (French Karate and Martial Arts Federation). So many factors contributed to me taking the major step of going to Japan, or should I simply say that it was my time to go.

When I got to Japan (in 1989) i was only seventeen years old, and I had a real shock at my first class with Ishizuka sensei who was, and still is, one of Hatsumi sensei's oldest students. After that, I said to myself that everything I learned in France before was a load of... so I was duped, and that really hurt me because my parents and I had both invested so much and I was lied to. You might not believe it, but for a seventeen year old kid, this was pretty heavy... and I said to myself that I was stopping with everything and everyone who called themselves "pioneers".

During the time I was a student of Guintard everyone was there: Arnaud Cousergue was his student and right hand man, there was Dominique Thibault, Marie Valerie Saumon, Jean Jacques Kocevar. There were those who came occasionally to give seminars like Bernard Bordas and Tarik Mesli... and others whose names I completely forget. In any case I knew them all and saw them climb their way up.

I still remember everything that was said and done and how things worked. Like many "families" there were secrets and tricks which, in retrospect, I find stupid and completely unnecessary to the practice of the martial arts. Many years later I lived in Japan as a Lavoisier grant recipient and I met with Arnaud Cousergue several times (he goes to Japan two or three times a year and always stays around ten days) and translated for him with Hatsumi sensei and even during the classes, but I also did that for many people over there, for the English, Americans, Swedish, Germans, Spanish, Brazilians, Canadians, etc... so I met a lo of people in japan.

So my relationships with these people are amicable, though as far as martial arts goes, that's another story, everyone does their own thing, and it's the same case for everyone in the bujinkan whatever the country.

I know Bernard Bordas well but I haven't seen him in quite a while. We send each other messages from time to time and I saw him in Japan in 2002 I believe, while I was over there, I think he sojourned for about fifteen or twenty days. We went to the restaurant with Hatsumi sensei and, like for everyone before and after him, I translated to the best of my abilities. And like with everyone, we maintained friendly relations.

Kwoon: In what way does your view of grades influence these relations?

KZ: As far as I am concerned, I have always held the same opinion about grading from the beginning and I might be a little too old school or uptight for some. First of all, there are no grades in ninjutsu and there should not be any. In the past, and there is substantial historical evidence, there was a system of menkyo like the one in the classical bujutsu which still exists in certain schools in Japan today. However, in the process of opening up to Westerners, Hatsumi sensei adapted himself to the needs of the time, even if he knows deep within himself that it doesn't really mean anything. It's important to realize that the foreigners who come to Japan, and this goes for every style, do so merely to leave with grades, with something legitimate to show or to use as proof. It's in this way that Hatsumi sensei gives grades, but the person who receives it assumes all responsibility, and in the end it's only a piece of paper.

Kwoon: You give them no importance?

KZ: Well, I don't give them any importance, but I do. They represent a certain amount of work, and the work has to be done. This means that if you say you are a fourth, fifth, or even fifteenth dan, would it not be wiser to place some value upon that which you present to others either in public or private?

We can't simply bury our heads in the sand by telling ourselves that we exist in some different martial universe. If you are fourth, fifth, or sixth dan we need to be at that technical level, that is to say the same as others in their respective disciplines. Moreover, in ninjutsu which is the art of a spy, we must be able to handle any style under any condition. This is where the idea of being harder on oneself and against oneself in practice and with respect to the level which we have attained comes from. I will also add that the martial arts in general are based on some common points like: speed, stability, uprightness, rectitude, flexibility... If someone holds a very high grade and is not able to stay upright on their own two legs, loses balance, etc... I sincerely believe that this isn't normal. We need to be honest with ourselves about our own abilities.

Nevertheless, we mustn't lose sight of the true significance of the term dan (degree, level, grade, stage, etc.) and the fact that it originates from an image that is outside martial reality as it was created for martial sports after the Meiji period whose forms were touched up after the Second World War. So this image cannot really explain the level of a person who practices the koryu. Of course we search for an equivalence but it will always be just an equivalence.

My approach remains voluntary. I have a teacher; Ishizuka sensei, and I would feel awkward accepting a tenth dan when he holds this grade! That isn't normal for me.

Even if one day (which I seriously doubt) I become better than him, for me I would always be lower than him. It's a respect within a respect. This is very difficult for me to explain, but this is the way it is for me, and as long as I work with him I will never hold back because a true relationship must be based in the moment of combat or the moment where the technique is realized in real and for reach the reality. So if I want to get the right feeling I have to go all the way. If the master is good he will know how to make me feel it without destroying me, this is one of the fundamentals of mastery in ninjustu and in all martial arts in general.

