

OU JA PATI !



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Move in your own availability

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Foreword

The Japanese term *mushin* characterizes the ability to evolve free from all forms of physical and psychological obstacles. In Japan, this concept integrates the essence of both Zen and martial art practices; symbolizing a state-of-being sensitive to all possible outcomes of the present moment, but above all, being available to all the possibilities of the one to come. Therefore, I perceive into *mushin* the idea of availability, knowing how to develop one's receptiveness in order to make oneself available and ready to seize the possibilities of each moment; talking about *mushin* is talking about availability. As a consequence, in my opinion, these two terms are interchangeable. *Mushin*, or availability concept, is the link that brings together all forms or types of practices. I will illustrate this on two distinct but yet so close artistic practices, the traditional Guadeloupean drum, the *Ka*, and the Japanese fencing, *Kendo*.

On the basis of diligent and regular practice, a familiarization with the state of *mushin* takes place and develops a know-how-to-be characteristic of an availability specific to each trainee. This personal research and questioning pushed me to begin my way of the *Ka*, intrigued by the ability of the *tanbouyé* (drummer) masters to evolve with virtuosity in a state of trance, while still preserving a permanent dialogue with singer, dancers, and accompanying drums. Transported into this transient state, the master seems to experience an alteration in his level of consciousness of the surrounding environment, and yet, the rhythm of his strikes on the drumhead attests to an extreme awareness of the moment and its intensity. The science of availability in the art of *Ka* resides in this parallel transient world. This is the science, or more adequately, this art that I discuss in this book through the practices of both *Ka* and *Kendo*.

Throughout my *Kenshi* journey, I naturally had to read reference books of the

martial art's culture. At the time, I did not understand the virtual absence of content on emotional management, which nevertheless seemed to me to be essential in the apprehension of *Kendo*. Today, after years of practice and many thoughts on this consideration, I better perceive in these writings, the desire to share and transmit a know-how-to-be rather than a knowledge, well beyond technical considerations and emotional management: the transmission of *mushin*. I believe that through the process of availability, emotions are managed like all other forms of perception, and are not at all subject to any particular treatment, blockage or emotional overload. They are in no way an issue of concern and evolve naturally, with fluidity, in the treatment of all sources of information leading to a free initiative.

Introduction

A period of 10 years is usually required to complete a learning cycle. At its end, the inevitable feeling that the loop has been closed, the feeling that a renewal is necessary. Even so, talking about renewal does not necessarily imply drastic changes, especially when the path has been pursued with sincerity, respect and self-respect. However, at the very least it imposes a reflection on the path followed, on the future destination, as well as on the means to be implemented to get there. In 2014, I was entering my thirteenth year of *Kendo*¹, at heart, the thoughtful feeling of psychological wear and tear related precisely to the end of such a cycle. In addition, after 15 years spent abroad, this period also coincided with my return to Guadeloupe, driven by this raw energy that smolders a desire to defy the mountain. Recently, encounters of personalities animated by a similar will, as well as the writing of this book, plunge me back into this specific feeling of renewal. Even if I recognize that I am no longer carried by this primary energy, I clearly perceive it as the source of the creative force behind the theme of this book; availability. Although I devote the entire first chapter to defining the concept of availability, I can however introduce it now as the state-of-being able to release all our physical and psychological resources in response to an internal and/or external stimulus. The text includes terms in Japanese and Creole, they will be distinguished by a writing style in italics, I will provide translations and explanations in notations when necessary for the reading comfort.

Constantly, I feel through my *Kendo* practice the intimate link between the rhythm, the preparation of an attack and finally the achievement of the *ippon*². When the body seems to take the initiative by acting on its own, outside of any conscious decision-making process, as if carried by an invisible, impalpable

