

## The Dō and Jutsu of Strategic Ethnography: Balancing the way and the art of understanding

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*In Japan, martial arts emerged from a long period of violence. Once warring ceased, philosophical practices formed on this foundation of efficacy. These martial arts are called by names ending in –jutsu (“technique”) and –dō (“way”), respectively. From ethnography’s rich tradition of understanding grew the practical art of understanding as a means to an end. But strip portions of the practice from the way, and problems sprout. For social research to remain relevant, practitioners must strive to embody the essential spirit of ethnography - understanding people. In the martial arts, Dō and Jutsu practiced by masters are identical. In the field of design research, we similarly balance understanding and application to deliver strategic outcomes. However, external factors push this practice to become more predictable and thereby threaten the balance. Using the analogy of Dō and Jutsu in the martial arts, we explore the challenges that strategic ethnography faces today.*

### INTRODUCTION

This is a watershed moment for design research, for design strategy, and for ethnography. As a community of practice, we’ve recently experienced great success and have been able to change, to some extent, how humanity as whole addresses problems. But what’s next for us? In recent discourse among practitioners, there seems to be an air of unease- how do we define what we do? More importantly, how do we do it better?

To this end, we have set out to define the *Way* of ethnography. However, the *Way* of ethnography has a hidden corollary- the *Art* of ethnography. The interplay between these aspects of mastery is our focus, discussed using the concepts of *Dō* and *Jutsu* as embodied by classical Japanese martial arts. Loosely interpreted, *Dō* is the way of a particular practice and *Jutsu* is the set techniques used in that practice. The history, philosophy and practice of martial arts provides a useful lens for understanding what we do and illuminates some of the challenges our field faces today.

The term ethnography has come to mean a wide variety of things, and is basically synonymous with any qualitative research that’s not a focus group. Generally, it implies deeper, more open-ended research techniques, which should take place in the context of the subject’s environment. However, as qualitative research is becoming a *de rigueur* part of basic marketing practice, these distinctions are becoming less and less meaningful. We, the authors of this paper, are not anthropologists. We are design researchers. We are strategists. We are a hybrid breed practicing a craft that is as old and fundamental as it is new and undefined. Our techniques, philosophies and perspectives are based on

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many different applied and academic theories, but to be sure they have been honed in the field of practice. This analysis is intended not as an academic work, but as a means of initiating dialogue.

As the international community of researchers, we use ethnography as a means to an end and increasingly, we are being asked to focus on the ends to the point where our processes may start to break down. Researchers are trying to get just as deep in half the time, or maybe 75% as deep in 25% of the time. To paraphrase Patrick Whitney and Vijay Kumar, the promise of new methods and techniques is to be *Faster, Cheaper, Deeper*, but there is a niggling worry that we might be losing sight of what makes Ethnography so interesting and useful. Understanding how masters of classical martial arts have integrated underpinning technique and overarching philosophy can help us do the same for our craft.

Tireless practice, deep knowledge, rigor and attention to detail are all imperative for mastery in the practice of ethnography. However, many of the techniques and methodologies of design research as it is currently practiced are pointless elaborations- either dogmatically inflexible processes or fatuously meaningless gimmicks. In short, there is an immanent danger of procedurizing design research in the name of effective Jutsu to the point where we cannot practice Dō. This could result in a process-focused practice, mired by preconceived notions of outcomes based on corporate environment that we inhabit.

Recently, Design Concepts embarked on a global strategic development project concerning diagnostic laboratories. Many of the people interviewed were high-ranking directors and executives, and very important customers to our direct clients. When visiting a consumer participant in their suburban home, it's easy to play the part of a naive and affable person who needs to be educated; in fact, much research calls for this type of approach. But it became apparent that this sort of behavior unsettled our clients- though the participants didn't seem to mind. Looking at the situation through their shoes revealed that it wasn't just a research project, it was also a very important high-level customer interaction. This meant that, in addition to getting the information needed, the team had to leave the end customer feeling like our clients were up to some really great work, driving home the point that the whole strategy and development of solutions was going to be built solidly on the end customer's needs. We weren't just studying them, we were also making a very important impression. So when we answered questions decisively, or even anticipated them, were we practicing bad ethnography? Was the technique flawed? On the contrary, smiling and nodding would have been less empathetic and ultimately less useful. To embody the Dō of ethnography, we had to set our notions of Jutsu aside.