So automatically I have a fourth dan which I received in 1994, I believe. Since then I have refused every grade that was offered to me. Why? It is very simple, it doesn't interest me. A lot of people have gotten involved in the race to be the first to obtain a certain grade or to get some recognition, this is their choice. Some other people will said I received from someone and they could not say no. I understand and I respect their choice. I always thought differently.

whereas I felt uncomfortable with a fourth dan where the expectations are already very high in even the basic, fundamental techniques. For me, being a fourth dan means being capable of doing and realizing all of the techniques from the first three levels (shoden, chuden, and okuden) of the nine schools, weapons included... this was and still is the requirement.

I think that I am at the level of a third dan and I am working and practicing hard to someday, and of course God willing, be worthy of a fourth dan. It is also a question of honesty with respect to practice, and with respect to the art. It may be a old fashioned way for many people in the Bujinka, but I ll not accepted something that I don't deserved by real practice and deep studies.

The rest, what other people do and aspire to doesn't matter to me. They do what they want. But once again, I think that we shouldn't bury our heads in the sand with regards to titles and high grades as there is nothing to acquire in the classical martial arts and particularly in ninjutsu.

I have always had the habit, and I think you already know, that when a person comes to one of my classes and asks what grade I am, I answer by saying: "You come, watch the class, and give me the grade you want."

Kwoon: Do you feel that a fourth dan is a good middle ground between that which you demand of yourself and the level of requirement...

KZ: That which I demand of myself is far beyond anyone else's requirements. The people who come here, the people who know me can see it for themselves. Besides, I never make a display out of my capabilities nor of my "grades" or activities. As for my articles or seminars, other people or editors create phrases that are catchy or attractive to get people to come or to buy. The only thing that I can use is the fact that I am a doctoral candidate and that's because it is what I am doing. Within the martial arts I am but one small researcher and but one small student of Ishizuka sensei. I follow Hatsumi

sensei's classes just like all the others who go to Japan and pay their dues. I have never presented myself as a student or direct disciple of Hatsumi sensei as that would be a great lie. I do not consider myself a student of Hatsumi sensei and even if I must admit to having some kind of relationship to him, the nature of that relationship has yet to be defined. I think that a lot of people do not understand the difference between being a student or what really means being recognized as a real disciple is. This difference is the same as show, teach and transmission. People love to hear and create their own story and tell to everyone how great they are, using the name of Hatsumi sensei to backup them is natural and it exists in other organizations too. I don't think that doing like this can help to move better or to understand better the art. So once again, I follow the rules of the bujinkan for the practice and follow the rules presented by the Hatsumi sensei. But because I respect him and the art very deeply I can not accept things that I don't really deserve.

So, yes, I am very demanding of myself and I hope it shows in my work and my articles, if not then I shall have to double my effort. I have also made these requirements clear to the people who come to my classes, however I am not responsible for their level and even less for their actions and their attitude. After the class is over, twice a week, I no longer see anyone. Everyone leads their own life.

Kwoon: What continues to motivate you to train at this time? If you had to stop what would motivate you to do so?

KZ: That's a very interesting question. I like it. What motivates me... (thinks)

Kwoon: If you were to ask yourself...

KZ: Frankly, I have never asked myself the question. Since it is not my business, my job, I am free to do as I please. However, if it was my job or my business, then I would be motivated to feed my family, and so on. In that case there is a conflict of interests. But, God willing, that is not the case for me. All that to say that I don't ask myself that question. I have a relationship to a teacher, a master, and having that master-disciple relationship, a real and sincere relationship, I cannot allow myself to say no or I am stopping, etc. There are things that have been given to me, shown, that I was permitted to see... if all of a sudden one day I say no, that would be strange wouldn't it?

Besides, if things were shown to me it may be because of this reason, because I never quit, and because that word never entered my heart. Since the time I began to give classes, conferences, I see those who come, others who don't come, others who ask themselves existential questions, others are seeking a master, some want to prove that they are truly sincere, etc... in the end... who really keep the sincere heart of the beginning?(thinks). I think that as we practice the martial arts, the word motivation ceases to exist. We become that motivation, it's a kind of faith, we do it because we feel the need to. It is the nature of this need that differs between practitioners and people.

It is difficult to answer... So what pushes me? The love of things? The art? It may sound a little stupid what I am saying, loving the art, to love art. Not to exploit it, just a sincere

love of the art. What could make me stop? Of course death? Although I have never met anyone who has come back from beyond... maybe I can continue up there, if God wishes it...

