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**Peace through fighting skills: the spiritual dimensions of budo and how they contribute to micro-level conflict transformation and peacebuilding**

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Master thesis of Religion, Conflict and Globalization

Word count: 19 987

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2nd assessor: Dr. Elena Mucciarelli

August 26, 2022

**Abstract**

Even though there is growing interest about how conflicts can be transformed in a way that they result to lasting peace, non-Western and spiritual knowledge have been largely ignored in this quest for more effective strategies towards such peace. This thesis focuses on exploring the spirituality in Japanese martial arts and how it can contribute to conflict transformation and peacebuilding on a micro-level. Specifically, the focus is on Dutch kendo practitioners, their understandings of budo spirituality and how they resolve conflicts in their everyday lives. This thesis argues that budo spirituality manifests as self-development towards control of the self and social situations, which can then be used to balance aggression and control conflicts. As such, this paper illustrates that budo has the potential to teach conflict transformation and peacebuilding skills to individuals.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

# GLOSSARY

**Bogu**
Protective gear used in kendo is called bogu. It consists of a helmet (men), wrist protectors (kote), a breast plate (do) and a cloth worn around the hips (tare). These are worn during training over a shirt (gi) and wide pants (hakama).

**Bu**
(In this context) Martial knowledge.[1]

**Budo**
An umbrella term for a variety of Japanese martial arts. Budo in the Japanese Budo Association are kyudo, kendo, judo, karate(do), sumo, aikido, shorinji kempo, jukendo and naginata.[2] Additionally, there are a few budo that do not belong in the association, such as iaido and jodo.[3] Additionally, there are traditional forms of budo (bujutsu or koryu), such as shinkage-ryu.[4]

**Budoka**
Umbrella term for a practitioner of Japanese martial arts. The suffix '-ka' can be added to the end of most budo practices to similarly indicate a practitioner of that particular art. For example, a kendoka is a person that practices kendo.

**Bun**
(In this context) Literary knowledge.[5]

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[1] Alexander Bennett, *Bushido Explained: The Japanese Samurai Code*. A New Interpretation for Beginners (Tuttle Publishing, 2020), 79.
[2] Alexander Bennett, *Japan: The Ultimate Samurai Guide* (Tuttle Publishing, 2018), 70-77.
[3] Ibid., 78.
[4] Ibid., 70.
[5] Bennett*, Bushido Explained*, 79

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| **Bushido** | Literally translates to 'military-knight-ways'.[6] Bushido is originally the behavior code of the samurai, but has since also come to mean Japanese spirit.[7] |
| **Dan** | Refers to grades one can achieve in budo, but also certain other martial arts. Dan graded practitioners have achieved a certain level of mastery in their art, while lower kyu grades are still learning basics. Some forms of budo use different colored belts to indicate grades. In this system, Dan-grades hold a $1^{st}$ degree black belt or higher. |
| **Do** | Commonly translated as 'the way'. Refers to a way of life or a path towards reaching a higher purpose.[8] |
| **Dojo** | Practice space of Japanese martial arts. In Japan, this space is often a specific dojo building whereas in the West it can be any gym where Japanese martial arts are practiced. The term can also refer to the training club and its members as a whole. |
| **Fudoshin** | Commonly translated to 'immovable mind'. It is a concept that refers to a mental state of imperturbability, regardless of what situation the practitioner finds themselves in.[9] |
| **Kamae** | Stance of the body and mental posture. |
| **Kendo** | Kendo is a form of budo practiced with bamboo swords (shinai). The kendoka are awarded points (ippon) based on correct strikes on the head (men), wrist (kote), side (do) or throat (tsuki), which are all |

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[6] Inazo Nitobe, *Bushido: the Soul of Japan* (Malvern: 1899; Eternal Books, 2016), 11. Citations refer to the 2016 edition.
[7] Bennett, *Japan*, 17.
[8] Harris L. Friedman, "Using Aikido and Transpersonal Psychology Concepts as Tools for Reconciling Conflict: Focus on Aikido and Related Martial Arts, Such as Hapkido," *NeuroQuantology* 14, no. 2 (June 2016): Aikido. DOI: 10.14704/nq.2016.14.2.938.
[9] Bennett, *Japan*, 38.

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| | protected by a training 'armor' (bogu). It derives from kenjutsu. |
| **Mushin** | Commonly translated to 'no-mind'. This concept refers to a mental state where the mind is not focused on any particular aspect, but instead is ready to react to any situation.[10] |
| **Ryuha** | Traditional school of Japanese martial arts.[11] '-Ryu' can often still be seen as a suffix in the names of traditional martial arts schools. |
| **Samurai** | Elite Japanese warriors that became the ruling class in the 12th century. The samurai originated in the 8th century and remained relevant until the late 19th century. Another common term for samurai is bushi.[12] |
| **Sensei** | Teacher of Japanese martial arts. |
| **Shinai** | Bamboo sword used in the practice of kendo. |

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[10] Ibid., 109.
[11] Ibid., 46-47.
[12] Ibid., 8.

## 1. Introduction

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a samurai called Issai Chozan wrote a story about cats that are trying to catch a rat: *The Cat's Eerie Skill*.[13] The samurai or bushi were elite warriors that were relevant in Japanese society between 8th and 19th century.[14] According to the fable, the rat lives in the house of an accomplished samurai who brings in three neighborhood cats to catch it, but the rat is skilled and they fail along with the samurai himself.[15] The samurai hears of an old neighborhood cat, who catches the rat with no effort. That night, the three cats – a black one, a tabby one and a grey one – are curious how the old cat managed to trick the cunning rat. The black cat tells the old cat that he has practiced for years, to which the old cat replies that his practice had focused too much on technique.[16] The tabby cat explains that he has focused on his energy or "ki", which allows him to use his power to intimidate his opponents. The old cat says his way is also faulty, because he has only developed his ego and a rat with a stronger ego will beat him.[17] The grey cat has worked on his heart and instead of confronting his adversaries, he tries to trick them. The old cat thinks that this is a foolish conspiracy and a skilled opponent can expect his plan.[18] The old cat then proceeds to explain that the key is to reach the state of "mushin" or no-mind:

*Because there is a self, there is an opponent. If there is no self, there is no opponent. What we call opponent, adversary, enemy, is merely another name for what means opposition or counterpart.[19]*

*The Cat's Eerie Skill* is one of many famous writings about the spiritual aspects of budo or Japanese martial arts. It highlights the personal development in budo practice and suggests that the root cause of an unsuccessful conflict is the self. Meanwhile in academia, the question of rising spirituality as contrast to religious practice continues to be of interest in the field of religious

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[13] Issai Chozan, "The Subtle Art of a Cat: Neko no Myōjutsu," 1659–1741, The Matheson Trust: For the Study of Comparative Religion, 1. https://www.themathesontrust.org/library/subtle-cat-art-neko-no-myojutsu.
[14] Bennett, *Japan*, 8.
[15] Chozan, "The Subtle Art of a Cat," 1.
[16] Ibid., 2.
[17] Ibid., 3.
[18] Ibid., 3-4.
[19] Ibid., 6.

studies. Studying budo is likely to bring new insights about the meaning of spirituality. As a starting point, this thesis will understand spirituality according to Heelas and Woodhead. They explain that while traditional religion '…has to do with deferential relationship to higher authority…', while spirituality is about '…holistic relationship to the spirit-of-life'. In conflict and peace studies, the interest has increasingly focused on how conflicts can be transformed in a way that their root causes are dealt with to ensure lasting peace. It is relevant to draw attention to the many types of non-Western and spiritual knowledge that could potentially help develop strategies for achieving such peace, but which have so far been largely ignored.

This thesis will focus on studying budo spirituality in relation to conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Budo used to be the militant and often violent way of the samurai.[20] As wars in Japan ended, the spiritual development in budo was highlighted in order to find a new place in the world for these various embodied practices.[21] The original names of most Japanese martial arts included the suffix "jutsu", which refers to combat, but have since been replaced with "do", which refers to spiritual development and the means to achieve a higher purpose.[22] Budo came to mean a collection of martial arts that highlight self-development.[23] The modern budo disciplines in the Japanese Budo Association are kyudo, kendo, judo, karate(do), sumo, aikido, shorinji kempo, jukendo and naginata.[24] Additionally, there are many traditional styles known as koryu or bujutsu and modern budo that do not belong to the association.[25] This change in the nature of budo from a violent way of war to a peaceful spiritual practice that is about self-development suggests that it potentially fosters unexplored knowledge about peace and conflict. However, the connection is yet to be properly studied.

In this thesis, the main question will be: to what extent can budo be considered a spiritual practice and how do its practitioners use it for micro-level conflict transformation and peacebuilding? When it comes to budo, the amount of

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[20] Bennett, *Japan*, 7.
[21] Ibid., 15, 17.
[22] Friedman, "Using Aikido and Transpersonal Psychology Concepts as Tools for Reconciling Conflict," Aikido.
[23] Bennett, *Japan*, 69.
[24] Ibid., 70-77.
[25] Ibid., 70, 78.

literature available in English is still limited and the publications dealing with budo's relationship to peace are even more scarce. The research that exists has neglected to provide a complex view on practitioners' inner life worlds. This thesis aims to bring a more in-depth view about budo's relationship to peace by focusing on how practitioners (budoka) use it in conflict. The main research question will be answered through the following sub-questions: what are the main spiritual teachings of budo and how are they understood by its contemporary practitioners? What is the relationship between budo and aggression? How do contemporary budoka use budo in order to transform conflicts and foster peace in their community and personal lives?

This thesis will use the word 'budo' to refer to Japanese martial arts, while its common translations such as martial arts and combat sports will be used to convey a larger meaning beyond only Japanese practices. This is to highlight the specificity of budo and separate it from similar activities.[26] While the word 'martial arts' includes budo, the word carries a wider meaning as it can also refer to various dance forms, traditional practices and religious concepts.[27] Additionally, the difference between martial arts and combat sports is problematically unclear.[28] The widest possible term used is that of fighting arts, which includes martial arts, combat sports and budo.[29]

This thesis will first discuss various literature by providing a quick look into Japanese history and then reviewing articles about spirituality, and budo's relationship with aggression and conflicts. Then, the conceptual framework and methodology will be explained. Even though most of this thesis discusses budo, kendo has been chosen as a specific area of study for the practical part of this research. Approximately half of the thesis is dedicated to a thorough analysis of these research findings and to answering the three sub-questions. Finally, there will be a conclusion, which provides an answer to the main research question.

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[26] Fuminori Nakiri, "Concept of budo and the history and activities of the Japanese Academy of Budo," *Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology* 15, no. 1 (2015): 14. DOI: 10.14589/ido.15.1.2.
[27] Ibid., 13.
[28] Ibid., 14.
[29] Ibid., 13.

## 2. Background: budo from feudal Japan to today

In order to analyze contemporary budo practice, it is necessary to take a brief look into its history. Naturally, its past is much more complicated than this small summary can capture, but it is possible to make a rough overview of the development of ideas about violence and peace in the history of Japan. This will focus on the samurai tradition.

The first samurai emerged in the 8th century during the Heian period.[30] They provided occasional fighting services for the imperial court in Kyoto. The samurai influence slowly increased and during the Kamakura period the first warrior government (shogunate) was erected. It existed together with the imperial government.[31] The first schools (ryuha) teaching the fighting arts emerged in the 14th century, but they were careful not to reveal their teachings to anyone except their own students.[32] Already during the Ashikaga shogunate, the samurai started showing interest towards cultural activities such as theatre, poetry and tea ceremonies alongside the martial way.[33] Because the samurai were thought of as lacking sophistication, families also started publishing their own rules of etiquette known as kakun. Although they were mostly written to make sure the samurai would not bring dishonor to the clan, a few still significant ideas of peace were included in these writings.[34] *Chikubasho* written by Shiba Yoshimasa highlighted that the warrior class should develop oneself in many aspects of life and be kind to others: 'Particularly the man whose profession is arms should calm his mind and look into the depths of others'.[35] Imagawa Ryoshun, on the other hand, highlighted that learning is important for governance.[36] Overall, the kakun suggested that samurai should balance the 'bu'

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[30] Bennett, *Japan,* 10.

[31] Constantine Nomikos Vaporis, *Samurai: An Encyclopedia of Japan's Cultured Warriors* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2019), xxi.

[32] Bennett, *Japan*, 46-47.

[33] Bennett, *Japan*, 13.

[34] Bennett, *Bushido Explained*, 79.

[35] Shiba Yoshimasa, *Chikubasho* (1383), trans. William Scott Wilson, in *Ideals of the Samurai: Writings of Japanese Warriors* (Valencia: Cruz Bay Publishing, 1982).

[36] Imagawa Ryoshun, *The Regulations of Imagawa Ryoshun* (1412), trans. William Scott Wilson, in *Ideals of the Samurai: Writings of Japanese Warriors* (Valencia: Cruz Bay Publishing, 1982).

