

A Book of Five Rings (Go Rin No Sho)

Written by Miyamoto Musashi

Translated by Victor Harris

Translator's Introduction

Japan during Musashi's lifetime

Miyamoto Musashi was born in 1584, in a Japan struggling to recover from more than four centuries of internal strife. The traditional rule of the emperors had been overthrown in the twelfth century, and although each successive emperor remained the figurehead of Japan, his powers were very much reduced. Since that time, Japan had seen almost continuous civil war between the provincial lords, warrior monks and brigands, all fighting each other for land and power. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the lords, called daimyo, built huge stone castles to protect themselves and their lords and castle towns outside the walls began to grow up. These wars naturally restricted the growth of trade and impoverished the whole country.

In 1573, however, one man, Oda Nobunga, came to the fore in Japan. He became the Shogun, or military dictator, and for nine years succeeded in gaining control of almost the whole of the country. When Nobunga was assassinated in 1582, a commoner took over the government. Toyotomi Hideyoshi continued the work of unifying Japan which Nobunaga had begun, ruthlessly putting down any traces of insurrection. He revived the old gulf between the warriors of Japan - the samurai - and the commoners by introducing restrictions on the wearing of swords. "Hideyoshi's sword-hunt", as it was known, meant that only samurai were allowed to wear two swords, the short one which everyone could wear and the long one, which distinguished the samurai from the rest of the population.

Although Hideyoshi did much to settle Japan and increase trade with the outside world, by the time of his death in 1598 internal disturbances still had not been completely eliminated. The real isolation and unification of Japan began with the inauguration of the great Tokugawa rule. In 1603 Tokugawa Ieyasu, a former associate of both Hideyoshi and Nobunaga, formally became Shogun of Japan, after defeating Hideyoshi's son Hideyori at the battle of Seki ga Hara.

Ieyasu established his government at Edo, present-day Tokyo, where he had a huge castle. His was a stable, peaceful government beginning a period of Japanese history which was to last until the Imperial Restoration of 1868, for although Ieyasu himself died in 1616 members of his family succeeded each other and the title Shogun became virtually an hereditary one for the Tokugawas.

Ieyasu was determined to ensure his and his family's dictatorship. To this end, he paid lip service to the emperor in Kyoto, who remained the titular head of Japan, while curtailing his duties and involvement in the government. The real threat to Ieyasu's position could only come from the lords, and he effectively decreased their opportunities for revolt by devising schemes whereby all lords had to live in Edo for alternate years and by placing great restrictions on traveling. He allotted land in exchange for oaths of allegiance, and gave the provincial castles around Edo to members of his own family. He also employed a network of secret police and assassins.

The Tokugawa period marks a great change in the social history of Japan. The bureaucracy of the Tokugawas was all pervading. Not only were education, law, government and class controlled, but even the costume and behavior of each class. The traditional class-consciousness of Japan hardened into a rigid class structure. There were basically four classes of person: samurai, farmers, artisans and merchants. The samurai were the highest - in esteem if not in wealth - and included the lords, senior government officials, warriors, and minor officials and foot soldiers. Next in the hierarchy came the farmers, not because they were well thought of but because they provided the essential rice crops. Their lot was a rather unhappy one, as they were forced to give most of their crops to the lords and were not allowed to leave their farms. Then came the artisans and craftsmen, and last of all the merchants, who, though looked down upon, eventually rose to prominence because of the vast wealth they accumulated. Few people were outside this rigid hierarchy.

Musashi belonged to the samurai class. We find the origins of the samurai class in the Kondei ("Stalwart Youth") system established in 792 AD, whereby the Japanese army - which had until then constituted mainly of spear-wielding foot soldiers - was revived by stiffening the ranks with permanent training officers recruited from among the young sons of the high families. These officers were mounted, wore armour, and used the bow and sword. In 782 the emperor Kammu started building Kyoto, and in Kyoto he built a training hall, which exists to this day called the Butokuden, meaning "Hall of the virtues of war". Within a few years of this revival the fierce Ainu, the aboriginal inhabitants of Japan who had until then confounded the army's attempts to move them from their wild lodgings, were driven far off to the northern island, Hokkaido.