Ethnography is more than watching people for an hour, or asking open-ended questions. The true Way of ethnography is to understand people in an empathetic and useful way- the techniques used are secondary. The Way of ethnography is the path of open understanding. This Dō is characterized by constant questioning, deep empathy, and an awareness of one's perspective. The Dō of ethnography is the Dō of understanding people.

## DŌ AND JUTSU

Understanding and reconciling the concepts of *Dō* and *Jutsu* in order to better understand mastery in the field of design research is the central purpose of this paper. These terms have rather fluid definitions and are used differently across the world and in different communities. *Dō* and *Jutsu* do not apply exclusively to the martial arts, but the themes of mastery and clarity make the analogy to design research a particularly powerful case.

### Dō and Jutsu in the Martial Arts

In the taxonomy of Japanese martial arts, there is a clear distinction between *Koryū* (lit. “Old School”) and *Gendai Budō* (“Modern Martial Way”). In ancient times, Japan was embroiled in intermittent violence, both from internal and external conflicts. Pragmatic fighting arts developed through iterative refinement and combat. These *Koryū* arts carry the suffix *-jutsu*, meaning technique or art. So *Kenjutsu* is sword technique, *Kyūjutsu* is archery technique, *Iaijutsu* is quick-draw technique and so on and so forth<sup>1</sup>. In the more modern age, once warring had ceased, more overtly philosophical practices formed on this foundation of ruthlessly effective technique. These arts carry the suffix *-dō*, meaning Way or path. Even in modern days, this distinction persists.

*Dō* and *Jutsu* are not opposites. In fact, they are intertwined in masterful practice of the way. Many ancient martial arts are still practiced today, not to perfect the technique of killing, but rather to experience personal growth and philosophical learning. By practicing and studying *Kenjutsu*, warriors embodied *Bushido*. All of the martial arts, but *Swordplay* and *Archery* in particular, have long been characterized by a close tie to *Zen* philosophy and the pursuit of enlightenment. The goal of *Zen* is personal. Enlightenment in *Zen* doesn’t come as a radical change; it is simply realization of the nature of ordinary life. This emphasis on clarity and understanding makes the analogy to the Way of ethnography doubly apt.

### Dō and Jutsu in Strategic Ethnography

By “strategic ethnography” is ethnography executed as a means to an end. In design research, both the aspects of both *Jutsu* and *Dō* are necessary ingredients for success. Before we grasp the Way of ethnography, we learn and practice the Art. The *Jutsu* of ethnography is practical and pragmatic reality of practicing this art. When a researcher looks at a project plan and comments that there isn’t enough time budgeted for translation or recruiting, that is the *Jutsu* of ethnography. When an interviewer use their participant’s words to describe the topic at hand (even if technically incorrect), that is the *Jutsu* of ethnography. The *Dō* is a different thing entirely. Only through extensive practice does the *Dō* emerge. When a consultant feels the need to advocate for common people in the face of a predatory business opportunity, that is a glimpse of this *Dō*. When empathetic understanding is so

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<sup>1</sup> *Ken* meaning sword, *Kyū* meaning bow and *Iai* roughly translated to mean “mental presence and immediate reaction.”

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deep that the underlying nature of a person or interaction is understood personally, that is a taste of the Dō of ethnography.

Unfortunately, most ethnographers are not retained as philosophers or otherwise left to pursue this path purely. The profession of design research is similar to the lot of the tiny bird who cleans the alligator’s teeth. As practitioners, our goal is not simply to better ourselves through the pursuit of this path. Generally, the profession is driven by a separate goal which could be seen as lofty or mundane-to change things. This means that on the path of strategic ethnography, we must have an impact. Results must be produced. To meet these seemingly disparate goals of pragmatism and enlightenment, a balance must be struck between Dō and Jutsu. Err in the direction of Dō and efforts become irrelevant and useless, with no foundation in reality. Tip towards Jutsu and the magic of the work will be stifled, resulting in uninspiring, predictable and flawed outcomes that miss the mark entirely. Mastery of this way is elusive and dynamic.