Kwoon: Have you studied the Chinese or Japanese energy system? If yes, is it within the framework of ninjutsu? And are there ties between the kyusho in ninjutsu and other approaches such as Mr. Dillman's or the one in Chinese dim mak?

KZ: Kyusho... there are two ways to write this in Japanese, or rather, there are several ideograms which correspond to different levels of comprehension depending on the style, the student, the master, etc. Of course, kyusho have existed for a very long time in the bujutsu and ninjutsu is no exception. Some styles are flashier, others, depending on the background of the master or founder, if he was a doctor or if he was a bonesetter, he will develop certain aspects more than others, take for example the Hakko ryu.

But in general the martial arts are a solitary practice where one must know how to overcome pain, how to practice and use their body, also know how to heal oneself, know how to eat, what to eat, and when and how to eat it,...

So yes, in ninjutsu this does exist but it does not consist of sitting and doing zazen or meditating under a waterfall while doing kuji. I respect people who do this practice, particularly if they are sincere, but this has nothing to do with the martial arts, though it can of course be beneficial. In the martial arts, like in life, if we practice correctly, sit correctly, move correctly, use the body correctly, the energy system is already there...

Kwoon: This is from a practical perspective?

KZ: Yes.

Kwoon: And from a theoretical perspective with respect to the five elements and other models, does Hatsumi consider these too complex for the general public?

KZ: I believe that sensei is already above all of that, he knows it but does not attach to it a vital importance, it is not the driving force. These are important details but not vital. He received certain things from Takamatsu sensei and his sole preoccupation is following the path set forth by his master without changing anything, all the while adapting to the world around him, and nothing more. So he has surely read things on the subject, given the denshos and makimonos that he possesses. There are those from Takamatsu sensei, and there are those that he had before Takamatsu sensei, which is quite a bit since he met him at the age of twenty-seven after having started to train at the age of six. He bought his first makimonos at nineteen! So, up until the age of twenty-seven he amassed quite a few things. Since he came from a wealthy family on top of that, all of his money went to either his studies in the martial arts or into purchasing weapons and denshos from all over Japan... And as far as the body's energy system is concerned, as we practice we begin to ask ourselves questions, especially as we age and our injuries begin telling us things. However, if we practice well and meet a man like Takamatsu sensei, who at seventy years old was doing flips on one finger, and even until the age of

eighty was able to give anyone a good thrashing, we start to ask questions about his way of moving. Hatsumi sensei had the chance to meet a master of this calibre and become his last disciple.

Therefore automatically, the way of moving is the most important thing. If we want to be vegetarian, to follow the macrobiotic diet, dietetics, to do yoga, taichi, Qigong, zazen, each individual makes their own choice and there is nothing wrong with that. We are all free. But if the way of moving is incorrect, and since we are a holistic unit, I will let you guess what will become of the health. It's like in religion; just because we pray from morning till night does not mean that we will have perfect health or even unshakeable faith... There is of course a distinction that has to be made: Will this movement allow me to be effective, but also "effective" in the sense that I will be able to keep my health.

As far as I'm concerned, and according to the many things I've read in, and the course of my university studies, this is what the energy system amounts to. This is very interesting, but it often remains at the level of theory. What interests me in the martial arts is practice, action. Reading about theories is fine but what value does that have in practice?

Kwoon: Okay, is there a kind of pragmatism somewhere?

KZ: I always take a pragmatic approach in my research. The essence of martial arts is pragmatic.

Kwoon: What do you feel are the major misgivings of your students?

KZ: Well, first of all, I don't like to judge my students. All I can say is that I have intimately experienced what it is to be a student. As for the people who come to my classes, I am not in their heads.

The problem is that we live in France and we're "spoon fed", many people say: "Yes, I met the master", "I did this, or that", "I worked with so and so", but who knows what it really means to "be their student". If it means paying a fee and coming two or three times a week... to be with someone for fifteen years, if this is what it means to be someone's "student", fine. However, we have to realize that there is a difference between being a pupil, a student, a disciple, and a son. Some use the term "spiritual son", why not, but for that one must be the successor of a master. I think that we first become a student and we later become a disciple once we have actually received a transmission and sense that there is something real. But beware! the master is very strong, he is the one who chooses the student, not the reverse. The opposite is very rare in the history of the classical martial arts. I will add that the pupil is always tested by the master. I have nothing against any of my students, they are who they are and do not have the same aspirations as me, we're different.