When the great provincial armies were gradually disbanded under Hideyoshi and Ieyasu, many out-of-work samurai roamed the country redundant in an era of peace. Musashi was one such samurai, a "ronin" or "wave man". There were still samurai retainers to the Tokugawas and provincial lords, but their numbers were few. The hordes of redundant samurai found themselves living in a society which was completely based on the old chivalry, but at the same time they were apart from a society in which there was no place for men at arms. They became an inverted class, keeping the old chivalry alive by devotion to military arts with the fervor only the Japanese possess. This was the time of the flowering of Kendo.

Kendo, the Way of the sword, had always been synonymous with nobility in Japan. Since the founding of the samurai class in the eighth century, the military arts had become the highest form of study, inspired by the teachings of Zen and the feeling of Shinto. Schools of Kendo born in the early Muromachi period - approximately 1390 to 1600 - were continued through the upheavals of the formation of the peaceful Tokugawa Shogunate, and survive to this day. The education of the sons of the Tokugawa Shoguns was by means of schooling in the Chinese classics and fencing exercises. Where a Westerner might say, "The pen is mightier than the sword", the Japanese would say "Bunbu Ichi", or "Pen and sword in accord". Today, prominent businessmen and political figures in Japan still practice the old traditions of the Kendo schools, preserving the forms of several hundred years ago.

To sum up, Musashi was a ronin at the time when the samurai were formally considered to be the elite, but actually had no means of livelihood unless they owned lands and castles. Many ronin put up their swords and became artisans, but others, like Musashi, perused the ideal of the warrior searching for enlightenment through the perilous paths of Kendo. Duels of revenge and tests of skill were commonplace, and fencing schools multiplied. Two schools especially, the Itto school and the Yagyu school, were sponsored by the Tokugawas. The Itto school provided an unbroken line of Kendo teachers, and the Yagyu school eventually became the secret police of the Tokugawa bureaucracy.

Kendo

Traditionally, the fencing halls of Japan, called Dojo, were associated with shrines and temples, but during Musashi's lifetime numerous schools sprang up in the new castle towns. Each daimyo or lord sponsored a Kendo school, where his retainers could be trained and his sons educated. The hope of every ronin was that

he could defeat the students and master of a Dojo in combat, thus increasing his fame and bringing his name to the ears of one who might employ him.

The samurai wore two swords thrust through the belt with the cutting edge uppermost. The longer sword was carried out of doors only, the shorter sword was worn at all times. For training, wooden swords and bamboo swords were often used. Dueling and other tests of arms were common, with both real and practice swords. These took place in fencing halls and before shrines, in the streets and within castle walls. Duels were often fought to the death or until one of the contestants was disabled, but a few generations after Musashi's time the "shinai", a pliable bamboo sword, and later padded fencing Armour, came to be widely used, so the chances of injury were greatly reduced. The samurai studied with all kinds of weapons: halberds, sticks, swords, chain and sickle, and others. Many schools using such weapons survive in traditional form in Japan today.

To train in Kendo one must subjugate the self, bear the pain of grueling practice, and cultivate a level mind in the face of peril. But the Way of the sword means not only fencing training but also living by the code of honor of the samurai elite. Warfare was the spirit of the samurai's everyday life, and he could face death as if it were a domestic routine. The meaning of life and death by the sword was mirrored in the everyday conduct of the feudal Japanese, and he who realized the resolute acceptance of death at any moment in his everyday life was a master of the sword. It is in order to attain such an understanding that later men have followed the ancient tradition of the sword-fencing styles, and even today give up their lives for Kendo practice.

Kendo and Zen

The Way of the sword is the moral teaching of the samurai, fostered by the Confucianist philosophy which shaped the Tokugawa system, together with the native Shinto religion of Japan. The warrior courts of Japan from the Kamakura period to the Muromachi period encouraged the austere Zen study among the samurai, and Zen went hand in hand with the arts of war. In Zen there are no elaborations, it aims directly at the true nature of things. There are no ceremonies, no teachings: the prize of Zen is essentially personal. Enlightenment in Zen does not mean a change in behavior, but realization of the nature of ordinary life. The end point is the beginning, and the great virtue is simplicity. The secret teaching of the Itto Ryu school of Kendo, Kiriotoshi, is the first technique of some hundred or so. The teaching is "Ai Uchi", meaning to cut the opponent just as he cuts you. This is the ultimate training... it is lack of anger. It means to treat your enemy as an honored guest. It also means to abandon your life or throw away fear.

