

The Art of Endurance.

Review from [bujin](#) about [Ninjutsu](#), 15.07.03

Advantages For ANYBODY of any size, gender, etc, Effective techniques IF you learn them correctly, Interesting history too!

Disadvantages Many poor instructors

Summary:

Well. It's time for a review. And what better subject than my "hobby" of Ninjutsu?

Or, more appropriately, Bujinkan Budo Taijutsu.

"What's the difference?" I hear you ask! Well, up until 1995, the art was called Bujinkan Ninjutsu. However, this was an inaccurate term.

The Bujinkan is comprised of nine traditional Japanese martial schools, as follows:

Togakure Ryu Ninpo Taijutsu (Ninjutsu)
Kukishinden Ryu Happo Hiken
Shinden Fudo Ryu Dakentaijutsu
Takagi Yoshin Ryu Jutaijutsu
Gyokko Ryu Koshijutsu
Koto Ryu Koppojutsu
Gikan Ryu Koppojutsu
Kumogakure Ryu Ninjutsu
Gyokushin Ryu Ninjutsu

As you can see, even though we learn techniques from nine schools, only three of those were ninjutsu schools. So the name was changed to reflect the fact that we learn more than just ninjutsu while training in the Bujinkan.

So what is this "Bujinkan" that I keep referring to?

The Bujinkan is the name of the organisation that comprises these nine schools. It is headed by Dr. Masaaki Hatsumi of Noda City, Japan. Soke (headmaster) Hatsumi is the official headmaster of the last three authentic Ninjutsu schools in existence, the oldest of which (the Togakure Ryu) dates back to the 1180s. He learned these schools from Toshitsugu Takamatsu, the last combat ninja who died in 1972. It is after Takamatsu that the Bujinkan is named. (Bujinkan means "House of the Divine Warrior").

So what does the martial art entail?

Budo Taijutsu is unlike most martial arts. It doesn't rely on strength. It doesn't rely on speed. It doesn't rely on power. What it DOES rely on is a good sense of distancing, timing, balance and rhythm. These abilities are learned through the basic footwork drills in the Sanshin No Kata and the basic techniques of the Kihon Happo.

Again, unlike some other martial arts, emphasis is not on learning the techniques themselves, but the principles behind them. This allows the practitioner to learn to flow from one technique to another easily. In a real life combat situation, things rarely go to plan. There's a famous saying - "no plan survives first contact with the enemy". It's a

vital skill to learn to flow because if you expect things to go your way and they don't, you may pause for that vital moment, allowing your opponent to win.

Training in Bujinkan Taijutsu includes all major weapons of the feudal Japanese period - katana, naginata, yari, kyoketsu-shoge, shuriken, tanto, bo, hanbo, etc... I hear many people ask the question "why bother learning all these old weapons - nobody uses them these days!" Firstly, I say to them "just do a search on the BBC News site for "samurai sword"". It's amazing how many news stories it throws up! Secondly, I say that again, we're not learning sword techniques, yari techniques, bo techniques, etc. We're learning principles of movement while using weapons. They can all be adapted for ANY weapon, including modern day pistols and rifles. Learning weapons techniques helps to perfect your taijutsu.

Now. There IS a downside.

Back in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the world went through a "ninja boom". This was when Ninjutsu was first brought outside of Japan. Many martial arts instructors set themselves up as Ninja Masters, even though they'd never learned ninjutsu. Thankfully, that phase has now passed (more or less!).

However, there are still many teachers out there who don't really understand what they're teaching (I certainly don't claim to, but then I'm not a teacher - thankfully, my teacher seems pretty clued up on it!). In the past few years, the number of shidoshi (licensed teachers) has grown, but nowhere near all of them deserve to be teachers.

There is no set ranking system in the Bujinkan. The only rank where you have to do a set thing is for the 5th dan test. The so-called "sakki test" involves either Dr. Hatsumi (or now one of the highest level shihan (master instructors)) to stand behind you with a shinai (bamboo training sword - they're not TOTALLY sadistic! ;o). You kneel down facing away. At an unspecified time, he cuts at your head. All you have to do is not get hit.

Unfortunately, while many people have taken and passed this test, rank is still no genuine show of ability. Some of the instructors I've seen have really bad taijutsu. Having said that, there are a lot of good ones out there too.

So the bottom line is FIND A GOOD INSTRUCTOR! Do a little digging to find out what people think of an instructor before deciding whether or not to train with him/her!

Anyway. I've gone on far too long with this review.

Suffice to say that in my experience, Bujinkan Budo Taijutsu is an extremely effective martial art. But it's one that you've got to be dedicated to. Training shouldn't just be twice a week in the dojo (that's why I enclosed "hobby" in inverted commas at the top of this review). You should apply the principles you learn in the dojo to everyday life. (That doesn't mean start throwing people around in the street - we learn a lot more than just how to beat people up!!! ;o)

If you find the right instructor and are prepared to put in the time and effort, Bujinkan Budo Taijutsu is an extremely rewarding martial art.