Their faults? If they have faults they are surely because of me since they receive transmission from me... I show them, so they copy my mistakes. But even here it is tough to say, because I cover them up very well, and because they don't live with me and don't know me. It is very difficult because ninjutsu is the art of concealment... Seriously

though, the only fault is... I will stick with the words I said a moment ago: "I have intimately experienced what it is to be a student". That's all.

Kwoon: What is the role of ukemi in ninjutsu?

KZ: The same role as every other combat technique.

Kwoon: Survival?

KZ: Of course.

Kwoon: It's so simple! (laughs)

KZ: ... And survival in a good sense; not with a mangled arm or a leg short, no! Survival in the sense of ukemi: a body that receives. How the body receives, in what way... It's very different from what you will find in judo or even in what we will call "modern-day" jujitsu.

Kwoon: How are they different?

KZ: The problem with modern jujitsu is that it is all of the old judoka who are practicing it; so automatically they don't know how to do jujitsu. We often forget that Kano practiced jujitsu before creating judo, but he did it in a rather precarious way with only six or seven years of practice at most. Therefore his science of ukemi was really quite limited. Although he did read a lot; after all he was a visionary and a man of great intelligence. But his knowledge of jujitsu was still rather fragmentary, contrary to what we tend to believe.

The problem with ordinary judoka, (and I say an ordinary judoka right, not someone who studies the reasons techniques are a certain way and stays open to other styles), is that they know nothing about jujitsu, they see jujitsu through the eyes and the practice of a judoka. In the same way that people try to see ninjutsu through the eyes, and therefore the experience, of a judoka, aikidoka, or even a koryuka. The way of performing ukemi is unique, you have to be able to do ukemi with weapons or even while holding something precious, like a child for example... These are rather special ukemi; we also have to avoid making any noise.

For example, the ukemi that Kuroda Tetsuzan practices in his school, the shishin takuma ryu, are at this time, I won't say the most pure but the ones that are closest to what you can find in ninjutsu because there is a real sense of absorbing the ground without injury. That sounds a little strange what I just said: Absorbing the ground... Anyway, let's say that the point is to role without injuring oneself, without hitting the ground, and of course to role anywhere, not just on tatami.

Kwoon: Do you know about the Hakkun ryu?

KZ: Yes! In ninjutsu? In ninjutsu, because I don't know about it otherwise: It was founded by Hakkun Issai who was one of the first disciples of Iga Zaemon Ienaga, foun-

der of Iga ryu. I am saying this from memory, I might be mistaken... So it was a school of ninjutsu that developed in Iga with certain ramifications in Koga; essentially koppo-jutsu and koshijutsu and a special use of the sword, a form of espionage as well, a type of guerilla warfare, use of the battle axe (ono), and shikomi zue, a specific kind of shuriken (Iga-tsune shuriken), and a kind of use for the rope and kusari gama. They are in the nine schools, one of the two schools that were transmitted by Ishitani sensei to Takamatsu sensei: Hakkun ryu.

Kwoon: Then could we say that there are ten schools!?

KZ: No, No, there are nine schools but let's say that the teaching of this school was given, it was transmitted, but not in the system of menkyo kaiden or soke.

Kwoon: Then it consists of techniques, feelings, principles...

KZ: Let's say "concepts" and principles but the principles are the same in all schools of ninjutsu. After that there are simply certain specifics that will change but it remains basically Iga ryu or Koga ryu.

Kwoon: Do you believe that we can really practice several schools of traditional martial arts at once?

KZ: That depends on whether or not they are interrelated; if so the answer is yes. If not it's impossible.

Kwoon: When can we say that they are "interrelated"?

KZ: When we discover the common denominator or once it is shown to us. In any case, if we are talking about classical schools, before Edo or mid-Edo, each one has eighteen defined disciplines: the bugei ju-happan, that were documented in fifteenth century China as well as for the first time in Japan, in the middle of the Edo period. However, if these schools possess eighteen disciplines, it means that they also possess something which permits them to pass quickly from one discipline to the next, if not it's impossible. You would need eighteen lives to learn all of that. Similarly, it would take nine lives to learn the nine schools.

Hatsumi sensei is not the type of person who would want to create the nine schools! Otherwise he would have created them at the beginning given the knowledge he already had amassed and the people he knew. Takamatsu sensei maybe, but even there it's not certain. It's difficult to create a school, it requires genius to ensure that the techniques don't all resemble one another and then to discover what they all have in common... So, yes it is possible to practice several schools if we have the master to show us how and if and only if we have the necessary capacities and convictions.

Kwoon: All things considered, and since we are in the business of budo, is it possible to ask you how we should approach the system created by Hiroo Mochizuki?