### Miyamoto Musashi and “The Book of Five Rings”

To understand mastery, we don’t need to look far to find a perfect example in the pantheon of the martial arts. Miyamoto Musashi (1584 – 1645) is arguably the greatest swordsman to have ever lived. He was a wandering *Ronin*, (masterless samurai), who, in his quest for mastery, initiated staggering numbers of famous duels from which he invariably emerged the victor. In later life, he created recognized masterpieces of ink painting and calligraphy. He has been romanticized and imagined countless times in prints, novels, manga, television and film. His true legacy, however, is one of the most essential works on martial arts, strategy, and Zen: *Go Rin No Sho* (“The Book of Five Rings”). It has been referred to not only in the world of martial arts, but also in the practice of business. In the text, dictated to a pupil near the end of his life, Musashi lays out his “guide for men who want to learn strategy.” Interestingly enough, Musashi begins his treatise by drawing an analogy between the way of the warrior and the way of the carpenter (or architect). We’re essentially doing the reverse, comparing the way of the ethnographer to that of the strategist.<sup>2</sup>

The sword arts that Musashi practiced and wrote about place him squarely in the *Koryū* distinction of martial arts, and to be sure, much of his writing is about specifics of *Kenjutsu* technique. Interestingly, one of the main points of his work is that techniques, while important, are merely trappings of the way. He goes to great lengths to point out that dwelling on technical concerns is actually antithetical to his Way.

“The true value of sword-fencing cannot be seen within the confines of sword-fencing technique.”  
- Musashi

<sup>2</sup> Musashi’s book speaks in terms of with *beicho*, or military strategy, but has implications for other strategies as well.

In the ultimate statement of the irrelevance of tools, Musashi began to fight all of his duels, including his most famous and celebrated<sup>3</sup> with a *bokken* (wooden sword), or even a crude stick. He was never defeated. So here we have the most famous and successful swordsman in history saying that techniques are essentially unimportant. Instead of dwelling on complex strategies or elaborate schemes, Musashi had no fear of death and struck his opponents down with pure intention. After training himself to a high level of capability in basic, essential techniques, he relentlessly pursued the heart of strategy.

## CONSIDERING THE IMPORTANCE OF JUTSU

While it may not be easy to say that Jutsu is unimportant compared to Dō, it is an attractively simple point of view. However, Jutsu is the aspect of our craft that makes it real. Techniques are the means by which we teach newcomers, refine our practice, and explain what we do to outsiders. As the community of practice, we must push our Jutsu forward by improving how we execute our craft and creating new tools. The danger is that we will sacrifice too much in the name of productivity, predictability and repeatability. We must avoid fixation on techniques, myopic focus and a narrow definition of success.

### Techniques Help Novices Learn

Techniques have names and procedural instructions, and sometimes even exist within codifying frameworks to organize and relate them to one another. These signifiers make them easier to teach to newcomers and explain to outsiders. There are many specific techniques in the martial arts. For example, Kenjutsu Ryu have certain attitudes or postures (“*kamae*”) in which to stand, and certain ways to hold the sword. Beginners learn details first- in the Katori Shinto Ryu, establishing three points of contact (left hand, hilt, right hand) between the head and sword in a high attitude ensures a quick and true cut. The student first learns simply to touch the sword to his head- the “why” comes later. Ethnography is very similar, though the techniques are generally less well defined than in the martial case.

When taking uninitiated clients out in the field, it’s handy to give them concrete techniques and rules to use and follow. It’s good to tell someone to see the world “with the eyes of a child” but in practice, do’s and don’ts (“Make eye contact.” “Trust your question and wait two seconds”) are more useful. These concrete tools provide a shared metric for the teacher (i.e. the ethnographer) and the novice (i.e. the client or initiate) to evaluate and hone performance. As consultants, having codified techniques with proven efficacy allows us to short circuit dissident process conversations and get down to work as a unified team.

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<sup>3</sup> The duel at Ganryu Island. Musashi defeated his most formidable opponent, Sasaki Kojiro, a young swordsman famous for a specific technique, “the turning swallow cut” with a bokken he fashioned out of a spare oar while being ferried to the duel.

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### Techniques Help Us Build Best Practices

Concrete techniques can be honed by a group of people through continued refinement, leading to powerful results. Freestyle practice may be very effective, but it is difficult to pass on to the next generation for further improvement. In the martial arts, this took the form of teachings passed down and improved through generations, resulting in a powerful practice that probably couldn't be developed by an individual<sup>4</sup>.