(martial) and 'bun' (literary) aspects of their knowledge.[37] Bunbu-ryodo is still a concept that refers to prowess in both martial arts and scholarship.[38] The first mention of bushido – the behavior code of the samurai – is likely to be from this period.[39]

The most violent part of samurai history started when the shogunate dissolved and warlords known as daimyo started recruiting the samurai in their fight for power. The samurai were far from loyal and were willing to overthrow their masters to advance their own interests. This is known as the Sengoku or Warring States period.[40] At the time the samurai focused on honing their fighting skills.[41]

In the end, a man named Tokugawa Ieyasu established a new shogunate in Japan. The Togukawa or Edo period is known as one of the longest periods of peace in world history.[42] Warrior, merchant, artisan and farmer classes existed in society. The warrior class, which consisted of the samurai, was bored with little possibilities to wield a weapon. This caused many of them to resort to drinking, petty fights, gambling and purchasing sexual services. Because of this, Confucian thinkers started writing about the 'social duty' of the warrior class in times of peace and in this way further developed the above-mentioned concept of bushido.[43] They instructed the samurai to be ready for conflict, but not to seek for it with anger and greed.[44] Samurai were to be moral examples to the rest of society while maintaining their fighting skills. The words 'bu' and 'bun' were once again important, although the latter was significantly highlighted.[45] The ryuha also changed. They now incorporated Buddhist and Confucian ideals and highlighted spiritual enlightenment as a goal of training.[46] Famous writings from the Edo period include *the Book of Five Rings* and *the Hagakure*.[47] Despite the

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[37] Bennett, *Bushido Explained*, 79.
[38] Bennett, *Japan*, 35.
[39] Bennett, Bushido Explained, 91.
[40] Vaporis, *Samurai*, xxi.
[41] Bennett, *Japan*, 14.
[42] Vaporis, *Samurai,* xxii.
[43] Bennett, *Japan*, 15.
[44] Bennett, *Bushido Explained*, 99; 105; 111.
[45] Vaporis, *Samurai*, xxiii.
[46] Bennett, *Japan*, 56.
[47] Ibid., 40.

peaceful publications, samurai still at times participated in honor-based violence against each other and members of other classes.[48] This made the samurai disliked among the lower classes.[49]

The peaceful time came to an end as the West forced Japan to open for trade. A brief revolution took place and marked the start of the Meiji period during which Japan struggled to catch up with Western development.[50] This stopped the samurai right of dealing out arbitrary violence.[51] They were disallowed of carrying weapons in public. Classes were removed in the late 1800s, which resulted to the society being divided into commoners and former samurai. The frustration of the former samurai is famously depicted in the movie *The Last Samurai*.[52] Many ryuha were closed as samurai practices struggled to find their place in modernization.[53] 20th century onwards, samurai culture was used to describe the Japanese identity along with the concept of bushido, which now came to mean Japanese spirit. Samurai morality was now considered Japanese morality.[54] The teaching of martial arts was also revitalized. In 1919, the famous change bujutsu to budo occurred. This was made to highlight the moral and self-development aspects of the martial way.[55]

During the Second World War, Japan became a totalitarian and militaristic state. 'Bu' was once again important. A popular book during the war years was Inazo Nitobe's *Bushido: the Soul of Japan* written in 1899.[56] Nitobe aimed to explain the concept of bushido to Westerners in order to show that Japan had morality too. He faced significant criticism for attempting to make bushido a religion and depicting it as too Christian.[57] While Nitobe was born into a samurai family, he moved to the United States and became a Quaker before writing his famous book.[58] After the Second World War, budo were perceived to be a part of

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[48] Vaporis*, Samurai*, xxii-xxiii.
[49] Ibid., xxiv.
[50] Bennett, *Japan*, 15-16.
[51] Vaporis, *Samurai*, xxiv.
[52] Bennett, *Japan*, 16.
[53] Ibid., 60.
[54] Ibid., 17.
[55] Ibid., 65.
[56] Ibid., 43.
[57] Bennett, *Bushido Explained*, 140.
[58] Ibid., 139.

Japanese militarism and were banned until 1952. Samurai ideals withered and were revitalized together with martial arts after that time.[59] Unexpectedly, Nitobe's book ended up becoming the foundation of contemporary Japanese bushido and succeeded in making the samurai ethical code internationally popular.[60]

In the book, Nitobe compares bushido to Western chivalry. Bushido literally translates to 'Military-Knight-Ways' and it is a moral code transmitted mainly orally through generations.[61] Nitobe explains that its foundations are in three religions. First, Buddhism gave bushido the idea of composure and calmness in the face of danger, which puts one in conformity with the absolute.[62] Second, Shintoism gave it its distinct respect towards elders and loyalty to the leader and nation.[63] Finally, Confucianism gave it an ethical doctrine.[64] However, bushido was only one way of finding wisdom and more than martial practices were needed to find it.[65]

Nitobe also uses examples from Western thinkers to explain the seven virtues of the samurai: justice, courage, benevolence, politeness, truthfulness, honor and loyalty. According to him, justice refers to the capability to find the correct thing to do without hesitation.[66] Courage is daring to do what is right.[67] Benevolence refers to the feeling of sympathy and affection, which in practice leads to showing mercy.[68] Politeness is the display of sympathy for example through etiquette.[69] Truthfulness refers to being sincere, avoiding empty compliments and telling the truth even without being tied by oath.[70] Honor – most famous of virtues – is the feeling of dignity one has and protects.[71] Lastly,

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[59] Bennett, *Japan,* 18-19.
[60] Bennett, *Bushido Explained*, 140-141.
[61] Nitobe, *Bushido: the Soul of Japan*, 11.
[62] Ibid., 13-14.
[63] Ibid., 14-15.
[64] Ibid., 15.
[65] Ibid., 16.
[66] Ibid., 18-19.
[67] Ibid., 20.
[68] Ibid., 23, 25.
[69] Ibid., 29.
[70] Ibid., 33-34.
[71] Ibid., 37-38.

loyalty is the fealty one feels towards their leader and family.[72] All of these aspects are a part of a warrior's sense of chivalry or bushido.[73]

This chapter has summarized the origins budo with a focus on its development from violent to a peaceful practice. It can be observed that the samurai tradition went through periods of extreme violence and peace before contemporary budo. The spiritual aspects of this history – mainly that of bushido – have been highlighted here. Additionally, Nitobe's book has been introduced because of its meaning to the contemporary understanding of bushido. Another significant part of budo history not highlighted here is its development into a sport-like phenomenon.

## 3. Previous research: spirituality, aggression and conflict skills

The social scientific study of budo in Japan is based on historiographical research, which dominated the field for a long time.[74] Historiographical research written in English by Western scholars has been referred to in the previous section. This section will focus on publications in English after the study of the fighting arts reached more interest in the West. While the focus of this thesis is budo, relevant research about many types of fighting arts will be referred to. This includes the role of spirituality in the fighting arts, relationship between aggression and these practices, and their usefulness in resolving conflicts.

### a. Personal development and spirituality

The fighting arts' spiritual and religious aspects have been a relatively popular topic in religious studies. Few of such studies focus specifically on budo, which is why especially here other practices are highlighted. Most of the research on fighting arts as spiritual or religious practices have been conducted as ethnographic fieldwork or historiographical analysis.

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[72] Ibid., 40, 43.
[73] Ibid., 17.
[74] Tetsuya Nakajima, "Japanese martial arts and the sublimation of violence: An ethnographic study of Shinkage-ryu," *Martial Arts Studies* 6 (Summer 2018): 63. DOI: 10.18573/mas.68.

Wacquant's 'The Prizefighter's Three Bodies' is an ethnography conducted at boxing gym with mainly black membership in South Chicago in the 1990s.[75] Wacquant discusses the function, aesthetics and ethics of a fighter's body. According to Wacquant, the boxers in his study used metaphors such as 'machine', 'weapon' or 'tool' to describe the purpose of their bodies.[76] Body aesthetics mattered not only because of looks, but also because a well-trained body displayed commitment and determination.[77] The morality of the fighter's body revolved around the sacrifice and renouncement of activities that did not improve the body.[78] This meant the observance of a strict diet, restriction of distracting aspects of social life and abstinence near a competitions as sex was believed to weaken the body.[79] Wacquant argues that developing the martial body through a strict routine gave the boxers lives a higher purpose. The purpose of their training is to embody masculinity and the morality of their profession.[80]

The routine of training becomes a spiritual practice, because it affects the way the practitioners relate to their lives.[81] This may be plausible for some Dutch budoka as well, as they may value their routine. It is unlikely that the interviewees in this research place as many restrictions on their lives, because they probably are not training for professional careers. Budo spirituality may also be connected to perceptions of one's body and its development, although it is unlikely to be as strong as with boxing.

Jennings, Brown and Sparkes focused their ethnographic research on an English Wing Chun Kung Fu Association. They argue that even though Wing Chun is not technically a religion, it does fit Edward I. Bailey's definition of a secular religion.[82] Bailey described secular religion as "either as that way of life that is expressed in religion, or as that way of life in which religion is

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[75] Loïc Wacquant, "The Prizefighter's Three Bodies," *Ethnos* 63, no. 3 (1998): 325. DOI: 10.1080/00141844.1998.9981579.
[76] Ibid., 330, 333.
[77] Ibid., 334-335.
[78] Ibid., 339.
[79] Ibid., 340-342.
[80] Ibid., 345-346.
[81] Heelas and Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution*, 31.
[82] George Jennings, David Brown and Andrew C. Sparkes, "'It can be a religion if you want': Wing Chun Kung Fu as a secular religion," *Ethnography* 11, no. 4 (2010): 543. DOI:10.1177/1466138110372588

expressed".[83] Jennings, Brown and Sparkes explain that in Wing Chun a religion such as Taoism can be expressed, but the everyday activity of training can also become a religion in itself.[84] Through repetition and the trainer's encouragement the training experience slowly becomes sacred to its practitioners. This is a social process where the sacralization of Wing Chun happens to them together until they practically embody Wing Chun spirituality.[85]

The authors suggest that the seemingly secular practice of kung fu becomes sacred and as such a sort of religion to its practitioners. It should be noted that religion and experience of the sacred are not the same phenomena, although they can be connected. Sacred phenomena do not always fit into the idea of religion and – similarly – not everything that is related to religion is sacred.[86] In this thesis, sacred will be understood as 'a communicative structure focused on absolute realities around which the meanings of social life are constituted and that exert normative claims on the conduct of social life'.[87] Jennings, Brown and Sparkes highlight the routine of training, which is similar to Wacquant. However, they add a social factor by arguing that sacralization of the practice happens to the practitioners together. This is an interesting aspect in the case of Dutch budo as well, because it is likely that budoka look to more experienced practitioners for how they are expected to train. By referring to Bailey, the authors also mention the relevant concept of secular religion, which budo may also be for some of its practitioners.

The presence of religion in kendo has been assessed by Tuckett. He analyzes various commentators of budo throughout history and argues that martial arts can provide relevant critique to the understanding of the term 'religion'.[88] When martial arts are promoted as sports instead of arts, the spiritual aspects of the practices are undermined.[89] The term 'sport' makes the practices appear less

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[83] Edward I. Bailey, "Secular religion," in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Society*, ed. William H. Swatos (Lanham: MD AltaMira Press, 1998). http://hirr.hartsem.edu/ency/Secular.htm.

[84] Jennings, Brown and Sparkes, "'It can be a religion if you want'," 543.

[85] Ibid., 547-548.

[86] Gordon Lynch, *The Sacred in the Modern World: A Cultural Sociological Approach,* (Oxford: Oxford Academic, 2012), 6. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199557011.001.0001.

[87] Ibid., 133.

[88] Jonathan Tuckett, "Kendo: Between 'Religion' and 'Nationalism'," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 44 (2016): 178. https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=538397.

[89] Ibid., 184.

serious and more playful than the more spiritual term 'art'.[90] Tuckett explains that this is a Western understanding of the meaning of martial arts and that is why it is often said only the Japanese truly understand kendo.[91] His main argument is that martial arts shows religion should not be understood as something all-encompassing as it often is understood in the West, but as an ideology.[92]

The author appears to confuse the terms 'religion' and 'spiritual' by suggesting that spiritual aspects of kendo are being neglected, while at the same time arguing that the concept of religion needs to be extended in order to accommodate it. However, the critique that Tuckett provides is relevant, because it is likely that budoka themselves are hesitant to call their practices spiritual or religious. The way that they understand the meaning of the words does not necessarily match budo. Another important point from Tuckett is that the interviewees disapproval of the word 'sport' in relation to budo may be an indication of spirituality.

Pérez-Gutiérrez et al. have documented the increased interest in martial arts spiritualities in Spain by analyzing monographs published by practitioners between 1906 and 2009.[93] The process started in the 1960s and the amount of religious content rose until the 1990s while spiritual content reached its highest point in the 2000s.[94] The findings were based on a keyword search where terminology of various religious traditions was used to look for religion and terminology from meditation, bioenergetics and relaxation methods was used to find spirituality.[95] The authors found that the rise of spirituality and religion in the monographs correlated with secularization in Spanish society, emergence of the New Age movement and increasing popularity of Eastern spirituality.[96]

The research of Pérez-Gutiérrez et al. suggests that martial arts spirituality is possibly linked to Eastern esotericism and the New Age movement.

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[90] Ibid., 185-186.
[91] Ibid., 195-196.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Mikel Pérez-Gutiérrez et al., "The (Re)Emergence of a Religio-Spiritual Self-Cultivation Focus in Asian Martial Arts Monographs Published in Spain (1906– 2009)," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 32, no. 2 (2015): 200. DOI:10.1080/09523367.2014.943735.
[94] Ibid., 205.
[95] Ibid., 203.
[96] Ibid., 207-209.

Though their research is focused on Spain, the arrival of these philosophies is likely to have had a similar effect on martial arts practitioners elsewhere, including the Netherlands. The peak of spiritual content in the research is in the 2000s where the research also ends. It is likely that the popularity of spiritual practices in martial arts has only grown since then. It is also possible that martial arts training is sometimes combined with other New Age practices.

### b. Fighting arts relationship with aggression

Many studies from the field of psychology provide insight in how fighting arts affect aggressiveness. They mostly use quantitative methods such as surveys to establish connections between anger and training. The matter became a topic of interest in the 1990s and the research still continues.

Lamarre and Nosanchuk examined judoka – the practitioners of a budo art called Judo – in three different training halls (dojo). The judoka filled in a questionnaire where frustrating situations were described and they could choose their responses in the imagined scenarios.[97] Special attention was paid to the participants' age, sex and grade.[98] Lamarre and Nosanchuk found that while sex did not have significant effect on the number of aggressive responses displayed, a higher age and belt level meant decreased amounts of aggressiveness.[99] However, as the participants with senior belts were usually older, it is difficult to ascertain which variable caused the decrease. The authors' explanation to finding no significant difference between the sexes is that aggressive people – which previous studies have more often found to be men – are unlikely to keep practicing judo, which focuses on relatively gentle throws and holds.[100]

The research shows that budo may make its practitioners more peaceful by decreasing aggressiveness as they gain more experience, although this may be partly related to wisdom that comes with age. A comparison with

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[97] Brian W. Lamarre and T. A. Nosanchuk, "Judo – the Gentle Way: a replication of studies on martial arts and aggression," *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 88 (1999): 993-994. https://doi-org.proxy-ub.rug.nl/10.2466/pms.1999.88.3.992.
[98] Ibid., 994.
[99] Ibid., 995.
[100] Ibid., 996.

practitioners of other sports would have determined whether judo attracts less aggressive people, because information about the difference between junior belts and more experienced judoka was available.

