

【研究資料】

## The last words of Miyamoto Musashi

### — An attempt to translate his “Dokkôdô” —

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**Abstract:** The “Dokkôdô” is the last handwritten manuscript by Miyamoto Musashi. Due to its aphoristic style it is often quoted and used to illustrate his thinking as well as his way of life, it has however until now not been intensively, thematically dealt with, so that the interpretation of several verses is still contradictory, which often leads to misunderstandings. In order to improve this situation we have initially tried to interpret all words in each verse as literally as possible, then from here to form a sentence under consideration of its grammatical as well as its historical context and finally to present the entire translation of the “Dokkôdô”. The author hopes that this small contribution may become an inspiration for further discussion, which could lead us to a deeper understanding of Musashi’s truth.

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**Key words:** Miyamoto Musashi, Dokkôdô, Gorin-no-Sho, Samurai, Heihô, Way

#### Foreword

Seven days before his death MIYAMOTO Musashi<sup>\*1</sup> called his friends and his best students to his house where he bade them farewell and gave them mementos. TERAO Magonojô received two significant documents, namely “*Gorin-no-Sho (A Book of Five Rings)*”<sup>\*2</sup> and the “*Dokkôdô*”. The former was lost in the course of time and exists only in the form of handwritten copies, which contain a good number variations and mistakes, but the original Dokkôdô document has survived to this day; its authenticity has been confirmed by critical graphological assessment. In *Gorin-no-Sho* Musashi deals primarily with the character of his *Niten-Ichi-Ryû-School* in a concrete sense e.g. his own practical martial art and its generic significance; the *Dokkôdô* on the other hand, deals with the ideas that lie behind it, or better his life’s philosophy in a few short aphoristic sentences. The fact that Musashi gave both documents into the hands of one single person leads us to the assumption that knowledge and understanding of both documents are essential in order to attain complete mastery of his school.

For this reason the *Dokkôdô* has always been held in high regard in the *Noda-ha*, one of the two orthodox lines of the *Niten-Ichi-Ryû-School*<sup>\*3</sup> that exist to the present day, as basic text for the practice of the school. Due to the fact that until the beginning of the 20th century it was in the possession of a single family, its existence and content was not widely known, until in the year 1909 a comprehensive book about Musashi edited on the basis of historical studies was published<sup>\*4</sup>, in which it was introduced in the “general introduction” as a document that reveals his true character to us.

This book was long regarded as the standard work for the study of Musashi, but was however also the source of a number problems. For example, it tells us that the *Dokkôdô* only consists of 19 verses, although a photograph of the original with 21 verses is shown in its appendix<sup>\*5</sup>. Not only that it changes at will the order of the verses, inter-

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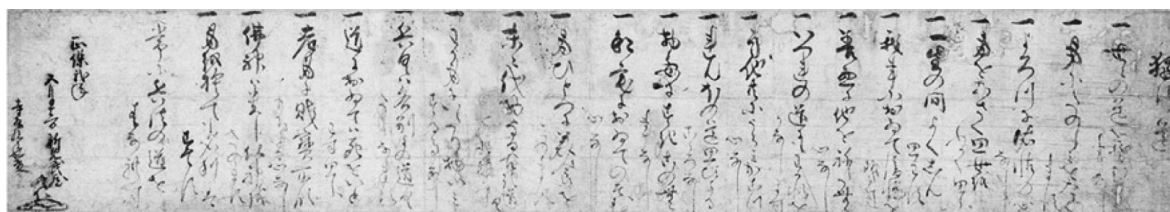
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prets the text imprecisely and displays considerable omissions. Apart from the number of verses, we are still under its strong influence, there is no consensus of opinion with regard to the punctuation of the sentences, the semantics of the historical vocabulary and especially the resulting interpretation of a number of verses and for this reason there has been no exhaustive translation into the English or the German language\*6.

It is always difficult to translate an aphoristic text, especially when it deals with such thoughts that stem from personal activity and experience and due to their strong connection to these actions, without them for themselves alone lose their meaning. This is the case with the Dokkôdô. In order to get closer to his thoughts, the interpreter should experience at first hand as closely as possible that which Musashi himself experienced, this means not only reading all his writings, but also practical training in conformity with his teachings, then as is often pointed out in "A Book of Five Rings" the truth of thought can only be reached by uninterrupted training. The truth that each individual unveils varies according to the level attained, but is however, uniquely in context with the individual absolutely true. So is it perhaps not without significance that the author, a student of the Niten-Ichi-Ryû-School, should attempt, on the basis of his present understanding and in anticipation of future improvement, here a translation of the Dokkôdô.

## I. Presentation of the Dokkôdô Text

### A: The Original



\*The original is in possession of the Prefectural Museum of Art in Kumamoto.

