



Sanshin no Kata

JAPAN:

THE LAND OF THE TREE SPIRIT FORM OF THREE HEARTS

Excerpted from Bujin Volume 1 Number 8 (some corrections made)

A monk once said, "Hundreds and thousands of leaves grow from one root". Simply speaking, he was saying that even a giant tree with small branches and thousands of leaves came from one seed. Without the seed no tree will grow. The giant tree depends for its growth on its root system.

I decided to have a chat with a giant tree. The following is the conversation between myself and the tree.

"Hello, Big Tree, how many birthdays have you celebrated?"

"I have no idea. There are so many annual rings in my body I get dizzy counting them!"

"Is that right! Do you remember when you were very small?"

"Yes, I remember eating delicious Nitrogen, Phosphoric Acid and Potassium, all the good stuff that helped me grow this big.

"Well, Great Tree, for martial arts, we have a teaching of the spirit of three hearts – Sanshin No Kata. This teaching is based on the saying that the spirit of a three year old is with a man until he is a hundred years old. We recognize the importance of early childhood and treasure these important years, when one is unaware of ego, independence and consciousness."

"This Sanshin No Kata (form of three hearts) is described in a section of secret teachings of the Gyokko Ryû, which teaches beginners that we have to train ourselves

with the spirit of a three year old, not forgetting the spirit even though they think they accomplish these techniques."

"Wow, what is it, asks the Big Tree?"

"Well, I can demonstrate the Kata for you. This Kata represents the most important feeling as a martial artist. It is a very simple movement, something we do intrinsically and naturally. The basis of Sanshin No Kata is artistic but also very uncomplicated. Your body movement while doing this is quite different from the movements of Kihon Happô."

"There are a total of ten (10) Kata. There are five (5) Kata for the right side of the body and another five (5) for the left. These ten (10) Kata are called the "Shoshin no Kata" (Kata of First Body) in Densho (Book of Teaching). The five (5) Kata are classified as the 5 elements of Nature, which are Earth, Water, Fire, Wind and Sky."

"By training in these Kata, a student begins to recognize the five (5) elements and the truth of Nature."

After I have completed my demonstration my conversation with the tree resumes.

"You are moving very naturally," the tree whispers.

"That's right, I answer. The good point of this Kata is to move naturally and not to make the Kata (forms) intentionally. Every movement is very simple and flows from one form to another."

"I see," said the tree. "Everything should be done simply and naturally. Many of us forget the important point of being simple and natural nowadays. I hear so much about lethal ashes, acid rain, and other air pollution, which is a result of people damaging Nature."

"Sorry, friend Tree, that we have caused all these bad things. That is why I try to introduce Budô to as many people as possible so that we can preserve Nature. I want to make a bigger circle of Buyû (friends of martial arts) who treasure Nature. Budô teaches us to flow with nature not against it."

"If so, we trees can continue to supply you with more oxygen" said the tree.

"Thank you so much, I appreciate your support. There is a lot for me to do, such as making people aware of their destructive actions. And stopping it so that they become better people. My calling also tells me that I must elevate the relationship of an instructor and students to the level of Buyû relationship so that we are all friends, with no one superior or inferior to the other. These things are very difficult to accomplish."

"I can understand your agony, Sôke. As people grow, they tend to change and separate themselves to follow their own way. Animals wean themselves from their parents and leaves fall from us trees. This is natural law. When we grow and find our own identity, we change and depart from the original place where we were nurtured."

"That's so correct, my stately friend. There are four seasons in Japan and we appreciate the beauty of each season. This beauty is especially enhanced at the time of seasonal change. There is sadness and loneliness in the beauty of the seasons. As the seasons change and mature we see their beauty more clearly. Queen Elizabeth once mentioned that nature is beautiful as it changes."

"I agree with you, that the beauty of nature is most apparent when it changes," the tree replies.