A strikingly different result on the sex variable was found among karateka by Björkvist and Varhama, who also added a comparison group of noncontact sports. The karateka were asked to fill in a questionnaire, which measured their attitudes towards "violent conflict resolution" in macro-level conflicts and personal lives. While overall men displayed more acceptive attitudes towards violent conflict resolution than women, male karateka were less acceptive than practitioners of noncontact sports. With women, the effect was reversed: karateka were more interested in violent conflict resolution than noncontact sport practitioners.[101] The authors argue that the difference is due to women associating karate practice with self-defense capabilities, while men are more likely to think of it as less violent defense.[102]

It is possible that the differences in Björkvist and Varhama's and Lamarre and Nosanchuk's findings about sex and aggression are related to the nature of judo as a gentle practice. However, there is no apparent reason why women would associate karate with self-defense more than judo. The results can perhaps be explained with the differences in the focus of the questionnaire. Women may be less likely to respond aggressively with the fear of repercussions, but be more acceptive towards violent conflict resolution if it proves necessary. The question whether women become more peaceful with martial arts practice remains unanswered, but it appears that men do. Björkvist and Varhama's research did not provide information on the participants' grades, which still leaves the possibility that less aggressive men are interested in martial arts training, while more aggressive individuals seek for other practices.

Morvay-Sey et al. provide a view on budo practitioners' aggression while paying attention to gender. They also included a control group for comparison. The study focused on high school and vocational school aged youth

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[101] Kaj Björkqvist and Lasse Varhama, "Attitudes toward violent conflict resolution among male and female karateka in comparison with practitioners of other sports," *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 92, no. 2 (2001): 587. DOI:10.2466/PMS.92.2.586-588.
[102] Ibid., 588.

between 14 and 18 years old.[103] In the survey research conducted in Hungary, the types of aggression that were measured were verbal aggression, hostility, physical aggression and anger. These together formed the overall aggression score. Boys in both the budo group and control group displayed significantly more physical aggression and overall aggression than girls.[104] However, in the budo group the boys' physical aggression and overall aggression were much lower than the boys in the control group.[105] Girls in the control group scored slightly higher on anger and verbal aggression than boys, but lower in the budo group. There were no significant differences between hostility in any of the groups in question.[106] The frequency of training or number of years of practice did not have further effect on the amount of aggression.[107] In the control group, vocational school students were more aggressive than high school students while in the budo group there were no notable differences between school types.[108]

While this thesis will not include under 18-year-olds, the study of Morvay-Sey et al. is useful, because it provides more insights to the question of gender and different types of aggression. It shows that women's – or, at least girls' – aggression is more likely to be verbal than physical. This may explain differences between studies, as they do not necessarily all survey both. In the research of Morvay-Sey et al. the amount of time spent practicing budo does not affect aggression. This does suggest that budo itself may not make people less aggressive, but that budo attracts people who are already not aggressive. However, it is possible that this applies only to young budoka.

Lafuente, Zubiaur and Gutiérrez-Garcia performed a systematic review of research articles about martial arts and combat sports' relationship with aggression. They found that all studies which showed a reduction in aggression,

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[103] Kata Morvay-Sey et al., "A trait aggression in young Hungarian practitioners of Japanese martial arts," Archives of Budo vol. 15 (2019): 13. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333264305_A_trait_aggression_in_young_Hungarian_practitioners_of_Japanese_martial_arts.
[104] Ibid., 14-15.
[105] Ibid., 17.
[106] Ibid., 14, 17.
[107] Ibid., 18.
[108] Ibid., 15.

traditional martial arts had been used.[109] In their understanding, traditional martial arts include training in philosophical understanding and the practice of meditation or kata, which are also known as forms.[110] The authors also found that while some studies about martial arts and combat sports showed an unfavorable effect in aggression of young people, when it came to youth with behavioral issues their aggression decreased.[111] The article did not provide insights on gender differences.

In the view of Lafuente, Zubiaur and Gutiérrez-Garcia, budo certainly belongs in the grouping of traditional martial arts. This is in line with other research quoted in this section. Björkvist and Varhama did find positive attitudes towards violent conflict resolution among female karateka, but their questions were posed differently than when measuring personal aggression. It is still possible that budo attracts people who are already not aggressive as Morvay-Sey et al. suggest. Even though the review of Lafuente, Zubiaur and Gutiérrez-Garcia is highly useful and shows a clear connection between budo and low levels of aggression, the disparities in research about aggression in the fighting arts continue.

### c.  Solving conflicts through the fighting arts

The articles in this section are perhaps closest to the topic of this thesis. They look into the role of violence in training, dealing with personal and societal conflicts and self-defense. Unlike the studies in the previous section, most of this research has been conducted through ethnographic methods such as participant observation and interviews. Unequally many studies about these issues have been conducted in aikido dojo.

One of the studies argues that practicing aikido helps its practitioners in the challenges of everyday life.[112] Foster has named this process

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[109] Jorge Carlos Lafuente, Marta Zubiaur and Carlos Gutiérrez-Garcia, "Effects of martial arts and combat sports training on anger and aggression: A systematic review," Aggression and Violent Behavior 58 (2021): 8. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2021.101611.
[110] Ibid., 9.
[111] Ibid., 8.
[112] Drew Foster, "Fighters who Don't Fight: The Case of Aikido and Somatic Metaphorism," *Qual Sociol* 38 (2015): 180. DOI: 10.1007/s11133-015-9305-4.

where bodily movements are an important metaphor for social understanding 'somatic metaphorism'.[113] The development of the concept is a result of participant observation, interviews and text analysis.[114] He explains that all movements in aikido are based on responding to an attack by diffusing it. No techniques to attack are practiced.[115] He argues that aikidoka train not because they need the physical skills for self-defense, but because somatic metaphorism helps them make sense of and respond to conflict and other social situations. Foster writes that this does not necessarily apply only to aikido or even only to martial arts practices.[116]

Foster essentially suggests that the self-defense skills learned in aikido are irrelevant compared to the more important social skills. Specifically, people learn to use the metaphor of diffusing attacks to diffuse conflicts in their personal lives. This is relevant, because it presents the idea that budo teaches non-martial skills that can be used outside the dojo. It is possible that the budo practitioners in the Netherlands also use budo to make sense of social situations.

Nakajima has studied the practice of shinkage-ryu through fieldwork in a traditional dojo in Japan.[117] His argument is that one of the purposes of budo is to learn the skill of 'sublimation of violence'. This refers to overcoming violence by using the adversary's attack.[118] Nakajima comes to this conclusion by analyzing the practice of kata or forms, which in shinkage-ryu are the fundamentals of the budo displayed in a performative manner.[119] These are meant to produce marobashi, which is the culmination of the practice and the capability to respond to the opponent.[120] Marobashi manifests after the opponent misses and the budoka has a split-second chance to win the fight.[121] In this moment the budoka may choose not to use violence in their quick reaction, which leads to the

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[113] Ibid., 179.
[114] Ibid., 169.
[115] Ibid., 170.
[116] Ibid., 180-181.
[117] Nakajima, "Japanese martial arts and the sublimation of violence," 64.
[118] Ibid., 65.
[119] Ibid., 69.
[120] Ibid., 71.
[121] Ibid., 72.

sublimation of violence. In other words, shinkage-ryu changes the form of violence.[122]

According to Nakajima, budo's relationship to violence is that it makes it different. In the dojo, the goal is to use violence in a way that it does not cause harm. The adrenaline and feeling of battle are experienced, but no real damage has been done. Nakajima's research is less about conflict transformation outside the dojo and more about the role that violence plays in shinkage-ryu and budo in general. Researching the role of violence in the practice of budo through interviews may be tricky as practitioners are likely to deny the existence of violence in budo. However, asking about the occurrence of injuries and the amount of force used in attacks may provide some information.

A similar topic is discussed by García, who conducted fieldwork in both an aikido dojo and a boxing gym. He explains that the acceptable level of violence is negotiated in the practice of such fighting arts.[123] As beginners, the practitioners may break the lower threshold of violence by being overly careful and avoiding intense practices while as experience gathers the opposite may happen – breaking the upper threshold of violence may result from accidentally applying too much force or practicing too intensely than the other person can handle.[124] García argues that the practice of such fighting arts teaches how to deal with violence and conflict in a controlled manner.[125]

Garcia's idea about the negotiation of violence in the practice hall provides interesting information about the relationship between beginners and experienced budoka. Most beginners are probably not used to any form of violence, which explains their carefulness. It can be argued that this connects to Nakajima's research, because once beginners understand that the violence is sublimated, they dare to use more force. The experienced budoka that will be interviewed for this thesis may also sometimes break the upper threshold of violence and accidentally hurt someone.

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[122] Ibid., 73.

[123] Raúl Sánchez García, "Taming the Habitus: the Gym and the Dojo as 'civilizing workshops'," in *Fighting Scholars: Habitus and Ethnographies of Martial Arts and Combat Sports*, eds. Dale Spencer and Raúl Sánchez García (Anthem Press, 2014), 161.

[124] Ibid., 163, 166.

[125] Ibid., 156.

A connection between societal conflict and martial arts can be found in Timor Leste, where Siapno has studied aikido and local traditional dance practices.[126] She argues that in the Timorese post-conflict context, martial arts and dancing give their practitioners a sense of power and agency.[127] They help people dealing with the trauma of conflict to practice self-care and heal. As such they teach the population resilience.[128]

Despite the positive effects of martial arts that researchers have observed in the Timorese population, the government still views them as practices that increase violence in the post-conflict context. In 2013, seven years after the civil war, they banned three martial arts groups that had famous rivalries with each other and were claimed to participate in violence.[129] Pawelz explains that even though street violence decreased, the decision has been criticized because it dismisses the possibilities for harnessing martial arts groups for positive action in society.[130] Additionally, whether the violence occurred because of martial arts is difficult to establish, which means that the root causes of violence are not dealt with.[131] Now, the government has forced the Timorese youth to search for other – possibly criminal – practices to replace martial arts in their lives.[132]

The evidence from Timor Leste display the role of martial arts later in the conflict transformation process. It shows that they can help people heal, although the stigma related to these practices can hinder this process. Even though this thesis does not examine budo in a context of societal conflict, it may be possible to find proof that budo has helped people through tumultuous periods in their lives and in this way look into budo's potential to heal and produce resilience.

Hayhurst et al. have studied a development program where the purpose was to alleviate gender-based violence in Uganda by teaching young

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[126] Jacqueline Siapno, "Dance and Martial Arts in Timor Leste: The Performance of Resilience in a Post-Conflict Environment," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 33, no. 4 (2012): 427. DOI: 10.1080/07256868.2012.693819.
[127] Ibid., 437
[128] Ibid., 440.
[129] Janina Pawelz, "Security, Violence and Outlawed Martial Arts Groups in Timor-Leste," Asian Journal of Peacebuilding 3, no. 1 (2015): 123-124. DOI: 10.18588/201505.000039.
[130] Ibid., 126.
[131] Ibid., 127, 132.
[132] Ibid., 128-129.

women martial arts. The program was part of a bigger 'sport for development and peace' (SDP) movement.[133] The purpose was for the young women to gain confidence, resist common gender norms and develop leadership skills.[134] According to the authors, the program was successful when it came to confidence-building. The women were also more capable of defending themselves against abuse and sexual violence. However, they experienced ridicule and increased attempts of abuse due to the stigma related to practicing martial arts.[135] Additionally, although the program managed to challenge gender norms by including women in practices viewed as masculine in Uganda, the exclusion of men from the program suggested that men cannot be victims of violence. Letting men enroll in the program may have been more effective in creating change to gender relations.[136] The article does not clearly specify which martial arts were included in the female empowerment program.

The women in Hayhurst et al.'s research seem to have learned more effective ways of approaching uncomfortable and potentially dangerous situations. The article deals with conflict between genders that appears to affect Uganda at large. This shows that martial arts have potential to deal with societal issues. It is possible that the practice of budo in the Netherlands challenges the commonly held perceptions of gender, especially when all genders train together.

Friedman – a scholar and aikidoka himself – reflects on how aikido can "offer insights for reconciling conflict at intrapersonal, interpersonal, organizational and global levels" through transpersonal psychology.[137] He claims that aikido focuses on reconciling conflict instead of on who loses or wins it.[138] He explains that aikido teaches 'ai' which according to him means cooperation, 'ki' which refers to a universally shared power or mind and 'do' which refers to a way or path for reaching a higher purpose.[139] These concepts together can be

[133] Lyndsay M. C. Hayhurst et al., "Gender relations, gender-based violence and sport for development and peace: Questions, concerns and cautions emerging from Uganda," *Women's Studies International Forum* 47 (2014): 157. DOI: 10.1016/j.wsif.2014.07.011.
[134] Ibid., 158.
[135] Ibid., 165.
[136] Ibid., 164.
[137] Friedman, "Using Aikido and Transpersonal Psychology Concepts as Tools for Reconciling Conflict," Abstract.
[138] Ibid., Introduction.
[139] Ibid., Cooperation as a Key Concept, Intrapersonal Conflict, Aikido.

applied to conflict reconciliation. An intrapersonal conflict where a person has a conflict with themselves can be reconciled through ki which helps to have a unified mind instead of contradicting oneself.[140] Interpersonal conflict refers to conflicts between people, organization conflict refers to conflicts within or between organizations and global conflict refers to large-scale conflicts that span national borders.[141] In these conflicts ai is especially important, because reconciling such conflicts requires cooperation. According to Friedman, the concept of do gives the pursuit of peace a spiritual purpose and makes conflict reconciliation a life path instead of merely a goal.[142]

The essay of Friedman gives a general idea of how the concepts from aikido can be used to resolve conflicts. The weakness of Friedman's argument is that while he reflects on how the concepts from aikido can be linked to conflict reconciliation, he provides no proof that other practitioners understand them in this way as well. Most interestingly, however, Friedman suggests that the spiritual aspect of budo is its inherent strive for peace. This suggests that the assumption of this thesis – that the spirituality and conflict reconciliation aspects of budo are connected – is correct. The possibility of spirituality and religion in budo will be discussed further in the next section.