\*It is written with ink on Japanese paper 16,8 cm × 97,3 cm.

\*The 21 verses are all written in two lines.

\*On the left below, between the last three lines is a square red stamp with the two characters "二天 (Niten)" that form part of Musashi's monk name "二天道楽 (Niten-dôroku)".

\*The size and thickness of the characters of the last four lines vary from those in the preceding part, they are however obviously both in the same handwriting. This leads us to believe that these lines were added to the existing text shortly before it was handed over.

### B: From the original deciphered text (horizontally arranged)

\*The slash "/" indicates where a paragraph is set in the individual verses.

\*As in the original the old writing style is used.

\*For stylistic reasons certain identical words appear sometimes in Chinese characters and sometimes in Japanese ("我"="わが", "心"="こゝろ", "捨"="すて").

\*For this text the verses are assigned the digits (1)–(21), the remaining five lines the letters [a]–[e].

獨行道.....[a]

- 一 世々の道をそむく／事なし.....(1)
- 一 身にたのしみをたく／まず.....(2)
- 一 よろずに依怙の心／なし.....(3)
- 一 身をあさく思世を／ふかく思ふ.....(4)
- 一 一生の間よくしん／思はず.....(5)
- 一 我事におみて後悔を／せず.....(6)

- 一 善悪に他をねたむ／心なし.....(7)  
 一 いづれの道にもわかれを／かなしませ.....(8)  
 一 自他共にうらみかこつ／心なし.....(9)  
 一 れんぼの道思ひよる／こゝろなし.....(10)  
 一 物毎にすきこのむ／事なし.....(11)  
 一 私宅におゐてのぞむ／心なし.....(12)  
 一 身ひとつに美食を／このまず.....(13)  
 一 末々代物なる古き道具／所持せず.....(14)  
 一 わが身にいたり物いみ／する事なし.....(15)  
 一 兵具は各別よの道具／たしなまず.....(16)  
 一 道におゐては死をいと／はず思ふ.....(17)  
 一 老身に財宝所領／もちゆる心なし.....(18)  
 一 仏神は貴し仏神を／たのまず.....(19)  
 一 身を捨てても名利は／すてず.....(20)  
 一 常に兵法の道を／はなれず.....(21)
- 正保貳年.....[b]  
 五月十二日 新免武蔵.....[c]  
                   玄信（花押）.....[d]  
                   寺尾孫之丞殿.....[e]

## C: Transcript in Latin Script (with macrons “^”)

\*The character “一” was often used in earlier times to emphasize individual concise items. It derives from the number “one” and is read “hitotsu”. In order to concentrate on the pure content of each verse, this word is not translated in the following text.

\*Each verse and nouns begin with capitals.

\*The old pronunciation of certain words is no longer known. For this reason they appear here in present day form.

- Dokkôdô.....[a]
- Hitotsu: Yoyo no Michi o somuku / Koto nashi.....(1)  
 Hitotsu: Mi ni Tanoshimi o taku / ma-zu.....(2)  
 Hitotsu: Yorozu ni Eko no Kokoro / nashi.....(3)  
 Hitotsu: Mi o asaku omoi Yo o / fukaku omou.....(4)  
 Hitotsu: Isshō no Aida Yokushin / omowa-zu.....(5)  
 Hitotsu: Waga-Koto nioite Kōkai o / se-zu.....(6)  
 Hitotsu: Zen-Aku ni Ta o netamu / Kokoro nashi.....(7)  
 Hitotsu: Izure no Michi nimo Wakare o / kanashima-zu.....(8)  
 Hitotsu: Ji-Ta tomoni urami kakotsu / Kokoro nashi.....(9)  
 Hitotsu: Rembo no Michi omoiyoru / Kokoro nashi.....(10)  
 Hitotsu: Mono goto ni Suki konomu / Koto nashi.....(11)  
 Hitotsu: Shitaku nioite nozomu / Kokoro nashi.....(12)  
 Hitotsu: Mi Hitotsu ni Bishoku o / konoma-zu.....(13)  
 Hitotsu: Suezue Shiromono naru furuki Dōgu / Shoji se-zu.....(14)  
 Hitotsu: Waga-Mi ni itari Monoimi / suru Koto nashi.....(15)  
 Hitotsu: Heigu wa Kakubetsu Yo no Dōgu / tashinama-zu.....(16)

- Hitotsu: Michi nioite wa Shi o ito / wa-zu omou.....(17)  
Hitotsu: Rôshin ni Zaihô Shoryô / mochiyuru Kokoro nashi.....(18)  
Hitotsu: Busshin wa tôtoishi Busshin o / tanoma-zu .....(19)  
Hitotsu: Mi o sute temo Myôri wa / sute-zu .....(20)  
Hitotsu: Tsuneni Heihô no Michi o / hanare-zu .....(21)

Shôhō Ni Nen .....[b]  
Go Gatsu Jûni Nichi SHIMMEN Musashi..... [c]  
Genshin (Signet stamp) ..... [d]

TERAO Magonojô Dono ..... [e]

## II. An attempt at the translation of the individual verses

The following is an attempt to translate the words of each verse as exactly and accurately as possible into English and then build a sentence with the individual phrases in the light of their grammatical and historical context. Illuminative annotations are added in each case to facilitate the interpretation of the content. The explanation of words that have already been dealt with will not be repeated in the following verses.