To a community of practice, techniques are very important. In a way, they should be the language that we speak to one another. When pressed to determine what's next for design research, many people would say “methods won't save us.” However, when promising new tools like internet-enabled ethnography or combined qualitative and quantitative analytics are mentioned, we take notice. It should be clear to anyone working in this field that there is still much room to improve our tools and practices. However, some of these infatuations with tools are tantamount to getting excited over a pencil and notebook.

### Techniques Help Us Explain to Outsiders

Techniques might be the surface of the way, or a stepping stone for beginners to find the truth, but they help us explain the hard-to-grasp Dō in a way that is easy for outsiders to understand. Importantly, clients need to have some idea of what we're going to do before they can invest resources and trust in our way.

As a design researcher, I'm constantly struggling to succinctly explain what I do to people outside of the field. I think my parents have finally gotten the gist of it, but when a stranger asks “what do you do?” I hunker down for a long conversation. Part of the reason for this is that there's no set of commonly understood terms. Hence, the ostensible need for a Design Research canon. Armed with a shared terminology, we can establish ourselves as a mature field and an area of study, and better integrate into the mainstream, the rationale goes. A look at other fields (Economics, or Olympic Fencing, for example) shows this pattern. A set of techniques, well-thought-through Jutsu, would help us explain what we do to outsiders and improve our craft in aggregate. So why hasn't it happened?

Musashi saw the proliferation of the different “branded” techniques of his day<sup>5</sup> as meaningless dwelling on details, intended only to dazzle. In his defense, he defeated many of the acknowledged masters of his time. He writes:

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<sup>4</sup> There are many legends of martial teachings being handed down from heaven or developed by a single individual. In practice, most of these methods have most likely honed by progressive authorship.

<sup>5</sup> During Musashi's lifetime Japan shifted from a period of civil war to the more socially rigid, if more peaceful, era of consolidated Tokugawa rule. The samurai class, formerly so important in the necessary business of doing war, started to become irrelevant. By this time there were many different professional schools of Kenjutsu, which competed to sell their services to various noble houses.

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“Recently, there have been people getting on in the world as strategists, but they are usually just sword-fencers ...If we look at our world, we see arts for sale. Men use equipment to sell their 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 are looking for profit.”

By this he means that certain “strategists” are concentrating on the visible, outer aspects of the Way to the detriment of its core. Harsh words, indeed. We argue similarly that while there are many different pockets of expertise and ways of doing things, much of the differentiation of methods we see today is just that- differentiation. We’re all engaging in the same basic activity. But as consultants, we need to stand out from one another. Just like esoteric sects of Kenjutsu, we need to keep our techniques secret so they’ll be effective in battle. Certain Jujutsu Ryuha<sup>6</sup> went as far as developing secret deceptive weapons<sup>7</sup> and proprietary techniques exist in almost every school of Kenjutsu. A graphic example is a certain means of puncturing the abdomen which arrests the target’s forward motion due to a physiological reflex. This facilitates a unique means of fighting because the swordsman armed with this proprietary knowledge can put himself in what would otherwise be an unfavorable situation and still emerge the victor.

In the past it might have been in our interest to obscure (perhaps not intentionally) the meat of what we’re doing from our clients, to keep the process under our control. The curtain is up now, but it seems that each consultancy still needs to have a different opinion and set of terms in order to differentiate themselves to potential patrons, leading to a confusing array of terms, techniques and methods. While transparency could build a

### Ultimately, Results are What Counts

For techniques in martial arts or ethnography, it’s not novelty or variety that’s important. Rather, the efficacy of the technique applied is what counts. Bruce Lee famously said: “*I fear not the man who has practiced 10,000 kicks once, but I fear the man who has practiced one kick 10,000 times.*” We should use straightforward techniques and execute them well.

In Akira Kurosawa’s masterpiece of pop samurai fiction, *Yojimbo*, Toshiro Mifune plays a destitute but clever rōnin who comes to a town divided by two criminal gangs and plays them against one another to free the town. While the analogy doesn’t cast our client collaborators in the best light, the following scene illustrates an important point. Mifune first arrives in the town, literally starving to death and looking to sell his services as a swordsman. A villager tells him that if he wants to impress

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<sup>6</sup> *Ryuba*- a smaller offshoot of a larger school, or *Ryu*.

<sup>7</sup> *Shikomibuki* fall into two classes- weapons disguised as inconspicuous objects (such as a dirk concealed inside a tobacco case) and weapons with special secret features, such as a fighting staff with a concealed spearhead or chain.