The first technique is the last; the beginner and the master behave in the same way. Knowledge is a full circle. The first of Musashi's chapter headings is Ground, for the basis of Kendo and Zen, and the last book is Void, for that understanding which can only be expressed as nothingness. The teachings of Kendo are like the fierce verbal forays to which the Zen student is subjected. Assailed with doubts and misery, his mind and spirit in a whirl, the student is gradually guided to realization and understanding by his teacher. The Kendo student practices furiously, thousands of cuts morning and night, learning fierce techniques of horrible war, until eventually sword becomes "no sword", intention becomes "no intention", a spontaneous knowledge of every situation. The first elementary teaching becomes the highest knowledge, and the master still continues to practice this simple training, his everyday prayer.

Concerning the life of Miyamoto Musashi

Shinmen Musashi No Kami Fujiwara No Genshin, or as he is commonly known Miyamoto Musashi, was born in the village called Miyamoto in the province Mimasaka in 1584. "Musashi" is the name of an area southwest of Tokyo, and the appellation "No Kami" means noble person of the area, while "Fujiwara" is the name of a noble family foremost in Japan over a thousand years ago.

Musashi's ancestors were a branch of the powerful Harima clan in Kyushu, the southern island of Japan. Hirada Shokan, his grandfather, was a retainer of Shinmen Iga No Kami Sudeshige, the lord of Takeyama castle. Hirada Shokan was highly thought of by his lord and eventually married his lord's daughter.

When Musashi was seven, his father, Munisai, either died or abandoned the child. As his mother had died, Ben No Suke, as Musashi was known during his childhood, was left in the care of an uncle on his mother's side, a priest. So we find Musashi an orphan during Hideyoshi's campaigns of unification, son of a samurai in a violent unhappy land. He was a boisterous youth, strong-willed and physically large for his age. Whether he was urged to pursue Kendo by his uncle, or whether his aggressive nature led him to it, we do not know, but it is recorded that he slew a man in single combat when he was just thirteen. The opponent was Arima Kigei, a samurai of the Shinto Ryu school of military arts, skilled with sword and spear. The boy threw the man to the ground, and beat him about the head with a stick when he tried to rise. Kihei died vomiting blood

Musashi's next contest was when he was sixteen, when he defeated Tadashima Akiyama. About this time, he left home to embark on the "Warrior Pilgrimage" which saw him victor in scores of contests and which took him to war six times, until he finally settled down at the age of fifty, having reached the end of his search for reason. There must have been many ronin traveling the country on similar expeditions, some alone like Musashi and some enjoying sponsorship, though not on the scale of the pilgrimage of the famous swordsman Tsukahara Bokuden who had traveled with a retinue of over one hundred men in the previous century.

This part of Musashi's life was spent living apart from society while he devoted himself with a ferocious single-mindedness to the search for enlightenment by the Way of the sword. Concerned only with perfecting his skill, he lived as men need not live, wandering over Japan soaked by the cold winds of winter, not dressing his hair, nor taking a wife, nor following any profession save his study. It is said he never entered a bathtub lest he was caught unawares without a weapon, and that his appearance was uncouth and wretched.

In the battle which resulted in Ieyasu succeeding Hideyoshi as Shogun of Japan, Seki ga Hara, Musashi joined the ranks of the Ashikaga army to fight against Ieyasu. He survived the terrible three days during which seventy thousand people died, and also survived the hunting down and massacre of the vanquished army.

He went up to Kyoto, the capital, when he was twenty-one. This was the scene of his vendetta against the Yoshioka family. The Yoshiokas had been fencing instructors to the Ashikaga house for generations. Later forbidden to teach Kendo by lord Tokugawa, the families became dyers, and are dyers today. Munisai, Musashi's father, had been invited to Kyoto some years before by the Shogun Ashikaga Yoshiaka. Munisai was a competent swordsman, and an expert with the "jitte", a kind of iron truncheon with a tongue for catching sword blades. The story has it that Munisai fought three of the Yoshiokas, winning two of the duels, and perhaps this has some bearing on Musashi's behavior towards the family.