### A: About the first and the last four lines

To begin with let us look at the lines that are marked with the letters [a] to [e].

#### [a]: Dokkôdô

This title consists of the three characters “獨 (doku)”, “行 (kô)” und “道 (dô)”, which can also be read “hitori”, “iku, okonau” and “michi”. Hence the word means here as adverb “doku”, “alone, myself, apart” and refers to “kô”, which has as verb the meaning “walk, stride” or also “do, conduct”, but here as adjective together with “doku” determines the following “dô”. The character “dô”, in this text almost always with the pronunciation “michi”, represents the “way” which also carries various metaphorical meanings as in the German or the English languages. So this title translates roughly:

“The way that I go alone”

#### [b]: Shôhō Ni Nen

“Shôhō” is the name of the era of the 110th Japanese emperor, Gokomyō Tennō, which according to the Christian calendar lasted from 1644 to 1648. “Ni” means here the ordinal number “second”, and “Nen” “year”. This line denotes the year in which the text was written.

“In the second year of Shôhō”, or, “In the year 1645”

#### [c]: Go Gatsu Jûni Nichi SHIMMEN Musashi

“Go” is the ordinal number “fifth” and “Jûni” “twelfth”. “Gatsu” and “Nichî” mean “month” and “day” respectively. “SHIMMEN Musashi” are the family name and the given name. This line names the date of the text and the name of the author.

“The twelfth of May SHIMMEN Musashi”

#### [d]: Genshin (handwritten signet)

“Genshin” is another given name of Musashi and appears here in this text as signature.

*“Genshin (handwritten signet)”*

[e]: TERA0 Magonojô Dono

“TERAO Magonojô” was the most important of Musashi’s students, who also received “A Book of Five Rings”. “Dono” is a polite term for a man and indicates the recipient.

*“To Mr. TERA0 Magonojô”*

#### B: About the verses

Now to the main body of the text, the 21 verses which we have numbered with Arabic numerals. It is significant that they all omit the subject of the sentences, the personal pronoun “I”, and are formulated almost exclusively as negative sentences. This is a kind of rhetoric with which personal determination is expressed.

(1): Yoyo no Michi o somuku Koto nashi

“Yoyo” is a plural form of “Yo”, which means “world, time, life”. In the plural form it has an amplified further meaning roughly “all generations”, or better Buddhist “all time and all space, that encompass the past, present and future”. The particle “no” is a case designating postposition that designates the word in question as genitive. “Michi” is, as already mentioned; “way” and can also mean “method, justice, truth”. The “o” is another case designating postposition that normally designates the word in question as accusative but in this case as dative. And “somuku” is a verb meaning, “diverge, turn away, oppose”. “Koto” is here a function word, which nominalises the preceding word. The word “nashi” is a negative, which is positioned at the end of a sentence and negates the word to which it pertains with determination.

In “A Book of Five Rings” there are more than 200 examples of the use of the word “Michi” to be found, with which Musashi primarily attempts to explain the way of the samurai e.g. the “Heihô”, but also when he refers to other ways, so they are usually acknowledged, insofar as they follow the natural elementary way. Die Buddhist philosophy, that Gods or Buddhas are not transcendent, but exist in this world in every living being, could enable understanding of this verse<sup>\*7</sup>. According to this the way is there to enable the seed in each individual to sprout and blossom. The way leads on endlessly, it has no end. It is important to remain on the way, to persist and always press forward. This continuous assertion of will power is life itself, which reveals the truth at each attained level. In the epilogue to the “Earth” book Musashi writes: “For those who wish to study my Heihô, there are rules to which he must abide as he follows the way. ... 4. Study the ways of many professions or activities”. On his way a man also encounters other ways with which he is not familiar e.g. the way of the farmer, the doctor or the trader, that do not appear to have anything to do with his way, but which perhaps offer something that can lead his own way to a deeper understanding. And there will be a “way of heaven” which is so high and so big that it is unknown to him. Musashi wished to always remain open for these possibilities.

