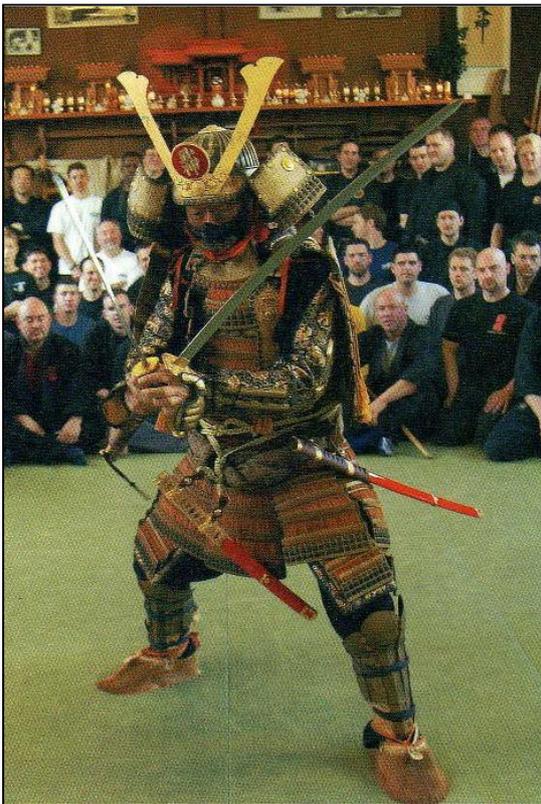


# 幽玄の世界

## Yūgen no Sekai

**Christian J. Petroccello**

During 2004 and 2005, Soke Hatsumi Masaaki talked in his classes about Yūgen no Sekai (The subtle world or the beyond) and also about the San jiggen no Sekai 三次元の世界 concept (The third dimension world).



Soke explained these concepts to understand the subtle world beyond the physical form of techniques.

During these years more techniques with Yoroi (suit of armor) were shown and Soke explained to us that many of these techniques were from the Muromachi period (室町時代 *Muromachi Jidai*), which was a very rich time for the development of the Japanese culture. Because of this, the Bujinkan students started to become aware of the subtle concept of Yūgen as a means to further cherish, understand and savor the Japanese culture.

Soke Masaaki Hatsumi once wrote: *“Without the Spirit of Yūgen, Budo cannot exist. The Japanese culture – including martial arts- was perfected in the Muromachi period (1392-1568),*

*particularly in the last stages. One of its features was that the culture of the common folk, the people’s culture, surpassed that of the nobility, and this newborn incipient culture began to root itself in daily life. The Ikebana flower arrangements, the Sado 茶道 tea ceremony, the Noh theatre 能, the Buyo dance 舞踊, the Sukiya-sukuri architecture 数寄屋造り, the Kare-sansui gardens 枯山水... “Yūgen” is the underlying idea to it all -a world of subtle and dark beauty. For example, the photographs that are out of focus are more attractive because they have more of a*

*“Yūgen quality” to them. If the photographer focuses carefully and obtains a clear picture, in most cases you get an “ordinary” result. That’s why it’s better not to add filters. You could say it’s okay to create walls or barriers. Thinking of this: protections are a necessary part, a requirement for life: filters in photography work in a similar way as protections do”.*



In Chinese philosophical writings, Yūgen means “dark, deep and mysterious”, but the translation of this word depends on the context.

In the Noh theatre, we can find famous Zeami (1363-1443) who describes Yūgen as the “refined elegance” in acting. It also means “a deep and mysterious sense of the beauty of the universe... and the sad beauty of human suffering”. In other writings of Zeami Motokiyo, “Yūgen” refers to the grace and

elegance of the clothing and behavior of the ladies of the court.

The meaning of Yūgen can be seen in the Chinese characters used to write the word. The Yu ideogram 幽 means misty, somber, deep and calm. Gen 玄 means subtle, hidden or dark.

Yūgen relates to the sense of Yohaku no bi: the beauty of emptiness, in the same way silences are appreciated in the making of a beautiful melody in music. This emptiness is related to Taoism, for which emptiness is the useful part of things (in a cup, the crystal is not important, but the emptiness in it).



The appreciation of simple things is expressed as “Wabi”.

In Zen and the classic Kare Sansui gardens, Yūgen is considered to be the subtly deep, suggesting rather than revealing.

Other concepts present in Japanese gardens also connect us to Yūgen, for example, Kanso (simplicity), Shizen (naturalness, unpretentious), Datsuzoku (the importance of conventional) and Seijaku (calm, quiet).



Soke Masaaki Hatsumi does not use force in his techniques, his movements are so unnoticeable that the mind of the beholder cannot understand what has happened. In his teachings, speaking few words, he leaves important messages that awaken the essence of Budo in those who can grasp them. I think that's the clearest level of Yūgen in its highest form in martial arts.

I feel the essence of Budō and Ninpō are hidden deep inside, but they express themselves in the ability of actions. Simple actions that are difficult or impossible to do for many, become true with the Ninpō, and those things that seem obvious become less important.

Yūgen shows us things in a different level, not directly but subtly. Just as many teachings of the Ninpō go unnoticed but have great impact, Yūgen shows that real beauty appears through suggestion, just a few words or some soft paint strokes can suggest what has not been said or shown, and therefore, they can awaken many thoughts and feelings.

## 幽玄の世界

---



© Copyright de Christian J. Petrocello

Tenryū Dōjō - Buenos Aires - Argentina

E mail: [bujintenryudojo@gmail.com](mailto:bujintenryudojo@gmail.com)

Blog: <http://tenryuden.wordpress.com/>

Web Site: [www.bujinkandojo.com.ar](http://www.bujinkandojo.com.ar) Telf. Dojo: (54 11) 4458- 2118