Yoshioka Seijiro, the head of the family, was the first to fight Musashi, on the moor outside the city. Seijiro was armed with a real sword, and Musashi with a wooden sword. Musashi laid Seijiro out with a fierce attack and beat him savagely as he lay on the ground. The retainers carried their lord home on a rain-shutter, where for shame he cut off his samurai topknot.

Musashi lingered on in the capital, and his continued presence further irked the Yoshiokas. The second brother, Denshichiro, applied to Musashi for a duel. As a military ploy, Musashi arrived late on the appointed day, and seconds after the start of the fight he broke his opponent's skull with one blow of his wooden sword. Denshichiro was dead. The house issued yet another challenge with Hanshichiro, the young son of Seijiro, as champion. Hanshichiro was a mere boy, not yet in his teens. The contest was to be held by a pine tree adjacent to rice fields. Musashi arrived at the meeting place well before the appointed time and waited in hiding for his enemy to come. The child arrived dressed formally in war gear, with a party of

well-armed retainers, determined to do away with Musashi. Musashi waited concealed in the shadows, and just as they were thinking that he had thought better of it and had decided to leave Kyoto, he suddenly appeared in the midst of them, and cut the boy down. Then, drawing both swords, he cut a path through them and made his escape.

After that frightful episode Musashi wandered over Japan, becoming a legend in his own time. We find mention of his name and stories of his prowess in registers, diaries, on monuments, and in folk memory from Tokyo to Kyushu. He had more than sixty contests before he was twenty-nine, and won them all. The earliest account of his contests appears in *Niten Ki*, or "Two Heavens Chronicle", a record compiled by his pupils a generation after his death.

In the year of the Yoshioka affair, 1605, he visited the temple Hozoin in the south of the capital. Here he had a contest with Oku Hozoin, the Nichiren sect pupil of the Zen priest Hoin Inei. The priest was a spearman, but no match for Musashi who defeated him twice with his short wooden sword. Musashi stayed at the temple for some time studying fighting techniques and enjoying talks with the priests. There is still today a traditional spear fighting form practiced by the monks of Hozoin. It is interesting that in ancient times the word "Osho", which now means priest, used to mean, "spear teacher". Hoin Inei was pupil to Izumi Musashi no Kami, a master of Shinto Kendo. The priest used spears with cross-shaped blades kept outside the temple under the eaves and used in fire fighting.

When Musashi was in Iga province he met a skilled chain and sickle fighter named Shishido Baikin. As Shishido twirled his chain Musashi drew a dagger and pierced his breast, advancing to finish him off. The watching pupils attacked Musashi but he frightened them away in four directions.

In Edo, a fighter named Muso Gonosuke visited Musashi requesting a duel. Musashi was cutting wood to make a bow, and granting Gonosuke's request stood up intending to use the slender wand he was cutting as a sword. Gonosuke made a fierce attack, but Musashi stepped straight in and banged him on the head. Gonosuke went away.

Passing through Izumo province, Musashi visited lord Matsudaira and asked permission to fight with his strongest Kendo expert. There were many good strategists in Izumo. Permission was granted against a man who used an eight-foot long hexagonal wooden pole. The contest was held in the lord's library garden. Musashi used two wooden swords. He chased the samurai up the two wooden steps of the library veranda, thrust at his face on the second step, and hit him on both arms as he flinched away. To the surprise of the assembled retainers, lord Matsudaira asked Musashi to fight him. Musashi drove the lord up the library steps as before, and when he tried to make a resolute fencing attitude Musashi hit his sword with the "Fire and Stones Cut", breaking it in two. The lord bowed in defeat, and Musashi stayed for some time as his teacher.

