



Modern Ninjutsu

A Primer

By Don Roley

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Published in 2021 by Freedom to Excel LLC.

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First Edition

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Introduction

Few have not dreamed of being ninja during their youth. The image of a black clad super assassin is a strong one for young boys. Some people go on to take jobs close to what a modern ninja would be. Others are merely curious. And some people reading this might have reason to try to understand what kind of thing is possible in the world.

I spent 15 years in Japan, living and training in the art of ninjutsu. This was after a short stint in the military. I was infantry, but nothing special. As I studied the art under my Japanese teachers, I always had an eye to practical, modern application. I have translated many ancient texts of the ninja. Some of it is very antiquated and impractical. But the central core principles are timeless.

There are modern things that touch on what the ninja did. There are spies, special forces soldiers, industrial espionage, and what are called Penetration Testers, who test the security of modern companies. I wrote this to give them ideas and spark some thought. I also wrote this for those who were curious and wanted to know what a modern ninja would be like. It is short, and meant to start consideration into the subject and not be the final word. Indeed, with technology changing every year, it would be hard to come up with something that lasted long if it depended on the latest tech.

I do have plans on expanding it. I easily can do 500 pages, with illustrations. But this work should serve as a start. Most of the stuff is fairly simple to pick up, but takes years of practice.

I do feel that we are facing some very crazy times. These skills may come in handy during the discord I fear we are going to be living through. I hope I am wrong. But I have always felt it better to prepare for the worst and hope for the best.

Note, I frequently quote from the Bansenshukai and Shoninki in this work. Both are very important works put out by the ninja in the 17th century. The quotes are from my translation, and can be purchased through Amazon via the following link.

https://www.amazon.com/Bansenshukai-Shoninki-Ancient-Tomes-Ninjutsu/dp/1983781312/ref=sr_1_1?

[crd=13346LV0I493V&dchild=1&keywords=bansenshukai&qid=1622555619&s=books&sprefix=bansenshukai%2Caps%2C272&sr=1-1](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B087TFBYWZ?ref=sr_1_6?dchild=1&qid=1622555996&refinements=p_27%3ADon+Roley&s=books&sr=1-6&text=Don+Roley)

I also have a translation of the Ninpiden, another important book, available in a Kindle version. To be honest, it is not as good as the previous two books, but like this book you can read it for free via Kindle Unlimited.

https://www.amazon.com/Ninpiden-Ninjutsu-Traditions-Hattori-Family-ebook/dp/B087TFBYWZ/ref=sr_1_6?dchild=1&qid=1622555996&refinements=p_27%3ADon+Roley&s=books&sr=1-6&text=Don+Roley

As it is a primer, it is only a start. Much of what is presented here is very simple to start exploring, but will take years of practice to get good at. In the future, I may come out with a physical book that expands on things. But this book, available to read for free, is a good start to plant the basic skills that are required to be a modern ninja.

A note of warning. Much of what is in this book is not only dangerous, it may be illegal. Stay within the law. If you don't fear being put behind bars, you just have no idea what goes on there.

What Were the Ninja?

About all the reader needs to know about history is enough to understand what created them and what roles they filled as a result. There is a lot of rubbish out in the world on how the ninja came to be. Most of what you read is probably wrong, and that led to a flawed version of what the ninja were. So I will take a bit of time to correct the idea and lay the groundwork as to what the ninja really were.

The stories about ninja originally being mystics that were forced to create a fighting art and go underground when the authorities cracked down on fear of their powers is great theatre, but has nothing to do with reality. That story sold well in the 80s with Star Wars still on screen and survivalists preparing for a nuclear war and collapse of civilization. It helped some sell themselves as a kind of jedi knight mixed with a commando, which really made it popular among young males, of which I was one at the time.

Equally false is the idea that ninja came from China and set up in Japan. There were many cultural influences from the mainland of Asia, but they were absorbed and modified to help influence what would become ninjutsu. It was certainly not the case that stealthy assassins took the boat from China and set up in Japan, no matter what certain charlatans try to peddle.

The true history of ninjutsu is based firmly on what happened in ancient Japan that led to a rather unique set of circumstances that made developing the art of stealth a needed and sought out skill.

The birthplace of ninjutsu is a small area called Iga. It was an area within travel distance of both the first official permanent capitol of Nara, and of the second at Kyoto. It had a few roads going through it, which allowed information to pass through, but those roads went through narrow passes, allowing them to be easily defended.

Many a battle happened in the capitols, which led to many defeated warriors fleeing to the Iga region. They put aside their armor and took up various trades, but the family they begat never forgot their warrior origins, nor their dislike of those that had defeated them and gained political power.

Added to this were the shoen. Shoen were tax free properties meant to support institutions such as temples. The farmers of the land lived a type of share cropper existence. They tilled the land, and the owners took a share instead of the government in taxes. Many a farmer signed their property over to shoen because the cut they took was less than the taxes they were paying at the time. But that became rarer, and the shoen tended to be more and more demanding over time. The ones in Iga were especially noted for squeezing the peasants of all they could. This led to resentment, and eventually raids on the offices and store houses of the shoen were fairly common. Stealthy raids that came, stole food and maybe kill hated officials, were soon being reported to the central government with pleas for help. When troops were sent, all the locals swore they knew nothing of who did it, or blamed people that had left long ago. This stealthy way of fighting, built upon the traditions passed down in the families of defeated warriors, formed a nucleus for more formal ways of teaching.

In 1467 a ten year war started. There actually was three shogunates in Japanese history. This war, called the Onin no Ran, broke the back of the second. By the end of the conflict, it was obvious that the local military governors, called shugo, could do pretty much as they wished and the shogun was powerless to stop them. Many of them gained the title "Daimyo" which means great name and served as warlords. Until the founding of the third and last shogunate in 1603, Japan was in a constant state of war.

But because of the shoen in Iga, the family put in charge by the shogun had very little power. As was customary, the local shugo would gather the taxes, take a large cut, and pass the rest on to the shogun. Iga was rife with shoen, which cut the tax base. The family officially in charge of Iga was known as the Niki, and were largely powerless in the area, mainly preferring to live in the capitol at Kyoto and rule inefficiently through deputies.

Several important local families stepped into the political void. It was not peaceful, at least not at first. There were several clashes as families vied for power. Archeologists have unearthed hundreds of forts in the area. Most often, they were located on a small hill behind the mansion of the head of the clan. They were crude and more like

entrenched positions that infantry might put up when stationed in a position for more than a few days, but they filled the need for defense if there was enough time to retreat from the mansion to them.

This led to small scale and stealthy warfare. Because the contestants were so close together, any large scale action of conquest would soon get back to the targets, allowing them to prepare. And while the forces were off attacking one neighbor, others in the area could easily swoop in and attack the clan that was off doing its own attacking.

So small and quick raids, mainly under the cover of darkness, became the norm. The idea was to move, strike fast, and get back to their base before dawn so no one could figure out how vulnerable their home was. It was a nasty war of pin pricks that lasted decades without much result.

Eventually, as Japan moved deeper into the age of war, the families came to a fragile peace. Seeing what was happening around them as warlords fought each other and absorbed their neighbors, they eventually formed a peace pact and a ruling council. With their homeland secured, they were then able to seek out employment with warlords in other areas.

Mercenary troops tend to be specialists. Unless you were a great warrior, you would be regulated to little more than cannon fodder. Many a farmer left his fields to join armies, with often little more than plunder for pay. These were called ashigaru, and they were famous for fickle loyalty and cruelty. Specialists were sought out and paid well. Those that knew how to conduct sieges, or train and deploy gunmen after firearms were introduced to Japan, were high in demand and got wages several times higher than a normal samurai. For the people of Iga, their reputation of stealthy raids honed over generations gained them many a role as elite troops tasked with night raids and the like.

As the Bansenshukai presented the history,

“Long ago the Shogun Ashikaga Takauji ruled the land and his descendants continued this rule and entrusted various areas to local lords. However, they were unable to rule efficiently and the balance between those above and below became confused. The officials

were corrupt and there was no end to the armed strife. Many of the officials went to conquer others and there was no peace to be found in our land. Thirteen generations after Takauji, the time of the lord called Kougen-in Yoshiteru was a period of no distinction between those who were above and those below and the confucian three aspects of loyalty (Lord and vassal, parents and child and husband and wife) as well as the five virtues (benevolence, duty, courtesy, wisdom and faith) were cast aside and the the land became ungovernable, descending into chaos..

“In the five provinces and seven roads (i.e. everywhere in Japan) there were none that were without strife and all was confusion. But in all the other lands they were ruled over by shugo (military governors) and the people of those lands followed them. However, the people of Iga and Koka had no shugo and set up small forts in areas they knew and freely did as they pleased.

“There was no shugo or warlord over them, and none to show them the way of government. As such, there were numerous cases of fighting among themselves to gain the lands of each other. So they did nothing but fight each morning and night, with the lives revolving around the call of arms. All of them would try to find some gap in the defense of the other, send in shinobi to set fires to their forts and sometimes try to gain knowledge of the enemy forces. They would try to interfere with the alliances between those that stood against them, conduct night attacks as well as catch them unaware with raids based on plans that changed based on the evolving situation. The soldiers never took the saddles from their horses and those that were of lower rank kept the sandals used in war stashed with their swords on their scabbard. There was not a moment where they felt safe.

“Therefore, they decided that their small forces should meet larger forces that were tough and strong with flexible strategies and thus it was best that they perfect the art of the shinobi. Every soldier became skilled in the art of the shinobi and even those of lower classes learned Innin- the art of concealment.

“As a result, 11 of this class distinguished themselves with Innin. It did not matter if it was their own territory or another’s, they could

enter into lands or slip into a strong point to achieve victory with the ease of twirling something in the hand.

“Because of this, even though the neighboring lands were strong with skilled leaders, they could never subjugate the land of Iga. Even as skilled a general as Oda Nobunaga met defeat there.

“Thus it was beyond hope of other lords to think to take this land. Iga was not only a small place with a small populace, it also had no central force to unite them, and yet all of the great armies and generals that surrounded them were not able to defeat them once. Why did they achieve these victories? It has to be because of the skills of ninjutsu. It is for this reason that Iga is the birthplace of ninjutsu.”

Peace came with the third and last shogunate. The Tokugawa family passed down the title of shogun through two and a half centuries of rule, and that rule was harsh and firm.

Somewhere along the line, the ninja became more than just raiders, but also information gatherers. The exact timing and structure is unclear. Those that spy are not talked about much, unlike the stories of night raids so commonly associated with the ninja of Iga. But works from the era of peace talked about the need to gather information by various means. Until this age of peace, literacy was rare and those works that were written were in grave danger of being destroyed, so much of what we know were written long after the age of wars based on stories passed down through the generations.

Be that as it may, works like the Bansenshukai were clear that there were many who filled various roles, but to be a ninja one had to master both the yin and yang aspects of ninjutsu.

Yin in Japanese is In, and Yang is Yo. Combined with the character nin taken from ninja, they formed the two halves of ninjutsu, Innin and Yonin. Innin is the art of stealth. If you crawled past a guard unseen, that was Innin. Yonin was overt action. When you walked by a guard dressed as a servant, that was Yonin.