*“I will not oppose the ways of the world.”*

(2): Mi ni Tanoshimi o takuma-zu

“Mi” actually means “body” and is derived from this, “self, I, my life”. The “ni” is a case indicating postposition, which determines the word in question as dative. “Tanoshimi” means physical and also mental pleasure “things which cause pleasure”. The word “takuma-zu” is comprised of the verb “takumu” and the phrasal verb “zu”, “takumu” has the meaning of “conceive, invent, plan, aspire” and “zu” is a negative suffix, to negate a preceding verb with determination.

As a samurai Musashi did invent many weapons and developed various strategies, but was indifferent to everything else, including all forms of pleasure. From a Buddhist standpoint happiness is a fleeting condition in this world of change, which must soon be replaced by suffering, the true nature of this world. So it is wrong to aspire to happiness, as this itself is the new cause of suffering. When a person feels happy he should regard this as a

blessing and should not cling to this because all attachments can be obstacles to following the way.

“I will not seek pleasurable activities.”

(3): Yorozu ni Eko no Kokoro nashi

“Yorozu” means “everything, all things, all matters”. “Eko” means “preference, prejudice, bias” and the meaning of “Kokoro” is very broad, it can mean “heart, soul, spirit”, but also “thought, opinion, feeling”.

In the “Ground” book Musashi writes about the “inner bearing of Heihô”, that “on the way” the heart must remain unclouded, “open and straight”, “in the centre”, “calm”. As long as we are too deeply occupied with something it is difficult to reach an adequate evaluation, which is decisive in combat. This teaching leads directly to the important theory of “Heijô-shin” or “Fudô-shin” the unchangeable, immovable heart, which is often brought up in the traditional martial arts. Incidentally this immovable heart never stands still, but is constantly in motion, so that it never remains in one place, because standstill on anything is imprisonment itself.

“I will give preference to nothing among all things.”

(4): Mi o asaku omoi Yo o fukaku omou

The adverbs “asaku” and “fukaku” are an opposite pair and mean “shallow, flat, small, unimportant” respectively “deep, thorough, big, important”. The verb “omou” at the end of the sentence has the meaning “think, mean, believe, feel” and “omoi” is a conjugated form of the same verb.

In comparison to the world a mortal being must always feel limited. Everything that a man can achieve and manifest in his lifetime is a minute part of the world. Seen from outside this fact could appear negative, but the world of existence allows no outside. We cannot escape destiny, but we should at the same time know that the meaning of life itself arises from exactly this limitation, from our mortality. The sentiment of holding back to perceive the world as deep and great, allows this to become even richer, inexhaustibly fertile and through this we attain various possibilities that lead the own “way” further.

“I consider myself unimportant, but the not the world so great and deep.”

(5): Isshō no Aida Yokushin omowa-zu

“Isshō” means “the whole life”, and “Aida”, “intervening period, period of time”, that here with both of the preceding words forms an adverbial phrase which means roughly “throughout the whole life”. “Yokushin” means “desire, greed, craving”, and “omowa-zu” is, as above noted above by (2), again a verb with the negative suffix “zu”, here the verb “omou”.

A human being has various cravings in his nature, which are useful and even essential for the development of life, but when a person is obsessed by them he becomes unfree and loses his way. In the eyes of Buddhism these cravings are innate to our nature. It is important not to renounce them ascetically, but rather to exercise control over them. This verse should be understood with this in mind.

“I will be free of desire throughout my entire life.”

(6): Waga-Koto nioite Kōkai o se-zu

The possessive pronoun “waga” means “my”<sup>\*8</sup> and “Koto” means “thing, matter, activity” and the compound “nioite” consists of the three words “ni”, “oku”, “te”, which express concern or reference to the preceding word. “Kōkai” means “regret” and “se-zu” is a compound of the verb “suru” and the negative suffix “zu”, whereby “suru” has the meaning “doing, deed”.

Regret is a kind of imprisonment in the past and so becomes an obstacle to the way. That which a person has done can become a burden as an unchangeable fact. Carefully considered it is clear that what actually worries us is

not the fact itself, but rather the chain of interpretations that derive from this in reference to the present and/or future, that can be detached with the change of perspective. Further: Everything in this world of change is interpretation. This chain should be torn apart and independent of the past regret should be overcome. This mindset is also important in fighting. As Musashi writes in the "Fire" book, "when you and the enemy are contending with the same spirit, and the issue cannot be decided abandon this spirit and win through an alternative resource."

"I will not regret my deeds."

(7): Zen-Aku ni Ta o netamu Kokoro nashi

"Zen-Aku" are an antonym-pair and mean "good and evil, good and bad, right and wrong". "Ta" has the meaning of "another" or "other people" and "netamu" is a verb with the meaning "to envy, to begrudge", but here adjectively defines the following "Kokoro".