"I have often felt that my relationship with students was somewhat unstable. You can compare it with the change of nature. Sometimes our relationship was swept away by a gale of wind. I felt lost then, and became very lonely. I compare these moments with seasons. As autumn is represented with falling leaves, and winter with snow-covered mountains, they are cold and harsh. But the change of scenery comforts my lonely heart. As we admire the

beauty of winter, soon we encounter the budding of new growth on the tree, the sign of coming spring. Before you know it, we grow bigger and another annual ring is added. We have to go through the fall and winter of our life before we can really appreciate spring. Life and nature are very much alike."

"So you just keep going," sighs the understanding tree.

"Exactly. I began to understand when Takamatsu Sensei used to say "Bufû Ikkan" (the consistent way of martial arts). It means that Bufû (the way of martial arts) enfolds different aspects of life just as a year has four seasons and each season has a different wind such as spring wind, summer wind, fall wind and winter wind. Mr. Big Tree, is there anything you are afraid of now that you become so big?"

"I don't like strong wind, but what I really am afraid of is the lightning. You see a lot of men seek a shelter under the big tree, in life. They try to seek favors of a mastermind by flattering him, thinking he too will be as great as their master because he takes care of him. They forget that flattery leads nowhere. And if they continue to seek favors instead of training themselves to be better, they may encounter the archenemy of the big tree, the lightning. The taller the tree is the higher the chance of being attacked by the lightning."

"You have a point there, Tree."

"So some of the big trees grow sideways instead of growing taller. They still are pretty but they are so called, 'street smart' because they won't be targeted by the lightning nearly as often as the tall tree."

"The way of living for the tree and man could be similar," I reply thoughtfully.

"Hatsumi kun, I understand you are Ninja. You can go freely in the world, whereas I am rooted in the ground and have no liberty of movement."

"The truth is the same, Giant Tree. What is most important to man, is his roots. One has to stand firmly on the ground, being nurtured by his roots. The roots provide the truth, which is most important to man. Unless we have roots we can't live a wholesome life."

"I don't understand what you are saying."

"In Eastern medicine, the liver and kidney are considered the key to one's health. If either one of the organs is not functioning properly, one tends to fall ill. In Budô, the key to the wholesome way is to have "Kishin Kigan" (God's heart and God's eye), just like the healthy liver and kidneys are the key to good health."

"So the Ninja has to have a heart of justice and use the right method to fight for justice against evil. The right method comes not only from your will, but also from some natural force. Some may call it God. In order to catch or receive this right method one needs the roots because they work as either earth or antenna. Unless you gain the right method and know how to handle it properly, you won't be a Ninja."

"Takamatsu Sensei gave me a Nanga picture (Chinese style picture) depicting the scenery of late fall, about 30 years ago. The picture brightens my mind every time I see it, as if the sun is shining over me. Surprisingly the picture inspires me to draw. I wonder if I become a true Budôka. (Note: Budôka, like Musashi, was also well known as a great painter.) The picture depicts desolate nature with trees barren of green and golden leaves. I am very happy to know that the relationship between Takamatsu Sensei and myself developed into something that I feel very proud of. We remained closely together as a teacher and a student throughout our relationship and never broke it, and our relationship became more of Buyû. On the contrary, I am saddened when one of my students leaves like an autumn leaf falling from the tree. I remember O'Henry's poem, One Leaf".

I wrote a poem with regard to the tree, hoping that it will nurture your mind and help improve your skill when you train the Shoshin no Kata. Please read the poem below and let it speak to your hearts.

So all of you, friends of Budôkan, please use the Dôjô as it is finished. I am old, and a lonely man. I would be happy living with you, for you can warm me with your warm heart."

THE MESSAGE FROM THE BIG TREE

*A cold wintry wind blows right through me,
and I wonder why I feel so cold inside.*

*Every leaf on the tree wanted to tell me something,
feeling sorry for the change of heart by so many men.*

For some reason, they leave without a word.

A cold wintry day no leaf left on the tree, a bare tree standing heroically by itself.

*"Aren't you cold big tree, without your leaves?"
Yes, but only if I am bare, can more sunshine fall on you."*

The message from the big old tree...
