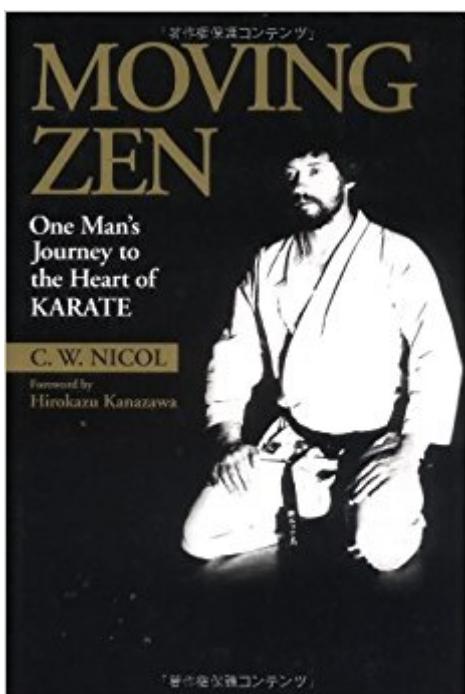


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Moving Zen: One Mans Journey To The Heart Of Karate (Bushido--The Way Of The Warrior)



Synopsis

A classic story of one man's confrontation with the self through Karate. In 1962 at age twenty-two, C. W. Nicol left Wales to study Karate in Japan. He quickly found that the study of the martial art engaged his whole being and transformed his outlook on life. Moving Zen is the multifaceted story of a young man who arrived in Japan to study the technique of, and spirit behind, Karate. Joining the Japan Karate Association, or Shotokan, Nicol discovered that Karate, while extremely violent, also called for politeness and a sense of mutual trust and responsibility. He learned that the stronger the Karateka, the more inclined he was to be gentle with others. Those who have gained a measure of skill but have not yet achieved spiritual maturity are the dangerous practitioners. Studying kata, Nicol came to realize that these forms are, in essence, moving Zen and that the ultimate goal of all the martial arts is tranquility. Through the help of many gifted teachers, C. W. Nicol gained his black belt, and moved progressively closer to his goal of tranquility. His story, Moving Zen, was first published in 1975 and has achieved the status of a modern classic.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"... an absolute must for all of our young adult karateka." -- Sensei Peter Leitch

C. W. NICOL is the author of Harpoon, among other English titles, and over seventy books in Japanese. He is a seventh dan in the Shotokan Karate International Federation. He has made

fifteen expeditions to the Arctic and has served as a game warden in Ethiopia. Born in Wales, he is now a citizen of Japan. He is vice principal of a college that trains environmental field workers.

As a newly minted ShoDan in Shiho Karano Karate, I have to be skilled in knowledge as well as technique. To that end, I've been reading a number of books on various aspects of the martial arts. One part of that genre are the autobiographical accounts of Budo practitioners. I want to gain deeper insight into my own path through what others have experienced, learned, and how they changed as a result of their martial arts training. "Moving Zen" is one such tale, written by a Welshman who rose to black belt level in Japan during the early 60s. C. W. Nicol, an adventurous twentysomething, decided to immerse himself in the study of Karate. So he moved to Japan and began training at the Yotsuya dojo in Tokyo. "Moving Zen" chronicles the two-year period where Sensei Nicol progressed from a brawny and temperamental white belt to a skilled and calm first-degree black belt. First released in 1975, this newer small-sized edition includes an afterword written by the author in 2001, plus some vintage photographs and simple pencil illustrations. Sensei Nicol writes with a very pure and austere style, so "Moving Zen" is a fairly quick read. There's not a lot of detailed exposition, although at times he tends to wax eloquent about the spiritual aspects of Nippon, particularly Zen within Karate (hence the title). Sensei Nicol is quite taken with Japanese culture, so you won't see much Western cynicism or skepticism here. Instead, he "went native," marrying a Japanese woman and eventually becoming a citizen of Japan. Of course, Sensei Nicol has his share of trials both in and out of the dojo, due to his hot temper and, ironically, being a gaijin (foreigner) in the somewhat xenophobic society he loves. But his respect, perseverance, and eagerness to learn Karate impress his Sensei and Sempai (not to mention his neighbors), so he eventually wins over even the hard cases. As his studies continue, Sensei Nicol slowly but surely matures and comes to grips with his penchant for "impetuous courage." Despite some slips that would've probably landed him in jail over here, he learns to calm his inner rage and become more tranquil. Indeed, the inner workings of Karate upon his spirit (vs. external fighting ability) become the most precious aspect of the martial arts to him. I was humbled by Sensei Nicol's unswerving determination and dedication, as well as the harsh training he endured and blossomed under as a Karateka in Japan. One would have to really love the martial arts to deal with the ascetic military-style discipline, exacting technical requirements, and physical pain meted out by Sensei Nicol's superiors. He even had to commute three hours a day(!) via train to his dojo. I'm not sure I'd want to endure all that, although I got a small taste of it as a young Marine under a Japanese Sensei in Yokosuka, Japan. He never abused us, but we sparred full contact (with pads) and