This chapter has dealt with the themes of spirituality, aggression, and conflict in relation to the fighting arts. The importance of the question of gender in this body of research is worth highlighting. In some studies, martial arts were a way of highlighting one's gender or finding protection from gender-based violence. In others, underrepresentation of women in training spaces was apparent. This review has also found that previous research suggests there is a connection between martial arts and conflict resolution skills and that martial arts can be connected to spirituality. These aspects have merely not been studied together often.

## 4. Conceptual framework

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[140] Ibid., Intrapersonal conflict.
[141] Ibid., Interpersonal Conflict, Organization Conflict, Global Conflict.
[142] Ibid., Conclusion.

Before approaching the empirical part of this thesis, it is necessary to look into how the terms 'spirituality', 'conflict transformation' and 'peacebuilding' are understood. Spirituality today is often seen in contrast with religion even though in the West it was originally associated with Christianity.[143] This contemporary understanding has been discussed since the beginning of the 1900s, although it was not yet a wide topic of interest. Only later in the 1960s and 70s spirituality was brought to the masses with the arrival of the New Age movement. New age is a highly fragmented and individualistic phenomenon, where practitioners pick and choose aspects from various pseudoscience and Eastern religions.[144] Despite its popularity, New Age has only gained academic interest in the last few decades, whereas before the various practices were viewed as a minor cult phenomena or less important versions of actual world religions.[145] As such, most research on spirituality is quite recent.

In 1902, William James observed that belief is divided into two camps: institutional and personal religion.[146] While James never used the word 'spiritual', he defined personal religion as: 'the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine'.[147] Even though budo is practiced in groups, James' definition is relevant for this thesis, because budo is focused on personal development instead of group worship. Spirituality is to be understood as individualistic. According to James, in the more individual form of religion, a person's inner workings of the mind, their weaknesses and conscience are highly relevant instead of more external appraisal of God, which traditional religion offers. As such, in personal religiosity ritual acts offered by the church decrease in importance and acts of religion become more personal.[148]

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[143] Heelas and Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution*, 1.

[144] Hugh B. Urban, *New Age, Neopagan, and New Religious Movements: Alternative Spirituality in Contemporary America*, 1st ed. (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 5. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/rug/detail.action?docID=2025592.

[145] Ibid., 7.

[146] William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience* (Longmans, Green & Co: 1902; New York; Open Road Integrated Media, Inc, 2015), 44. Citations refer to the 2015 edition. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/rug/detail.action?docID=1952721.

[147] Ibid., 47.

[148] Ibid., 44.

More recently, Heelas and Woodhead suggested that spirituality is part of a subjective turn in society. While individuals used to experience themselves as part of a higher order of things, increasingly many are now focused on inner awareness and personal experiences.[149] As explained in the beginning of this thesis, Heelas and Woodhead separate traditional religion from spirituality: 'The one has to do with deferential relationship to higher authority, the other with holistic relationship to the spirit-of-life'[150] According to Heelas and Woodhead, spirituality is focused on understanding and seeking significance in life, while religion is about adjusting to a significance that is given from external higher power.[151] These authors' understanding is relevant for studying spirituality in budo, because it separates spirituality from an external God and instead makes it about a search for inner meaning.

When it comes to spirituality, it is also important to note that it can still be intermingled with traditional religion. Ammerman observed that while most authors and popular media described a decrease in religious belief and a rise in spirituality, the situation is not as simple.[152] She examined contemporary Americans' understanding of the term and found two distinct discourses: theistic and extra-theistic. The first group of participants were from traditional religious denominations and for them, spirituality meant a personal relationship with God.[153] Participants in the extra-theistic category spoke of spirituality as experiences that are greater than them, out of the ordinary or transcendent. Spirituality was something within the self, connected to others, in awe of nature and the world and in philosophies that explained the meaning of life. This category included members of traditional religious institutions and others.[154] Ethical view towards spirituality was common to both categories as many characterized spirituality as being a good person and doing what is right despite personal interests.[155] A differentiating factor was the question of belief and

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[149] Heelas and Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution*, 3-4.
[150] Ibid., 31.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Nancy Ammerman, "Spiritual But Not Religious? Beyond Binary Choices in the Study of Religion," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 52, no. 2 (2013): 259. https://www.jstor.org/stable/24644008.
[153] Ibid., 266
[154] Ibid., 268.
[155] Ibid., 272.

belonging. Belonging for some meant a positive experience of spirituality, while others linked it to an oppressive tradition. Similarly, belief could be linked to legitimate spirituality or merely superstition.[156] In the context of this research, it can be that for some spirituality is still experienced as part of an organized religion and this may be intermingled with their practice of budo. Additionally, Ammerman's research adds the aspect of being a good person and – in some cases – feeling a sense of belonging, to the understanding of spirituality.

Most directly relevant for budo are Raposa's writings as he has reflected on the specific nature of martial spirituality in Eastern martial arts.[157] This martial spirituality is characterized by a spiritual battle within the self. Raposa explains that even conflicts with other people can be traced back to unresolved conflicts within the self. As such, the most important aspect of martial spirituality is self-control. This self-control is something that a person either uses or fails to use in a sudden moment. It is characterized by '…feelings of resistance, along with feelings of satisfaction for having successfully overcome such resistance'.[158] According to Raposa, this self-control provided by martial spirituality is important when attempting to manage violent situations or persons.[159]

It will be analyzed how the type of spirituality outlined here is used by budo practitioners for conflict transformation and peacebuilding. As concepts, the latter two are much newer than spirituality. The understanding of the word conflict transformation can be traced back to John Paul Lederach or Johan Galtung, who explained it in the early 2000s, while peacebuilding appears to have surfaced with the United Nations already in the 1990s.

Lederach writes that as opposed to conflict resolution, conflict transformation aims at not only stopping the conflict, but in looking for constructive changes to issues that led to the conflict. As such, the transformational view sees conflict as an opportunity, which individuals should

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[156] Ibid., 273.
[157] Michael L. Raposa, "Martial Spirituality and the Logic of Pragmatism*," American Journal of Theology & Philosophy* 28, no. 2 (May 2007): 165. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27944399.
[158] Ibid., 168.
[159] Ibid.

not be intimidated to grasp.[160] It focuses on restoring relationships and minimizing harm on individuals while maximizing the benefit for them through enacting positive change in society. In conflict transformation, conflict and peace are normal parts of human interaction, which is why in addition to dealing with the obvious issues at hand it also aims to understand how instances of conflict relate to the bigger picture of human relationships.[161] Conflict also allows a person to stop and reflect on their own behavior. Lederach argues that conflict transformation looks further into the future than conflict resolution. Relationships are at the heart of conflict transformation.[162]

Galtung famously developed the *Transcend* method for transforming conflicts. He bases it on the six major world religions, the listing of which gives a good idea of the characteristics of conflict transformation. From Hinduism, he took the idea of conflict as Destroyer and conflict as Creator. This means that conflict can cause violence, but also be a chance to achieve constructive developments. Conflict workers are Preservers, which transform conflict in a way that it minimizes violence while encouraging development. From Buddhism, Galtung adopted the view that conflicts have no end and no beginning and that everyone – as opposed to only decision-makers – shares the guilt of it. From Christianity, he took the view that individual persons are responsible of choosing peace over violence. According to Daoism, Galtung suggested that every good action may also have a bad consequence, which is why irreversible actions should be avoided. Following Islam, Galtung argued that there is great power in dedication towards a shared goal such as the happiness of all. Finally, following Judaism, he added that understanding is not in the procedure, but in dialogue that never ends.[163]

The world religions have given inspiration to a process of identifying the goals of conflict parties, transcending them and finding new

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160 John Paul Lederach, "Conflict Transformation," *Beyond Intractability*, eds. Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess (Conflict Information Consortium, University of Colorado: Boulder, 2003): Conflict Transformation: A Simple Definition. http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/transformation.
161 Ibid., Conflict and Change.
162 Ibid., Resolution and Transformation: A Brief Comparison of Perspective.
163 Johan Galtung, *Conflict Transformation by Peaceful Means (the Transcend Method)*, United Nations Disaster Management Training Programme (2000): The Transcend Method at a glance: a one-page version 1, available from https://gsdrc.org/document-library/conflict-transformation-by-peaceful-means-the-transcend-method/.

common goals. A new vision transforms the conflict. According to Galtung, then, conflict transformation is about finding one's capabilities of dealing with conflict creatively without violence.[164] It can occur in 'global, social and inter/intra-personal (macro, meso, micro)' levels of conflict.[165] Galtung has also introduced the concepts of negative and positive peace. While the former means that there merely is no violence, the latter is a more comprehensive integration of society.[166] Conflict transformation clearly aims for positive peace.

Peacebuilding is a term that is very interlinked with conflict transformation. The first to bring up the concept of peacebuilding was Boutros Boutros-Ghali – the sixth Secretary-General of the United Nations – who identified peacebuilding as 'action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict'.[167] This definition explains peacebuilding as prevention of conflict. Later, the United Nations has improved it by calling peacebuilding 'activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war'.[168] The new definition made the concept of peacebuilding more comprehensive as now it included working to create and support peace.

Over the years, the term has been adopted by various other institutions that all modified it to fit their own interests and uses.[169] Despite this, consensus exists on the term as action to find positive peace, remove underlying causes of conflict and create meaningful change peacefully.[170] In the context of this thesis, these definitions suggest that peacebuilding is about protecting a peaceful existence for everybody. It is about actively taking steps to avoid conflict and create peace. For example, International Alert suggests that peacebuilding is

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[164] Ibid., Transformation: 2.
[165] Ibid., A summary of the approach: 3.
[166] Johan Galtung, "An Editorial," *Journal of Peace Research* 1, no. 1 (1964): 2. https://www.jstor.org/stable/422802.
[167] Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping* (New York: United Nations, 1992): 11. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/145749?ln=en.
[168] United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, A/55/305, S/2000/809 (21 August, 2000): 3, available from https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/brahimi%20report%20peacekeeping.pdf.
[169] Barnett et al., "Peacebuilding: What Is in a Name?" *Global Governance* 13, no. 1 (2007): 53. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27800641.
[170] Ibid., 44.

about dealing with the problems that caused people to fight and supporting communities in handling conflict without violence. They highlight the importance of positive peace.[171] A more academic view to peacebuilding is provided by the Kroc institute that focuses on the study of peace. They explain peacebuilding from the perspective of creating relationships that span boundaries of religion, nationality, ethnicity and class. It also includes solving issues of injustice without violence and changing conditions where violent conflict could be born.[172] Despite the variety of approaches, these definitions provide adequate understanding of peacebuilding for the purposes of this research.

This section has discussed the terminology that will be used in analyzing the findings of this thesis, namely those of spirituality, conflict transformation and peacebuilding. The latter two are interlinked and are about creating and supporting peace. While definitions of conflict transformation highlights conflict responses as an opportunity for positive change, peacebuilding appears to focus on upholding already existing peace. Spirituality, however, is a complex concept that may exist in religion, but is in contemporary usage often an alternative to it. It may manifest itself through budo as an individual quest for truth, connection, meaning, self-control or being a good person. The three concepts are also expected to connect through budo, because budo spirituality's qualities are likely to lead to conflict transformation and peacebuilding skills being developed.

## 5. Methodology

This thesis takes a qualitative approach. Weakness of qualitative methods is that they are not as generalizable as quantitative methods, but they are better when in-depth knowledge is needed.[173] As this study requires a thorough understanding of

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[171] "What is peacebuilding?" International Alert, accessed July 15, 2020, https://www.international-alert.org/about/what-is-peacebuilding/.

[172] "What is Strategic Peacebuilding?" Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, 2022, https://kroc.nd.edu/about-us/what-is-peace-studies/what-is-strategic-peacebuilding/#:~:text=Peacebuilding%20is%20the%20development%20of,conditions%20that%20generate%20deadly%20conflict.

[173] Monique Hennink, Inge Hutte and Ajay Bailey, *Qualitative Research Methods* (Sage, 2011), 16-17.

how budo spirituality fosters peace, a qualitative approach is more suitable. Six in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with kendo practitioners (kendoka) in the Netherlands. This method was chosen, because interviews are effective for learning about complex views and feelings.[174]

While this thesis speaks of budo, only kendoka were chosen, because a representative sample of all budo would have been difficult to accomplish. Kendo is a form of budo practiced with bamboo swords (shinai). Kendoka are awarded points (ippon) based on correct attacks on the head (men), wrist (kote), side (do) or throat (tsuki), which are all protected by a training 'armor' (bogu). A focus on kendoka provides diversity, as they tend to have experience with other budo. Additionally, while kendo has been researched a lot from a historical perspective, it has been largely ignored in sociology and anthropology.

The interviews were conducted in May-June, 2022. All interviewees were found through personal networks. The interviewees were chosen with the aim of creating diversity with regard to age, gender and Dan-grade. However, the minimum years of experience to participate in the interviews was set at ten to ensure the participants had had sufficient time to absorb the teachings of budo. The participants were requested to choose an interview location that they were comfortable with. This led to interviews being conducted both at interviewees' homes and public spaces. Two of the interviewees were conducted online due to scheduling difficulties and travel. All interviews were conducted in English, recorded and transcribed. The shortest interview was approximately one-hour-long while the longest lasted an hour and 26 minutes. Consent to recording the interviews was asked and the interviewees were informed about how the findings of the research would be used.

Reflexive thematic analysis was used to make sense of the interviews. They were coded by finding important aspects of data that were relevant to the research questions. This facilitated a process of dividing them into themes around which bigger stories developed.[175] Protecting the participants

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[174] Ibid., 110.
[175] Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Doing Reflexive TA," *University of Auckland*, accessed July 10, 2022. https://www.thematicanalysis.net/doing-reflexive-ta/.

identity was challenging in the case of this thesis, as the kendo community in the Netherlands is small. In order to avoid recognition, identifiers such as names and training locations have been removed from the final product.[176] Additionally, the participants' Dan-grades will not be revealed. Only the range of grades will be stated. It was also agreed with the interviewees that voice recordings would be disposed of after the research is finished.

It has been particularly important to be aware of researcher bias during the process of conducting interviews and writing this thesis. I am a kendoka myself, which made it easy to find interviewees through personal networks and gain their trust. However, this may have also impacted the interviews negatively as some people may experience certain matters are easier to discuss with a stranger. Throughout the research process, I have paid attention to remaining as objective as possible, avoided steering the interviews and tried to not embed my own experiences in the interviewees experience.