KZ: Well, All things considered, it's not possible.

First of all, we have to look at his background: His father, Minoru, was a judoka, so everything that he practiced was done under the supervision of a judoka no matter what that was. The manner in which he practiced Katori shinto ryu had nothing to do with what Otake was doing.

Sugino, who was very close to Minoru, and who learned from the same master who... how can I put this... didn't "show them everything". They were judoka, they practiced Daito ryu in a "judoka" way. They were able to very quickly retain because they already had a form, a method: The Kano method, which was a super method of learning. But to say that they practiced classical martial arts... isn't the same.

Minoru wanted to extract the essence... but the essence from the point of view of a judoka. What does that mean? Particularly when we don't actually know the experience of combat, I am talking about combat to survive, not about randori or competition. They never truly received the real transmission from the koryu. They had several masters! You can't have a master of judo, a master of aikido, a master of this and that, it isn't possible.... a master is A master, who will teach you the whole koryu, a bit like Takeda Sokaku who, in some sense, showed a certain form to Ueshiba... if you have several masters that means you have several hearts to follow... have you ever seen a man with several hearts? If you have please let me know!

Kwoon: Hatsumi changed his style of teaching between the seventies and eighties; it seems as though you went to Japan and experienced the old structure. What do you feel the difference is?

KZ: First of all, Hatsumi sensei had no assistant: Let's make that clear. His first students, Mr. Manaka and Mr. Tanemura, left to create their own thing which proves that they were not real students. A student, in the true sense of the word, stays until the end, a true disciple. When we have a treasure right under our nose and are not even capable of seeing it... Mr. Tanemura and Manaka created their own systems, and even if we look at the very first videos that date from 1973/4, we can see Hatsumi sensei showing techniques (no one has this video and it is not sold anywhere), we can see even here that the level of Mr. Tanemura and Manaka does not correspond to Hatsumi sensei's form. What this means basically, is that Hatsumi sensei left them totally free to do as they pleased in their practice, so they did what they wanted and created their own systems: They do not resemble Takamatsu sensei whatsoever in their form, etc... Therefore we cannot call them assistants. They were people who practiced a form, a martial art that they had never heard of before. When I arrived in Japan in 1989/90, Tanemura had already created his own system. Like everyone who went in Japan, I was able to meet the shihan that were training with Hatsumi sensei; I still remember Mr. Manaka before he left, I remember Mr. Oguri, Mr. Noguchi, Mr. Someya, etc, there was at the time, a very old disciple named Mr. Kobayashi who was one of the first people that we can see on the koppojutsu and Takagi tapes, if I remember correctly.

So I worked, actually worked is a big word, I was seventeen at the time, I was pointed in the right direction of the dojo, I payed, I went to class like everyone else, I was a client like all the others, so to say I worked is a big word.

And there was Ishizuka sensei, at the time he was famous in the bujinkan and for his way of moving, very close to the basic show by Hatsumi sensei in the very beginning. This is someone who even named his children Mae, Sae, and Aki without realizing it! It is afterall Hatsumi sensei's name! He is rather special and I feel that he loved the art more than the others and it showed in his form. There was something that attracted me, more than with the others in any case. It was a question of personal taste that in the end grew into something very fruitful. Little by little as I practiced more seriously, I realized that his form was closer to Hatsumi sensei's at the beginning, I then later discovered that he had met Takamatsu sensei, like Mr. Manaka, Mr. Tanemura, Mr. Oguri, and Mr. Seno but he kept a very vivid image of Takamatsu sensei in his mind, even to this day! There were seven who met with him and Mr. Tanemura and Mr. Manaka were among them. And through it all, it was Ishizuka sensei who was always the most honest with me. He never raised his prices, he would tell me: "Listen, there are things that Hatsumi sensei showed us and other things that he has not shown us. He has never taught us anything, he has never loved teaching". **None** of the others have told me this, they all repeat: "Yes, Hatsumi sensei showed me this, he told me this..." So it was this sincerity, this integrity... which made me stay with him. He also never got involved in the politics even though he always helped Hatsumi sensei. Those are the reasons why have stayed with Ishizuka sensei since 1989... It has been a little while, but it still feels like yesterday to me. Here its important that people mark my words, I am not telling that the other shihan are bad, wrong, etc. it was the choice I made to stay with Ishizuka sensei, other people prefer choose different shihan or organization, this is their choice. I don't judge them. I just look the fact and especially how most of the shihan are now acting in the bujinkan.