force. However, it is not a simple parasitic reflex, but a subtle initiative inserted into a brief, intense, almost elusive space-time of unconscious origin. This moment of truth cruelly imposes itself on the consciousness after the *ippon*, in a form of bewilderment: there, just at the moment, what happened ? In 2014, then, my need of renewal was consolidated by this questioning of the genesis of taking the initiative and its relation in the rhythm of the movement. Rhythm, music, return to my native land, an abandoned traditional drum at my parent's house, *Ka* lessons offered by the sport and culture department of my University under of a master of the art; I naturally began my way into the traditional Guadeloupean drum, as an evidence, almost driven by faith, looking for a new energy and freshness to infuse into my martial practice. When I attend a *Ka* master's performance, the energy and intensity of his play bring spontaneously the following words to my mind: transported, transformed, inflamed, frenzied. Because he seems transported by a state of trance, in a world inaccessible to the profane. I clearly perceive a connection between this musical trance and the moment of truth when the *ippon* is triggered in *Kendo*. In the practice of *Ka*³, this transient state lasts for long minutes, offering any given trainee a chance to experience it, to feel it and to fortunately become familiar with it. In this way, if one cannot tame it, at least it seems possible to dissipate the thick fog that veils the perception of the bridge connecting the conscious world to the trance state. In Creole, when a person evolves in a state of trance, in another dimension where he is virtually unreachable, the expression "*ou ja pati*" is used. It literally means you're already gone, implying the ease with which this person is able to project himself into a parallel universe.

In the first chapter of this book, I will define the concept of availability that, through the taking of initiative, connects the inner world to the outer, establishing a privileged link between an individual and his environment. This link is based on a conscious activity during decision-making, but above all on an unconscious activity through the process of maturing this decision. What is

remarkable about the *Ka* and *Kendo* practices is the ease and fluidity with which process and decision-making are carried out during the action. This results in this feeling of being the witness, or the vector, of a supernatural, mystical process. Then, I will make a detour through the neurosciences in order to discover what a field of so-called hard sciences, reveals to us about the role of the brain in the motor skill and the process of triggering movement when taking an initiative. In the third and fourth chapters, I will illustrate availability as I have experienced it in my respective *Ka* and *Kendo* practices. The subject of the *Ka* will be approached from a double perspective, that of the amateur in practice (the apprentice that I am), and that of the initiate, of the *tanbouyé*⁴ master Pierre Narouman, known as Pierrot. I will rely on his words, his conception of the drum practice and his way of transmission, as well as on his knowledge as an initiate to explain the concept of availability through the practice of *Ka*. I thank Pierrot for his benevolence and patience during the courses where he passes on his science to me, but also for having accepted that in this book, I share some of his art secrets. As far as *Kendo* is concerned, I will talk about my experience on the path of availability, illustrating it with examples, from the trainee of the beginnings, to the *Kenshi*⁵ of today. I will not specifically address aspects related to the technical understanding of *Kendo*, for this I refer you to my previous book "*Keiken suru*"⁶: An educational approach to *Kendo*" self-published in ebook format in 2020 in its French version (2021 for its English version). Finally, in the fifth chapter, I will finish by putting into perspective the concept of availability in an educational system. Because there is no availability without mastery of one's art, no mastery without education, no education without basic learning skills. However, the establishment and proper functioning of any educational system is the prerogative of the Nation State. As a teacher, this issue affects me personally in my daily occupation. I am unfortunately confronted with a growing number of inconsistencies and blockages in a system that seems to me to have lost the mission of transmitting knowledge, the all know-how-to-be, most of all

has lost its backbone.

The book clearly has two different tones; arduous and rough, in the first two chapters dedicated to the concept of availability, fluid and almost devoid of asperities in the following three, focused on its illustration through *Ka* and *Kendo*, then its perspective through an educational system. You will have noticed in the summary that the first and second chapters are located at the end of the book. This is a conscious choice, because I prefer that the reader starts reading from the concrete point of view of practice, with a certain fluidity which will give him, I hope, the desire to immerse himself into the first two chapters with abnegation. To this end, I will begin chapter 3 with the essentials of the first two chapters, necessary for a natural reading. In the same way that it is possible to use a television, a computer, a tablet or a smartphone, without reading the user's manual; this book can be approached by its last three chapters by directly penetrating the heart of the matter, without having to get caught up in the user's manual and its conceptual, theoretical issues. However, I encourage the reader who is not put off by these aspects to read the book in the original and chronological order of chapters to fully grasp the basic concepts.

Chapter 3:

The Ka, a challenge to my availability

Essentials of the first two chapters

The GwoKa

At the monastery, the monk

Two hands, one skin

Cascade and waterfall

Heart and mind in one's hands

Nou monté asi la lin