### 6. Interviews: 'Kendo saved my life, I think'

As mentioned above, all six interviewees practiced kendo and had experience with other budo. Some interviewees even had a little experience with non-Japanese fighting arts. In kendo, each interviewee held two to seven Dan grades. All interviewees practiced kendo mainly in the Netherlands, although two of the interviewees were non-Dutch. Ethnically, the interview sample was primarily white European as kendo in the Netherlands tends to be. One interviewee was of Asian heritage. The interviewees have been given different names for the purposes of this thesis.

Johan (63) had spent varying amounts of time with hapkido, penjak silat, taekwondo, aikido, iaido and jodo, but in the interview he mostly refers to his fifteen years of experience with kyokushin karate and over 35 years of experience with kendo, which he still practices. His experience in budo amounts to a total of approximately 46 years. Emma (59) had practiced kendo for 37 years, before which she had done judo for two years. During her time with kendo, she

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[176] Hennink, Hutte and Bailey, *Qualitative Research Methods*, 215-216.

had also gained experience with iaido, jodo, naginata and – shortly – kyudo. At the time of the interview, she only practiced kendo. Jeffrey (46) had started kendo 27 years ago. Approximately a year after, he also started taijiquan, iaido and jodo. He continues to train all four. Jeffrey had also practiced aikido for a little over a year. Anna (31) had done four years of judo as a child, but quit after the small dojo had not been able to accommodate her improvement. She started kendo at the age of 19 and continued training since. Bas (29) had approximately 22 years of budo experience. ages seven to thirteen, Bas had trained in judo, after which he had started kendo at 14-years-old. For two years now, he practices iaido as well. The youngest of the interviewees is Gijs (25), who had similarly practiced judo as a child for four or five years and started kendo at the age of thirteen. As such, he had a total experience of approximately sixteen years with budo, same as Anna. At the time of the interview, Gijs was having a small break from kendo due to his life situation, but intended to get back to it within a few months.

According to the interviewees own assessment, they trained at mid to high level kendo dojo. They spoke mostly very warmly of these training groups. Words like home and family were used to describe their own dojo, while others related the experience of commonality to the kendo community at large. 'I think the community which you have in kendo is quite unique compared to other sports or other martial arts, because always when you go to central practice you know each other', explained Bas, who enjoyed visiting other dojo. Emma, who had moved around a lot added that these relationships made in kendo could also last long.

In kendo, men and women usually train together. With the exception of Emma, all interviewees indicated that women were in the minority at their dojo, with many explaining that this is very common in the Netherlands. According to Emma, at some trainings there were more women than men present. When asked about mixed-gender trainings, the interviewees indicated that women focus less on physical force. 'I think it really shows that in kendo, you're not dependent on physical aspect. …you are not in a disadvantage, if you're not physically built like a stronger person', Anna stated. The male interviewees felt that while there was no great difference between training with women than men, women indeed tend to rely less on power. Johan explained that when he had

trained in karate, female practitioners did not often enjoy a contact-based approach to the practice, but this was not an issue with kendo.

A different view to the gender question was brought by Emma, who pointed out that while training with a woman may not affect men much, for a woman it can be reassuring to see highly graded female kendoka: 'The best well-intentioned men doesn't understand that for women it's not only a matter of technique or feeling physically safe, but also feeling psychologically safe, so that you are in a place where you are not the only female around, that you are not being bullied around or whatever…'. She found it important to promote women's kendo and explained that while the amount of female kendoka in Europe is increasing, there is still discrimination below the surface: '…we still have situation in which, you know, the ladies' final has been refereed by three men referees, while there were plenty of ladies' referees available'.

Etiquette was an aspect that helped negotiate relationships in the dojo. Jeffrey explained that kendo is about helping other people and etiquette shows how to behave. Gijs' view was similar: 'I think the most important part of etiquette in budo is that you show respect, right, to your superiors, but also very importantly to your inferiors'. Whether this was respect towards other people, the dojo or oneself, the others also recognized respect as a crucial part of budo: '…a dojo is still a place to be respected. I mean, people respect churches, why shouldn't we respect a dojo?' argued Emma. She also explained that it is good to show respect by bowing after a fight even if you are annoyed with the person. Even if it is not sincere, the action helps. While Johan was the only one who did not connect behavior towards other people to etiquette, he confirmed that respect was an important value. This meant being humble, and respecting each other and one's surroundings. Another part of etiquette for many was that it helped them improve themselves through discipline: '…etiquette is part of disciplining yourself, your mind kind of. So, etiquette helps you, uh, to be more strict in yourself in order to make the self-improvement', explained Bas. Anna also made this connection. She explained that etiquette makes a practitioner humble, which makes them more open to learn. Overall, the discussion on etiquette was highly interconnected with the discussion of budo values.

A few of the interviewees brought up their experiences of having someone breach etiquette and resort to actions that can be considered abusive. One of them was Gijs, who spoke of an instance where he had faced a more experienced kendoka than him in a tournament and – unexpectedly – managed to score against him: '(before the match) …he would not look me in the eye and he, uh, he completely disregarded my presence and we had a really interesting match… …and when we finished the match, he not only didn't look at me, but he wouldn't even greet me anymore…'. Gijs had had a few more occurrences of experienced kendoka being disrespectful towards their inferiors. He considered this a form of bullying. Bas had heard a similar story from a person who had traveled abroad for a jodo seminar: 'So, he came all the way from the Netherlands going to practice jodo under a 7th Dan teacher (sensei) and he was practicing during the seminar and he had a really nice time, but then at the end of the training everyone was standing in the line and this sensei there told the guy, like, my fellow companion you did not do well, who is your teacher, and, you should really improve. So, he was kind of in front of everyone insulting him'. Bas explained that this type of mental abuse can still happen in budo and someone of a higher level is often involved in these instances. Despite these few negative experiences, all participants also named teachers or higher graded budoka as their most positive influences in their budo development.

Jeffrey explained that physical injuries could mostly be avoided through etiquette as well: '…one time, I had to go to the hospital myself, because there was a-a Japanese sensei, who used an illegal technique on me'. The sensei had struck Jeffrey to the side of his head and – despite the protective gear – this had given him a concussion. If rules had been followed, this injury could have been avoided. According to the same sensei, Jeffrey recalled, hits on the wrist were supposed to hurt, but this was advice that he nowadays strongly disagreed with. Overall, the kendoka explained that getting injured is extremely rare: 'I don't think kendoka get hurt very often. I think most times people get hurt it's due to an action they initiate themselves or due to tripping…", Anna explained. Instead of injuries, momentary discomfort from a hard hit occurred often: 'I always say to people that ask me if kendo is painful, I say if people don't do their techniques properly it is painful. If they carry it out in the right way, it will not be

painful', said Gijs. Many interviewees mentioned that bruises occurred in kendo, but while some described them as occasional, others had them weekly.

All interviewees highlighted that in kendo, situations that caused pain were generally accidental. This is not necessarily the case with all budo, as Johan who spoke a lot of his experiences with kyokushin karate, explained that with this hard form of karate, the purpose was to cause some pain in order to defend oneself. However, according to the rest of the interviewees, even kendo requires a certain level of endurance towards pain and discomfort: 'If you don't want to be touched at all a little bit harder, then you shouldn't do budo, because that will happen sooner or later that you get hit…" argued Jeffrey. He had as a beginner been scared of people hitting him hard, but also recalled being more bothered by how uncomfortable wearing the protective helmet had felt. Bas and Gijs similarly spoke of how they were at first intimidated by the hard hits, but had pushed through and gotten used to it. Johan remembered that especially the first time he started with karate, he had been holding back, but also gotten through it and started to 'fight back without hesitation'. Emma remembered similar pushing through: 'Are you tired? Well, I remember some exercises that I did crying [laugh] in the past'. She explained that the atmosphere is different nowadays as most teachers let people take a break when they ask for one, which Bas confirmed: '…normally based on the etiquette drinking water during practice is not allowed, but now you can even see in Japan that people are like, please, make it more easier…'. For Anna, endurance and pushing through discomfort seemed to be most natural as she said she had always fed off the energy that her opponent displayed.

When asked directly about whether there is a relationship between budo and violence, the participants disagreed in different ways. Anna explained that budo can actually help a person to control their emotions '…when you're in the heat of battle or training'. Emma argued that if a person interprets budo as a combat sport there can be violence, but budo is different: 'It has nothing to do with it. Budo should be self-improvement, should be technique, should be social skills, relationship with the other. I don't see violence into that'. She explained that budo is not meant for on-the-street altercations. Jeffrey and Johan spoke of aggression instead of violence. Johan explained that budo requires regulated

aggression in order to perform correct techniques: 'making the aggressive guy less aggressive, but also waken up the aggressiveness in shy people, making them confident. …that's budo. Making the people whole'. Jeffrey described this kind of aggression as something that '…makes you happy, but not in terms of, uh, I'm happy because I destroy everything. No, because I'm happy, because I can… …settle and focus my energy'. When speaking of karate, Johan admitted that this kind of aggression may lead to violence if the practitioner is actually attacked and needs to defend themselves, but it is most effective to run away. Gijs and Bas could identify some minor connections between budo and violence. '…I think there is somewhat of a relation between budo and violence, but in the sense that sometimes violent people think that budo is their place', explained Gijs and related this to his experiences with judo where he had met people who relied more on force than technique. Bas on the other hand related violence to budo's history in Japan.

Gijs, Jeffrey, Emma and Bas saw that budo can help read social situations. Gijs explained that budo allows one to stay neutral, because you can analyze the situation and decide a course of action instead of reacting impulsively whereas Jeffrey had developed a way to read people: '…the more you train, the more you look into the opponent's eyes, the more you get experience to see when somebody is attacking'. He used this skill to avoid conflict by staying away from such persons, but also had an example where he had diffused a conflict. Jeffrey had been working as a DJ and noticed a rather large man starting to make trouble. He explained that he had looked at this person and seen that he was weak: '…so I turned down the music, started shouting at him and telling him to shut up and leave or to behave, immediately, because I will not tolerate this kind of behavior and he caved, and apologized'. Johan also explained that he was good at sensing when problems were about to arise and used this to get away from them. Emma similarly explained that in management, it was very useful that she understood the distance between whether a person was going to react or not. Bas on the other hand compared a work conflict to the start of a fight in kendo: '…first ten seconds you try to figure out what the other one is going to do, trying to sense your opponent. So, you could react on it. When you feel like his kamae is coming up you can hit kote or when you feel he wants to attack, you could also really feel it

from his posture. This is also something I do with my colleagues or when I have to negotiate with suppliers. Just to feel the other person'. Bas felt that being able to read people in such a way made it easier to decide whether and how to react.

In general, the participants felt that budo had positively affected their confidence. They explained that it had helped them in work negotiations, staying resilient while working towards goals, not being afraid of authority figures or managing relationships. It had also affected the way they perceived their bodies. Half of the interviewees indicated that they were more aware of what their body can do and what it needs in order to function properly, which in some cases had made them like their body more. Additionally, Emma and Anna explained that they had learned to look at themselves differently, which had created a new appreciation towards their bodies.

None of the interviewees had had to deal with stigma related to kendo. Half of the people expressed that people tend to joke when they hear about it. Bas had experienced that in high school, he had been challenged a bit more often than others because of his judo training while Jeffrey explained that he had no experience with such things, but for example karateka might: '…if you're in a fight and do karate, five people beat you up, it's your fault, because you're doing karate'. Johan – the karateka of the group – commented that there had been some people in his dojo who came from rough neighborhoods: '…they came more for the fighting than for karate training. …but, not in a negative way'. They had been encouraged by the sensei to come settle fights in the dojo instead on the streets.

All interviewees described remaining calm in the face of conflict. Johan, Anna, Bas and Jeffrey linked this calmness to budo. Johan explained that budo had taught him calmness through the concept of mushin, although he also described himself as generally a calm person: 'Stay calm. Be the mirror. ...sounds strange, but it really helps. …you stay calm, you suck away the energy from him or her'. Bas on the other hand explained that he has a very stressful job and practicing budo had taught him to stay calm when people get angry at him: '… kind of the situation where you put your knuckles to each other and you are pushing, then you are really tired after a while, but if you open yourself, like in budo for the other, then it goes the other way around. So, you can receive people'.

His approach to conflict was usually to try to stay calm and explain the situation. Anna and Jeffrey similarly described that they aimed to bring down the emotional reaction of the other before trying to talk to them. While Anna described that staying calm herself was enough for the other person to calm down, Jeffrey said that he also apologizes even if he is not at fault. He explained that while he used to have the tendency to react with more verbal aggression, he had improved on this: 'because we practice the art of conflict, especially in kendo. Not verbal conflict, but conflict is conflict. …If you learn to control emotions… …this is an ability that stays and this is not something that leaves you when you leave the dojo'.

The other interviewees did not link their calmness in the face of conflict to budo. Emma explained that she might feel hurt by the other person, but still would stop and assess whether it is worth it escalating the conflict. Gijs was displeased with his tendency to get defensive in order to stop the conflict. With strangers he swallowed his anger, stayed calm and tried to offer an explanation before moving on to solutions. With people close to him, he would skip the explanation phase. At the same time, Gijs admitted that he was more likely to get openly angry to someone close to him.

In general, the interviewees experienced differences between reactions towards someone close to them versus a stranger or a colleague. Similar to Gijs, many felt that it was either easier to display emotions or more difficult to hide them with people close to them. Bas and Anna linked this to a sense of professionalism, which did not play a part with encounters with family or friends. Jeffrey explained that a close family member was more likely to know how to make him angry, but he had gotten better at controlling his reactions. Johan and Emma felt slightly differently. Johan stated that he would hardly ever be angry at his family, because according to his cultural heritage family was important. Emma also felt that the stakes were higher with family than at work: 'The worst case scenario is that you lose the job. Who cares? Um, family is a different thing. You cannot find another family'.

The participants reaction to their own feelings of anger varied. A commonality was that most of them – especially the older participants – struggled

thinking of a situation when they had felt angry. Johan explained that he generally pulls away, tries to contain his anger and identify the reason why he feels that way. Emma's reaction was withdrawal: 'My typical reaction when I get angry goes back to the "I don't want to play with you anymore"', she said and stated that she would probably not explain that she is angry. Jeffrey and Bas would at first similarly pull themselves out of the situation, but they would later come back to the conflict calmer and prepared. Anna and Gijs explained that they would directly state what exactly was bothering them, although they would scale down the directness with less familiar people. As mentioned above, this was especially the case for Gijs.