It wasn't clearly one or the other on a mission. A ninja might crawl through the outer perimeter of a castle and once in an area the enemy thought safe, calmly walk to his objective acting like a messenger. Or he might enter a castle dressed as a day laborer and jump into a well, to later emerge and stealthily complete his mission.

Ninja would frequently enter enemy territory in disguise and set themselves up. Merchants were a popular cover for them. Once there, they would engage in Yonin as they talked up people, trying to glean bits of vital information from everyday conversations. They would try to befriend and woo vital people in the enemy's camp to work for them, either knowingly or not. If it was needed, they would sneak into areas to gain information their Yonin activities could not handle. If war broke out between the ninja's employer and the land he was living in, he would spread rumors to sap the will of the people to fight for the enemy, or sneak in and set fire to supplies or other related missions.

As such, there are actually very few modern day equivalents to the ninja. Some like to point to special forces units as modern day ninja. But soldiers rarely do their work in civilian clothes trying to gather information or recruit traitors to pass along information.

Despite what the movies say, CIA agents rarely do any sneaking around. Most agents, some under diplomatic cover, meet and try to recruit foreign nationals to pass along information. There is a section of the CIA, called the technical branch, that does things like sneak into building and open safes. But these specialists are not field agents for the most part, instead being flown in when they are needed. This is pretty much the pattern for most intelligence agencies.

So the ninja would be a combination of special forces, CIA agents, and the technical branch of the CIA. This is what we will deal with in this book.

This is just a quick history of the ninja. For those that want to learn more, I have a short Kindle book on the subject, free to read if you have Kindle Unlimited.

https://www.amazon.com/Ninja-vs-Samurai-Myths-Revealed-ebook/dp/B086Z881KZ/ref=sr_1_9?dchild=1&keywords=don+rolej&qid=1622471209&s=digital-text&sr=1-9

Outlook of the Ninja

From the start, the ninja must hone their ability to see things as they are, and approach problems from unexpected directions. A mindset that is settled, instead of fluid, is the enemy of those that must live and work in the shadows.

The Shoninki, an important text of the ninja, illustrates the way the ninja had to think outside of the box with this story.

“There is a story of a teacher who told his skilled students to obtain a large pot by means of theft. The students complained that it was quite difficult to do in the midst of the day. Then he showed them the true way by going to the pot shop and buying the pot. The students laughed in unison. The teacher said this was why they were not skilled. They thought only of a direct path, stealing the pot outright. “I went in and stole ten small cups of high quality, hiding them in my sleeves. I then sold them for enough to buy the large pot. This is how to accomplish things without showing your true intention.”

When you do things just like everyone else, you get the same results as them. From the start, think of the most outrageous means of doing things, feeling free to reject them. We do things the normal way because it is the natural path, found out by many that have gone before us. Those that were first to tackle a problem met with a lot of failures. Those that achieved their aim passed along what they learned. There is no shame in following wisdom like that, only in getting trapped by it. Be brave enough to take chances while being humble enough to reject things when they prove to not work. Never let yourself attach your sense of self worth to something you dreamed up, such as a solution to a problem. Let things go, and relish the chance to try the unexpected, fall on your face, and then learn from your mistakes.

Push the limits of your ability to think. Take up new challenges. If you don't know how to play chess, learn. If you are skilled in chess, learn something like igo, also called go, the strategy game from Asia. There are table top war games, and logic puzzles that are easily accessible. There is a saying, “All the best generals play chess. But the best chess players are never generals.” This means that some

things, like chess, are tools meant to help people expand their abilities to think and strategize. They are not the purpose of study. Take things with the idea that you will get some use out of them, feeling free to not do as well as those that are fanatical about them and being able to walk away once the value has been extracted.

Gathering Intelligence

Despite the popular image of spying, it rarely involves sneaking into the enemy stronghold, taking out guards, and stealing the secret plans. It is instead part of a long process that most often pieces several bits of information together much like a jigsaw puzzle to create a picture of what the enemy is doing or is planning. One of the most common forms of intelligence gathering is merely reading sources already in the open, such as newspapers. Why steal information through great effort when it is already out there for anyone to pick up? But it is more than that. Most people do not understand just how much information they give out. When these bits of information are put together, especially with other sources unknown to the target, they can be a great window into the truth. So common is this mode of information gathering that it is called OSINT, for Open Source Intelligence.

The Shoninki, an important book on the ninja, detailed this type of gathering when it described one of the agents as 'gaikan', meaning someone that listens from outside.

“Gaikan (Outside Listener)- this is not the act of going only a little into an enemy territory and coming back. This is the act of not going into an area too difficult to enter and instead stalking the edges and talking to people who have been there. The agent pieces the information together into a logical picture of the area without going there himself. The agent selects only the logical accounts, pieces them together and reports back without entering himself. This is the ability to find out what is truth or not, for travelers may lie. It is a skill of telling the truth from tall tales.”

As you can see, the idea of the ninja never actually having to sneak into anywhere to get information is not new.

An amusing story is how the 34th head of Togakure-ryu ninjutsu, Hatsumi Masaaki, trained under the 33rd, Takamatsu Toshitsugu, exclusively at Takamatsu's house. Not once did Takamatsu visit Hatsumi's house. Yet, a few years into their training, Takamatsu presented a detailed map of Hatsumi's home to him. This was no magic trick, as some in the West have tried to portray it. Rather it was from bits and pieces of conversations put together to form an

accurate map. If Hatsumi told a story of falling through the floorboards at the bottom of the stairs and how his wife came rushing out of the kitchen in panic, only to start laughing when she saw what happened (and this story did happen), then it is obvious that there was no clear view of the stairs from inside the kitchen. This only tells a small part, but combined with many other stories over the years, a complete picture can be made. Or in the case of this tale, map.

It is difficult to tell what bits of information can be useful and which are mere chaff. Sometimes intelligence agencies actually have too much information to deal with, and not enough people to sift through everything and be able to put the bits together. A puzzle with only a few pieces is easier to put together, but obviously the more pieces the more complete a story might be possible.

Sherlock Holmes in the famous novels is a great example of this, combined with a bit of specialized knowledge. The big fiction is that he is always certain and 100 percent correct, while real operations are always full of doubt and subject to counter measures.

I will never forget my first lecture on gathering intelligence in the military. I was newly assigned to my unit, and sent immediately to help out in the TOC (Tactical Operations Center, a mobile command post) to fill in temporarily as a radio operator. We worked with both the operations and intelligence sections as we took messages, updated maps, and any scut work that needed to be done.

As part of the exercise in the field, the intelligence officers sat us down for a lecture to help us understand the importance of even fine details. They described the process of gathering intelligence and putting them together and then gave an example that all of us, dealing with the radios, might possibly run into.

They gave a scenario where we were hearing radio traffic that was obviously from the enemy. Our unit was dug in facing off against an enemy unit that was also dug in and we were at a stalemate, neither side trying to overwhelm the other. We could not tell what was being said, because of language and/or them using the code words and such militaries all use. But we could tell that the number of messages were going up. More than that, the voices we were hearing tended to sound older and more confident.

Passing this along to the people in the TOC, the officers would combine that with reports they were getting that enemy soldiers were going on a shopping spree. There are many reasons why this may be so. Sometimes soldiers do not get paid for months at a time. So if their back pay suddenly caught up with them, they might feel it burning a hole in their pocket and that would explain why the merchants behind their lines were doing so well.

But another reason might be that soldiers often stock up on stuff just before moving out. So before the officers heard what we told them, they were uncertain if the reason for the surge in buying was due to money catching up with the troops or if they were about to fall back or maybe go on the attack.

Military units do not prefer to use radio. The transmissions are easy to intercept, and even with codes and the like might reveal things to the enemy. Also, it is easy to triangulate them, and artillery units love bombing anything giving off a radio signal, especially if they believe it is a headquarters unit. So to avoid such risks, whenever a unit is in an area for more than a short time, they set down wires to communicate instead.

The increased radio traffic hinted that these wires were being pulled up. That probably meant they were getting ready to move. Add to that the older and more confident voices. Day to day traffic is usually left to guys like us, young and not too experienced in things. Those voices were more likely the commanders and senior officers themselves giving orders so as not to have their message garbled by some private new on the job. Again, this means something is probably up.

Taking all these pieces, it is likely that the units we were facing off against were getting ready to move. There are other hints that are possible, such as reports that enemy vehicles were seen lining up to top off their gas tanks. But the officers said that if they had just these three bits of info, stressing to us that we were the source for two of them, they would go to our commander and warn him that something was about to happen.

And yet, there still are questions in this case. We suspect they are going to move, but for what purpose? Are they going on the attack? Are they pulling back to a stronger position? Are they being

replaced by fresh troops? At this point, the intelligence officers would send the information they had and their conclusions up to intelligence units higher up. Those units might have information that can help. Maybe an agent saw tanks being moved to the front. Maybe aerial photographs showed that there was a massive building of near impregnable positions a mile behind the lines. But instead of just relying on the higher ups, the officers we dealt with would be tasking our forces to look for specific bits of information to help get an idea on their own. Scout troops would be sent to get information based on suspicions. This is how some information can lead to more detailed questions. In this case, it is likely that the scouts would be sent forward to see if any minefields were being cleared out. If the enemy was getting ready to pull back, they would leave the mines to slow us down if we started to chase them while they were vulnerable. But if they were being pulled up, that probably meant they were getting ready to move through them, coming at us.

This lecture, still vivid in my mind, shows the nature of gathering intelligence. Rarely is it certain. Always are you wary of the other side sending out false clues. The more pieces you have, the better picture you can put together. The trick is knowing what is relevant and what is mere chaff. Sometimes specialized information based on knowledge or experience helps to interpret the data, such as the behavior of soldiers about to move out. And the process never really ends. Answers lead to new questions, which lead to assets such as the scouts being tasked with examining certain things. It is like a big puzzle that you can never be certain of completing, and never stop seeking out new bits to work with.

A personal example in my experience outside of the military might help people understand how various bits of information can be put together, and how much care they should take on what they put out on social media. I once had my life threatened by someone on Facebook. He was a rather crazed type that took offense at something I said about the reality of ninjutsu. He made a point of telling me I would die by his hands. Although the chances of him stepping out from behind the computer was rather low, I always pass these things along to the police, which everyone should in case

someone does take action and you have to explain their corpse inside your house by the broken window he used to get in.

To get his address, I of course used the internet. Looking over his profile, he listed he was in a major city. He made frequent reference to his job at the time, usually a low level position of manual labor, most often involving stocking shelves. He also styled himself a gangster, despite being pasty white. He modeled his wardrobe on what the popular gangsta rap artists were wearing, complete with oodles of cheap neck chains and the like. Aside from a small arsenal of ninja weapons he posted pictures of, he also took pride in the mountain of expensive sports shoes he had. He loved to take selfies in the bathroom with his weapons and the like, but not surprisingly there were little in the way of photos of him interacting with other people. No photos of him on dates, or hanging out with people from work.