Has Hatsumi sensei changed? I don't believe so, I believe he has simply changed with times, adapted to the needs of the moment. You can't teach ten people the way you teach twenty or fifty. But he stays the same...

It's true that some people are always nostalgic of the past... yes, nostalgia... some practiced during that period and I can see that they are not as good, one need only look at Stephen Hayes who arrived one or two years after the death of Takamatsu sensei, and his way of moving, excuse me, but I did not saw on his way of moving something close to what is Takaamtsu sensei or Hatsumi sensei's ways of moving..... anyhow, it isn't because we were there during that period that we are one of the best or that we are good. I think many people get confused with this. There were people who saw Jesus, lived around him, spoke with him, but this did not prevent them from being stupid people or from being narrow minded... The same goes for Moses and for the Prophet in Islam, it's the same everywhere.

Kwoon: I can put this on Kwoon?

KZ: Of course! Why, did I attack anyone in particular?

Kwoon: Okay, Okay...

KZ: It isn't because we were close to the source at a given time that we automatically absorb everything. Sometimes you can drink pure water only to have it change at the last second because it mixes with your breath, your saliva, with the deposits on your tongue, or with what is inside you... To the one who is able to keep the water pure until the very end, my hat goes off to you!

The research that I started on the martial arts have led me to one conclusion: That I have not yet completed my research! (laughs) and to tell you the truth I don't think I'll complete on day, which is good, like this I can keep on practice and learning. Something very important in ninjutsu's art is the continuity.

Historically, the martial arts were made for an elite few. In the Period like muromachi, or sengoku for one master there were only ten students, maybe twelve or fifteen, but not more. Each received different diplomas and only one would become the successor. So it was elitist from the beginning. We Europeans with our way of thinking, have the tendency to see the martial arts with the idea that they are open to everyone, and this is a huge mistake, a huge mistake, since we are forgetting the reasons for the transmission of an art or a science. Even if we look at Greek or Christian Gnosis, we realize that there is the same process of elitist transmission.

Once again, Hatsumi sensei has not changed anything. I arrived at a time when they were, more or less, showing the basics. Once again, to show them does not mean to transmit them! Or to teach them. And it's important to be aware that the one who shows the basic, did in their own way they understood, so it's more a personal interpretation, rather than the real basic. Even the people who create their own organization had their own way of doing.

When I arrived in Japan I was alone, seventeen years old, and I practiced alone from what I had in my memory of what Ishizuka sensei and his seniors had shown me. To copy Hatsumi sensei hum hum... already at the time it was impossible, so today... you have to have a process; there is a process to learning technique the same way there is a process to transmission, the two go together, that's life... If you want to copy a man, who today is seventy years old, you're making a big mistake. What you should be copying is the process that allowed him to get to this point... If the process is piecemeal, without any real transmission, you will damage your body and miss a great many things. This is because the goals of bujutsu techniques are to kill and stay alive, if you do not know how to realize them you will injure yourself without even knowing it, then age will catch up with you and teach you the lesson...

However this a process that allows Hatsumi sensei to maintain unbelievable flexibility, spiritual vitality, and incredible movement... Having this process that has made him what he is at present, is a good thing. This process isn't exclusive to Hatsumi sensei, other masters have their own. You have to know how to study and observe so as not to repeat the same errors over and over; hence the art of listening. Although you need someone to show you the keys... As far I go, Ishizuka sensei showed me some keys, he

showed me a few things. I worked at it, and I still work at it even now. At present, I am sufficiently close to him to know what is good and what is bad. Often when he tells me things he says: "Listen, I learned this like that, I do it like this. You do it like I learned it." And this is an honesty that I haven't found anywhere else not even among the teachers in France or in other countries. Most of the Japanese shihan said "I do it like it is said in the densho", but the densho is only paper, that's important to keep in mind. It only means something to someone who has received a real transmission. It is useless to someone who has nothing! It becomes mere interpretation. What I want to explain here is densho can be understood only by someone who received the key and the full transmission. This key and full transmission depend of the nature of the heart of the disciple. This is a crucial condition in nay koryu. I did enough studies to understand that. Also Its very easy to see how the shihan themselves does the technique in their own way, all read the same densho but they realize the technique according their own understanding and their own way of being. For me, I am nnot interest by a interpretation or "a way of moving". I am interesting by what Takamatsu sensei give to Hatsumi sensei, the real technic. I don't think that I act wrongly in this way.

Anyway, Hatsumi sensei hasn't changed anything. He is the same as always, he's simply a little older. The dojo has remained open to all, he simply adapted with respect to the demand... without ever having taken a disciple of course.