The only interviewee that mentioned having used non-verbal self-defense was Johan: '…I was running around city and some young guys came after me and, uh, they did some-some strange movements…'. He explained that he had turned the young man's wrist in a type of hold he had learned and asked him what he wanted. This had caused the group to run away. Johan thought that it was best he had controlled the situation in this way. He compared controlling the attack in aikido and the more aggressive kyukushin karate to the yin and yang: 'So, hard, soft skills, dark and light'.

All interviewees were adamant about being against using any physical violence in personal conflicts, except in the case of self-defense: 'I think it's a sign of, uh, not being in control of the situation. So, it's more, like, I consider it as a weakness to apply physical violence', stated Anna. Bas and Johan pointed out that there is also a line between acceptable and unacceptable self-defense: 'Is it like you hit someone else or do you keep hitting until the other is falling down? There is also a difference' explained Bas. Questions about the interviewees stance on the military were also used to understand their opinions on physical violence. All except Anna supported the Netherlands having a military, although some criticism about the running of the military were expressed. Anna's critical stance towards the military stemmed from the idea that ideally no country should have a military. This was also mentioned by Jeffrey, but he argued that this was not a realistic idea. All interviewees that supported the military highlighted that it should be there for self-defense purposes. Emma and Jeffrey also spoke of tradition and identity of a country being linked to the military. Bas and Gijs

explained that they also support the idea of the military being used for de-escalation assignments such as peace missions.

Instead of external conflict, when the interviewees were experiencing difficult times themselves, they explained that they would lean to budo. For Johan, this again manifested itself through the concept of mushin or no-mind. When he had lost his job, he had experienced doubts about whether he had done something wrong and then this calm state of mind had helped him: '…if you have peace with it, that life doesn't always go up, that's also what I call a state of mind of calmness. Accept what's going on'. He had also sometimes taught himself Tai Chi to calm himself, but felt that practicing karate or kendo required too much focus to relax the mind. This was different for the other interviewees. They highlighted that keeping the routine of training helped them get through difficult times. Going to training had helped Emma after the death of a loved one: 'Kendo saved my life, I think'. She explained that the only place she was able to be herself during this time was the dojo. Anna highlighted that during difficult times, training would be a constant that would ground her. This idea was shared by Jeffrey, who – with Bas – felt that kendo was an activity that made one be in the moment, which helped forget troubles. Gijs explained that sometimes he might prioritize something else, if he would feel that it was better for him, but mostly he felt that going to kendo would be best: '…I will say to myself "you should go, it's good for you" right'. Even though he valued kendo in this way, Gijs also felt that kendo could also frustrate him a lot. Bas would also occasionally prioritize seeing friends over a training.

When asked whether they see themselves as spiritual or religious, half of the interviewees said no. Gijs viewed himself more down to earth than spiritual. Johan explained that while he would not think of himself as spiritual, others might see his budo practice as such. Emma stated that while she mostly did not have beliefs, she had one related to kendo: 'There is one thing I have faith in that I truly believe and maybe it's magical thinking, is that when you do kendo with somebody, you truly see that person. That person cannot lie to you'. She explained that even though she had explored Eastern spirituality, she had come to the conclusion that it was not for her. However, when discussing endurance,

Emma did mention that it was part of the spiritual education of budo. Johan and Emma both described budo as 'part of my life'.

The other interviewees admitted to being spiritual or religious and they made connections between their beliefs and budo practice. Anna at first hesitated, but then described herself as spiritual. She did not see herself as religious, although she recognized to have lived her life in a Christian society and as such, according to Christian values. She wanted to be a good person and believed that doing good things in the world created more good things. Anna connected this to respect for others and self-development in budo. Both Anna and Jeffrey connected the idea of being a good person as part of their spirituality, while approximately half the interviewees identified being a good person as part of budo.

Jeffrey and Bas were comfortable with the word spiritual, but were also involved in religious practice. Bas explained that he was into Taoism, which was about being in harmony with the environment and accepting things as they come: 'And basically with budo it's the same. It's also going back to the moment, it's also working on your inner self, so there is, there is a connection there'. Bas described himself as more of an individual practitioner and did not belong in a Taoist sect. Jeffrey practiced reiki, was a Christian, but also felt connected to the values of Buddhism and practiced meditation. He explained that these aspects were all connected to each other and his practice of budo. He had sometimes experienced moments of enlightenment at trainings. He explained that in these moments he had, for example, experienced a deep state of relaxation and the beauty of everything around him. Jeffrey also told about an instance of understanding, which he had reached at a particularly difficult jodo training when he had been training with a person much older than him: 'I'll never forget this, that I looked at him… [chuckle] and doesn't make sense, yeah? But, at that moment, I understood the immortality of the soul of my father and I understood why my father's soul is immortal, and why my soul is immortal. Just, just like, like that [snaps fingers] and it was also beautiful'.

Most interviewees felt that describing budo as a sport simplifies it. 'There is more behind it. Behind the whole thing. For example, everything we do

in kendo or iaido or other budo forms, there is a whole theory behind it, why you are doing this and that', described Bas. This part that was missing in budo but existed in sports was also described as the essence of budo, the mental part or – in the case of Jeffrey – even spirituality. Anna explained that some aspects of budo are more sport-like, but unlike sports, budo follows you home, which is an aspect that Jeffrey also endorsed. Gijs was the only one who initially answered that budo are sports, but even he later added that the physical part is not the most important part of training. Gijs also explained that he sees budo as a way of practicing Zen, but this was not an important part for him personally. Emma highlighted that to provide a simple explanation to non-budoka, calling it a sport was fine. This was a view shared by many other interviewees. Hobby was similarly controversial term for describing budo, although most interviewees preferred it over 'sport'.

Throughout the interview, all interviewees highlighted the importance of self-improvement in budo. While describing the way (do) of budo, Gijs explained this through a metaphor: 'There is always the road has a destination, but after the destination there is another road. I think that's an important aspect of "do" that once you have reached your destination, there is always more to go to, more to improve. You're never finished. The road is endless'. Half the interviewees linked this self-development to being able to bring it out of the dojo and focus on self-development in life in general. Most interviewees also discussed self-development when asked about the meaning of budo or 'do', which is telling for the importance of the idea.

In addition to self-development, being in control was discussed throughout the interviews, although the word was not always directly used. In one way or another, all interviewees discussed being in control of social situations. Johan and Jeffrey – while they highlighted that they were never aggressive people – found that budo had made it easier to control aggression. Anna and Bas highlighted that self-control helped deal with social situations, but also that it helped survive situations one could not affect: '…having an immovable mind. I think, that means a lot to me in budo and also in your life. Like, the idea of not getting, um, not getting upset by anything external happening to you, I think that's, uh, pretty much the ultimate thing you can reach. Like, whatever happens you are still you and you can control it' stated Anna. She was the only interviewee

to refer to the concept of fudoshin or the immovable mind. Additionally, four of the interviewees discussed beginners hitting recklessly or otherwise not being in control of their attacks. Johan also discussed controlling the attack, but not in relation to beginners. He explained that when he had briefly trained aikido, he had enjoyed the idea of controlling the other person's attack.

While budo as a word appeared to resonate with all interviewees, bushido was experienced as more distant. All interviewees confirmed that it carried more historical or traditional meanings and they did not feel directly connected to it. Bas explained the word as an old behavior code, which is about respect and dealing with others. Most other participants viewed it as a more violent concept from which the more peaceful budo had developed. Additionally, although many interviewees felt sentimental about their training gear, they did not attach great meaning to it.

### 7.  Analysis: budo as personal peace skills

This section will analyze the interviews outlined above in relation to the literature review and conceptual framework of this thesis. This will be done in three sections, which aim to answer the sub-questions of this thesis. First, spirituality in budo will be discussed. Second, budo's relationship to aggression will be assessed. Third, budo's role in solving micro-level conflicts in the lives of the participants will be examined. It should be noted that even though this section will discuss budo in general, all interviewees of this thesis were found among kendoka. As such, it is possible that they highlight different aspects of budo than practitioners of other disciplines.

### a.  Spirituality: self-development towards control

As expected, the amount of spirituality that the participants admitted to having varied. They are likely to compare their beliefs to their own understanding of spirituality. This section will refer to the literature on spirituality in martial arts and the conceptual framework in order to gain more understanding of what kind of spirituality may exist in budo and what it means to its practitioners.

Specifically, this section will focus on answering the question: what are the main spiritual teachings of budo and how are they understood by its contemporary practitioners?

Shaping one's body did not appear to be as relevant to the spirituality of the budoka of this research as for the boxers studied by Wacquant. As half of the interviews described, the relationship between budo and the training of the body was more related to being aware of one's body instead of achieving results through abstinence and restricting diet or social life as in Wacquant's research.[177] He suggested that a boxer's training routine revolves around developing a masculine body, but with kendo this does not appear to be the purpose. This is unsurprising, as the practices are highly different from each other. None of the interviewees suggested that aesthetic development of the body would motivate them to train. This does not appear to be a relevant part of budo spirituality. However, it should be noted that spirituality can be highly individualistic and a person's own understanding is important.[178] As such, it is possible that some practitioners place more emphasis on body image. Wacquant's claim that the routine of training gave the practitioner's lives a higher purpose is likely to be more common among budoka.[179] The interviewees mostly did not wish to skip trainings even at difficult moments of their lives. Training gave their lives significance, which is an aspect of spirituality.[180]

Jennings, Brown and Sparkes suggest that in kung fu, you can express a religion or the training can become a sort of religion.[181] In both cases, practice can become an expression of 'secular religion' by Bailey when it becomes a way of life.[182] Both can also be observed among the participants of this research. Jeffrey and Bas were the only interviewees that felt a connection with traditional forms of religion. For Jeffrey these were Buddhism and Christianity and for Bas, Taoism. They felt that their religiosity was related to their practice of budo. The connection was perhaps stronger for Jeffrey, because he had

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[177] Wacquant, "The Prizefighter's Three Bodies," 340-342.
[178] James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 44.
[179] Wacquant, "The Prizefighter's Three Bodies," 345-346.
[180] Heelas and Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution*, 31.
[181] Jennings, Brown and Sparkes, "'It can be a religion if you want'," 543.
[182] Bailey, "Secular religion."

experienced moments of enlightenment during trainings. Based on the interview findings, for Jeffrey and Bas budo was a way to express religion, which could make budo practice a form of secular religion for them.

As Ammerman also explained, spirituality can be linked to the practice of religion.[183] For some, spirituality is about a connection with God. For others – whom Ammerman categorized as extra-theistic – it is about experiences of the transcendent, such as awe towards the world or realizations about the meaning of life.[184] The latter appears to be descriptive of Jeffrey and Bas' spirituality. Bas described Taoism as being harmonious with the environment, which suggests admiration towards the world. Jeffrey's experiences of enlightenment described a feeling of extreme awe and understanding about life. Taoism and Buddhism do not have a clear conception of a God, which would suggest that spirituality of Jeffrey and Bas is unlikely to be related to a relationship with a personal God. On the other hand, Jeffrey was also a Christian, where relationship with God may be relevant. It appears that spirituality can be at the same time linked to belief in God and to individual experiences of transcendence. Even though spirituality in contemporary times is often understood as separate from belief in God, this may not be the case when it comes to budo spirituality.[185] Budoka may have a spiritual connection with God, but still display other forms of spirituality through budo.

Anna did not belong to any traditional religious groups, but her training was her way of life and – as such – a secular religion.[186] The other participants are also likely to belong to this group. The comparison is clear when it comes to Emma and Johan as they both experienced kendo as an integral part of their lives. They valued their training routine, but did not practice a traditional form of religion. Gijs was at the time of the interviews having a longer break from kendo, which could suggest that for him budo is not a secular religion according to the definition of Bailey. However, the timing of the interview may affect results here.

[183] Ammerman, "Spiritual But Not Religious?", 259.
[184] Ibid., 266, 268.
[185] Heelas and Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution,* 31.
[186] Bailey, "Secular religion."

Jennings, Brown and Sparkes also argue that the turn to secular religion happens to a training group as a whole.[187] As this thesis research did not examine group dynamics, it is difficult to assess. However, most interviewees described the budo community or their own dojo as a 'home' or 'family' and such notions of belonging may suggest traces of spirituality.[188]

According to Tuckett, the participants disapproval of the term 'sport' in describing budo can be interpreted as an indication of spiritual or religious thinking.[189] Only Gijs initially stated that he would consider budo a sport. Many others felt that something would be missing from budo if it was considered a sport. The words used to describe this missing area such as 'essence' or 'mental part' were rather vague, which suggests some level of spirituality as that is usually difficult to describe. This was different in the case of Jeffrey who directly identified the missing part as spirituality. It is possible that the mental part refers to strategy or confidence in their own skill, but these are aspects required in sports as well. In that case, the participants would not have seen the need for making a distinction.

Tuckett also suggested that in the case of martial arts, religion should be understood as more similar to an ideology than an all-encompassing system such as most Western religions.[190] In the context of this research, the continuous self-development practiced by kendoka could be considered an ideology. After all, half of the interviewees stated that they focus on it in life outside the dojo as well. However, instead of arguing for a wider understanding of religion, it may be more suitable to equate budo with spirituality, specifically because of this aspect. Focus on the self is compatible with the individualism of spirituality.[191]

The self-improvement in budo appears to aim to achieve control, whether this is control over attacks, social situations or difficult life moments. In the case of Anna and Johan, concepts of mushin and fudoshin represented control, because they believed these could help them persevere through difficult situations.

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[187] Jennings, Brown and Sparkes, "'It can be a religion if you want'," 547-548.
[188] Ammerman, "Spiritual But Not Religious?", 273.
[189] Tuckett, "Kendo," 185-186.
[190] Ibid., 195-196.
[191] James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 44.