Musashi's most well known duel was in the seventeenth year of Keicho, 1612, when he was in Ogura in Bunzen province. His opponent was Sasaki Kojiro, a young man who had developed a strong fencing technique known as Tsubame-gaeshi, or "swallow counter", inspired by the motion of a swallow's tail in flight. Kojiro was retained by the lord of the province, Hosokawa Tadaoki. Musashi applied to Tadaoki for permission to fight Kojiro through the offices of one of the Hosokawa retainers who had been a pupil of Musashi's father, one Nagaoka Sato Okinaga. Permission was granted for the contest to be held at eight o'clock the next morning, and the place was to be an island some few miles from Ogura. That night Musashi left his lodging and moved to the house of Kobayashi Taro Zaemon. This inspired the rumor that awe of Kojiro's subtle technique had made Musashi run away afraid for his life. The next day at eight o'clock Musashi could not be woken until a prompter came from the officials assembled on the island. He got up, drank the water they brought to him to wash with, and went straight down to the shore. As Sato rowed across to the island Musashi fashioned a paper string to tie back the sleeves of his kimono, and cut a wooden sword from the spare oar. When he had done this he lay down to rest.

The boat neared the place of combat and Kojiro and the waiting officials were astounded to see the strange figure of Musashi, with his unkempt hair tied up in a towel, leap from the boat brandishing the long wooden oar and rush through the waves up the beach towards his enemy. Kojiro drew his long sword; a fine blade made by Nagamitsu of Bizen, and threw away his scabbard. "You have no more need of that" said Musashi as he rushed forward with his sword held to one side. Kojiro was provoked into making the first cut and Musashi dashed upward at his blade, bringing the oar down on Kojiro's head. As Kojiro fell, his sword, which had cut the towel from Musashi's head, cut across the hem of his divided skirt. Musashi noted Kojiro's condition and bowed to the astounded officials before running back to his boat. Some sources have it that after he killed Kojiro Musashi threw down the oar and, nimbly leaping back several paces, drew both his swords and flourished them with a shout at his fallen enemy.

It was about this time that Musashi stopped ever using real swords in duels. He was invincible, and from now on he devoted himself to the search for perfect understanding by way of Kendo.

In 1614 and again in 1615 he took the opportunity of once more experiencing warfare and siege. Ieyasu laid siege to Osaka castle where the supporters of the Ashikaga family were gathered in insurrection. Musashi joined the Tokugawa forces in both winter and summer campaigns, now fighting against those he had fought for as a youth at Seki ga Hara.

According to his own writing, he came to understand strategy when he was fifty or fifty-one in 1634. He and his adopted son Iori, the waif whom he had met in Dewa province on his travels, settled in Ogura in this year. Musashi was never again to leave Kyushu Island. The Hosokawa house had been entrusted with the command of the hot seat of Higo province, Kumamoto castle, and the new lord of Bunzen was an Ogasawara. Iori found employment under Ogasawara Tadazane, and as a captain in Tadazane's army fought against the Christians in the Shimawara uprising of 1638, when Musashi was about fifty-five. The lords of the southern provinces had always been antagonistic to the Tokugawas and were the instigators of intrigue with foreign powers and the Japanese Christians. Musashi was a member of the field staff at Shimawara where the Christians were massacred. After this, Ieyasu closed the ports of Japan to foreign intercourse, and they remained closed for over two hundred years.

After six years in Ogura, Musashi was invited to stay with Churi, the Hosokawa lord of Kumamoto castle, as a guest. He stayed a few years with lord Churi and spent his time teaching and painting. In 1643, he retired to a life of seclusion in a cave called "Reigendo". Here he wrote *Go Rin No Sho*, addressed to his pupil Teruo Nobuyuki, a few weeks before his death on the nineteenth of May, 1645.

Musashi is known to the Japanese as "Kinsei", that is, "Sword Saint". *Go Rin No Sho* heads every Kendo bibliography, being unique among books of martial art in that it deals with both the strategy of warfare and the methods of single combat in exactly the same way. The book is not a thesis on strategy, it is in Musashi's words "a guide for men who want to learn strategy" and, as a guide always leads, so the contents are always beyond the student's understanding. The more one reads the book the more one finds in its pages. It is Musashi's last will, the key to the path he trod. When, at twenty-eight or twenty-nine, he had become such a strong fighter, he did not settle down and build a school, replete with success, but became doubly engrossed with his study. In his last days even, he scorned the life of comfort with lord Hosokawa and lived two years alone in a mountain cave deep in contemplation. The behavior of this cruel, headstrong man was evidently most humble and honest.