Looking up his last name combined with the name of his city came up with only one address, and it was for a female. She might be related to him, but there was no assurance that he lived with her, and I didn't want to send the police against an innocent family member, if they were even related. But in the end, pot-pourri was the key to figuring out the truth. Looking at the photos of him posing with his weapons, I noted that there were pink fluffy towels and pot-pourri. This was not what you would expect from someone that styled himself a gangster or any room mates he would end up living with. It was fairly obvious, the ninja gangsta still lived with his mommy. That was how he was able to afford so many things like the shoes and bling while making minimum wage. I noted the address and gave it to the police.

This tale should tell you how much you can gather from open sources on the internet, as well as warn you that even things that you think are harmless might be anything but. It is best if you make a point of limiting what you put out for the entire world to see.

On the other side of things, you have to be careful that what you are seeing isn't meant to distract and make you believe what the other side wants you to.

A spy might sit at a cafe, carefully taking note of the soldiers marching by. But he may not be aware that the division patches were

replaced to make new soldiers coming to reinforce a front merely seem to be part of the units already in place.

Two popular disguises of the ninja were well suited for standing in place and gathering passive information, such as how many troops walk by. One was as a member of the Fukke sect of Buddhism, noted for wearing a basket hat that covered their faces and playing a flute while begging for alms. The other was a common street performer. In both cases, it was expected that they would set up on a busy road with many people going by and stay there for hours, performing with a basket for donations.

A little imagination gives us a few examples that we might use in the modern world. A beggar by the side of the road is a common sight now. So are people waving signs to try to lure people into nearby businesses. Fujita Seiko, the last grandmaster of Koga-ryu, was a skilled artist that would often set up his gear and paint some building or scenery as he covertly observed the goings on of his target area.

The possibilities are too numerous to list them all, and merely pointing out the role of standing out in the open should be enough. Times change, some principles remain endless.

Specialized knowledge can often help put the pieces together. This can be something that you can pick up by reading something quickly, or it may be something that requires years of specialized experience. Using the network you built up as part of the Kumo no Den (described later) is a great help in inquiring into what significance some bit of information might have.

Fujita Seiko gives an example of how merely knowing how many rice balls a Japanese soldier would eat can serve as the key piece of information.

““What a day,” starts the conversation. “We were making rice balls for the soldiers all day. Each of us in the shop needed to make 200 of them!”

“That must have been hard,” says the customer. “How many people were involved?”

“We broke into two groups of 10 with my wife and I each in charge of one.”

From just that, a lot can be made by a spy. There were 20 total workers each making 200 rice balls. That is 4000 in total. If you know that it is typical to give each soldier two of them, then you know that there were 2000 soldiers that passed through. Those wanting to know about the troop movements of Japanese soldiers can pick up things like this from small things put together. In this case, it was the number of rice balls made along with the knowledge of how many are issued per regulations. And the number of the rice balls can be picked up as easily as this example shows. “

(The above quote was taken from my translation of Fujita Seiko's book, "The Secrets of Koga ryu Ninjutsu.

https://www.amazon.com/Secrets-Koga-ryu-Ninjutsu-Don-Roley/dp/1329672682/ref=pd_sbs_4/134-7953100-6332210?pd_rd_w=weJ9n&pf_rd_p=a5925d26-9630-40f3-a011-d858608ac88b&pf_rd_r=W6KPGN62P5Y09T3A8F82&pd_rd_r=b2015953-67b9-4f10-9dd8-f580807e39e7&pd_rd_wg=XlcPh&pd_rd_i=1329672682&psc=1)

Gathering information in the modern age of course involves the internet. It actually should be the first thing to be accessed. But as with most things, even though the technology changes, the principles stay the same.

There are many books out there on search engine optimizations. Most people get what they need out of Google, but there are tips and such to refine and optimize the information being gathered. One should also know that companies like Google collect the information being looked for in accounts. This could lead to trouble for the spy. There is a web search site called Duckduckgo.com that does not gather such information. Of course, if one must use Google and does not want to attract attention to themselves, there is always the option of going to a public library and borrowing a computer as a guest. In most cases, there is no need to show or register for a library card, and everything is done without any type of trail. Of course, in repressive countries this might not be the case, and if you make a point of always going to the same library for something the government frowns upon, there may be a stake out on a later visit waiting for you.

Modern ninja should at least be familiar with computer science. It does not require a degree from a university, but there are certain standards that seem common sense. One should be familiar and able to get around on the major computers and operating systems at the time. Right now, this means Windows, Mac OS, Android, and Linux. The last may be a bit obscure, but it is often used by those that know what they are doing with computer security and if you wish to continue onto being more of a hacker, Linux is vital to know.

Be able to use desktop, laptop, and tablet versions. Cost is a factor, so having a friend willing to lend you theirs and run you through the basics is nice to have.

Getting a computer without paperwork might be a chore. If you were a spy in enemy territory, the best bet might be to just steal something and use it once to send a message, or research something like the best routes to escape. Pawn shops that accept cash are good places to pick up a cheap tablet that can connect to the internet and do searches. But these are short term solutions for on the fly type situations. If there is the time and resources, a secure system that is difficult to trace is of course best.

Whatever system you prefer to use, there are tools you can use to keep yourself under the radar. First of all is Tor. Tor stands for "The Onion Router" and it was developed by the US military. It is a fairly good way to obscure where you are posting from, but it is not perfect. Certain applications and programs can give it away if they are installed on the device.

Another thing that helps keep you from being discovered is a VPN, Virtual Private Network. It essentially connects directly from your computer and then routes it out somewhere else. If someone is looking at a web site to see where the people that have been viewing it are located, they will see the end point of the VPN and not your actual location. VPNs are also commonly used with TOR since anyone looking at your IPN to see what is going out will not be able to tell. You use the VPN to get onto TOR, and then both ends are obscured.

A good way to use Tor is with the Tails Operating System. It is the ultimate in tools to keep you from being discovered, but it may be a bit extreme. Tails works off of a USB drive with 8 GB or more

memory. You download the operating system onto it, and use it to boot up a computer. The system then allows you to use some of the programs already on it like Tor and Thunderbird, an email program designed to keep your location safe. When you shut down the computer, everything is lost, so there is no digital footprint to trace back anywhere. It is possible to save things while using Tails, but if you don't do so, it is lost forever. Tails can be found with a simple web search.

The first part of any assignment is research. It can be about a person, a company, or a government office. Being that we live in the digital age, the internet should be your first step in finding out all you can. There are many books available to people in the local library on optimizing how you use search engines to find information. But there are more specialized sources. My recommendation is "Open Source Intelligence Technique" by Michael Bazzell. It is expensive, and frequently updated as new sources are born and older ones discontinued. But it is the standard for anyone doing more than a school report level of information gathering.

https://www.amazon.com/Open-Source-Intelligence-Techniques-Information/dp/B08RRDFFF9/ref=sr_1_3?crid=2QNTCT2V9P5OK&dchild=1&keywords=michael+bazzell&qid=1622473231&s=books&prefix=Michael+Bazzell%2Caps%2C213&sr=1-3

A good start for those who want to learn more about computers and computer science is to get a Raspberry PI. It is good for learning, and might be a good tool.

The Raspberry PI is a computer that costs less than a good meal with a friend. For the price you pay, you can't expect top of the line speed and capability. In fact, you can't even expect a power cord. The Raspberry is a bare bones system about the size of a credit card. I got mine for 35 dollars, 10 for the case. Yes, it does not even have a case, but comes as a board with the components welded onto it. The idea is that most people have things like monitors, keyboards, and everything else already. The power cord needed is the same as many smart phones.

Depending on the model, you need an SD or Micro SD card on which you download the operating system for the PI and insert it into the computer. That is your hard drive. The more memory on the card, the more you can have access to on the computer. If you need to get rid of what you did, throwing away the SD card is the first option and you are only out the money you paid for it. Even if you need to get rid of the entire computer, it won't set you back much.

This is more important for taking risks while learning. If you go to a site that locks up your computer, even if you can't just write over the SD card and start over, you probably won't do any crying as you pick up a replacement PI. The first day I fooled with my PI, I managed to erase the task bar and had to rewrite over the card. There is little in the way of safeguards you find on more established systems like Windows to stop idiots from destroying their work or their computer. But by taking risks that don't cause massive hits to your bank account, you can learn so much faster.

One idea I have toyed with is the use of more than one SD card set up for a single machine. When going to certain countries, it is common for the computer drive to be scanned and copied as you go through customs. Even when that is not the case, many a computer left in a hotel room has been accessed and what is on it copied. This is the tale of many a negotiator in China, as their strategies and such were made known to the company they were negotiating with before they even sat down at the table. While swapping out the SD card often will cause problems down the road, taking a Raspberry PI with a decoy card installed and hiding the ultra small micro SD card might not only allow secrets to be safe, but might also give you the chance to give the other side misinformation they believe is legit.

The Raspberry has Python installed on it. That is a programming language. It is considered one of the best for those starting out to learn. If you want to go onto becoming a hacker at some point, it is a valuable tool. Many exploits are written in Python, and even if you don't use it in that manner, it is a good thing to use when using the Raspberry as a tool.

Aside from being a learning tool, there are many uses for the Raspberry. It is small, easy to conceal, and if you have to leave it behind, easily replaced. In the TV series "Mr. Robot" the main

character places a Raspberry behind a thermostat to control the temperature of a server room they want to corrupt. The possibilities are almost endless. There are several nodes that wires can be attached to, and people have made crude robots, alarm systems, and many other things of use requiring only a simple dog brain to control.

There are tutorials online at YouTube and elsewhere for turning a Raspberry into a machine for hacking. Again, if your machine gets destroyed in the process, it is not a big loss. And you can afford to keep this machine separate from your normal computer and what you use it for so no personal information can be leaked while you use it. Keep just the tools you need to do your job on the Raspberry and do your social media, banking, or whatever on your regular machine.

The Raspberry PI uses a variation of Linux as its operating system. There are many version of Linux, as it is an open source platform and people are free to modify and distribute it as they see fit. One version is called Kali Linux and it is the system of choice for hackers. If you plan on eventually becoming a hacker, you would do worse than to familiarize yourself with one version of Linux before stepping up to Kali.

Just remember that you aren't going to be using cutting edge gaming programs or the like with such an inexpensive system. It can do certain things very well, but not everything. Programs that don't need speed or power are best. It comes with its own word processing program, and that is what I am using it for right now. Your local library probably has several books on using the Raspberry PI and getting all you can out of it.

Consider getting a case for it. Some even come with small monitors attached. If you have a bit of static electricity on you, touching the bare components can fry them. There are even videos and pages on how to make cases out of leftover lego blocks your kids might have grown out of.

One last thing about the Raspberry PI. Something that is not mentioned often in the books and tutorials is that the adaptor plugs that you can use to power it can often vary greatly in the amount of juice they put out. Some adaptors that come with appliances do not

need much power and don't put out as much as the Raspberry might need. This goes double if you have the Raspberry in a case with a cooling fan attached, like I do. The first time I tried to start up my Raspberry, it would not fully boot up. Even after I rewrote the card, I got the same result. Finally I ran across a brief passage in a book explaining this might happen, changed the adaptor I used to one I knew put out more power and I have not had a problem since. This, in my opinion, should be emphasized more for the sake of people unused to working with these types of things.