At the same time, all interviewees described being in control of situations in one way or another. Self-control was also the most important aspect of martial arts spirituality according to Raposa.[192] He explained that martial artists experience feelings of satisfaction when they use self-control or disappointment when they fail to use it in the moment.[193] This feeling of satisfaction can be observed from how willing the participants were to tell about their experiences in managing threatening situations. All this suggests that personal development towards control of the self is significant in budo spirituality. Even the participants that did not consider themselves spiritual or religious discussed this feeling of control, which suggests that budo may be a spiritual practice even when the practitioners themselves do not experience it as such. A focus on personal development towards control also makes budo a spiritual practice, because it suggests a focus towards inner awareness.[194]

Values that the participants mentioned may also carry spiritual meanings, if they are related to the idea of being a good person or doing what is right in general.[195] Most notable example of such value was respect, which some interviewees related to etiquette. While Emma did not consider herself spiritual, she still compared the importance of respecting a dojo to respecting a church. Many also brought up respect towards other people, which was also connected to the value of humbleness. These examples show that budo values may be part of spirituality.

By looking into martial arts monographs in Spain, Pérez-Gutiérrez et al. noted that the increased interest in spirituality in these practices correlated with the arrival of the New Age movement and increased popularity of Eastern spirituality.[196] This is partly true in the context of this thesis. Jeffrey was a reiki practitioner, which in the West can be considered a New Age practice. Him and Bas' interest in Eastern spirituality also partly explain the origins of budo spirituality. Emma also explained that she had had an interest in Eastern religions,

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[192] Raposa, "Martial Spirituality," 168.
[193] Ibid., 168.
[194] Heelas and Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution*, 3-4.
[195] Ammerman, "Spiritual But Not Religious?", 272.
[196] Pérez-Gutiérrez et al., "The (Re)Emergence of a Religio-Spiritual Self-Cultivation Focus," 207-209.

but had decided that it was not for her. The other interviewees did not mention anything that suggested that they were involved in any New Age practices outside of budo. Anna considered herself spiritual, but not through Eastern spirituality. While the interviewees had more or less direct connections to New Age, it can be argued that all kinds of budo spirituality belongs to the category of New Age as they are connected to Eastern spirituality in the West.[197]

Even though in the beginning of this thesis, bushido was identified as an important spiritual concept, it does not seem to be relevant to contemporary Western budoka. The participants identified the concept as part of history instead of today and most even perceived it as violent. The participants seemed more comfortable describing budo and they viewed this as a more peaceful practice. For Bas, bushido seemed to carry slightly more peaceful meanings than for others, but even he was more eloquent when discussing budo. It appears that at least in the eyes of Western practitioners, the old concept of bushido has been replaced by budo. This term carries meanings such as self-improvement, control, non-violence, social skills and spirituality. Many also described it as part of their lives. Not all participants named these aspects as part of their budo practice, but they were endorsed by more than one participant. The strongest consensus was regarding self-improvement as all participants related this aspect to budo. The value of non-violence was also common for everyone, although some of the practitioners had witnessed another budoka breaching this value.

The findings here challenge common understandings of spirituality. While the interviewees themselves did not view their practices as spiritual, training gave their lives a different level of significance and affected the way they related to the world around them.[198] Additionally, self-development appears to be an aspect that has not often been connected to spirituality. In the context of this research, self-development seemed to be the most important part of budo spirituality. Values such as respectfulness and humbleness can also be important. The ultimate goal of self-development appears to be control. This may be control of the self, attacks, social situations or something else. Budo spirituality can be connected to other spiritual or religious practices, but when the routine of training

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[197] Urban, *New Age, Neopagan, and New Religious Movements*, 5.
[198] Heelas and Woodhead*, The Spiritual Revolution*, 3-4, 31.

becomes a way of life, this alone may also become a spiritual practice in itself. However, all kinds of budo spirituality can probably be considered New Age. Developing one's body appears to be rather irrelevant to spirituality in budo. The feeling of belonging may be another important aspect, but the findings of this thesis do not provide adequate information to assess it.

### b. Aggression, confrontation and self-defense

This section will focus on discussing the role of aggression in martial arts through answering the second sub-question of this thesis: what is the relationship between budo and aggression? It is a necessary question to answer before discussing peace skills. Conceptual framework and the second section of the literature review will be referred to in order to assess this part of the research findings. This thesis did not focus on finding participants with behavioral issues as some of the sources cited below, which is why – as expected – none of the interviewees displayed particularly high levels of aggression. However, it should be noted that a relevant issue in studying aggression is that the participants are likely to provide somewhat biased answers.

Lamarre and Nosanchuk examined the aggression of judoka and noticed that higher age and grade correlated with lower levels of aggression.[199] As this thesis does not reveal the participants' grades due to privacy reasons, a comparison with the number of training years will be made. This is also likely to bear more accurate results, as the number of training years captures experience in budo in general.

In this thesis, all participants explained that they were rather calm in the face of conflict and even when getting angry, their reactions were mild. Some minor differences between ages and grades can still be observed. Johan and Emma – the oldest and most experienced of the participants – were most likely to pull themselves out of the conflict and leave the matter be. The next in experience were Jeffrey and Bas. They explained that they would also pull away, but return to the conflict after calming down. Anna was slightly older than Bas, but Anna and

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[199] Lamarre and Nosanchuk, "Judo – the Gentle Way," 995.

Gijs had the least amount of budo experience. Anna was perhaps most direct in conflict situations, while Gijs wished to be that. Instead, he easily ended up explaining himself. What can be observed here is that the older – and more experienced – budoka were more likely to value leaving the conflict while the less experienced, but not necessarily youngest budoka seemed to value confrontation. The middle group – Bas and Jeffrey – also valued confrontation, but strongly highlighted calming down first. Another difference when it comes to age was that Johan and Emma denied getting angry at their families, while others experienced this as either easier or more difficult to avoid. Overall, the more experienced budoka valued confrontation less than practitioners with fewer years of experience. The small age difference between Anna and Bas shows that experience may matter more than age. Bas had more years of experience with budo, but he was two years younger than Anna. It may be possible to interpret these differences in confrontation as differences in the level of aggression, but on the other hand, the desire to deal with the matter cannot truly be considered aggressiveness.

Conflict transformation sees conflict as an opportunity for positive changes, which is why one should embrace conflict.[200] From this point of view, a more confrontational or 'aggressive' approach appears better. In this view Johan and Emma – the most experienced budoka – were less likely to take a transformational stance and more likely to leave the matter be. They were more inclined towards conflict prevention, which fits a simple understanding of peacebuilding as supporting structures that strengthen peace.[201] Johan and Emma's hesitance with arguing with family may stem specifically from protecting family cohesion. Because the other interviewees were more confrontational, a trajectory from conflict transformation to peacebuilding skills can be observed here. Gijs – who was least experienced of the interviewees – expressed a desire to be better at conflict transformation. The interviewees with more experience were better at this. Jeffrey was closest to Emma and Johan in experience and he expressed to have used budo for both avoiding conflicts and transforming them. While it is still possible that these differences between interviewees are due to

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[200] Lederach, "Conflict Transformation," Conflict Transformation: A Simple Definition.

[201] Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace,* 11.

age, they also suggest that budo may first teach its practitioners to transform conflicts and later cause them to focus on peacebuilding. However, if this assessment is incorrect and Johan and Emma are conflict avoiders rather than peacebuilders, it would suggest that budo does not strengthen people's conflict transformation skills.

Lamarre and Nosanchuk also argued that aggressive people may be unlikely to keep practicing judo.[202] This may be true in the case of this thesis. The interviewees had all been practicing budo for a long time and none of them had ever been very aggressive. On the other hand, many of the interviewees stated that budo had made it easier for them to control aggression. Jeffrey admitted that he had in the past had the tendency to get verbally angry, but this had gotten better. Johan, Anna and Bas also linked their calmness in the face of conflict to budo. As conflict transformation is dealing with conflict without violence, remaining calm is necessary.[203] This suggests that budo can indeed decrease aggression in people, which in turn can help their conflict transformation capabilities. It is still questionable whether aggressive people would enjoy budo and this might cause them to quit prematurely.

Morvay-Sey et al.'s study was conducted among 14-18-year-old youth, which naturally makes their results difficult to apply in the case of this thesis. They found that among boys that did not practice budo, physical aggression was higher than budo practitioners, while for non-budoka girls it was verbal aggression.[204] Practicing budo also decreased general anger in both groups, although more for girls.[205] As none of the interviewees in this research spoke of having any physical aggression, this is in line with Morvay-Sey et al.'s findings. Low levels of general aggression in the interviewees makes it difficult to assess differences in verbal aggression among genders. What is interesting about Morvay-Sey et al. is that they found the number of training years in budo irrelevant to the amount of aggression people display.[206] As mentioned above, Anna was older and described herself as more direct than Bas, but she had less

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[202] Lamarre and Nosanchuk, "Judo – the Gentle Way," 996.
[203] Galtung, *Conflict Transformation by Peaceful Means*, Transformation: 2.
[204] Morvay-Sey et al., "A trait aggression," 14-15, 17.
[205] Ibid. 14, 17.
[206] Ibid., 18.

budo experience. This suggests that the number of training years is significant to how people respond to feelings of anger, even though this does not necessarily speak of aggression. As a difference can be observed though, it seems that budo has an effect on how people react to feelings of anger. However, as mentioned above, Bas and Anna's age difference was only two years, which may make this finding coincidental.

Lafuente, Zubiaur and Gutiérrez-Garcia compared different types of research focusing on martial arts and combat sports and their relationship with aggression found that all cases of decreased levels of aggression focused on traditional practices such as budo.[207] As mentioned above, this appears to be true in the case of this thesis as most participants confirmed that budo had helped them control aggression. The authors also linked traditional martial arts with practices such as meditation and philosophy.[208] This would suggest that in the case of budo, the decrease in aggression may be related to the 'mental aspect' or spirituality described in the previous section. Specifically, spirituality in martial arts is a battle within the self where one exercises or fails to exercise control.[209] This fits the idea of controlling aggression, which suggests that an increased capability of controlling aggression and budo spirituality may be linked.

Johan suggested that budo was about making aggressive people less aggressive and finding aggressiveness in shy people. The idea of controlled aggressiveness was also endorsed by Jeffrey. Even though other interviewees did not mention this aspect of budo, it is worth exploring. Lafuente, Zubiaur and Gutiérrez-Garcia also found that in general, most studies of martial arts and combat sports still showed that adolescent aggression increased whereas with studies focusing on youth with behavioral issues the effect was positive.[210] This is very similar to the suggestion of Johan and Jeffrey. Youth with behavioral issues would become less aggressive through training whereas youth with no issues may be shy due to growing up and need some controlled aggressiveness to become – as Johan said – 'whole'. As such, the differences between findings in studies focusing on aggression in budo can perhaps be explained with the idea that budo

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[207] Lafuente, Zubiaur and Gutiérrez-Garcia, "Effects of martial arts and combat sports training," 8.
[208] Ibid., 9.
[209] Raposa, "Martial Spirituality," 168.
[210] Lafuente, Zubiaur and Gutiérrez-Garcia, "Effects of martial arts and combat sports training," 8.

aims at balancing the amount of aggression instead of removing it. This makes studies with different focus groups produce different results.

When this idea is applied to peace skills, it suggests that people with too much aggression become better at conflict transformation and peacebuilding through budo by becoming calmer and more capable of minimizing the use of violence.[211] Vice versa, people who are too shy to be confrontational enough to find opportunity in conflict can find the bravery to do so through budo.[212] As mentioned above, it appears that peacebuilding capabilities may appear later when more experience has been gathered. Presumably this is when budoka have truly learned to balance aggression and are more capable of responding to conflict situations even before they occur through supporting peace.[213]

While Björkvist and Varhama did not directly focus on aggression, their research was rather similar as it measured attitudes towards 'violent conflict resolution' among karateka. They concluded that female practitioners had more positive attitudes towards it than male karateka. With practitioners of noncontact sports, this was the opposite.[214] When it came to personal conflicts, the interviewees of this research were regardless of gender adamantly against using violence, except in the case of self-defense. Two of the interviewees – Johan and Bas – pointed out that self-defense can also be exaggerated and then it is not acceptable anymore. Johan was also the only interviewee who brought up having used self-defense.

When asked about the military, Anna was the only interviewee against having one. This is different from Björkvist and Varhama's results. However, as the authors suggested, karate may make women have more positive attitudes towards violent conflict resolution, because they associate it with self-defense capabilities whereas men associate it with less violent self-defense.[215] This is unlikely to be the case with kendo. As it simulates sword fighting, it is unlikely to be seen as self-defense. This difference between kendo and karate may explain the difference in findings. The other interviewees believed that it was

[211] Galtung, *Conflict Transformation*, Transformation: 2.
[212] Lederach, "Conflict Transformation," Conflict Transformation: A Simple Definition.
[213] Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace,* 11.
[214] Björkqvist and Lasse Varhama, "Attitudes toward violent conflict resolution," 587.
[215] Ibid., 588.

useful to have a military for self-defense purposes. Because the interviews were conducted at a time when the Ukrainian war was receiving significant media attention, it is possible that the answers about self-defense and the military were affected by these events. Many of the interviewees brought up Ukraine as an example. Overall, when it came to using violent conflict resolution in personal and societal conflicts, most interviewees supported it, but only in the case of self-defense This is also in line with conflict transformation, which supports minimizing violence in conflicts of all sizes.[216]

While most studies measuring aggression in fighting arts focus on questionnaires, the advantage in qualitative interviews is that they provide the participants a chance to explain their answers and as such, provide a wider perspective. What is particularly relevant here is that all the participants highlighted that budo is not violent. Despite individual practitioners, their opinions, level of aggression or even violence use, budo practice is considered peaceful. Many of the interviewees spoke of the existence of abuse in budo and even provided examples of physical and verbal aggression, but they highlighted that this was the work of individuals instead of the practice itself.

This section has examined the relationship between budo and aggression. None of the participants of this research had ever been particularly aggressive, but some differences how much the interviewees valued confrontation could be observed between the less and more experienced budoka. Most interviewees argued that budo had made them calmer and budo was generally considered peaceful. It is possible that budo aims for controlled aggression by balancing the amount of aggression a person has, which both explains differences between studies and links balancing aggression as an aspect budo spirituality. Budo may improve practitioners conflict transformation and peacebuilding capabilities through balancing aggression. In this case, it seemed that conflict transformation capabilities develop first and peacebuilding only later. All participants saw self-defense as acceptable in personal conflicts, whereas the military was supported by all except Anna. When it comes to gender, this research did not observe significant differences in the amount or type of aggression.