The conception of good and evil is the result of evaluation according to a particular standard. Or expressed differently all beings in the changing world are innocent, beyond good and bad. There are people who could be envied because of their beautiful possessions or happiness, or who can make a person feel bad or evil in comparison. But envy and comparison are to be traced back to an unproductive, passive and humiliating psychological condition, that is yet another obstacle on the personal way which must be removed.

"I will not be envious of anybody, good or bad."

(8): Izure no Michi nimo Wakare o kanashima-zu

"Izure" is an indefinite pronoun like "everyone" in English and together with the particle "no" defines the following noun, while "nimo" is a compound of "ni" and "mo" and has the function of underlining the meaning of an affirmative or negative sentence. "Wakare" means "farewell, separation", and "kanashima-zu" is a compound of the verb "kanashimu" and the negative suffix "zu", whereby "kanashimu" has the meaning "to mourn, grieve, lament".

Encounters and separations are the course of the world. We encounter various ways of others on our own way; we befriend them and gain many valuable experiences. But in this world nothing is permanent. The time of separation must inevitably come, which sometimes brings unbearable grief. Grief itself is a normal human emotion and cannot be simply shaken off, but when it becomes so great that it permanently depresses our soul it becomes an obstacle. We know that the dimension of grief reveals the importance of the loss. When this is so, is it not more reasonable to concentrate the heart on the encounter and not the separation? In the way of tea there is a suitable word for this "Ichigo-Ichie", which is often translated into English as "a unique opportunity in life". This verse of the Dokkôdô seems to state this in a paradox way.

"I will not be sad when I must take my leave of any way."

(9): Ji-Ta tomoni urami kakotsu Kokoro nashi

"Ji-Ta" is again an antonym pair and means "I myself and others". The "tomoni" is actually an adverb but here after the plural form of the noun has the function of a conjugation in the meaning of "as well as". The verbs "urami" and "kakotsu" have roughly the meaning "to blame, accuse, hate" as well as "justify, excuse, look for pretext".

We often tend to give others the blame for our misfortunes and to hold a grudge, or on the other hand, when another accuses us of something we try to protect ourselves with all sorts of excuses. This behaviour however does nothing to improve the situation; rather it discloses our weakness and our lack of self-confidence and our irresponsibility with regard to our actions. On the way we must have the courage to accept the responsibility for everything as it is, the autonomy of our mind is necessary for this.

“I will not seek excuses and will hold no grudge against myself or others.”

(10): Rembo no Michi omoiuru Kokoro nashi

“Rembo” means “love affair, romance, passionate love”. The verb “omoiuru” has the meaning “to approach, to abandon oneself to, to indulge in”, and determines as an adjective the following “Kokoro”.

Love for the opposite sex is a natural desire and is as noted in (5) is not to be removed. But this originates from a deep-seated urge that is very difficult for us to control in an appropriate manner, especially when we are already trapped deeply in it, and many do indeed lose sight of their way. Here Musashi appears to point out this danger in the light of his personal experience.

“I will not indulge in the way of passionate love.”

(11): Mono goto ni Suki konomu Koto nashi

“Mono” means, quite similar to “Koto” in (6), “thing, object, article”, while “goto” as a suffix adds the meaning of roughly “every, all, every time” to the preceding noun. “Suki” means historically “elegance, aesthetics, sophisticated taste”<sup>9</sup>. “Konomu” is a verb, which in itself has the meaning of “like, wish, value” but here forms a noun with the following “Koto”.

Around the end of the 16th century various artistic ways e.g. the way of tea, flowers, incense, were developed, which in order to retain inner composure in the time of war sought an irreplaceable sense of beauty in everyday humble things. In Musashi’s time they were fashionable and he came into contact with them from time to time. Of course everything has its own beauty, its own story, its own meaning for being. When however, as so often happens, these ways develop too highly in a metaphysical sense, so that the abstract beauty or form of behaviour are given the highest regard, and no longer the thing itself, then they lose their actual meaning. Musashi must have seen this transformation and wished to draw a line.

“I will not seek elegance and beauty in all things.”

(12): Shitaku nioite nozomu Kokoro nashi

“Shitaku” means “own house, own dwelling, private residence”. The verb “nozomu” means “wish, expect, demand” and determines here as adjective the following “Kokoro”.

A house is there to allow a person to lead a private life. As long as it allows us a certain space and living conditions, it is enough. Success, which is a result of the therein accumulated vitality, could allow a splendid house. This is however a result and not the purpose itself. If we confuse this, we lose the right way in the vortex of desire.

“I will have no luxury in my house.”

(13): Mi Hitotsu ni Bishoku o konoma-zu

“Hitotsu” has here the function of closer determining the preceding noun that is to say emphasise it. “Bishoku” means “delicacy, debauchment” and “konoma-zu” is a combination of “konomu” and “zu”.

