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In this bulletin, I want to discuss the misuse and correct use of **Master and Traditional** as it relates to martial arts.

"MASTER"

"One who acquires complete knowledge or skill in an accomplishment, technique, or art."

Note: acquires complete knowledge: So those who claim they are a **Martial Arts Master** in this context is saying. " *I have reached the top of the mountain.*

I have seen these martial artists who profess to follow martial arts philosophy, heritage, traditions, and values but only when it serves their purpose. They should know that Asian martial arts traditionally use terms that are usually translated as "*teacher.*" **The use of "master" was a Western invention derived from the 1950s United States war veterans.**

They told stories of incredible martial art feats of individuals and groups. Later on, they found their way into martial arts culture and Hollywood as marketing tactics.

Titles were aligned to the 'elderly martial arts master.' In Asian culture, such titles are more commonly reserved for religious leaders and saints. Not in martial arts.

Here are a few more examples of western influence and the misuse of terms.

Soke, DR, PhD-MS, Professor etc. These terms are impressive to the ignorant. PT Barnum said it best. **"There is a sucker born every minute."**

I am a Master, or any of the preceding terms I just mentioned that are being used for commercialization without any legitimacy and is based on **ego and narcissism.** This is where I have a problem.

"Narcissistic"

Narcissistic is defined by Meriam Webster as. One who is extremely self-centered with an exaggerated sense of self-importance: marked by or characteristic of excessive admiration of or infatuation with oneself.

How the word master is used will define its meaning. Here are a few examples.

Plantation Master: One who runs a plantation/slaves in times past.

Head Master: One who is in charge of a school, university, etc.

Dojo Master: One who is in charge of their martial arts school. Not to be confused as an all-encompassing Martial Artist. I, for one, do not use such a term. To me, it implies, *"Look at me, I am the man."*

"I serve only one master."

when the word Master is used in this statement. That is to be defined as a noun meaning—one who directs the work of others or is a presiding officer of a school. ***"And not one who has reached the top of the mountain."***

When used in the statement, I am a member of a specific Master's organization or Associations. It's meant to imply that they have been confirmed to be of a legitimate Ryu Ha Kai organization, whose documents are traced back to its legitimacy and not a McDojo.

I hope this has, in some way, opened your eyes to how important it is to look at the context of a word as context defines content.

My advice for anyone planning on studying martial arts would be. **Do your research and learn to ask the right questions.**

In this case, the **right question** I would ask. You say I should call you **Master**, or you say you are a **Master**. Would you define that for me, please? Their response will tell you the type of person they are.

"TRADITION"

What does it mean when someone says, "I am a traditional martial artist?"

Merriam Webster defines Traditional.

One: an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action, or behavior.

Two: The handing down of information, beliefs, and customs by word of mouth or by example from one generation to another that may be with or without written instruction.

Three: Cultural continuity in social attitudes, customs, and institutions.

I have been guilty of making the statement. "I am a traditional martial artist." I did not bother to ask what it meant and took it literally that I followed, in my case, Japanese martial arts traditions in their entirety. I and others just took this term at face value.

Over the years, I have learned how words can be misused or used to define a person's agenda.

Words have meaning, so I try very hard to use a word in its proper context. Remember, context defines content.

Traditional has a vast range of meanings. Over the years, I have changed how I use and define **Traditional**. In my opinion, many still say they are traditional when in fact, few have ever been asked. *What do you mean you teach traditionalist martial arts?*

Are you teaching the traditions related to the customs and protocol as it relates to your specific style? Are you giving commands in Japanese? Are the ranks and titles you give following the traditions of your style? Are you teaching only that which is relevant to your style?

As you can see, I could go on and on with asking questions and those questions bringing up more questions. So ask yourself, are you teaching traditional martial arts? Or are you picking and choosing that which is relevant to you.

Our Hollywood action martial arts movies have played a big part in how the public perceives martial arts. Some good, some bad.

The bad part arises when a teacher uses some of the movie's jargon for commercial gain, as in I teach traditional martial arts. This is to entice the mislead and the uneducated public into thinking this teacher is real. When in fact, it is misleading. I may get some kickback on this next statement. What do you think?

I am caucasian my culture does not allow me to understand Asian culture related to martial arts and its teaching. I may try to **emulate**, but I will never understand the totality of the mindset of Asian martial arts.

"Emulate" is a more specialized word with a purely positive function, meaning to try to equal or match. In this case Traditional Martial Arts.

There is an old saying. *"Never judge another person until you have walked in their shoes."* This can relate to culture as well.

I am not saying a Martial Arts teacher should not follow some of the customs. No, your limits,

and do it with good intentions and not one of being flamboyant. *"A person tending to attract attention because of their exuberance, confidence, stylishness."* In some cases, this is meant to feed one's ego.

Don't try to be something your not, nor can you ever be. If you are not Asian, then how can you know what and how they think. Nor can they understand what it means to be caucasian. It will never happen.

Otherwise, you're just putting on a show.

As the years went by, I realized how broad and complicated the definition of tradition could be. *To say I teach traditional Martial Arts would not be entirely accurate.*

I now tell people that I follow **Traditional Martial Arts Values and Principles.**

Values are qualities or standards that govern a person's behavior, and principles are rules or beliefs that govern our actions. Thus, it is values that act as the foundation for principles.

I hope that I have shed more light on how some use Master and Traditional. *Context defines content.* I would like to

hear from some of you about my take on these two words. We can all learn to agree to disagree. An opinion is a judgment, viewpoint, or statement that is not conclusive, rather than a fact.

Please let me know if anyone has a topic or a question you would like me to expound on relating to Kihon and Waza's in martial arts. I like challenges.

If you wish to be removed from the email list. Say so, or if you know someone who may be interested in this bulletin, forward it to them.

A teacher should be critical in his instruction. Limiting it only by the student's capability.

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