

The greatest single description of a Danzan master, in my opinion, is "Warrior-Healer." To understand why requires an understanding of "levels" of experience and how they relate to the practice of DZR.

-Experience is a function of understanding at a particular level.

What does it mean to "take something to a new level" in DZR. There are the "Den" or "transmissions" of the system which include the Shoden, Chuden, and the Kuden. There are also the "Dan" ranks that we use including Shodan, Nidan etc. Each of these references a different level of something... but what?

It's often stated that the "transmissions" of the system are based on fundamental technique, intermediate technique and advanced technique. It's also communicated that the black belt grades represent recognizable increases in skill and understanding (which should be evident in the dan-level test being performed). While both these simplistic explanations are acceptable, I would like to offer yet another aspect of "levels" in our study of the Danzan Ryu.

-Danzan Ryu offers different experiences for different people at different times.

Ever wonder what the real difference is between a "Jutsu" and a "Do"? Books have been written on the subject (and related viewpoints) but suffice it to say, a "Jutsu" is the method by which one uses a tool efficiently while a "Do" is the elevation of that method's training system to achieve an experience of higher consciousness. This statement may sound similar to the first line of Prof. Okazaki's mokuroku... "whereby Jujutsu has been elevated to a finer moral concept known as Judo." We have, in effect, the makings of a quantum shift in the way of levels-- to use the physical and strategic practice of the combat art known as jujitsu in an effort to obtain an "experience of the third kind", the experience of mind, body and spirit as one. Professor Okazaki called this experience "Kyoshin Tankai."

So, the experience of DZR exists for us on at least three distinct levels: that of physical sensation, intellectual understanding and on a level that can only be "whispered in the wind"-- that of a "spiritual" nature. Each level influencing and enabling the other while remaining completely separate. While all three levels are available to each of us as students, our uniqueness as human beings may dictate which of them, if any, we ultimately master.

-Physical / Emotional experience

Experience on the physical level is a function of our senses. We believe what our eyes see and what the nerves in our body report. We calibrate our balance via the "gyro" in our middle ear and we assess our effort based on how fast we breath. The human experience is very much a "physical" experience and it is, without doubt, the "reality" the vast majority of us live in (including our medical community).

Accordingly, the physical level is the first and primary level of mastery we seek to achieve in our study of the DZR (after all, fighting is physical... right?). All our

efforts are based in it, albeit inter-spliced with moments of intellectual understanding, and our notebooks are filled with it. In fact, our kata manual only lists those aspects of the system that are considered physical. It's no wonder why many, many DZR practitioners believe there is simply no other level to master... And because of that, never do.

-Mental/ Intellectual experience

Ju: Absence of resistance. a quality of conscious-mind before it can be a quality of the subconscious-governed body. Sutemi: Whereby the will of the conscious-mind reprograms the protective nature of the subconscious mind to abandon its belief that to fall is to die (or at least be injured). Indeed, many of the most profound concepts in Danzan require a significant amount of contemplation and understanding before they can be performed physically. DZR is most certainly a thinking-man's martial art in that many of its physical challenges are first challenges of the intellect.

To experience DZR on the level of mind is to first master the basic physical forms (foot here... hand here, etc) and work to incorporate the subtle aspects of strategy. "Leading the mind" if you will, is the skill of one person's intellect to engage and manipulate the opposition's unconscious mind: The basic operating system that we all have that serves to protect us by short-circuiting our thoughts and moving directly into action. It takes an understanding of the art on the level of intellectual-mind to accomplish this.

In our fighting system, it is of the utmost importance that one maintain their composure in order to access the sensitivity necessary to flow. Inability to do so results in a rapid loss of nearly all technique causing the DZ artist to rely completely on strength and aggression. Complete decay of all subtle skills. It is only thru mastery of the art on the level of mind that one is able to fight with courage, ferocity and composure. Look at the example set by the best of the best in our armed forces. These are legitimate warriors in life and death situations, trained to survive and succeed via superior training on the level of mind. The power of DZR as a combat art as well as an art for personal growth requires the alignment of these two aspects of our consciousness: Our "thinking" mind and our "doing" mind.

-Higher consciousness/ Spiritual experience

Most of us, on any given day, spend the vast majority of our time in our "self." That is to say, we rarely go a moment without being aware of who we are and what we are thinking. The mentations of the thinking-mind are never ceasing and work to convince us of its supreme value. To think is to be productive. To be productive is to move forward. To move forward is to live. Therefore to stop thinking is to cease living. But what if that wasn't actually the truth? What if our thoughts had some secret agenda that we weren't aware of, attempting to secure more and more of our personal power in an attempt to gain immortality? That is the nature of the "ego." A term used to describe a false sense of self.

So what would life be like without an ego? Would we collapse to the ground like

invertebrates or would we in some way be set free? Free from fear, free from hate... free from death. This question is the domain of many spiritual systems including Zen Buddhism. I point that out because it was Zen that the ancient stewards of Jujitsu, the Samurai, found very useful to their way of life. It was thru the strategy of "ego assassination" that they found the ultimate level of their art. It was thru this level that the samurai was able to use all his training. He was now free to move with spontaneous adaptation and decisive action because he had experienced his true nature outside the ego... his Shin.

The relationship between spirituality and the martial arts, of the east as well as of the pacific islands, goes back to the beginning. Accessing one's higher consciousness, spirit-self or God-self has long been the experience of those facing their final moments. And for those that survive, it may very well be that access that was responsible for the miraculous feats of skill and courage that saved the day. Learning the secrets of accessing your being outside the illusions of the ego is a level of experience few have obtained. But for those that have, training in the martial arts becomes a path to a great realization.

In asian spirituality, many activities are capable of creating the necessary path. Some are based in movement. Some are based in stillness. Either way, they serve to integrate the physical body and the mind that governs it, and the spirit-self that resides outside our thoughts. This union is the definition of the sanskrit "Yoga." This union is the goal of all systems of realization. Otherwise known as mind, body and spirit training. Whereby Jujitsu is elevated to a finer moral concept.

-Life force as a level of experience.

Training to align the body-mind, the thinking mind, and the higher-self into a unified intention will also serve to create awareness of yet another level of experience: the level of bio-energy or as its known in China... Chi.

Chi is the "experience behind all experience." It is the animating force of the universe and the crux of all traditional Asian healing. To work to sense and cultivate chi in your body (chi gong) is by definition an "internal art." Internal martial arts include Tai chi chuan, Bagua xuan, Aikido and Aikijujitsu to name a few. They are considered internal because the main intent of their respective training systems is to learn to build and manipulate chi or ki (Japanese). Is Danzan an internal martial art? that may depend intirely on you (and your instructor).

The healing arts of Danzan are no different from the martial arts with regard to levels of experience. They too begin in the physical, evolve to the mental and culminate in the energetic. Healing on the level of chi is the greatest expression of our martial power.

-What did Professor Okazaki mean by "completion of character?"

It is unanimously agreed by the senior stewards of DZR that the Professor Okazaki's main objective in creating his system was to provide the means by

which (path) a student, regardless of race, religion or gender, could "complete or perfect his or her character." While I don't have the authority to translate the original kanji or the author's intent when writing it, I will submit my personal belief as to the meaning of this goal:

Completion of character requires mastery of the DZR system on each of the various levels of experience. This alignment of body, mind and spirit frees the individual to access and guide his/her chi in an effort to create greater health, happiness and freedom.

Completion of character therefore equals an abundance of personal power (mana). And an abundance of personal power makes for a formidable warrior as well as a miraculous healer.

Thus, the way of the Warrior-Healer is the Danzan path.