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the bosses, he'll lop off an arm or two. Mifune finishes his meal, gets in a squabble with some of the thugs and soon he's killed two men and taken the arm of a third. He is hired shortly thereafter.

This is how we convince stakeholders we can get the job done- by doing it. Describing specific techniques we may use to address a project is helpful, but nothing beats an undeniable case study. However, the “process” behind any case study often gets converted into jargon-riddled consultant speak and the glimmer of Dō fades. We need clearer language that can communicate to outsiders both the efficacy of our Jutsu and the depth of our Dō. We must be grounded in practical interests and focused on application, but with an openness and affability for the process that preserves the underlying spirit of understanding. The lack of a shared canon is an impediment to the mainstream legitimacy of our field, but perhaps that's how we want it. Like the sword master, the ethnographer is an outsider.

## BUILDING UP TO DŌ

Dō is what we are after- it is our path, our way. Unlike Jutsu, Dō is not a means to an end, but an end in and of itself. By utilizing Jutsu, by going through the practice, actions start to build greater meaning. When practice becomes a *Way*, the practitioner becomes an expression of some deeper truth.

“... making gardens, doing flower arrangements, or making tea, all had, at one time, a simple practical orientation...there were people who practiced these crafts masterfully. In their simple commonplace acts, refined to a high degree through practice, these virtuosi began to experience a deeper sense of purpose. They found that the simple movements of their body, the design of space, the forms they created and tools they employed, all seemed to fall naturally into a kind of harmonious perfection. Instead of ending up with just a cup of hot tea on a cold day (for example), these adepts experienced some deeper sense of reality, of humanity, of life.”

-Jeff Brooks

And so we should strive to uncover the Dō of ethnography. This Way is characterized by practicality, understanding, openness, awareness of perspective, and empathy. It means seeing to the heart of things. When ethnography is practiced in this way, the best possible project outcomes result. Perhaps we can even learn about ourselves in the process. The depth of understanding that we come to will be deeper and more poignant than the simple sum of the data that we've gathered.

## Moving Beyond Technique

After hard training, repetitive practice and personal learning, the master moves beyond technique. Dō then exists as something that cannot be approximated or replicated by steps taken. The practice moves beyond the technical accomplishment.

“In the case of Archery, the hitter and the hit are no longer two opposing objects, but are one reality. The archer ceases to be conscious of himself as the one who



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is engaged on hitting the bull's eye which confronts him. This state of unconsciousness is realized only when completely empty and rid of the self, **he becomes one with the perfecting of his technical skill, though there is in it something of a quite different order which cannot be obtained by any progressive study of the art...**

-Eugen Herrigel, *Zen in the Art of Archery*

For the true master of ethnography, just like the master of kenjutsu, there is no set agenda. Perfectly appropriate techniques emerge out of thin air to meet the needs of the Way. This notion was embodied by Bruce Lee's version of a codified martial art, Jeet Kune Do. Thirty years after his death, a version of this art is still practiced today. However, the foundational notion of JKD is that it is a “form without form.” It is perfectly fluid, and therefore perfectly appropriate for any situation. At the 2010 Design research Conference, Rick Robinson hinted at an ethnographic praxis based on a similar principal of absolute flexibility. However, there's a catch. If you're not Bruce Lee or Rick Robinson, You had better have a pretty ample Jutsu toolbox. This sort of absolute statement is perfect in principle, but it only works in practice if the one implementing it is a master versant in a wide range of disciplines, approaches, and techniques.

While it is less and less common given the current climate, an ethnography project that swings too far in the Dō direction can fail just as surely as an overly pragmatic one. Insights can be too deep if they don't match the solution scope of the project. A researcher once joked: “if you dig deep enough, identity and safety come up in every project.” Surely, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, or more refined frameworks (such as Systems Logics framework popularized by Jump Associates) attempt to codify insights by level and correlate them to outcomes. Regardless, almost any researcher has overstepped this bound and supplied insights that are true, very interesting, and not at all useful. It's important to adhere to the Dō of strategic ethnography without losing sight of concrete goals.

### **Dō Infuses Everything the Master Does**

Dō is not just a simple act- if we look to a master, the Dō of his/her practice infuses nearly everything they do. Even when the tea has been put away, the master of Chadō is still a master. Practitioners of martial arts in particular have known for a long time that rigorous study and practice in the art of fighting can have beneficial effects in almost every sphere of one's life. The mental clarity required to release an arrow with true intention, or to blend the motion of your sword with an opponent's is a gift that travels with you. It helps you confront everyday problems and...see to the heart of things.

