

Report on the Association of Budo Culture for Disabled Seminar in Sweden

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I had the honor of being invited by the Association of Budo Culture for Disabled (ABCD) to participate in a Disabled Budo Seminar held from May 15 to May 18, 2026. The seminar took place in the city of Luleå in Sweden, located near the Arctic Circle. The event was organized by the Swedish branch of the Association of Budo Culture for Disabled and the Norrbotten Disabled Budo Association, based in Norrbotten County in Luleå.

This occasion also served as the grand opening of a new dojo established by the President of its organization Mr. Pontus Johansson. This event brought together practitioners and instructors from a variety of martial arts disciplines. My connection with Mr. Johansson dates back to 2005, when we jointly organized a Disabled Budo Seminar at Osada Dojo in Sendai, Japan in 2005.

Even today, Osada Dojo in Sendai continues to provide Kudo instruction at facilities for people with disabilities. Furthermore, as I serve as Chairman of the KIF Committee for Budo for People with Disabilities, I felt truly honored and grateful to be given such a valuable opportunity. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to Dr. Kantaro Matsui, President of the International Budo University and Representative Director of the Association of Budo Culture for Disabled, for his valuable advice and support regarding this visit.

During the three-day seminar, I had the opportunity to teach Kudo both to participants with disabilities and to local instructors. I was also able to observe various methods of instruction for people with different types of disabilities.

Participating in this event in Sweden for the first time in nearly twenty years provided me with many new insights and valuable learning experiences. Above all, it gave me an opportunity to once again strongly appreciate the excellence of Kudo as a martial art and its tremendous potential.

One of the key reasons for this realization was that ABCD embraces all martial arts and welcomes practitioners regardless of style. Kudo, as a comprehensive martial art incorporating strikes, kicks, throws, and groundwork, is exceptionally well suited to this philosophy. Mr. Johansson himself commented that Kudo may be one of the martial arts best suited for Budo Culture for Disabled.

The instructors working within ABCD come from many different martial arts backgrounds. In my sessions, I introduced not only the fundamentals of Kudo but also principles of body usage and movement. Through both explanation and practical exercises, I shared the idea that “when the body is aligned correctly, empathy and harmony emerge instead of confrontation.” This approach was very well received, and participants enjoyed the training greatly.

Another striking discovery was that the methods being used in Sweden closely resembled the practices we have developed in Sendai. At our facilities in Japan, we help bedridden individuals maintain flexibility through stretching exercises and encourage participation in martial arts techniques using training equipment adapted to their abilities. To my surprise, the same methods were being employed in Sweden. Witnessing people on opposite sides of the world working toward the same goals with the same spirit was deeply moving.

At the same time, I noticed a significant difference between Japan and Sweden. In Japan, the essence of Budo is often incorporated into care facilities through the efforts and creativity of caregiver and instructors, and is accepted as a beneficial activity.

In Sweden, however, participants themselves—or their families and caregivers—actively choose Budo as a means of personal development and enjoyment. Dedicated Budo dojos and training facilities exist specifically for this purpose, and participants attend them voluntarily.

Even individuals with severe disabilities who are unable to move independently are supported by one or two assistants. They are transported by taxicab to the dojo, changed into their uniforms, and line up together with all participants. Training begins with formal bows to the Shomen of the dojo, the instructors, and fellow participants, just as in a traditional martial arts environment. This was a fresh and inspiring experience for me.

On the final day, a grading examination was conducted by the Association of Budo Culture for Disabled. While respecting the rank systems of the various martial arts represented, the Association also operates its own promotion system and issues its own grades and ranks for those who wish to participate. The evaluation system is highly detailed, taking into account the degree of disability as well as proficiency in striking, kicking, throwing, and groundwork techniques. Several examiners carefully observed each participant, assigning scores and providing individual comments with warmth and encouragement.

This experience led me to reflect deeply on the meaning of happiness and what is required to share that happiness with as many people as possible.

Finally, I would like to mention that some of the instructors within the Association themselves have disabilities. Among them was a female instructor named Margarita, whose sincere enjoyment of learning martial arts and passing their value on to future generations was truly inspiring. Watching her dedication was both humbling and uplifting.

This experience reinforced my belief that Kudo exists for everyone. It renewed my determination to further promote and develop Kudo so that more people can enjoy its benefits, grow together, and enrich their lives through its practice.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Association of Budo Culture for Disabled and to the Kudo International Federation for providing me with this valuable opportunity.