Incidentally, the Tails Operating System does not seem to work on Raspberry PI so far, but later models might change that. Tails keeps updating, and new version of the Raspberry PI do as well. And then there are those that work on building patches to make things work with each other and love to share their genius (and they are just that) with the world. So while as I write this you can't use Tails on a Raspberry, it may not be the case when you read this.

You can't get by in this world without a cell phone. There are also many applications you can use on a smart phone. Many people get burner phones and it is not hard to get one in hand. Of course if you are serious about not being traced you pay in cash and don't do anything that will lead it back to you, such as turn it on around your regular phone or near your home, work, school, etc. In addition, typically stores have video cameras set up and they keep the footage for about three months. If you need a phone fast, and believe that there will be state security agents combing through the footage soon while tracing you, give some money to a transient to go in and buy one for you.

Seishin

The Bansenshukai, considered the most important book written by the ninja, had a section of seishin- spirit and morals, at the start. The reasoning was that ninja had to start with a firm moral base, or else all was lost. While this might seem to be a rather cynical way to let mercenary thugs think better of themselves, there is some modern examples to give credence to the idea that only those that have a firm moral code can be trusted to do well in the shadows.

Manipulation and betrayal come easy to some. Often, too easy. If you recruit someone based solely on their ability to charm and scam others, chances are good you will be one of those scammed. In the field of espionage, many of those that betrayed America did so for very base reasons. Money has swayed many a person to betray their country. So other motivations are a better choice. Ideally, the person tasked with being a modern day ninja must hate the idea of manipulating others, but realize it is a needed task.

To hammer home this idea, the ninja built a code, called Okite, that no use of ninjutsu could profit them. Because of the secret nature of their role, they could not even take bragging rights from the feats they accomplished. If they stole a scroll of secrets to pass along to their lord, that was acceptable. It was even acceptable while on a mission to steal money to keep them able to continue until they returned with the information. But stealing for anything that benefited them was strictly forbidden. The ninja knew that once a small justification was made for keeping what they stole or using the art for their own gain that the door was open for much larger thefts and abuse.

Looking back at recent history, you find those that served in intelligence services and betrayed their countries in favor of the Soviet Union tend to have massive problems. Alcoholism, too much greed, and many other things are not uncommon. Some people do betray their countries for ideological reasons, thinking that one system of government is inferior to another. But having a problem with your spirit is a great weakness that is easy to exploit by the enemy.

When recruiting someone to work for you, a complete knowledge of their motivations and morals is vital. Those that do shadow work should not like abusing others, but recognize that sometimes harming one person prevents millions from dying. It is not a perfect world, and the agent must always be wary of the idea that he might be fooling himself to justify what he wants.

Getting Physical

Yes, the ninja were in good shape. No, they didn't look it. Some cover stories, such as being a stone mason, requires good physical shape of an obvious nature. But if you were disguised as a monk, huge muscles would get you suspicion.

Of course, most people back in the day of the ninja were in much better shape from the start. There were not much in the way of desk jobs. Farming by hand is hard work and many other professions required more physical effort than after machines were introduced to lift much of the burden. People had to walk everywhere. So their leg muscles and endurance was better than almost everyone outside of pro athletes today.

Many ninja from Iga and Koga went through shugendo training at a center located almost in the center of both regions. Shugendo is the religion of the shugenja, sometimes called yamabushi. It is a very hard form of worship, with many marches up mountains, meditating under waterfalls, being hung over deep ravines, and many other things that are physically and mentally taxing. This left them very conditioned.

In general, the current generation of ninjutsu in Japan avoids large muscles for the reason of not attracting attention. Instead they prefer to concentrate on core muscles. This is the type of thing you strengthen by doing things like planks. Most of the teachers and students you see in Japan are lean, with maybe a dancer or runner's body.

Ripped abs and the like actually aren't the most effective. Pro body builders do routines to emphasize their muscles, but if you look at power lifters, they are not lean and obviously ripped.

Exercises should follow this. Try to be as healthy and strong as you can, with an emphasis on endurance, but in a way that you don't appear to be a threat. Someone that looks like an NFL blocker is going to attract a lot more attention than someone with what is called a dad bod.

An example of how not looking like one is a threat can be of great benefit might be in order. One of the most famous penetration testers used his mother once to infiltrate and access vital computers in a

prison. You can imagine how harsh the security was there. But she was in her 50s or older and wanted to try it. She had an advantage in that she had worked for decades in a school cafeteria and her cover story was of a health inspector. After all that time working as she did, she knew the procedures and everything else associated with what health inspectors did and it wasn't that different for a prison cafeteria.

It was her appearance that got her so much trust, on top of her knowing the subject so well. No one suspects someone that looks like their grandmother. Men tend to discount women in general and drop their guard, one in their 50s generates a bit of affection as well. On her mission, she was even invited to send her health report using the warden's computer, which she of course used to download the software that would prove she had access to every system in the prison.

The modern ninja must be able to climb, move equipment, and other related acts. But the most important aspect is the ability to run. So endurance is key. Jogging is good, as are long walks. Building up endurance does not make you look like a commando on its own, so it is a good start. Climbing is another common task, so spending time crawling up things should be done.

Then there is combat. In general, while gathering information the ninja avoided combat as much as possible. The goal was to get home with the information, not kill the enemy. When combat was forced on them, this principle stayed the same. Instead of training to kill the enemy or take him prisoner, the emphasis was in finding a gap in which fleeing became possible. If the enemy tripped and fell, that was the time to run, not go to the ground with him and dominate him. Taking out one guard and making him submit, as in sport competitions, only allows other guards to show up.

Togakure-ryu is a old style of ninjutsu still taught in Japan. Its unarmed section is not even called anything like jujutsu or related terms. Instead it is called "tonsogata", which means ways of escaping. There are no holds or anything like that. The forms all end with the student running away. It is not enough to say that you should run, it must be practiced.

This was also the case with raids for the most part. The ninja would rampage while the enemy was off guard. But once they had

rallied, a toe to toe slug fest was not in the best interest. At that point, when surprise was lost and the enemy was set up to fight, it was time to retreat.

Ninja liked ambushes and surprise. Instead of squaring off and fighting, the ninja would strike without warning if at all possible. One of the tools the ninja frequently carried was a towel. This was rather common back in the day to let people wipe sweat from their face. The ninja would wrap a rock in one end and use it as a weapon. It was a very poor weapon if the ninja squared off against a guard with a sword. But it could be put over the shoulders as the ninja approached, maybe asking why the castle was starting to be locked down. A quick blow, followed by a storm of strikes, and the ninja would rush past the downed guard to make his escape before anyone could react.

Today, penetration testers can't use violence at all. And it is avoided if at all possible by secret agents, despite what the movies say. A system of avoiding combat is best, and if you must fight, run as soon as possible.

The Ninja Web of Information and Contacts

Despite the image popular in the media, most of the work the ninja did was out in the open, attempting to gain access to areas and recruiting sources to keep him informed.

One ancient teaching passed down is called the Kumo no Den. Roughly translated, it means the lessons of the spider. Spiders build webs. When insects are caught in the web, their movements travel along the web and tell the spider they are trapped. In practical terms for the ninja, this means having a network to rely on for information.

The type of information differs in the modern age. There are those that serve as experts that can be consulted, and there are those that are in positions to pass along warnings when they see something in their area of speciality or in general that causes concern.

Many things do not make it to the official news. The reasons why are unimportant. Having contacts in various areas of the world and professions is simple now, and vitally important.

Networking is a popular term in business, and there are many books on how to do it. But the type of networking the ninja does is a bit different. Business leaders are trying to expand their influence when they network. They tend to concentrate on power connections. They want people who can help them with loans or something else material, or they want people that can put them in contact with people that make the decisions.

In contrast, the purpose of Kumo no Den is information. Aside from people able to pass along warnings, various people can be contacted to gain deeper insights into a subject.

Social media connections are one excellent ways to make initial contact with such experts, or semi experts. You usually need an excuse to reach out to someone without meeting them. I find that martial arts are a great way to connect with people. People from all walks of life take martial arts, and it is practiced all over the world. If you want a pediatric ER doctor, I know someone. The same goes for

editors, lawyers, construction workers, IT specialists, real estate, and of course many more. If you need someone in a certain city, they can probably be found.

Developing such a network of sources is an art in itself. To be able to get people to help you, you need to be willing to help others. Make yourself useful, I have an advantage in that I have a bit of a reputation as an expert in my art's history, and that of the ninja as well as Japan in general. I help a lot of people with language, or advice and the like and in return there are many people willing to answer my questions.

When asking for information or help, don't be a pain. That seems obvious, but sadly I have run across many types that think nothing of asking me to do a long translation for free. The best way to ask is to request they give you a source you can access yourself. If they know what they are talking about, they can help you avoid the many bits of crap out there on the internet.

Take time to follow experts in their field. Find out about them and their interests. You can't help them in their field if they know much more than you. But if you know they are fans of the movie Princes Bride and you hear that there will be a special showing, you can pass that information along and get your foot in the door so to speak. Help them how you can, and maybe they will be able to help you in the future.

Working In Plain Sight

The bulk of the ninja's duty was done while playing a role and interacting with people. They would talk with people to get a picture of the area and the attitudes of the people. This actually turned into the biggest role for the ninja with the age of peace that came with the installation of the third and final shogunate. In 1637, peasants rose up in revolt against the cruel lord of their land in the southern island of Kyushu. The lord was known for such acts as putting peasants that displeased him in straw and setting them on fire. The rebels captured a castle and it became a focal point for christians and others who felt persecuted. It took a massive army to starve them out and the shogun took steps to make sure discontent never reached a boiling point again.

Ninja would travel through lands, talking with the common people. By talking with so many types of people from all different levels of society, they were able to tell if the local lord was pushing his people to revolt or not. Of course, as part of these trips, the ninja also looked for signs that the lords themselves were planning a revolt. Piecing together information like supplies being stockpiled more than usual, a surge in samurai being let into the lord's service, increased awareness of outsiders and attempts to monitor them, all these types of things could mean that someone was planning on turning on the shogun.

In the modern age, despite the rise of the internet, some things have to be picked up in person. Those that wish to be modern ninja have to develop their observation skills. When walking down the street, they have to be able to pick up things going on around them, instead of retreating into their own little world like many do with their smart phones and headphones. One thing to note are surveillance cameras. Picking these out has to be a developed skill, so that you always are aware of the last few ones you passed.

Most of the work ninja did was while playing a role. Their exploits while sneaking past guards gets the most attention, but developing skill in recruiting and manipulating people was their greatest task.

Many of what they wrote is timeless, but there have been a lot of advances in dealing with humans and getting them to do what you

want since then. A popular term for it in the modern era is Social Engineering. This is actually how most hacking cases seem to rely on. Instead of slipping into someone's account by a latest exploit, it is often much easier to get them to reveal it over the phone by pretending to be from their company's tech support arm.

There are short term and long term versions. Most penetration testers deal mainly with short term. They will figure out ways to get past guards, get people to let them into areas they are not supposed to be in, and have people reveal secrets like their passwords or sensitive information.

Those in the CIA usually have the long game in mind. They have to find an excuse to meet someone, get on their good side, and eventually persuade them to do tasks or pass along information to them.