The samurai including the generals had become used to simple food during times of war and this habit was considered a virtue in the following peaceful Tokugawa-era. Apart from the taste the simple food of the time is from the aspect of nutritional science ideal. As a true samurai Musashi adhered to this, but we can deduct from the addition of the words “Mi Hitotsu ni” that he sometimes ate tasteful food served for the sake of others.

“I will have no delicacies for myself.”

(14): Suezue Shiromono naru furuki Dôgu Shoji se-zu

The adverb “suezue” has the meaning of “one day, in the future, in distant generations”. “Shiromono” means



“rare and valuable thing, antique” and “*naru*” is a verb, which means, “becoming, changing, in the course of time slowly transforming”. The adjective “*furuki*” means “old, used, linked to a story” and determines the following “*Dôgu*”, which itself also has a very wide range of meaning and pertains to all kinds of tools that exist to be used by humans. “*Shoji*” means “own, keep, collect”.

It was also fashionable to collect antiques at this time. The collectors interpreted all sorts of stories into the antiques, valued them highly and kept them safely stored. For Musashi however tools were exclusively there to be used and not for aesthetic enjoyment. A thing reveals its nature then when it is used by its owner. This verse reveals Musashi’s practical thinking.

“I will not own anything that will one day be a valuable antique.”

(15): *Waga-Mi ni itari Monoimi suru Koto nashi*

The verb form “*itari*” from the verb “*itaru*” that is “accomplish”, gives here as a conjunction the preceding clause the meaning of roughly “as far as it concerns anyone or anything”. “*Monoimi*” means “taboo” or “moral, religious ban, with which we protect ourselves from evil or accident”. “*Koto*” here builds as a function word with the preceding verb a noun.

At all times there are manifold taboos that restrict our daily activities from outside. They do contain many empirical truths but for those who wish to go their own way, they can be obstructive. Musashi teaches us in the “*Ground*” book and the “*Fire*” book that through continuous training we should reach the “body that follows the will” that is to say “physical freedom”. Of course freedom of spirit is an essential prerequisite for this. However he did not wish to compel anybody to this because everyone has his own lifestyle, which should be highly respected as his “way”. The preceding “*Waga-Mi ni itari*” denotes this.

“I will have trust in myself and never be superstitious.”

(16): *Heigu wa Kakubetsu Yo no Dôgu tashinama-zu*

“*Heigu*” is a hyponym of “*Dôgu*” and means “weapons” or “various tools, instruments, utensils, that the samurai used for combat”. The “*wa*” is a modal particle, which distinguishes the preceding word from other similar things. “*Kakubetsu*” means “exception, outstanding, especially important, thing of the highest grade”, and “*Yo*” in this line means “other, the rest, further”. At the end of the sentence is another verb with the negative suffix “*zu*”, this time the verb “*tashinamu*”, which means roughly “like, practice, to value, to learn or have skills”.

The samurai, that is those who followed the way of Heihô, were obliged to learn and understand the meaning of all weapons, in order to be flexible at all times in combat situations and always use the appropriate weapon in order to win. In order to fulfil this duty they had to relentlessly practice the use of all available weapons, to improve the weapons or produce them. In peaceful times however this duty became more and more neglected as Musashi comments in the “*Ground*” book and many deviated from the way of Heihô. In this line we can see Musashi’s determination as samurai and at the same time his criticism of the contemporary tendencies\*<sup>10</sup>.

“Weapons are of the highest importance to me, I will not concern myself with other things.”

(17): *Michi nioite wa Shi o itowa-zu omou*

“*Michi*” means here the “*Way of Heihô*”, “*Shi*” means “death, dying” and “*itowa-zu*” is made up of “*itou*” and “*zu*”, whereby the verb “*itou*” has the meaning of roughly “hate, loath, deny”. And “*omou*” has here the function of moderating the tone of the sentence.

Death is for us all our very last most personal experience upon which we can reflect and through which we can sometimes win an inexhaustible wealth of insight. In other words we can only reach the peak of our potential when we strive for life and death. And regarding the unconditional acceptance of death as it is described in the “*Ground*” book there is no difference between samurai, and priests, or women or farmers. The crucial point is to

be aware of what we risk our life for, then when this standpoint is not upheld, it could degenerate to an empty slogan or a simple escape from reality. For Musashi only the “way of Heihô” is worthy of the sacrifice of the life of a samurai and under no circumstances any other. The word “wa” implies this and expresses paradoxically his respect for human life.

“I will always be prepared to die on this way.”

(18): Rôshin ni Zaihô Shoryô mochiyuru Kokoro nashi

“Rôshin” means “old body, old person, body of an old person”. “Zaihô” and “Shoryô” each mean “treasure, wealth” or “manor, barony” and “mochiyuru” is a verb meaning, “use, utilize, employ, exploit”.