If we extend this concept to Ethnography, we start to see all the places where the Dō of understanding people comes in to play, outside of field research. In our interactions with our clients and collaborators, as well as our understanding of people and systems of people that we may have never met, the Dō of understanding people should be present.

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“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 a one foot model.”

- *Musashi*

### The Dō of Ethnography Outside of Research

Part of mastery is embodying the Way outside of the realm of technique. When we widen the scope of our Way to understand users, clients and collaborators we create powerful outcomes. From a Jutsu perspective, in-home, in-depth interviews are the technical basis for many of the techniques we use. While the situation is quite simple compared to others we might encounter, this creates a setting for truly deep, personal connection. Like Musashi’s scalable strategy, the spirit of understanding a single person or a whole corporation is the same, embodying principles of openness, questioning and empathy.

Understanding clients as people is one of the most important tools a consultant ethnographer can have. The consultant lives and dies by this craft, but it is true for anyone with stakeholders and sponsors. Simply putting ourselves in our client’s shoes can change how we approach our work. Understanding our collaborators is important as well, especially when their part in the process gives them a different view. In multi-disciplinary teams, we often find ourselves doing research and Ethnography along side people without a background in these activities. Some folks will have the knack for it and others won’t, but it is our responsibility to guide the experience for our collaborators. Researchers also need to empathize, most importantly, with anyone who is adjacent in the design process, either before or after. Ideally, the development process is not a linear one with discrete phases owned by separate disciplines, but sometimes this is the simple reality of things. Knowing how our teammates see the world and the project, as well as what’s expected from them, will help us empower those teammates and create the best possible outcome. I’m talking about research getting along with design. I’m talking about engineering loving research. I’m talking about phrasing research outputs not as hard and fast rules that are the mysterious outcome of some opaque process, but rather intriguing riddles for designers to solve and rational directions with transparent logic behind them for engineers to explore.

### To the Master, Dō and Jutsu are One

In martial arts and ethnography alike, the way and the art are intertwined. Only through rigorous practice of specific techniques do we see beyond technique and understand the true nature of the Way. For the master, Jutsu and Dō are one and the same. The expert Zen archer, solemnly releasing arrows in a peaceful garden, looks in some ways identical to the expert archer in battle, loosing arrows towards the enemy. Meaning is endowed through practice. There are failure modes associated with both Dō and Jutsu- to achieve success in applied ethnography for design, we need to balance both aspects and keep the kernel intact. When we err in the Dō direction, we spend too much time and effort and our

deep understanding isn't useful or applicable in design outcomes. When we err in the Jutsu direction, we limit our thinking based on preconceived notions and the task at hand.

So how do we balance these aspects? Practically speaking, we need to focus on technical mastery and best practices when applicable and leave ourselves open to ambiguity when necessary. Knowing when to be abstract and unconstrained versus when to be concrete and focused is part of the unquantifiable expertise that defines our craft.

### CONCLUSION

The most meaningful similarity between these Zen martial arts and ethnography is the emphasis placed on seeing the true nature of things. As ethnographers and design researchers, that's exactly what we've been brought in to do. Musashi argues, along with many other notable Zen scholars that this is the fundamental essence of the way. In the fifth and final book of *Go Rin No Sho*, (The Book of The Void), Musashi lays out the fundamental aspect of his Way, relating it back to nature:

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.

This could be taken to mean that all Ways are offshoots of one Way- they aren't artifacts created by people, but rather expressions of an underlying natural order. Perhaps the Way of ethnography is not so hard to grasp after all. If we set out to simply, deeply, understand people, we can have a real impact on the world and preserve our craft. We've got to be pragmatic and idealistic at the same time. When the Dō and Jutsu and of strategic ethnography are in balance, the Way of understanding is realized.

As a parting thought, Musashi offers up 9 “broad principles” to those pursuing the Way of strategy, all oddly pertinent to those pursuing the Way of understanding.

1. Do not think dishonestly.
2. The Way is in training.
3. Become acquainted with every art.
4. Know the ways of all professions.
5. Distinguish between gain and loss in worldly matters.
6. Develop intuitive judgment and understanding for everything.
7. Perceive those things which cannot be seen.
8. Pay attention even to trifles.
9. Do nothing which is of no use.

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