Kwoon: With regards to Ishizuka, do you know what made him stay with Hatsumi? He came from Shorinji kempo, is that right?

KZ: First of all, like most of the Japanese, he was a judo practionner. I even heard that he was pretty good. He practiced shorinji kempo, aikido, some karate, but he was from the beginning, a very good judoka. He was competing in the Japan national championship when, he dislocated his shoulder. He went to Hatsumi sensei's clinic to fix it. Hatsumi sensei was the only doctor in Noda back in this days. Ishizuka sensei also lived in Noda and knew Hatsumi sensei by name only. He put his shoulder back into place and while he was at Hatsumi sensei's house, which also served as a dojo, he noticed some weapons. Ishizuka sensei asked him what they were, and Hatsumi sensei replied "Oh, those are for old martial arts"... At the time he only had two students, and even then they only went from time to time. He asked him what he does, "Oh I do shorinji kempo".

Ishizuka sensei was still young at the time, he was what... sixteen years or seventeen years old then, he was sure of himself and his abilities, and talent as a fighter. He asked Hatsumi sensei if he could 'test' him. In a word, he got fried. This pleased him right away, it opened his eyes. He didn't know what ninjutsu was, like most Japanese people! It's similar to a person from France who speaks of d'Artagnan without knowing if he is a great swordsman or a good musketeer (in the sense of someone who uses a musket). For him, ninjustu was still something out of a comic book. He even met Saiko Fujita! That is still something! and Ueno Takeshi! He met many people thanks to Hatsumi sensei, including Nawa sensei (who died few months after this interview)! Ishizuka sensei

said it himself: "He changed the way I look at the world". He calls him the godfather. That means something. If Ishizuka sensei stayed with Hatsumi sensei it was because he offered something completely different... At the time, talking about ninjutsu when there was only judo, karate, aikido, kendo, shorinji kempo... the practice of koryu was quite something. In somewhat the same way as Katori shinto, jodo, or jojutsu, which were better known, for many people, Nawa sensei and Hatsumi sensei were the specialists in the old schools... They were the ones who were most widely seen on the television. Some people came on from time to time but... perhaps for the them it was also a question of jealousy on the part of those who did their own thing and said: "We possess the real thing".

Kwoon: What is your present occupation?

KZ: My thesis! Because it's a thesis on the classical martial arts and movement, it is quite large. I am working mostly with old manuscripts on the martial arts. Historically, these were called *heihō*, which is strategy with a capital 'S', and ranges from a simple school of jujutsu all the way to a school of bujutsu complete with the eighteen disciplines. There you are, that is my thesis, I am working exclusively with old manuscripts. The oldest of which I just finished translating was written in 1566 and had never been translated into french. I also work on old densho written before 1566, some from the Kage-ryū and other from the Nen-ryū and the the Kashima-ryū. I also have found some scroll of the chūjō-ryū as well.

Kwoon: Do you know when you will be finished?

KZ: I hope to finish this year. This year was difficult, there were many mishaps and some things that very deeply touched my family, and since I often work abroad or give conferences, it wasn't always easy. I try to avoid working too much in France because, I have to be honest, it doesn't pay. We aren't very respected for what we do, apart from two or three professors who really like my work, but that won't allow me to find a decent job and feed my family. I also have a large family, I have my parents to take care of and my brothers too, I can't allow myself to fall behind. As far as University conferences are concerned the best are abroad. I have the chance to do a few seminars abroad but this is insignificant compared to the number of conferences. I always try to combine seminars and conferences to avoid being away longer than necessary since I am a bit of a homebody.

Kwoon: What are the other disciplines that interest you right now? Whether to practice or simply because you hold them in high regard...

KZ: I love all martial arts! I love all classical martial arts, be they Japanese or Chinese, I also like the Indian martial arts like kalaripayat... the work they do with message and oils is really quite interesting. I like kali, the history of kali and the Spanish invasion, these people were very strong... after all the Spanish were very skilled fencers and hardened

fighters. In any case, I'm not biased; I love all martial arts. I like read and stdeis every-thing about martial even f m basic are frst Japanese classical martial arts.

Kwoon: You have quoted, in many instances, the Sufi tradition, do you have any particular connection to this tradition?

