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9

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Foreword

A thought pattern in a 5-step “recipe”,

1- **WORK** relentlessly on your basics, your fundamentals

To fill in your gaps, your weaknesses, to eliminate all floating and wavering.

You will then be able to

2- **CLEAR** the structure of your Art

To distinctly identify your strengths and weaknesses, to recognize what you know and do not know, what can and cannot do.

Through this laborious work, you will

3- **Find** your true face; **EXTRACT**, then **SHAPE** your identity

An identity that will guide you in dialogue, as a force of proposal, of counter-proposal. Through the learning of this art, you will constantly manipulate this identity, through succession of shaping and reshaping.

You will ultimately;

4- **ABANDON** your Ego

Indeed, within the permanent dialogue, a process of abolition, construction/destruction of Ego takes place, leading to the identity loss, forgetting oneself in favor of attention and listening. Learning again, something new, differently, to open the universe of possibilities.

Finally;

5- SEIZE and MANIFEST your Intensity, your *Ki*, 気

By accessing the true Force, freedom while expressing yourself

Introduction

In Asian cultures, the concept of *Ki*, 気, is obvious. Indeed, its roots run deep into a cultural understanding, especially in traditional martial arts. *Ki* is the life force that connects the material and immaterial, its energy flows freely in and between both the physical and spiritual worlds. However, in Western cultures, this concept is mainly focused on the material side, seeking force and power. This is probably why, influenced by my western roots, I always thought, visualized and translated the word *Ki* by intensity. Unfortunately, in the West the concept of intensity is mostly restricted to the energy drawn from the physical dimension in strength and athleticism on one side. On the other side, there is the psychological dimension relying on an aggressive and domination mindset. During *keiko*, I have always felt the weakness of this interpretation, sensing its lack of depth, its limited perspectives. In this manuscript, I correct this misconception and give back to intensity its integrity and worth as a natural and appropriate translation for *Ki*, 気. Indeed, in its fullness, intensity is a living concept of creation, that expresses on the foundations laid by identity.

Identity is its cornerstone; knowing who we are physically, intellectually and emotionally. Without a clear understanding and definition of one's identity, any attempt at expression is doomed in shallowness, and intensity will only shine through the dullness of its brilliance. Skills and talent cannot make up for the lack of self-awareness/availability, this is what separates aesthetic and pleasant from the expression of art. Depth is mandatory and can only be found in a well-defined identity. Therefore, time becomes a requirement in order to shape the framework of who and what we may be. In this truth, hidden in life's experiences, lies our potential for growth, our ability to interact with our surrounding and shape reality. In the first chapter of the book, I define the full concept of intensity, as a life force equivalent to the concept of *Ki* in Asian cultures. In the second chapter, I highlight the early signs of identity, how from the growth of a young character, identity is shaped, how it becomes the field of expression for intensity. Finally, in the last chapter, I describe the manifestation of identity through intensity in the art of *Kendo*. Personality uniqueness imposes intimacy in the definition of identity. This is a personal journey that through these pages of reflections on *Ki*, intensity, I hope to have sketched out a basic

framework that still requires your touch of coloring, all the power and creativity of your own nuances.

Chapter 1 – KI



Shape of life

The seen and unseen

Shapeless truth

Vision and power

The art of silence

Intensity

Around the clock

This chapter is dedicated to the definition of *Ki*, 気, an uneasy concept to manipulate that encompasses several aspects from energy to mindset, including a feeling of the overall ambiance and mood. Thinking of *Ki* should bring to mind the following ideas: energy, steam, fluid, spirit, heart, state of mind, motivation, disposition, determination, intention, feeling, mood, atmosphere, ambiance, nature. Its perception and sense have always been a focal point in martial arts practices. According to the first edition of “The martial ways of Japan” from Nippon Budokan¹ (2009), 気 is the basics energy or life-force that flows through and exists in all things. This is the kinetic energy responsible for perception, awareness and sense. *Ki* is said to determine the relation between mind and body, and is a core element of all budo arts. Its ideogram or *kanji* writing relies on two elements; a radical expressing steam, air, fluidity, breath 气, plus a simplification of the ideogram of rice 夨. As a quick thought, when steam ensures food, the essence provides life.

Ki can shape life through initiatives that materialize its energy. It is therefore a natural link, inherent in the creative process. By remaining latent, nestling in emptiness, *Ki* is a potential yet to be realized, hidden in the limitless possible outcomes. Like a sparkle out of emptiness, its essence has to be grasped to bring the action to life. Moreover, *Ki* must be collected for a specific purpose; motivation, disposition, determination, intention. Awareness and perception of its true nature are prerequisites; feeling, mood, atmosphere, ambiance, nature. Finally, the mastery of a specific mind, *mushin* or availability², is crucial for each step, from its perception to its materialization; spirit, heart, state of mind. In this way, understanding and managing *Ki* is the prerogative of the master, a disposition which, once acquired, places all the surrounding resources at the service of true force (as opposed to brute force).

Gathering, collecting *Ki* just for *Ki*'s sake is nonsense, its collection purpose must be to shape reality and life from intention. Since intention is materialized by intensity and that intensity expresses our true nature or identity, **my interpretation of *Ki* is intensity** and I intent to give a full explanation of this conviction in this book. Thanks to intensity, *Ki*'s potential/latent energy is gathered and shaped by initiative, bringing the action to life, acquiring in the process; purpose, shape, colors and savors. Unfortunately, wrongly, intensity is often summarized and restricted to the general idea of domination in Western

cultures; brute force, power, high level of activity, aggressivity, impulsiveness, induced fear. This misconception is detrimental to our understanding of *Ki* in our martial arts practices. I will argue that intensity is a much broader and more subtle concept, and on this basis, it is a life driven-force, intensity is 気

In my first released book in 2021, “*Keiken Suru: A pedagogical approach of Kendo*”, I was introducing intensity as a basic in learning and teaching *Kendo*, already weaving the link between intensity and *Ki*. I stated then that: “Intensity is a state of mind in which the focus is maximum, the awareness (self-awareness and awareness of the environment) is at its utmost limit, directed toward the achievement of a goal. Without any resentment and desire to harm others, mind, heart and body are focused on the goal. All available resources (physical, psychological, emotional) are gathered into a deep concentration process. There is no time and energy to waste with aggressivity and hostility”. Even if I still agree with this argument, I was, and I am aware of its lack of deepness, I felt, and still felt that some essential dimensions were missing. Consequently, I was instinctively drawn to investigate further the concept of intensity to deepen its understanding. That the reason why, I also wrote in *Keiken Suru*: “intensity remains a concept which will become clearer as the *kenshi*³ naturally evolves. Be careful not to mistake intensity with aggressivity”. Indeed, in this book, intensity encompasses multiple layers, displaying its full dimensionality and depth.