At the start, before you begin to manipulate others you have to be able to read them. And before you can read others, you need to have good knowledge of yourself. As the famous strategist Sun Tzu wrote, those who know the enemy but not themselves lose many battles, while those that know themselves but do not know the enemy do somewhat better. Those that know both the enemy and themselves of course do the best.

When learning to read people, start with yourself. Know what motivates you and your weaknesses, lest they be used against you. You also need to have a starting point for understanding the concepts that drive people, and the best place is within your own skin. In addition, knowing yourself makes you stronger mentally. You know what buttons can be pushed on you, and even if you then can't avoid it, you at least understand what is going on instead of being in denial.

While you are discovering yourself, it is best to get used to talking to people if this is something you are not used to. Those that write books on influencing and manipulating people seem to take it for granted that everyone is an extreme extrovert that loves to talk with people whenever they can. For many, just getting used to striking up a conversation with a stranger is a challenge.

A simple method of starting conversations is to do so by looking back over your shoulder. It could be you are in line and talk to the

person behind you. It doesn't have to be about anything important while you are starting out. With nothing to lose if the conversation goes nowhere, you are free to try things out with little fear of falling on your face. If you fail to make connections while talking to someone that means nothing to you, the fear of failure tends to go away. That allows you to learn from your mistakes. Eventually you will have to try to get specific bits of information out of people, but it will be much easier if you have done the speaking over your shoulder routine many times before with no fear of censure if the conversation doesn't go swimmingly. You can talk about anything with the person in line or behind you. A simple joke about some product on display, or a comment about the weather is fine at first.

A good book to start out with to learn social engineering is, "Human Hacking- Win Friends, Influence People, And Leave Them Better Off For Having Met you" by Christopher Hadnagy. It deals with systems like DISC and methods of getting close to people on a personal level. It is mainly about helping people, but isn't limited to just that.

https://www.amazon.com/Human-Hacking-Friends-Influence-People/dp/0063001780/ref=sr_1_3?crid=1EE10XSUGDFKZ&keywords=christopher+hadnagy&qid=1622474808&srefix=Christopher+Had%2Caps%2C283&sr=8-3

His earlier book, "Social Engineering, The Science of Human Hacking" is considered one of the must have books for anyone involved in social engineering.

https://www.amazon.com/Social-Engineering-Second-Science-Hacking/dp/B07NS53TKR/ref=sr_1_4?crid=1EE10XSUGDFKZ&dchild=1&keywords=christopher+hadnagy.&qid=1622474808&srefix=Christopher+Had%2Caps%2C283&sr=8-4

Disguises

There are roles for disguises in modern ninjutsu, but it isn't like in the movies. What falls under this category falls broadly into two areas, actual disguises that change the way you look, and roles that you will interact as a cover story.

First of all, the CIA is fairly advanced with masks and disguises. They cannot make a tall person short, or a fat person thin, but they are able to do such a good job that a female African diplomat can appear to be an asian male. The masks they have are fairly close to the ones you see on the Mission Impossible movies, except that they can't be made to resemble just anyone, and they take a long time to put on. People can talk and eat in them.

However, they are not for the agents of the CIA. They are for the contacts that the agents develop to keep them safe. Specialists are flown in to the target country where the agent and his recruit are. They measure the features of the recruited spy and then, back at their labs in America, they create a custom disguise for them. Then the recruit is able to go near the CIA agent to drop off messages, or maybe even talk. If the CIA agent is being monitored, as is often the case when they are under diplomatic cover, the recruit won't be recognized.

For the purposes of modern ninjutsu without such a budget and lacking the resources of the CIA, things are a lot simpler.

Most disguises are used to merely not be recognized later. That means that if you want to scope out a place you would make yourself look one way, and when you came back pretending to be a repairman, you would look another. If people notice that the two are the same person, there of course would be trouble.

In such a situation, there really doesn't have to be much done to prevent people that have only casually seen one aspect to prevent them from making a connection. The more you interact with people, the more they are able to keep what you look like in their memory, so a quick walk through as part of the recon and not talking to anyone is best. Do nothing to stick out so that people bother to take a good look at you.

A good rule of thumb in these situations is that complicated is bad. If you are questioned, anything that is obviously meant to change the way you look, say a wig, is going to be really hard to explain. Instead, do things that change how you look but can be explained away. A loud hat that draws attention away from the face is a good example. People wear hats of course, and later do not. If you have slightly bad eyesight, but not enough to warrant wearing glasses all the time, you can use them for one situation, and leave them behind for the other. For that matter, if you do need to wear corrective lenses, sometimes wearing contacts and sometimes glasses can help. Fake glasses that do not correct the vision may be good for something casual, but if the local police question you and notice they are just plain glass, you are assured a long interrogation.

People tend to associate fashion with people. If you scope out a place looking like a young gangster wanna be, complete with chains and loud shirt, when you come back in a three piece suit a week later, it will be much harder for people to make the connection.

Sometimes, complicated disguises may be needed. There are fat suits and inserts for shoes to raise your height a little. Wigs of course are commonly used, and can be pulled off quickly if needed. Often, they are attached to a hat to make them easy to throw on and take off.

A key thing is usually have something that people fixate on. Eye patches are a great example. Whenever someone uses one, people tend not to remember what hair color, fashion, height, looks, or anything else. In their mind, the person becomes "eyepatch man."

Hats that have wigs in them are in this category, and can be taken off in a second and thrown away if a quick getaway is needed. The report goes out to be on the lookout for someone with long, blonde hair wearing a hat. When someone with short black hair walks by the people that got the audio description, maybe after ditching a jacket as well, it will be much easier to avoid being picked up.

Temporary tattoos are good in the right situation. There are pens used to simulate tattoos on a short term basis. A design around the eye like what Mike Tyson has will stand out in the minds of people so that when you come back later it will be hard to make a connection.

But such things are harder to get rid of in short order. The colored ones are also much brighter than real tattoos. Black ones tend to look more like the real things. You can buy special pens for simulating tattoos, and there are video tutorials online for recreating the famous facial tattoo Mike Tyson is noted for. There are also stencils for sale to download online.

For long term work with someone, disguises are less useful and you instead move towards things that will only slightly give you an advantage. This are situations where you are infiltrating an agency, company, or maybe trying to get someone to betray their country. Always wearing one type of fashion, or keeping your hair long to cut later, can help if a description goes out to pick you up and you have to flee. Again, glasses that you don't really need to rely on are one example of something you can use in this situation, but won't fool the mark you have been having lunch with every week for six months trying to recruit him. The more time you are with someone, the less they will be fooled why you change your look. But in some cases, if you set up an image in their mind, they will tell the authorities something that will allow you to fool those who only get a description.

It needs to be said that with the rise of cameras on almost every corner and face recognition technology, avoiding being identified is getting harder and harder. Many cameras are not connected to the internet and the tapes purged after 90 days or so. If something happens, of course it can be pulled up. Defeating facial recognition software is not simple, but not impossible. They look for things like the distance between eyes, ears and other parts. A simple search will bring up many sites telling you how to avoid them as the technology advances,

Roles are special cases. They are for rather long term missions. This is the sort of things CIA agents do. They may pretend to be diplomatic staff, or a businessman working at a company. By American law, agents cannot pretend to be US reporters, but there is some grey area about pretending to work for other country's media, such as a journalist from New Zealand. And other countries certainly have no qualms about pretending to be reporters, and many countries require reporters to work for their intelligence agencies.

In these cases, you must think in the long term. You can't keep up complicated disguises. There is too much chance that at some point you will slip up and be revealed for what you really look like. Something like a real set of glasses can be explained in these situations, fake beards not so much. And of course, if you are working in an office or something, the people you interact with will be unlikely to not recognize you when you make minor adjustments. If your cover is blown and you have to flee the area, the short term disguises can be of use as the people you were in contact with will tell authorities that you have short, black hair while you are taking the train with a long blond wig under a hat of a style you made sure to never wear around the people you worked with.

Many things obviously change from short term to long. If you pretend to be a deliveryman to recon the lobby of a target, you can call yourself whatever you want on your name tag. But when you deal with people for more than a few minutes, it is best to stick with your first name, or whatever name you are used to. If someone calls you by your assumed name and you don't react, you might gain too much attention. Also, if you are a private eye or something infiltrating a group and someone from your real life sees you, they are likely to call out your real name. This isn't much of a problem if you live in Texas and are working in Damascus, but even then things can happen and the chances of someone calling out in pleasure at seeing a familiar face so far from home goes up a lot. Last names are easier to change.

When playing a role, pick one that is suited for the situation. If you want to talk to a lot of people to determine the lay of the land, pick something like a traveling salesman. In such a role, people would not think it strange that you would want to know all about the prospects and situation of a place you are going to.

Despite various scandals, most people are more trusting of people in religious roles, as long as they aren't too different from their own religion. A priest's shirt also can serve as a way to stand out in the minds of people, allowing you to be less recognizable when you slip out of it.

If you don't need to rely on your profession to gain access, pick one that people are probably not going to ask too many questions

about. In Mission Impossible III, Tom Cruise says he works for the Department of Transportation studying the patterns of traffic. He pretends to be fanatical about his work, but when someone changes the subject, everyone else is eager to follow their lead and get off the boring subject they think Cruise wants to drone on about.

Repairmen, pest exterminators, inspectors, cleaning crew, and related fields are good for examining and gaining access to locations. Entertainers, such as musicians or magicians, travel a lot and like to ask about a lot of local stuff. A variation are street performers, which allow you to stay in one place and observe a target, as well as not being able to show authorities a place you are booked to perform. They expected to be talkative and friendly, asking people lots of questions to butter them up for donations.

Whatever role you take on, know it completely. You have your cover story down pat and you know the parts of the profession you are filling in for. For short term cases, such as penetration testing, this is commonly known as pretexting. You only need to know enough for the job on hand, such as the name of the person in charge of arranging for pest control visits. You need to know how to work the right equipment, but having a story about where you lived, went to school, and anything else is pretty much overkill. Those sorts of things become vital when you take a long term role.

The Bansenshukai had this to say about preparing for a role, *“Whenever you take on the role of a certain profession, one should take care ahead of time to master every aspect of it and its manners. When trying to infiltrate using yohjutsu (Yohnin), even if you have down the language and appearance of a role, it will be easy to be exposed if you have no knowledge of the profession. Thus it goes without saying that the terms and appearance must fit, but you also should learn all the normal aspects of the profession. For example, if you are to be a monk on the road, you should familiarize yourself with the tenants of that sect and take the time to pay a visit to their temple and serve as their attendant. At a later time when getting ready for an espionage mission, you should speak secretly with one of the monks and agree that if the enemy comes checking your story they will vouch for you. Naturally, one should have all things prepared from start to finish. As a case in point, if you*

take the guise of a komuso, you should learn to play the shakuhachi fluently and be able to talk on matters of zen.”

Depending on situation, keeping things as close to your real story helps keep things easier. A reporter infiltrating a movement might be able to admit he is from Los Angeles, changing only his last name. Thus, he can converse easily about where he comes from, giving advice on how best to visit Disneyland and the like. But an American working in Iran has to pretend to be from some other country that has less antagonism.