No matter whether treasure or manor, in Musashi’s eyes a possession is to be used and is not an end in itself or for self-satisfaction. Possessions should be used for example for personal development. When a person has reached a certain age and a mature personality he needs very little. Then he should leave the rest to his successors for their development and not hang on to it, because he cannot take it with him when he dies.

“I will take advantage of no treasure or manor in my old age.”

(19): Busshin wa tôtooshi Busshin o tanoma-zu

“Busshin” is a compound of the nouns “Butsu” and “Shin”, which both mean “Buddhas” that is to say “Gods”. The adjective “tôtooshi” means “holy, venerable, worthy of worship” and “tanoma-zu” is once again a verb with a negative, whereby “tanomu” has the meaning “to ask for something, to depend upon something, to rely upon something”.

Musashi spent his whole life searching for basic rules in order to be victorious in his various combats. However he only acknowledged those that he had acquired himself through his own experience. His more than 60 duels certainly confirmed that he was right and for some time he declared his school to be the “best in the world”. For a self confident person like Musashi, help of any kind even from the Gods however he may revere them, is unacceptable, because in the moment that he would ask others for help he would lose his autonomy, which would at the same time lead to the collapse of all the success that he had independently achieved on the way. Moreover Gods are worthy of adoration in themselves and not because they grant us any blessings. There is absolutely no principle of give and take between the gods and us. The popular belief that is practiced because of something is not authentic as a belief.

“Buddhas and Gods are worthy of adoration but I will ask them for nothing.”

(20): Mi o sute temo Myôri wa sute-zu

The verb “sute” has the meaning of “to throw away, to do without, sacrifice” and is once again at the end of the sentence in the negative form. The particle “temo” connects the preceding clause contradictorily-hypothetically, therefore with the meaning of roughly, “even if ...” in English, to the following text. “Myôri” means “honour and happiness, human dignity” or “renown that one has won with his name”.

For the samurai, who always lived with the danger of death, the personal name as the only unchangeable proof of their existence was of high importance. Of particular importance were the family names, upon which they founded their identity, their behaviour patterns and the resulting consequential generic task, to uphold and enhance the renown of the inherited name through their deeds. As is written in the “Ground” book, it was the task of a samurai, “according to the virtue of Heihô”, “to make a name and career for his employer and himself”. This task was at all times more important than his name. Death for its own sake deserved praise; survival without it earned unforgivable shame.

“Even if I sacrifice my life I will never sacrifice my name.”

(21): Tsuneni Heihô no Michi o hanare-zu

The adverb “tsuneni” has the meaning of “always, unfailingly, at all times”. “Heihô” means, as has often been mentioned, “all forms of martial arts, that a samurai should learn and develop throughout his whole life as his inborn duty”. And “hanare-zu” is once again a verb with a negative suffix, whereby “hanareru” means “leave, to break away, to diverge from something”.

In this last verse Musashi’s determination to carry on his own way with pride is decisively and clearly expressed. The way leads on infinitely and continuously gives each individual the possibility to grow, continuously become closer to the inexhaustible truth. And the value of a human being lies in his ability to always remain open for this possibility and never at any time presumptuously regard himself as perfect and stop on the way or to diverge from it. In this world of change we invariably encounter many obstacles and difficulties. According to the lesson “crossing at a ford” in the “Fire” book we must confront them with courage and strength and strive to conquer them. Because that is life itself.

“I will never deviate from the way of Heihô.”

### III. The entire translated text

Finally the translation of the entire Dokkôdô. For the reader the verses are numbered.

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Dokkôdô (The way that I go alone)

1. I will not oppose the ways of the world.
2. I will not seek pleasurable activities.
3. I will give preference to nothing among all things.
4. I consider myself unimportant, but not the world so great and so deep.
5. I will be free of desire throughout my whole life.
6. I will not regret my deeds.
7. I will not be envious of anybody, good or bad.
8. I will not be sad when must take my leave of any way.
9. I will not seek excuses and I will hold no grudge against myself or others.
10. I will not indulge in the way of passionate love.
11. I will not seek elegance and beauty in all things.
12. I will have no luxury in my house.
13. I will have no delicacies for myself.
14. I will not own anything that will one day be a valuable antique.
15. I will have trust in myself and never be superstitious.
16. Weapons are of the highest importance to me, I will not concern myself with other things.
17. I will always be prepared to die on this way.
18. I will take advantage of no treasure or manor in my old age.
19. Buddhas und Gods are worthy of adoration but I will ask them for nothing.
20. Even if I sacrifice my life I will not sacrifice my name.
21. I will never deviate from the way of Heihô.