performed some extreme exercises, like doing wheelbarrows on our bare knuckles up and down the gym floor. I haven't seen many American dojos that hardcore, including my own. I stand by my current school, but I sometimes miss the intense level of training I had in Japan. I read "Moving Zen" in conjunction with "Iron and Silk" by Mark Salzman and "Angry White Pyjamas" by Robert Twigger to get multiple perspectives on martial arts training. It's interesting to compare and contrast Sensei Nicol's early 60s presuppositions and experiences with those of Mr. Salzman's in the 80s and Mr. Twigger's in the 90s. Each book is a fascinating snapshot of a particular era, culture, and martial art style (Karate, Wushu, and Aikido). But despite their different philosophies, motivations, and levels of immersion, all of these men demonstrated personal growth and maturation through practicing the martial arts in a persevering way. I found that to be inspiring, and so I recommend all three books.

This very old book was brand new, as promised, and we are delighted with it.

Thank you very much. I really needed this book.

This book gives a well written account of an individual who endeavored to immerse himself in a new culture and discipline. He writes clearly and succinctly without the usual over admiration for things Eastern.

The first time I read MOVING ZEN (Karate as a Way to Gentleness), I was a teenager in the 1970's, and an aspiring brown belt in Shotokan. I was captivated by the book, and I read it and reread it. In many ways, as a young woman in the martial arts, the daughter of two neglectful parents, in an era when women didn't get a lot of respect in karate, Nicol's earnestness and dedication inspired me and helped me throw off any baggage from my unhappy home and the occasional brutality I encountered in the dojo when men wanted to drive out women. Now in my fifties, a fourth degree black belt (but not in Shotokan), and having read PERSIMMON WIND by David Lowry, IRON AND SILK by Mark Salzman and ANGRY WHITE PYJAMAS by Robert Twigger, as well as Funakoshi's Karate-Do: My Way of Life, and several biographies of Morihei Ueshiba, I take a slightly more critical view of Nicol's memoir. Nicol's style is straightforward, pointed, opinionated, and just a little bit wide-eyed. Older martial artists like me who recognize names like Donn Draeger will relish the memoir of Nicole's life in Japan among his bushido colleagues. But his story gilds the heroes of the martial arts. He definitely idolizes Japanese culture and martial arts instructors. David Lowry gives a far more intimate picture of life in Japan. And Robert Twigger offers a more balanced depiction of

both the virtues and the flaws of the martial arts masters. For newbies who want to understand what martial arts training entails, this is a great book. It moves fast, and it will engage both martial artists and non martial artists. Nicol's attempts to use martial arts to enable him to tame his temper never quite succeeds with me. Lots of people learn to control their tempers without martial arts. It's called growing up. And, even as a teenager, I wondered if he put that bit in to balance out any fears from publishers that Westerners would perceive the book as advocating violence. As one of the first western memoirs of pursuing martial arts at the source, Nicol's memoir is etched in stone as a martial arts classic. But you may find better, less starry-eyed and more profound stories from those who came after.

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