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[216] Galtung, *Conflict Transformation*, Transformation: 2; A summary of the approach: 3.

### c. Conflict skills through control

The analysis has so far discussed budo spirituality as self-development towards control, which in the previous section was linked to the control of aggression, which may help in conflict transformation and peacebuilding. It will now be further assessed how these aspects of budo relate to improved conflict solving skills. The final sub-question left to discuss is: how do contemporary budoka use budo in order to transform conflicts and foster peace in their community and personal lives? This section will connect the concepts of conflict transformation and peacebuilding outlined in the conceptual framework to the interview findings. This will be done while referring to literature about dealing with conflicts.

Many of the participants explained that budo had helped them read social situations. Especially Jeffrey and Bas provided concrete examples of how reading the opponent in kendo was similar to reading whether the other person was going to attack. This is similar to the process of 'somatic metaphorism' by Foster, where bodily movements become metaphors for social situations.[217] In his research, aikido provided such metaphors for diffusing conflict situations.[218] Kendo is not a self-defense art as aikido, but somatic metaphorism seems to work nonetheless. In one of his examples, Jeffrey used his skills in reading people to prevent a conflict from ensuing at a bar. This may also be a case of somatic metaphorism, but a direct link with kendo is difficult to see. Perhaps Jeffrey's short experience in aikido had taught him to diffuse attacks as in Foster's research.[219] The only other interviewee with little experience in aikido was Johan and he also discussed diffusing a situation in relation to the young guys he had encountered during his run. He had grabbed an arm and let go. Jeffrey and Johan also explained that reading a situation allows them to get away from aggressive persons and prevent conflicts. It is difficult to see a connection to peacebuilding

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[217] Foster, "Fighters who Don't Fight," 179.
[218] Ibid., 166.
[219] Ibid.

here, because there is no specific structure to prevent conflict.[220] Additionally, the situation did not contribute to creating something positive.[221]

Conflict transformation seems to be a slightly more suitable word for these situations. Johan and Jeffrey minimized harm with their actions, but dealt with the conflict creatively.[222] However, to be fully considered conflict transformation, it should also be proven that these situations led to positive changes and fixing of relationships.[223] Since in Jeffrey's example the man who had behaved aggressively apologized, it can be argued that this happened. Johan's opponents ran away. It is possible that they learned a lesson that caused positive changes in their lives, but it cannot be said that the relationship was fixed. However, in both cases it is unlikely that the situation led to positive peace, which does not refer only to the absence of violence, but also to more thorough integration of everyone involved.[224] The conflict parties are unlikely to encounter again and the troublemakers probably will not significantly change their behavior after one incidence. However, Jeffrey and Johan's actions are consistent with their explanation about balanced aggression. They probably needed a little bit of aggression to perform such an action, but they also controlled it.

Johan's experience is also similar to Nakajima's idea of sublimation of violence, where you use the opponent's attack to overcome violence.[225] He suggested that in marobashi, practitioner has a chance to react quickly, but in a way that is not violent. The form of violence is changed.[226] It is unclear from Johan's story whether the young men had started to physically attack him. However, he reacted to the situation quickly in a way that allowed everybody to leave unharmed. This is sublimation of violence, because he had had the opportunity to use violence, but chose not to. In Jeffrey's story this is a little different as he did not physically defend himself. It should be noted that Nakajima also mostly focuses on the idea of sublimation in training.

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[220] Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace,* 11.
[221] United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, 3.
[222] Galtung, *Conflict Transformation by Peaceful Means*, Transformation: 2.
[223] Lederach, "Conflict Transformation," Conflict and Change.
[224] Galtung, "An Editorial," 2.
[225] Nakajima, "Japanese martial arts and the sublimation of violence," 65.
[226] Ibid., 72-73.

García similarly focuses on violence in the dojo. He argues that the level of violence is a result of negotiation where beginners tend to break the lower threshold of violence by being too gentle and experienced practitioners can sometimes break the upper threshold of violence by using too much force.[227] According to the participants of this research, when it comes to physical violence this is the opposite. Over half of the interviewees explained that beginners can be reckless. The only exception to this is Jeffrey's example of a sensei using an illegal technique on him and giving him a concussion. Since beginners later learn to use more appropriate amount of force, this process can be considered a negotiation as García described it.

Interestingly, psychological violence appeared to be sometimes conducted by more experienced budoka, which Gijs and Bas provided examples of. Gijs' opponent had refused to show him respect, while Bas knew a person who had been told by the sensei he did badly in front of all other students. Of these two instances, the example of Bas could be considered a negotiation of violence if the sensei thought that this would teach a lesson to the student, which would encourage him to improve. If so, it could be considered that he broke the upper threshold of García.[228] In Gijs' example it is more difficult to speak of a negotiation, because it was not related to learning. Additionally, it is unlikely that psychological violence is negotiated in the dojo. Gijs, Bas and Jeffrey's examples are more likely to be individual instances, although it is notable that half of the interviewees had such examples. This is supported by the fact that all interviewees named various sensei and other more experienced practitioners as their budo influences.

These instances highlight budo etiquette as a form of peacebuilding in the dojo, because it is a structure that upholds peace and prevents further conflict.[229] Gijs and Jeffrey specifically described their examples as breaches of etiquette, which is why they were problematic. In general, the interviewees felt that etiquette helped social relationships in the dojo by giving clear instructions on how to behave. Even though budo training is about practicing conflicts, etiquette

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[227] García, "Taming the Habitus," 161, 163, 166.
[228] Ibid., 166.
[229] Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace,* 11.

secures the peaceful continuance of relationships within the dojo. One could argue that etiquette is also linked to the concept of 'ai' or cooperation as Friedman explained it. He suggested that this concept could be used to reconcile conflicts between people.[230] This conflict transformation part of the etiquette was brought up by Emma, who explained that after a fight in kendo one should bow to show respect even if they are still frustrated with their opponent. This show of respect ends the 'conflict' that budo practices. It is practicing conflict transformation, because etiquette heals the relationship and the encounter has allowed both participants to improve their skills, which is a positive change.[231] It leads to positive peace, because integration in the dojo has been improved.[232] This was endorsed by Bas, who linked etiquette to disciplining oneself to self-improvement. As many of the interviewees told that skills learned in the dojo are also used elsewhere, conflict transformation and peacebuilding through etiquette are likely to follow them as well.

Friedman also suggested the concepts of 'do' and 'ki' to reconcile conflicts. He argued that 'do' or path gives the pursuit of peace a spiritual purpose in budo.[233] In this thesis research, self-improvement was identified as the most important part of budo spirituality. However, this self-improvement also appeared to be linked to control, which the participants associated – among other aspects – to control of social situations. They found that it helped them deal with difficult people. Budo spirituality appears to be linked to the participants conflict transformation and peacebuilding capabilities through the idea of control.

Conflicts between people have been already discussed above, but the participants also gave answers that suggested budo helped them transform conflicts within the self.[234] For most, the routine of training had helped them cope during difficult times. According to Friedman, 'ki' or universal energy helps to

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[230] Friedman, "Using Aikido and Transpersonal Psychology Concepts as Tools for Reconciling Conflict," Cooperation as a Key Concept.

[231] Lederach, "Conflict Transformation," Conflict and Change, Conflict Transformation: A Simple Definition.

[232] Johan Galtung, "An Editorial," 2.

[233] Friedman, "Using Aikido and Transpersonal Psychology Concepts as Tools for Reconciling Conflict," Conclusion.

[234] Galtung, *Conflict Transformation by Peaceful Means*, A summary of the approach: 3.

deal with intrapersonal conflicts by having a unified mind.[235] This is similar to Jeffrey and Bas' explanation as they suggested that training forced them to stay in the moment for a few hours even if they had other troubles to consider. Anna, Emma and Gijs also viewed budo as something that was good for them during such periods, but did not specify how. While Johan felt that budo training did not allow his mind to relax, mushin, which he described as a calm state of mind did make it easier for him to accept the situation he was in. As concepts, mushin and ki are highly different, which makes Friedman's theory inapplicable in Johan's case. However, all interviewees used budo in transforming internal conflicts.[236] Through training they could deal with their troubles, but also develop something positive, which is compatible with the idea of conflict as an opportunity.[237]

While this thesis focuses on micro-level conflict transformation and peacebuilding, Siapno suggested that solving internal conflicts can help society at large. She argued that in the post-conflict context of Timor Leste, martial arts helped people heal and taught the population resilience.[238] While this thesis cannot prove the societal benefits of budo, it can be expected that when people deal with their emotions in non-harmful ways – as shown above that budo enables – they can also be more productive citizens. As such, also Pawelz' argument that the banning of martial arts groups in Timor Leste was a mistake, because it could have helped deal with the root causes of conflict there is likely to be correct, although there are significant contextual differences. They could have learned alternative ways of dealing with conflicts and – as Johan's experience with karate suggests – they could have had a space to settle matters safer than on the streets. As possible root causes of internal conflicts mentioned by some of the interviewees were work or school related stress and budo was their way of dealing with them, in this case budo itself is peacebuilding as it supports a peaceful existence.[239] It is also conflict transformation, because it helps get over the conflicts in non-violent ways.[240] By dealing with these root causes on the level of

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[235] Friedman, "Using Aikido and Transpersonal Psychology Concepts as Tools for Reconciling Conflict," Intrapersonal Conflict.

[236] Galtung, *Conflict Transformation by Peaceful Means*, A summary of the approach: 3.

[237] Lederach, "Conflict Transformation," Conflict Transformation: A Simple Definition.

[238] Siapno, "Dance and Martial Arts in Timor Leste," 437.

[239] Barnett et al., "Peacebuilding: What Is in a Name?" 44.

[240] Galtung, *Conflict Transformation by Peaceful Means*, Transformation: 2.

the individual, budo may contribute positively to society at large as Siapno suggested.[241]

The participants of this thesis also confirmed that practicing budo had made them feel more confident, although in different ways. This is similar to Hayhurst et al.'s research, which argued that a Ugandan martial arts program for women gave them confidence and defense skills. However, they were ridiculed for their training.[242] The authors argued that in order to change gender relations in Uganda, it would have been more effective to teach a mixed-gender group.[243] The participants of this research had experienced some jokes related to their kendo training, but speaking of ridicule may be exaggerating. Kendo training is a mixed-gender environment, which Hayhurst et al. identified as ideal for developing gender relations. This appears to be confirmed by this research. Anna – and many other interviewees less directly – indicated that women do well in kendo despite being less focused on physical power. This is likely to be empowering for female budoka, but also alter gender relations for the better by showing the capability of women. As Emma's account of discrimination in kendo shows, this is still needed. Her statements about improvements in women's position in European kendo also shows that progress has been made, which further supports the point of Hayhurst et al. While it may be difficult to speak of a conflict here, this aspect of budo is also similar to conflict transformation, because it promotes integration of society at large and – as such – positive peace.[244]

This section has shown that budo training does include subtle training in conflict transformation and peacebuilding, which practitioners can take outside of the dojo and apply in real life situations. These peace skills manifest through improved capabilities of reading situations and responding to them. Budo can help solve conflicts within the self, but also between persons. While societal conflicts were difficult to assess in the context of this thesis, budo may foster capabilities to help with them by allowing individuals to deal with their internal conflicts in a constructive manner. Conflict transformation and peacebuilding

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[241] Siapno, "Dance and Martial Arts in Timor Leste," 437.
[242] Hayhurst et al., "Gender relations, gender-based violence and sport for development and peace," 165.
[243] Ibid., 164.
[244] Galtung, "An Editorial," 2.

skills are related to budo spirituality through the development of control of situations and the self. Additionally, budo training can boost confidence of practitioners and it has the potential to positively affect gender relations when trained in mixed-gender groups.

## 8. Conclusion

*The Cat's Eerie Skill*, a Japanese fable about a wise senior cat catching a rat suggested that the cause of an unsuccessful conflict is the self.[245] Similarly, control of oneself, emotions, actions and situations were the most prevalent themes in this thesis research. Budo can be considered a spiritual practice, which manifests itself as self-development towards control. It can help budoka control emotions and balance aggression. Some budoka may then use this control for conflict transformation and peacebuilding purposes in their everyday lives.

While this thesis shows that not every budoka views their practice as spiritual, there appear to be some shared meanings that can be understood as budo spirituality. For some, budo appears to be a way to express their religion or spirituality, while for others it can be that budo as a way of life becomes a form of spirituality itself. Budo gives their lives structure, meaning and values to live by. Budo spirituality is unlikely to be related to shaping of one's body, but instead it can make one feel more connected to it. Most important aspect of budo spirituality appears to be continuous self-development, which leads to control. Respect, humbleness and being good to others are also commonly observed values.

While it may look it, budo practice is not violent, but peaceful. The practitioners can use budo to learn to control their emotions, actions and situations. Budo does not seem to promote extreme pacifism as its practitioners seem to hold positive attitudes towards the military and self-defense. The practices may not aim to make everyone less aggressive, but instead find a balance in the amount of aggression that people display and provide tools for controlling it. The practices can also foster conflict transformation and peacebuilding skills through balancing aggression and the spiritual idea of control.

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[245] Chozan, "The Subtle Art of a Cat," 6.

Budoka can learn to read social situations and use this analysis to avoid, prevent or find non-violent ways to transform conflict.[246] The routine of training – which for some practitioners may hold spiritual meanings – also helps budoka deal with conflicts within the self.

This thesis has explored the spiritual aspects of budo and how they relate to conflict transformation and peacebuilding in the everyday lives of budoka in the Netherlands, with a specific focus on practitioners of kendo. The findings here are significant for the study of spirituality, because while spirituality has been previously associated with control and creation of significance in life, the connection between spirituality and self-development is uncommon. The findings here are also novel in suggesting that spirituality in budo may be the aspect that fosters peace skills in its practitioners. Much more research is required to better establish this connection and possibly extrapolate applicable aspects of budo to use in conflict transformation and peacebuilding in practice. It is worth exploring whether people who attach spiritual meanings to budo are better at handling conflicts or whether these peace skills arise from merely a deeper level of reflection towards the budo practices. Perhaps there exists yet another unexplored area of budo that fosters peace skills.

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[246] Galtung, *Conflict Transformation by Peaceful Means*, Transformation: 2.

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