It is hard to pass as a native in these cases. Most often it is policy to pretend not to be from where you really are, nor from where you are working, but rather a third location. When that is the case, avoid people actually from your cover story home as much as possible.

Of course, in large countries there are cases of people not native to be able to pass themselves off as citizens. Someone from Germany with near perfect English might not be able to pass themselves off as a native Texan in Dallas, but they might be able to succeed as being thought Texan in Los Angeles. There is a tendency for people in large cities to look down their noses at their country fellows and assume they are not as up on culture and probably not as smart or aware of what is commonly known.

When you pick a place for your cover story, know what people living there would know. Examine what you take for granted about what you know about where you live and apply it to the cover story. You would probably know the area codes for phones within a few hundred miles. You may hate sports, but you would know the name of your local hockey team. Most people don't know the name of their congressman, but few don't know the name of the governor.

The same goes for everything in your cover story. If you change your date of birth, know the zodiac sign for your new birthday. If you have a college listed as part of your cover story, best know the mascot and tour the campus. Graduates from the US Naval Academy are well aware that they have more wins in their famous football rivalry with Army, while West Point grads are quick in pointing out that they have the bulk of the most recent trophies.

Tours of the places you plan on pretending to be from might be a good idea to develop a cover story. And one thing the ancient ninja

didn't have to worry about was social media. If you set up a Facebook page with your assumed identity, it would look weird if someone checks and can't find any photos of you walking in San Francisco with the famous bridge in the background if you are claiming to live there. If necessary for older photos of a younger you, photoshop or similar programs might be of use as long as you do not get much scrutiny from government agencies that have armies of specialists skilled in such matters. At the same time, facial recognition software is getting so that those photos might cause trouble later on.

An interesting possibility as technology advances, is the use of deep fake programs and the like to create false pictures of yourself on social media as your cover. Such technology is not very available to the common person, but it may soon be possible for nearly everyone to put together a picture to put on a fake account that is close enough that people believe it is you, but just different enough in some areas to fool facial recognition software.

Again, avoid anyone actually from where you claim to be from. If you do run into someone, have prepared excuses and questions. Change the subject as soon as possible and find a way to get away, avoiding them from then on as much as possible.

The Ninja's Forbidden Secrets of Manipulation

Despite the image of the ninja as exclusively skilled in stealth, developing contacts among the enemy was the prime skill of the ninja. Sitting down and slowly getting someone to warm up to them enough to betray their lord was their task most of the time. A poem in the Bansenshukai illustrates this, "The paths a shinobi must learn are many, but the most important is to get close to the enemy."

Developing a relationship can start many ways. Today, you can meet someone online and then meet in person. It has always been the case that someone can introduce you, or you get thrown together at work or other activity. But there has always been the need to just walk up to someone out of the blue and start a conversation. These are among the most difficult cases.

It may be that you know someone works at a government office you need access to. So you get their schedule, know they will be at a gym, and arrange to be next to them as they work out. Then the cold call begins.

Before you even open your mouth, your work begins. Start with how you present yourself. This has to start months earlier as you examine yourself. Some people just look different from how they feel. Some look angry all the time, some like they are sad, and many times people are unaware of how they look to others. The people around you soon find out that you may always look like you are irritated, but adapt when they realize you are not. It is quite common for people to have no idea that they are not presenting themselves as open and happy, and you need to find out if that is the case with you.

Ask friends to be honest. Some of them may not longer think of you as looking the way you are, and instead see your true emotions perfectly. Some might not want to hurt your feelings.

Take video of yourself for long periods of time. You need enough time to get used to the camera and forget it is there so you can be yourself. Fast forward it as you watch and notice how you would react to someone else that moved or emoted as you do. Start a

journal of how you feel and how you move. It may be best to set an alarm every so often on days you don't have to explain what you are doing, and when it rings, notice what you are doing, how you are standing, etc., and write it down in the journal. Do this for months. You can start practicing cold approaches before the end of the journal, and you can keep journaling for years after you have become skilled at cold approaches. The more you know about yourself, the better.

Suspend what you are. In essence, be without form. Many conversations, no matter what we tell ourselves, are to promote ourselves. We wait for the other to finish whatever they are saying so that we can impress them with our tales. The purpose of what you do must be so strong and first in your mind that you can forgo thinking about what you get out of the conversation other than the information or influence you are tasked with.

As the Bansenshukai puts it,

“Thus, those take their sustenance from their lord should say this to the people of the world. ‘My life is not to do as my own, neither is the manner of my death for me to determine. I am one who owes my existence to my lord. If needed, I must take being trampled and merely endure it.’”

As the Bansenshukai lays out, the attitude you need is that this is not your life to give. You serve a greater purpose, so you can lay aside the need to look smart, witty, sexy, or whatever. Appearing to be a bit stupid sometimes works great.

As the Shoninki puts it,

“To pull the truth out of someone, appear to be less capable than them. Talk of trivial things and wait for them to reveal what you want. You must appear to know little and encourage them to go on. Follow what they say, draw them out and flatter them so you can see the signs you need to know the truth.

When they start to reveal the points you desire, comment on it so as to encourage more travel down that path, while letting them think you know nothing. Conceal your intentions and allow nothing but trivial matters to come from you. By restraining yourself, you draw others out. Those that seem ignorant while keeping up good

relations with others shall cause others to reveal themselves. Push your own self to the side in the process.

It is said a skilled shinobi appears to be a simpleton. The art of praising others so as to bend them to what you want is an art. It must be ingrained into you to your core.”

In his book, “How to Win Friends and Influence People”. Dale Carnegie lists not judging others as a one of the keys to getting along with them. Telling people they are wrong is a sure way to turn them off. Indeed, many of the people that spies and police have to work with will open up if they are not met with scorn for what they are and did. Everyone wants to think of themselves as good people, no matter the sins they have committed. It is alarming how even people that have done horrible things to kids create mental constructs that not only let them forgive what they have done, but point to their acts as some sort of virtue.

When you deal with such types, if you reproach them even in the slightest you lose any chance to connect and use them. To be a modern ninja, you have to be as strong and able to detach as the police officer that comforts a young victim as she cries and screams in terror and shame, hugging her and whispering in her ear that she is now safe and the bad man will never touch her again until the specialists in these matters arrive to take over. Then you have to be able to go out to the cruiser where the monster that did that to her is waiting in handcuffs and, instead of beating him to death, calmly ask, “So, do you want to tell your side of the story?” Then you have to sit there, not only silent as he justifies what he did, but give small nudges to make him think you sympathize so that he opens up even more and digs his legal grave deeper.

When a white supremacist shot up a black church, there were loud denouncements that the police took him into custody and even got him a burger from a fast food chain. But that little bit of food and an act that the officers were not revolted and had to restrain themselves from taking a baseball bat to him resulted in him giving a full and complete confession in the form of a conversation where he practically bragged about what he did because he thought the officers sided with him a bit.

This sort of ego suspension is key to getting on someone's good side, even if it rarely is so extreme a case. When dealing with the underworld or dark corners of espionage, you have to be able to deal with some of the scum of the earth as bedfellows. But most of us will never have to interact with people that sell drugs to kids, beat their wives, or other vile acts. Still, you will have to deal with people saying things you know to be untrue, admit to things that turn your stomach, and maybe most common, subtly lord their superior condition over you. Actually, when such types in need to prove they are superior to others (rarely justified) find someone that merely sits there and nods their heads instead of confronting them, they tend to open up a great deal. The validation they perceive that the other gives to their superiority makes them discount the idea that the other might use what they say against them in some way. They feel in control of the situation and often take the chance to reveal all that they do openly, with nothing held back. Many criminals, despite having the right to shut up in an interrogation, can't resist this sort of thing with just the smallest of prods by the police. They talk themselves into long prison times when the police give even a little validation to what they did with statements like, "Yeah, as a man I can appreciate the need to show your wife that she can't just walk all over you. When you pay the bills and keep her in clothes and her belly full, she should appreciate you in return and forgive these little mistakes we make instead of giving us grief." Most criminals also think they are smarter than everyone else, and can't resist lording that over others by talking when they really need to shut up.

Make what you do about the other person and the greater purpose you are serving. People love to be the center of attention. Listening is your greatest skill when talking. A young lady had a conversation with Benjamin Disraeli, the prime minister, and another politician. When asked as to the differences between the two conversations, she replied that when she was with the other, she felt she was having dinner with the smartest, most wonderful person in England. But when she dined with Disraeli, she felt that she was the smartest, most wonderful person in the land.

Use questions to prod the person to go on, and volunteer information about yourself only as a way of finding common ground

and the like, with the purpose of course of getting them to go on with their story and revealing more details. You can't be silent, only asking questions and not giving up any details about yourself. But everything you say, even about yourself, must be with the purpose of putting the person on a pedestal far above you in a subtle way. If they talk about how they installed a computer system in their work without problems, tell a short story how you tried something similar and had to be saved by contractors to clean up your mess. That gives you a possible opening to ask how they managed to install such vital gear under some sort of pretext.

In reality, you would research as much as possible your target if at all possible. You would know what they do, what they like, their past, and any related subjects. If they are a fan of a particular sports team, you should familiarize yourself with all you can about them. But for practice especially you should get used to going up to people you have never seen before and know nothing about and see just how much information you can get without them realizing how much they are giving away.

A little secret to doing better at cold approaches is to psyche yourself up beforehand if possible. A simple way in public is to find a public restroom with stall, or someplace where you won't be seen or disturbed, and take a particular stance. Throw your chest out, elbows back, and put your hands on your hips. This has sometimes been called the Superman or Wonder Woman pose. Stand there for a short while. You might put on some earphones and listen to something inspirational. Some might like the theme song from Mission Impossible, or something like Eye of the Tiger by the 80s band Survivor.

Standing like this will not accomplish miracles. You won't suddenly go from shy wallflower to a master of gab. But studies have shown that it does seem to increase your presence by a few percentage points, and you can use everything you can get. Get good enough at approaching strangers and you will need this less and less. But you may still want to do it to give you a little extra edge every time.

If you are a bit shy, take on a new personality after some experience with acting lessons. It isn't you going up to talk to

someone out of the blue, it is Humphrey Bogart. It won't achieve miracles, but will probably increase your confidence a bit since it will be Bogie, not you, that risks being shot down.

Feel positive, and let that positivity manifest and show itself in you. In some special cases, you might have to play the role of someone scared, sad, overworked, or other negative emotion. But in general, you want to appear to be someone that is happy and that is how you should practice at first. Smile, or at least appear happy in the spring in your step and everything else.

There is a great importance in understanding the pace and energy of the other person and matching it when it is warranted. Sometimes you want to keep calm while someone is agitated, and other cases where mirroring the other person isn't the best idea. But in general, the closer you are to them in emotion, pace, and body language the better for a cold approach. Some say that generally copying the way people move helps influence them. An alternate theory is that mirroring allows you to understand what type of mental state they are in, and that insight gives you an advantage. If you copy their hunching and find it is extremely uncomfortable, you know they are not feeling the best they could and without thinking about it, you will try to make them feel at ease and only then try to get them to open up in conversation. The body manifests the mind and the emotion follows the body. When mad, making the effort to smile takes the edge off of the rage. Opening yourself up as if you were a superhero drags your attitude into one where you believe anything is possible.