Musashi wrote, "When you have attained the Way of strategy there will be not one thing that you cannot understand" and "You will see the Way in everything". He did, in fact, become a master of arts and crafts. He produced masterpieces of ink painting, probably more highly valued by the Japanese than the ink paintings of any other. His works include cormorants, herons, Hotei the Shinto God, dragons, birds with flowers, bird in a dead tree, Daruma (Bodhidharma), and others. He was a fine calligrapher, evidenced by his piece "Senki" (War spirit). There is a small wood sculpture of the Buddhist deity Fudo Myoo in private hands. A sculpture of Kwannon was lost recently. He made works in metal, and founded the school of sword guard makers who signed "Niten", after him (see below). He is said to have written poems and

songs, but none of these survive. It is said also that he was commissioned by the Shogun Iemitsu to paint the sunrise over Edo castle.

His paintings are sometimes impressed with his seal, "Musashi", or his nom de plume "Niten". Niten means "Two Heavens", said by some to allude to his fighting attitude with a sword in each hand held above his head. In some places he established schools known as "Niten ryu", and in other places called it "Enmei ryu" (clear circle).

He wrote, "Study the Ways of all professions". It is evident that he did just that. He sought out not only great swordsmen but also priests, strategists, artists and craftsmen, eager to broaden his knowledge.

Musashi writes about the various aspects of Kendo in such a way that it is possible for the beginner to study at beginner's level, and for Kendo masters to study the same words on a higher level. This applies not just to military strategy, but to any situation where plans and tactics are used. Japanese businessmen have used *Go Rin No Sho* as a guide for business practice, making sales campaigns like military operations, using the same energetic methods. In the same way that Musashi seems to have been a horribly cruel man, yet was following logically an honest ideal, so successful business seems to most people to be without conscience.

Musashi's life study is thus as relevant in the twentieth century as it was on the medieval battleground, and applies not just to the Japanese race but to all nations. I suppose you could sum up his inspiration as "humility and hard work".

Introduction

I have been many years training in the [Way](#) of [strategy](#), called Ni Ten Ichi Ryu, and now I think I will explain it in writing for the first time. It is now during the first ten days of the tenth month in the twentieth year of Kanei (1645). I have climbed mountain Iwato of Higo in Kyushu to pay [homage to heaven](#), pray to [Kwannon](#), and kneel before Buddha. I am a warrior of Harima province, Shinmen Musashi No Kami Fujiwara No Geshin, age sixty years.

From youth my heart has been inclined toward the Way of strategy. My first duel was when I was thirteen; I struck down a strategist of the Shinto school, one [Arima Kihei](#). When I was sixteen I struck down an able strategist, Tadashima Akiyama. When I was twenty-one I went up to the capital and met all manner of strategists, never once failing to win in many contests.

After that I went from province to province dueling with strategists of various schools, and not once failed to win even though I had as many as sixty encounters. This was between the ages of thirteen and twenty-eight or twenty-nine.

When I reached thirty I looked back on my past. The previous victories were not due to my having mastered strategy. Perhaps it was natural ability, or the order of heaven, or that other schools' strategy was inferior. After that I studied morning and evening searching for the principle, and came to realize the Way of strategy when I was fifty.

Since then I have lived without following any particular Way. Thus with the virtue of strategy I practice many arts and abilities - [all things with no teacher](#). To write this book I did not use the law of Buddha or the teachings of Confucius, neither old war chronicles nor books on martial tactics. I take up my brush to explain the true [spirit](#) of this Ichi school as it is mirrored in the Way of heaven and Kwannon. The time is the night of the tenth day of the tenth month, at [the hour of the tiger](#) (3-5 a.m.)

The Ground Book

Strategy is the craft of the warrior. Commanders must enact the craft, and troopers should know this Way. There is no warrior in the world today who really understands the Way of strategy.

There are various Ways. There is the Way of salvation by the law of Buddha, the Way of Confucius governing the Way of learning, the Way of healing as a doctor, as a poet teaching the Way of [Waka](#), [tea](#), [archery](#), and many arts and skills. Each man practices, as he feels inclined.