KZ: No, not at all. Here again, I love all religious traditions whether esoteric or exoteric. I also like Gnosis, Kabbalah, anything associated with God, the one, oneness, I like... So things that touch me, I quote, the same goes for the martial arts. Sometimes if I read something in a manuscript and I really like it, I will go and see the current soke or the instructor and tell him: "This isn't possible", or "I find that hard to believe". What I mean to say is that there is a discrepancy between what is written by the founder in the manu-script and what the master or instructor is showing me. I have had quite a few friendly altercations with masters or researchers in Japan when they would ask me if I know about old martial arts; I would reply yes, then they would ask if I had ever seen any; I would say yes, of course, then when they would start to talk about the nihon budokai, or the nihon budo videos: I think to myself, if these are the old budo where we move stiffly like it isn't permitted in their original manuscripts... I would prefer sincerely, to stop training.

As far as I'm concerned, the kobujutsu, koryu, or kobudo cannot be restricted or limited to a few rigid kata mixed with a belief in a pseudo samurai spirit. Moreover, as we read the writings and manuscripts we see something totally different. So I can't believe this... I refuse to believe this! In any case, there are reasons why things have progressed the way they did, to this breaking point. It's easy to explain etymologically, historically, and sociologically... I can also, within the boundaries of my humble knowledge, explain to whoever... I do it in Japan in front of the top researchers; this is part of my university work. Then there are people's sensibilities. Many people's sensibilities are insulted because it touches a nerve with them... but that's life.

There are certain practitioners that I like a lot, I their way of doing things, not known to the public... since they still teach in secret like in the Asayama ichiden ryu: I was able to meet the Sakai family and they have two students... I really like their way of doing things. I also like Kuroda Tetsuzan, what he says, what he does, I know him since I have met him several times, though I don't know him intimately. Then there is a Japa-nese side that is a little tough for me which I don't like very much. Over the course of studying Japan, we discover certain aspects which many researchers know, no matter what their discipline. In the domain of the martial arts it becomes particularly difficult when these researchers are rigid, which is often the case. I suppose this is true for Japanese society as a whole. Ceremony is something I had to master down to the most minute details... I learned how to do this thanks to university which at times forced me to see that some people are more interested to see that I am able to present things the way they like to do them in order to make them better known. There you have it, you meet all kinds! We meet people who are very interesting and have a great deal of knowledge but remain very closed in their heads and their hearts which is really too bad... but that is the life which they have chosen.

Kwoon: Do you have anything to add? Or remove?

KZ: Thank you... Hello to all the people from Kwoon, it's been great... No matter what your influences or tendencies... As far as I'm concerned, ninjutsu, regardless of which organization, I don't care who trains with who. I think we must, I will speak frankly and directly, we must stop hiding our faces behind someone's name, organization or even a screen, we have to open our eyes... I am not saying that Hatsumi sensei is the best or anything like that... We have to analyze facts and things as they are at their source: The master-disciple relationship is based on certain undeniable factors, and it has been like this ever since martial arts have existed. This means that we should find documents that prove someone to be fully licensed. Some like to practice with Mr Tanemura or Mr. Manaka, its fine with me, they choose in their own way. But again just by looking who really met and stay with Takamatsu sensei for more long time and until the end, it was only Hatsumi sensei. Even the so call student of Takamatsu sensei like Sato Kinbei or Ueno Takashi who received scroll and soke license from Takamatsu sensei were not at his funeral. I mean if I received a scroll or even a menkyo from a master like Takamatsu sensei I'll show him my respect to his entire family the day of his funeral. Its very important to look those fact and by this we understand what type of relation was between Takamatsu sensei and student who called themselves their successor, and also the nature of the scroll they received from Takamatsu sensei.

Now the fact that some people would like to pass above that or to sidestep it, that's one thing but we have to be able to recognize it. When we make a mistake, we do it and we admit it. If we follow a teacher instead of a style... that's fine! We have to learn to accept them as they are. If I like someone because of their way of doing things, it's because of their way of doings that I like them; that doesn't mean that it applies to the style... So if I have something to say to everybody on Kwoon it's that it is really a great thing to create a space for open discussion and exchange, if it really leads to exchange! But never forget, that art martial is about action more than argumentation, the real argumentation is found through the action in martial arts.

I'm sorry that I do not have the time to write nor to participate in the discussion and argumentation that so many enjoy. Everyone uses time to the best of their abilities; either way this was a good thing.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak in your column and I hope that nothing I have proposed will insult anybody's sensibilities. It is not my intention to insult anyone. If I have touched anyone they can always contact me and I could explain myself in person since it is always difficult to understand a person through their writing alone. There is nothing better than meeting directly, to go straight to the source, to be sure... and even then.

This is martial arts: direct confrontation, immediate reality, not just reading...

Kwoon: Thank you very much Kacem!

KZ: It's I who thank you.