Pay attention to how you speak, now just what you say. An immense amount of information is conveyed in tone, pace, and other parts of the words. An interesting exercise is to find a movie or drama in another language you can't speak and notice just how much you can pick up just by noticing how they interact and, of course, how they say things. As someone that speaks fluent Japanese, I can say with certainty that news broadcasts are by far the most difficult thing to follow on television. The even, monotone delivery and lack of gestures makes it near impossible to tell if they are talking about a wedding of a film star or their horrible murder.

In general, slow your pace of talking. There are exceptions of course. But, in general, talking fast gives the impression that you are nervous, and that puts others on edge, as well as making them suspicious as to why you would be nervous. Speaking a bit slower than the other person invites them to calm down and join in a pleasing conversation. Lowering your voice also helps a bit, making you seem less threatening. But this is a bit less of an iron clad rule.

Approaching people out the blue takes special care. You do not want to appear threatening, especially if you are a man and your target is a female. Coming straight on, so that you are in the same position as a drill sergeant screaming at a recruit, isn't the best way when cold approaching someone. Coming up from behind is maybe worse and seems like an ambush.

Try to blade yourself so that you are not behind them, nor seem to be confronting them. If the person is facing you directly, maybe turn to your right so you are facing the 2 o'clock position. A good way that many pick up artists use is to turn and talk to someone over your shoulder.

When you open up a conversation with people, most will be worried that there is something you want that they won't want to do, like inviting them to a Scientology class. Taking up a lot of their time is another worry. To avoid this, start with a statement letting them know your time with them is limited. "I have to catch a train, but..." or "My wife will be here any second, but I have to ask a quick question if you don't mind" are good examples of things you can say that will convince them that if they respond they won't be bogged down with a stranger for hours as they try to extract themselves. Letting them know that you will soon be out of their hair gets you just enough time to attract their interest, at which point you can find an excuse to lengthen the conversation, or just ignore the time constraint. Few people seem to notice that the person that said they had to catch the next bus ended up talking with them for a half hour.

You need a reason to talk to someone, of course. This can be a comment about something outside yourself, or a plea for help.

An example of mentioning something outside of the two of you might be that you are waiting in line at a bus stop and you notice a sign at a burger place saying, "Our secret ingredient is our people."

With the next line saying, "Now hiring." Looking back over your shoulder, you catch the eye of the person behind you, grin while nodding your head towards the sign and say, "What were they thinking when they put that up?" If the person snickers, you make a comment like, "I don't know when was the last time I was in that chain, do you know if they have changed all that much, like adding Soylent Green to the menu?" Based on any response they give, you move to widen the conversation.

A plea for help is as simple as asking for a good place to eat in the area. But be careful. If you know the target just got off the plane from where he really lives, you can be sure he won't have an idea. But someone that you know has lived around the corner all his life is the perfect person to ask for directions to a place.

Perhaps the best type of plea in most situations is for advice. People seem to love it when people act like they are experts in something and worthy of seeking advice from. This also lets you drop in something when speaking to females as a male that puts them at ease, a reference to a spouse or girlfriend. Actually, just saying you have a partner of some sort does not seem to be enough in my experience. I suspect that many married men might be putting the moves on women, mentioning their marital status just to test the water to see if they are still interested even in a fling and maybe to set the stage for a later conversation that includes the statement, "When we started this I told you in the first words out of my mouth I was married." Advice about getting a present for an anniversary shows you are not only married, but doing your best to be a loving husband.

On the other side of the aisle, women probably would be better leaving open the idea that they are single and/or maybe looking for a fling. Even if you mention a partner, it probably won't matter as the man falls over himself to open up. Women have an extreme advantage in approaching men than vice versa. As the title of the book by Joan Rivers sums things up, "Men Are Stupid...And They Like Big Boobs."

Helping people seem to be wired into our DNA. I suspect it has something to do with our self image. Everyone wants to believe they are a good person. So make it easy enough to feed that image

without putting in too much effort, such as giving advice, and you will get many people willing to give you enough time to get your foot in the door with them.

If you have watched the movie “Silence of the Lambs” you might remember that Wild Bill captures his victim by asking for help moving a couch, when they are the only two people in a dark parking lot. That seems to be right up there with the horror movie standard of the coed taking a shower after returning to a blood splattered dorm. But rather than leave a person that looked like they were physically handicapped trying to move a heavy piece of furniture, she hops in the van to help pull it in. This is actually based on the tactics of a few serial killers, who might ask a woman to come with him to an isolated place to help him find a lost dog or similar story. Compared with cases like these, giving a few minutes to a stranger in the midst of the crowd is nothing.

Compassion/mercy has long been known by the ninja as a powerful motivator. They listed five emotions and five needs as a means of manipulation. Along with fear, anger, lust, and many others, the desire to help others, or at least imagine themselves as being someone willing to help others, has been a way to get people to do what you want for centuries at the hands of the ninja.

If you are interested in further studying the traditional method of using the five emotions and desires the ninja traditionally used to manipulate others, I put together a Kindle book you can read for free with Kindle Unlimited.

https://www.amazon.com/Ninja-Manipulation-Five-Emotions-Desires-ebook/dp/B08BBBVCQ9/ref=sr_1_2?dchild=1&keywords=don+rolely&qid=1622478242&s=digital-text&sr=1-2

As soon as the conversation is underway, the next step is to try to find a way to give the person value. This might be an actual gift, or something like giving validation to what they do. Just by listening more than talking, you give many people validation, especially if they are used to people making fun of what they are telling you, or revulsion over something like racist viewpoints.

Giving value is of course not limited to short term encounters. When developing an asset, one must always think of ways of making the person leave each encounter feeling better for having met you. This is the most pleasant thing to practice, using your friends. Think of ways you can help them whenever you can. Just this week I read a book on breathing. In it, there was a brief passage on people that use a machine to help breath while sleeping and how to increase the effectiveness. I passed along the name of the book to a friend I know uses it. He has given me a lot of value over the years and it feels damn good to be able to maybe help him in some small way.

Presents of course are good for giving value over the long term. They are more limited in the short term, but something like sharing a stick of gum or a breath mint can go a long way towards forging bonds after a short amount of time in the conversation has gone by. People that sell cars try to break bread with you in the form of a cup of coffee. People feel a need to give back, and coffee has probably helped sell more cars than low interest rates.

Validating people is very powerful, especially if it is something like crediting them as being good at something they take pride in doing, like work or even a hobby. Some of the most effective people might pull the, "Aw shucks" routine when praised for the accomplishments, but that is not to say they don't appreciate and enjoy it.

Indeed, the vast pay gap between CEOs and their workers in the US is due to this, and congress. Some in government felt that CEOs were being paid too much and they wanted to rectify that. Companies were not required to reveal to the public how much they paid their CEOs, and most didn't. So congress thought that if the salaries were required on public filings with the SEC, that companies would be shamed into lowering what they were paying to those at the top.

It didn't work out that way.

Those that made it to the level of CEO generally were very hard working. Someone in the airline industry told me that when you walk from economy class through business to first class, the percentage of people working on something rather than watching a movie or entertaining themselves goes up. But they do expect some sort of recognition for all that, indeed they demand it.

Before congress passed its law, magazines and such would run headlines like, “The CEO that doubled his company’s sales”, with the picture of the CEO on the cover. After the law passed, it was more likely to be along the lines of, “The highest paid CEO in Silicone Valley.” Most people naturally believe that the more someone is paid, the more competent and valuable they are. This was the start of the skyrocketing rise in compensation for CEOs as they demanded to be recognized for the value they knew they brought. Even before the law, they rarely were able to spend all they made, due to their unwillingness to take much time off in order to keep ahead of the game. But the more money they make now, the more recognition they get for their efforts.

The example of the CEOs shows just how important some people put on being recognized for what they do. Time spent developing the skill to realize what someone feels they should be acknowledged for is a fine investment. If someone is good at what they do, take time to point it out whenever you can. Again, this is something that is easily practiced with friends.

It does not have to be professional. If you ask someone advice about something as simple as an opinion on fashion, you are in essence validating their greater experience in the subject. If you throw in some compliments, such as saying you are asking them because they are dressed so well, you build them up even more.

A word about compliments. They need to be specific, truthful, and something not easily dodged. Instead of something like, “You are a great person,” try instead of something more specific like, “You are the guy that always comes running when a friend like me needs help.” Since they do come to your aid, it is not something they can say “Aw shucks” and not accept it. This is one of the most pleasant things to practice in your daily life. Try it with friends of course, but also try to find some way to brighten the world around you by complimenting people that don’t expect it and barely know you. At my local supermarket I have complimented the cheese counter for having the most pleasing set up in the area, and it is true. It costs me nothing, and indeed it makes me feel good lifting the spirits of others a bit.

A sympathetic ear is another way of validating someone. Those that put up with a lot of crap in their life almost fall over themselves with gratitude when someone realizes that and thanks them for putting up with all they do. Try this at the DMV the next time you get a chance, or something similar. Those working the booths have no control over things other than the paperwork they process and pass on. Yet it is a rare week that most of them are not insulted, been the source of anger, or worse for the problems those that are far from the front lines are responsible for.

In Japan, I helped tutor in English some friends of a friend that were stewardesses. I heard some real horror stories about abuse from passengers. I now have made it a point to bring a small box of chocolate and give it to the group waiting to go on the plane before the passengers, explaining why I was doing it and letting them know that some of us know what they had to go through, and that we appreciated all they did for us. More than a few times, I have actually had some of them break down in tears of gratitude. It makes me feel good helping them restore their faith in humanity, and I have never had a bad experience with the staff afterwards. The chocolate is a gift, but the real one is showing sympathy and understanding for their experiences.

Gifts are good, but it is showing thoughtfulness that is the true key. Training yourself to think of others, their feelings, and how you can leave them better for meeting you is vital. This is easier for some. For me, it is something I have to work on. If you think it is natural for you, chances are you need work at it too.

A simple, "I could never do what you make look so easy" or "My friend is in the same boat as you, so I know what would happen if you weren't doing it and that scares me" is easy to state, but can reap great rewards. And once again, it costs nothing to you, makes the world better, and it personally raises my spirits whenever I find a way to make someone's day a little bit better.

Acknowledging someone as being good at what they do is a great way to get on their good side, as well as getting help from them. Most people are pretty decent at helping others, as long as they are not being used and abused. If you share the same profession or interest and you treat them as far superior to you, they

feel validated and are often eager to lend a hand in raising you up. A cynical view might be that by doing so they get to feel superior and benevolent at the same time. That dark side is part of us, but there is no harm in the act of helping others.

For me, if you ask me about the best way to learn Japanese, or ask some pointed questions about Japanese history, I might spend the whole night talking your ear off and suggesting resources to get. If you need to get a bit of information from a business, you could pretend to be setting up your own. Not one that will become a rival of course. It might be that you pretend to be in the same business, but setting up in another part of the country, or a different business but in the same area.