It is said the warrior's is the twofold Way of [pen and sword](#), and he should have a taste for both Ways. Even if a man has no natural ability he can be a warrior by sticking assiduously to both divisions of the Way. Generally speaking, the Way of the warrior is [resolute acceptance of death](#). Although not only warriors but priests, women, peasants and lowlier folk have been known to die readily in the cause of duty or out of shame, this is a different thing. The warrior is different in that studying the Way of strategy is based on overcoming men. By victory gained in crossing swords with individuals, or enjoining battle with large numbers, we can attain power and fame for ourselves or for [our lord](#). This is the virtue of strategy.

The Way of Strategy

In China and Japan practitioners of the Way have been known as "masters of strategy". Warriors must learn this Way.

Recently there have been people getting on in the world as strategists, but they are usually just sword-fencers. The attendants of the [Kashima Kantori shrines](#) of the province Hitachi received instruction from the gods, and made schools based on this teaching, travelling from country to country-instructing men. This is the recent meaning of strategy.

In olden times strategy was listed among the Ten Abilities and Seven Arts as a beneficial practice. It was certainly an art but as beneficial practice it was not limited to sword fencing. The true value of sword fencing cannot be seen within the confines of sword-fencing technique.

If we look at the world we see arts for sale. Men use equipment to sell their own selves. As if with the nut and the flower, the nut has become less than the flower. In this kind of Way of strategy, both those teaching and those learning the way are concerned with coloring and showing off their technique, trying to hasten the bloom of the flower. They speak of "This Dojo" and "That [Dojo](#)". They are looking for profit. Someone once said "Immature strategy is the cause of grief". That was a true saying.

There are [four Ways](#) in which men pass through life: as gentlemen, farmers, artisans and merchants.

The way of the farmer. Using agricultural instruments, he sees springs through to autumns with an eye on the changes of season.

Second is the Way of the merchant. The wine maker obtains his ingredients and puts them to use to make his living. The Way of the merchant is always to live by taking profit. This is the Way of the merchant.

Thirdly the gentleman warrior, carrying the weaponry of his Way. The Way of the warrior is to master the virtue of his weapons. If a gentleman dislikes strategy he will not appreciate the benefit of weaponry, so must he not have a little taste for this?

Fourthly the Way of the artisan. The Way of the [carpenter](#) is to become proficient in the use of his tools, first to lay his plans with a true measure and then perform his work according to plan. Thus he passes through life. These are the four Ways of the gentleman, the farmer, the artisan and the merchant.

Comparing the Way of the carpenter to strategy

The comparison with carpentry is through the connection with houses. Houses of the nobility, houses of warriors, the [Four houses](#), ruin of houses, thriving of houses, the style of the house, the tradition of the house, and the name of the house. The carpenter uses a master plan of the building, and the Way of strategy is similar in that there is a plan of campaign. If you want to learn the craft of war, ponder over this book. The teacher is as a needle, the disciple is as thread. You must practice constantly.

Like the foreman carpenter, the commander must know natural rules, and the rules of the country, and the rules of houses. This is the Way of the foreman.

The foreman carpenter must know the architectural theory of towers and temples, and the plans of palaces, and must employ men to raise up houses. The Way of the foreman carpenter is the same as the Way of the commander of a [warrior house](#).

In the contraction of houses, choice of woods is made. Straight un-knotted timber of good appearance is used for the revealed pillars; straight timber with small defects is used for the inner pillars. Timber of the finest appearance, even if a little weak, is used for the thresholds, lintels, doors, and [sliding doors](#), and so on. Good strong timber, though it be gnarled and knotted, can always be used discreetly in construction. Timber which is weak or knotted throughout should be used as scaffolding, and later for firewood.

The foreman carpenter allots his men work according to their ability. Floor layers, makers of sliding doors, thresholds and lintels, ceilings and so on. Those of poor ability lay the floor joist, and those of lesser ability carve wedges and do such miscellaneous work. If the foreman knows and deploys his men well the finished work will be good.

The foreman should take into account the abilities and limitations of his men, circulating among them and asking nothing unreasonable. He should know their morale and spirit, and encourage them when necessary. This is the same as the principle of strategy.

