

# Sword and Spirit

The Journal of Itten Dojo

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## — Benefits of Budo —

**Regardless of the times in which you live, or the circumstances of your life, success largely depends on things you can control:**

- **Building a foundation of strong relationships in a community of mutual support and achievement.**
- **Forging a disciplined and positive mindset.**
- **Enhancing your physical health and capabilities.**

*These are exactly the benefits membership in an authentic dojo provides.*

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## Why Iaido and Jujutsu?

Readers of this journal or of my book, *A Journey of Sword and Spirit*, will recognize the derivation of this topic. An early version of my essay, “Why Iaido?,” was first published here in December 2021. Revised and expanded versions were published in *Bugeisha Traditional Martial Artist* magazine in April 2022 and in my book. “Why Nihon Jujutsu?” was published in the August 2023 issue of this journal, and later in my book. These essays described our introduction to and rapidly growing dedication to training in these arts under the direction of Nicklaus Suino Sensei of the Japanese Martial Arts Center in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Having examined the two arts on an individual basis, I would like now to address the synergistic effects and significant benefits of training in both arts as a comprehensive study.

Over the course of the 30+ year history of Itten Dojo, changing circumstances have dictated revisions in affiliations and arts. Through it all, I observed that the optimal basis for this dojo is an opportunity for members to train in an unarmed art and a weapons-based art that are consistent and complementary. There were times when such a combination was available, and times when it was not. In 2020, we found ourselves once again in the situation of “not.”

The process of finding ourselves in the enviable situation that now exists has been described previously in detail. Suffice it to say that the Muso Jikiden Eishin-ryu iaido program that was originally intended to be just a supplement to other arts in the dojo quickly became—and still is—the largest component of the dojo and my primary focus. As for Nihon Jujutsu, Suino Sensei wanted us to learn just eight *waza* (techniques) that could provide a basis for him to work with us on his “real-time self-defense” applications. Instead, our first exposure to Nihon Jujutsu opened my eyes to the astonishing possibilities embodied in the art. I went from reluctant convert to ardent evangelist for Sato Shizuya Sensei’s marvelous creation.

New members of our dojo are expected to choose just one art in which to begin training. A second art can be added once an adequate foundation in the first art has been established. Not everyone can or will ultimately train in both iaido and jujutsu, but those who do benefit immensely.



I've had multiple conversations with senior students of Suino Sensei. Those who train in iaido and other arts, even when iaido is not their main focus, all credit iaido as being the source of their understanding of structure and basis for their generation and application of power. To a person, these individuals manifest incredible structure and power. The solo forms of Eishin-ryu, referred to as waza rather than *kata*, are not primarily intended as combative applications. Rather, the forms are sophisticated studies of achieving and maintaining ideal core structure and physical/mental capabilities under difficult circumstances. Drawing on more than four centuries of research, skeletal alignment, posture, relative weighting of feet, patterns of movement, sourcing and applying power, breathing, awareness, visual focus, and sequencing of muscular involvement/relaxation are all aspects of the study. All of these aspects have direct correlations in unarmed practice.

Nihon Jujutsu is a relatively recent compilation of ancient and modern Japanese methods of unarmed combat: aikibujutsu waza originally found in Daito-ryu aikijujutsu as conveyed by Ueshiba Morihei and Tomiki Kenji, pre-1945 judo with its emphasis on personal development and defensive skills rather than sport, and arresting techniques adopted by Japanese police forces.

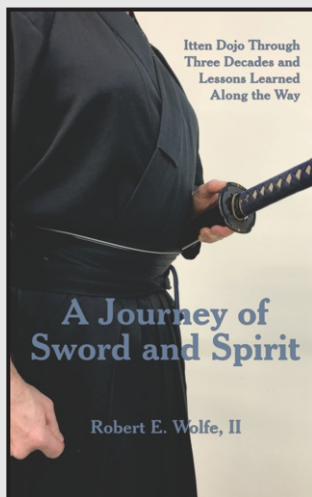
The emphasis is on practical, effective techniques in an accessible curriculum enabling credible self-defense skills across a range of engagement distances.

Training in jujutsu offers the iaido student a means to test against a live "opponent" all of the most important attributes he or she is establishing through training in swordsmanship, along with a more intense process of physical conditioning. The jujutsu student finds in iaido—because of *not* having to deal with a physical "opponent"—a more immediately apparent and achievable means of understanding, building, and utilizing internal structure. Additionally, the majority of iaido practice does not require a partner (or even a trip to the dojo, for that matter).

All of the above benefits are maximized by virtue of our training in both arts with Suino Sensei. Historically, there is no connection between Eishin-ryu iaido and Nihon Jujutsu, but Suino Sensei's approach to training provides consistency and correlations that result in as close to perfect an overall martial arts study as could be wished for. Taken individually, these arts are everything I ever wanted in a study of swordsmanship or unarmed combative.

Taken together, iaido and jujutsu are a fantastic foundation on which to build the future of our dojo. 🌀

**Robert Wolfe, chief instructor of Itten Dojo, began martial arts training in 1975 while attending Bucknell University, where he earned a degree in Japanese Studies. Mr. Wolfe has taught since 1985, and with his senior student Alan Starner founded Itten Dojo in 1992. His articles on martial arts have been featured in numerous publications, including the *Journal of Asian Martial Arts* and *Bugeisha*.**



## *A Journey of Sword and Spirit*

Available from Amazon.com  
In Hardcover, Paperback, and Kindle editions!

**"In an age that has largely lost touch with many of the traditional values that built the world we all currently inhabit, this work (and the dojo from which it sprang) serve as a welcome oasis of wisdom, strength, and serenity."**



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