In the second year of Shôhô (1645)

The twelfth of May SHIMMEN Musashi

Genshin (*handwritten signet*)

To Mr. TERAÔ Magonojô

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## Epilogue

This essay originally stems from the more than 20 year friendship with Mr. Vaughn WILLIAMS and thanks to his cooperation a first draft of a German translation of the Dokkôdô has long been presented on a website<sup>\*11</sup>. In the meantime he carries on his study of the *Ono-ha Ittô-Ryû-School* that he began under Torao ONO Sensei in Japan. And the author has had the opportunity to study under Eiki ICHIKAWA Sensei, the son of the 17th authorised successor of the *Niten-Ichi-Ryû-School (Noda-ha)*. As a result of the regular, intensive training with this master as well as his revealing comments about Musashi the author felt encouraged to revise the previous translation on the basis of closer observation. This was the reason for this essay and once again the friend assisted.

However this translation of the Dokkôdô is based upon our present understanding of both schools. It is, as is every interpretation must be still pro tempore, underway and remains therefore open for future improvements. It is important not to remain hanging on something, but rather to stride forwards on the own personal way. If this contribution serves as an origin for further discussion whereby we can come always closer to Musashi's truth, the author would be extremely happy.

## Footnotes

- \*1 Family names are written before the given names, as is the custom in Japan. In order to differentiate both names all family names are written in capital letters in this essay. Incidentally the samurai usually had several given and family names and used various combinations of them depending on the situation. Musashi himself had the other first names "Genshin, Masana, Masanaka, Yoshisada, etc.", and the family names other than MIYAMOTO "SHIMMEN, FUJIWARA, TAKEMURA, HIRATA, etc.". So is the usually used name "MIYAMOTO Musashi" one possibility from these combinations, which has probably become popular since the beginning of the 20th century.
- \*2 "Gorin-no-Sho" is the popular title, which was first used decades after Musashi's death and has become generally used since the 18th century. Musashi himself called it "Go-kan (Five Scrolls)" or "Chi Sui Ka Fû Kû no Go-kan (Five Scrolls of Earth, Water, Fire, Wind and Void)". Cp. Takashi UOZUMI: "Miyamoto Musashi, Nihonjin no Michi", Perikan-sha publishers, Tokyo 2003, p. 11, 170ff.
- \*3 The other line is called "Santô-ha". There were several other lines but they disappeared over the course of time.
- \*4 "Miyamoto Musashi" published by Miyamoto Musashi Iseki Kenshō-kai, Kinkōdō Shoseki publishers, Tokyo 1909. A reprint of this book was recently published by Kumamoto Nichi-nichi Shimbun-sha publishers, Kumamoto 2003.
- \*5 The 4th and 20th verse of the original document were omitted in this book, as they were in the biography "Niten-ki" which was written ca. 130 years after Musashi's death. Cp. *ibid*, p. 6f.
- \*6 For example a translation of "The Book Of Five Rings" was recently published in German with the advertisement: "Contains the Dokkodo for the first time, the 21 rules of self discipline written by Musashi". The interpretation in this book "according to the translation of Professor Giichiro Ikeda (1965)" reverses the order of the 2nd and 3rd verses and reproduces the text incompletely, including the pronunciation as well as the translation of the title. Cp. Taro YAMADA: "Das Buch der Fünf Ringe", Piper Verlag, München 2003, p. 46–150, 157. Regarding the advertising cp. the website: [http://www.angkor-verlag.de/html/musashi\\_funf\\_ringe.html](http://www.angkor-verlag.de/html/musashi_funf_ringe.html)
- \*7 Musashi practised Zen meditation in his last years with a Buddhist priest in Taishōin-Tempel. According to historical source-research this priest's name was not "Shunzan" as documented in the old scripts but "Daien".
- \*8 Some people read "我" "ware", and take the word for the personal pronoun "I". The sentence then sounds so that his determination is more strongly expressed. But in context with all the other verses that leave out the personal pronoun, is this interpretation not acceptable. And when this word is used in "A Book Of Five Rings" it always has the meaning "waga" when it stands before a name, it functions as a possessive pronoun.
- \*9 Due to the association out of the modern usage, the word "suki" is often regarded as an adjectival noun that means something like "fondness, preference". But in a historical sense it indicates various aesthetical "ways" above all the way of tea, and in "A Book Of Five Rings" Musashi uses the word in almost all cases in this sense. Additionally, if this word is so interpreted the meaning of this verse would be similar to the 3rd verse.
- \*10 Some people interpret this verse as if Musashi did not need any special weapons. But the fact that Musashi always held good weapons in high regard is completely clear from the description in "A Book Of Five Rings". "Kakubetsu" and "Yo" must not be written together as one word, this would lead to such misunderstanding.
- \*11 Cp. the Website: <http://www.page-five.de/TENSHU/dokudo.htm>

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