The Way of Strategy

[Like a trooper, the carpenter sharpens his own tools](#). He carries his equipment in his toolbox, and works under the direction of his foreman. He makes columns and girders with an axe, shapes floorboards and shelves with a plane, cuts fine openwork and carvings accurately, giving as excellent a finish as his skill will allow. This is the craft of carpenters. When the carpenter becomes skilled and understands measures he can become a foreman

The carpenter's attainment is, having tools which will cut well, to make [small shrines](#), writing shelves, tables, paper lanterns, chopping boards and pot-lids. These are the specialties of the carpenter. Things are similar for the trooper. You ought to think deeply about this.

The attainment of the carpenter is that his work is not warped, that the joints are not misaligned, and that the work is truly planed so that it meets well and is not merely finished in sections. This is essential.

If you want to learn this Way, deeply consider the things written in this book one at a time. You must do sufficient research.

Outline of the Five Books of this Book of Strategy

The Way is shown in [five books](#) concerning different aspects. These are Ground, Water, Fire, Tradition ([Wind](#)), and [Void](#).

The body of the Way of strategy from the viewpoint of my Ichi school is explained in the Ground book. It is difficult to realize the true Way just through sword fencing. Know the smallest things and the biggest things, the shallowest things and the deepest things. As if it were a straight road mapped out on the ground, the first book is called the Ground book.

Second is the Water book. With water as the basis, the spirit becomes like water. Water adopts the shape of its receptacle; it is sometimes a trickle and sometimes a wild sea. Water has a clear blue color. By the clarity, things of Ichi school are shown in this book.

If you master the principles of sword fencing, when you freely beat one man, you beat any man in the world. The spirit of defeating a man is the same for ten million men. The strategist makes small things into big things, like building a great Buddha from one-foot model. I cannot write in detail how this is done. The principle of strategy is having one thing, to know ten thousand things. Things of Ichi school are written in this the Water book.

Third is the Fire book. This book is about fighting. The spirit of fire is fierce, whether the fire is small or big; and so it is with battles. The Way of battles is the same for man to man fights and for ten thousand a side battles. You must appreciate that spirit can become big or small. What is big is easy to perceive: what is small is difficult to perceive. In short, it is difficult for large numbers of men to change position, so their movements can be easily predicted. An individual can easily change his mind, so his movements are difficult to predict. You must appreciate this. The essence of this book is that you must train day and night in order to make quick decisions. In strategy it is necessary to treat training as a part of normal life with your spirit unchanging. Thus combat in battle is described in the Fire book.

Fourthly the Wind book. This book is not concerned with my Ichi school but with other schools of strategy. By Wind I mean old traditions, present-day traditions, and family traditions of strategy. Thus I clearly explain the strategies of the world. This is tradition. It is difficult to know yourself if you do not know others. To all Ways there are sidetracks. If you study a Way daily, and your spirit diverges, you may think you are obeying a good way, but objectively it is not the true Way. If you are following the true Way and diverge a little, this will later become a large divergence. You must realize this. Other strategies have come to be thought of as mere sword fencing, and it is not unreasonable that this should be so. The benefit of my strategy, although it includes sword fencing, lies in a separate principle. I have explained what is commonly meant by strategy in other schools in the Tradition (Wind) book.

Fifthly, the book of the Void. By Void I mean that which has no beginning and no end. Attaining this principle means not attaining the principle. The Way of strategy is the Way of nature. When you appreciate the power of nature, knowing the rhythm of any situation, you will be able to hit the enemy naturally and strike naturally. All this is the Way of the Void. I intend to show how to follow the true Way according to nature in the book of the Void.

The Name Ichi Ryu Ni To (One school - Two swords)

Warriors, both commanders and troopers, carry [two swords](#) at their belt. In olden times these were called the long sword and the sword; nowadays they are known as the sword and the companion sword. Let it suffice to say that in our land, whatever the reason, a warrior carries two swords at his belt. It is the Way of the warrior.

"Nito Ichi Ryu" shows the advantage of using both swords.

The [spear and halberd](#) are weapons that are carried out of doors.