An example might be that an auto repair shop has had a judgement in court against them, but it has proven impossible to get them to pay. In such cases, you can usually get action to seize their bank account through the courts, but you need to know what bank they use. Working for your client as a PI, you strike up a conversation and pretend to be setting up a shoe repair shop a few offices down from them. You ask many questions about the area and how best to navigate things with the local regulatory agencies to get the paperwork done. Then, casually, you ask what the best local bank for business is. Chances are they will not only give the name of the bank they use, but they will confirm they do business there with a statement like, "I've been there for five years and never had a complaint."

When cultivating long term relationships, having someone help you in some way opens the door to contacting them again to show your thanks. In return for their advice on the best ski areas after you move into an area, you send them lift tickets. That will usually get a response, from which you can expand into a deeper connection. Having people save you and then showing your thanks is a well known strategy of the ninja. Giving gifts in return for a kindness has always been expected in Japan. A strategy giving in the Shoninki, an important work of the ninja, illustrates how this could be used.

"Depending on the place or province, it may be very difficult to gain access to the residence. In that case, make sure to pass by it several times in advance. In front of the gate feign an illness sit down

and have your servant ask for water, medicine or hot water. Use a suddenly occurring malady like stomach ache, severe intestinal inflammation, food poisoning, epilepsy or diarrhea. You should not pretend to be drunk. After receiving something like water or hot water, pretend to get better and enter in order to pay thanks while getting to know the people before leaving.

“At a later date, return bearing gifts and a letter of gratitude, and with a friendly manner become familiar with the residents. If you want to get close to the people of the house, praise their children. When you give presents, at first give them discreetly. Then start to give them to servants on good standing with the master and to the men and women in the house. This will please the master of the house. Thus he may call on you to get familiar with him.

“There is a saying, ‘Metal bends to fire, Men bend to words, The nightingale that sings among the flowers, comes to smell like them.’”

Of course, making someone feel important is not limited to their job or hobby. If you act like every thought and opinion they have is brilliant, you will quickly get on their good side. This seems especially true if what they state is idiotic and they are frequently told so. Of course, you can't go overboard and be too obvious. But done in small measurements, it is easy to draw someone out.

This gets into the realm of shared interests and such to get close to someone. People like those that are like them. If you appear to think almost the same as them, instant kinship is established.

For a majority of Facebook users, it is obvious to tell what sort of politics they have. Even if they don't post on social media at all, if they are registered to vote the party they belong to is a matter of public record, available through the right web sites. If prior to your 'accidental' meet up with someone you note a shared meme lambasting your governor, a simple mention like, “Well I hope business picks up for me, if that idiot in the governor's mansion and thinks he's our king doesn't get in the way as he always does” is probably worth its weight in gold. Of course, you may not know their politics, so you must be ready to leap on any mention of any political topic, or one pertaining to culture, sports, or anything else, and work from there. Sports and the like are other ways to forge a quick bond with someone, but for many politics is the most powerful tool in my

experience. After a few experiments with it, I became tempted to stop posting anything even slightly political and deleting everything I wrote. It is that powerful and I don't want it used against me.

Aside from politics, there are many other ways to find common ground with someone. Again, Facebook is your friend if you can access it before you meet. TV shows, sports teams, places you visited, all these and more are gateways to get close to them. If you have to cultivate an asset, finding out what they like and studying it is time well spent. You don't have to be very good at any sport or skill you share. If, for example, someone likes bridge and posts a lot of things about the game, you cannot become an expert in a short time, but that is actually a way in. As stated, people love to help those that have less skill than in some area they excel in, at least by comparison. And if you want to deepen the relationship and contact them again, giving a small gift for helping you out will not be looked on with suspicion.

Naturally, you can't always rely on social media to tell you what someone's interests are. If they mention something, you must be able to jump on it, if possible. If someone was to mention climbing Mt Everest, I could not give a similar experience. But it would be possible to express admiration and interest in something so obviously fascinating.

Having a wide range of experiences and knowledge can help out. You need know only a little bit, and then serve as the eager student to your target on the subject.

A useful habit might be to take up a new interest every month and follow it until the next. Try to take a step out of your shell and expand your vision. It might be first person shooter video games, knitting, the game of bridge, reading a few books on art appreciation... indeed the possibilities are endless. If you have friends that are already involved in something, you can be honest in asking their help. If you explain to your friend that does hockey that you take up a new interest for a month, he will probably be glad to let you come along to some of his games. This has the additional obvious benefit that you get to get closer to the good people in your life.

Keep up with things like culture, sports, and anything else in your area. You might not like sports (I don't) but make a point of following the baseball, hockey, football, and any other teams in the area. Watch a few of the very popular programs currently on TV. Find out what is hot in your area, whether it be a club, activity, or whatever, and get at least basic knowledge of it. Some places seem to go nuts over professional football, while others obsess on the college version. Find out and make a point to at least be able to keep up in a conversation about these types of things.

Once the conversation has started you need to direct it a bit. This requires planning before the first word is spoken. You will of course let them do most of the talking, and adapt to the various changes that pop up. But with subtle nudges you will have to drive the conversation to areas you want to get information on. This is where most of the practice comes in, after you have struck up at least a few dozen conversations with no motive other than to get used to approaching strangers and getting them to talk to you.

People tend to remember what started the conversation and what ended it more than anything else. So after the initial ice breaker, move to the subject you want, and then switch the subject to something else a bit before you end.

Go from wide subjects and move to more specific areas. Plan by determining exactly what you want, and move back from there. If you want to know the number of troops at the base the soldier you are talking to is from, before discussing that you want to talk about living conditions and how crowded it might be. Before that, you want to discuss general lifestyles of the soldiers. Before that, you can discuss what it is like being a soldier in the area. You might come up with other routes unique to yourself, for there are many paths up the mountain. But this is something you must practice a lot on. Try things like finding out the name of the boss at the local store without directly asking. Or finding out the university the teacher of your kid went to during parent teacher conferences. If you fail during this practice, it is no big deal and we learn from our failures. Ratchet up the difficulty level with more specific bits of information you go after with people you randomly meet on the street. Something like the mascot of their high school when they were a student, or the make and model of

their car. When you make a goof, and you will, it is not like you will probably ever see them again. As long as you aren't trying to get something that can be abused, like their mother's maiden name, they probably won't give it a thought when you are a little too obvious during practice.

Planning like this has one added advantage if you are a bit introverted. Many introverts are daunted by the fact they feel they are battered in a sea of conversation, forever dashed here and there. With some solid purpose to work for, many shy and introverted people are able to put aside their fear of suddenly not knowing what to say and looking silly. With a plan in mind, they are able to focus on it and forget their fears.

Previously I said that someone has to be rather empty in terms of their ego and saying what they want to say instead of listening to the other. Now I am saying you have to have a plan at the forefront of your mind. Both statements are true and it is a matter of putting aside your ego and making it about the plan and the other person. Cast yourself aside and make the other person the most important person in the room, and the plan the only thing inside you that matters.

Much of what you gain will be by means of what is called elicitation. Rather than give a detailed explanation, here is an example. The use of elicitation was known at least as early as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, whose example in *The Sign of Four* is still among the best examples of it. Here it is, as Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson use a dog named Toby to follow a trail that leads them to the waterfront.

"We are out of luck," said Holmes. "They have taken to a boat here."

Several small punts and skiffs were lying about in the water and on the edge of the wharf. We took Toby round to each in turn, but though he sniffed earnestly he made no sign.

Close to the rude landing-stage was a small brick house, with a wooden placard slung out through the second window. "Mordecai Smith" was printed across it in large letters, and, underneath, "Boats to hire by the hour or day." A second inscription above the door informed us that a steam launch was kept- a statement which was

confirmed by a great pile of coke upon the jetty. Sherlock Holmes looked slowly round, and his face assumed an ominous expression.

"This looks bad," said he. "These fellows are sharper than I expected. They seem to have covered their tracks. There has, I fear, been preconcerted management here."

He was approaching the door of the house, when it opened, and a little curly headed lad of six came running out, followed by a stoutish, red-faced woman with a large sponge in her hand.

"You come back and be washed, Jack," she shouted. "Come back, you young imp; for if your father comes home and finds you like that he'll let us hear of it."

"Dear little chap!" said Holmes strategically. "What a rosey-cheeked young rascal! Now, Jack, is there anything you would like? The youth pondered for a moment.

"I'd like a shillin'," said he.

"Nothing you would like better?"

"I'd like two shillin' better," the prodigy answered after some thought.

"Here you are, then! Catch!-A fine child, Mrs. Smith!"

"Lor' bless you, sir, he is that, and forward. He gets a'most too much for me to manage, 'specially when my man is away days at a time."

"Away, is he?" said Holmes in a disappointed voice. "I am sorry for that, for I wanted to speak to Mr. Smith."

"He's been away since yesterday mornin', sir, and, truth to tell, I am beginnin' to feel frightened about him. But if it was about a boat, sir, maybe I could serve as well."

"I wanted to hire his steam launch."

"Why, bless you, sir, it is in the steam launch that he has gone. That's what puzzles me; for I know there ain't more coals in her than would take her to about Woolwich and back. If he's been away in the barge I'd ha' thought nothin'; for many a time a job has taken him as far as Gravesend, and then if there was much doin' there he might ha' stayed over. But what good is a steam launch without coal?"

"He might have bought some at a wharf down the river."

“He might, sir, but it weren’t his way. Many a time I’ve heard him call out at the prices they charge for a few odd bags. Besides, I don’t like that wooden-legged man, wi’ his ugly face and outlandish talk. What did he want always knockin’ about here for?”

“Ah, a wooden-legged man,” said Holmes with bland surprise.

“Yes, sir, a brown, monkey-faced chap that’s called more’n once for my old man. It was him that roused him up yesternight, and, what’s more, my man knew he was comin’, for he had steam up in the launch. I tell you straight, sir, I don’t feel easy in my mind about it.”

“But my dear Mrs. Smith,” said Holmes, shrugging his shoulders, “you are frightening yourself about nothing. How could you possibly tell that it was the wooden-legged man who came in the night? I don’t quite understand how you can be so sure.”

“His voice, sir. I knew his voice, which is kind o’ thick and foggy. He tapped at the winder- about three it would be. ‘Show a leg, matey,’ says he: ‘time to turn out guard.’ My old man woke up Jim- that’s my eldest- and away they went without so much as a word to me. I could hear the wooden leg clackin’ on the stones.”

“And was this wooden-legged man alone?”

“Couldn’t say, I am sure, sir. I didn’t hear no one else.”

“I am sorry, Mrs. Smith, for I wanted a steam launch, and I have head good reports of the-, the-. Oh, let me see, what is her name?”

“The Aurora, sir.”

“Ah! She’s that old green launch with a yellow line, very broad in the beam.”

“No indeed. She’s as time a little thing as any on the river. She’s been fresh painted, black with two red streaks.”

“Thanks. I hope that you will hear soon from Mr. Smith. I am going down the river, and if I should see anything of the Aurora I shall let him know that you are uneasy. A black funnel, you say?”

“No, sir. Black with a white band.”

“Ah, of course. It was the sides which were black. Good-morning, Mrs. Smith. There is a boatman here with a wherry, Watson. We shall take it and cross the river.”

“The main thing with people of that sort,” said Holmes as we sat the sheets of the wherry, ‘is never to let them think that their

information can be of the slightest importance to you. If you do they will instantly shut up like an oyster. If you listen to them under protest, as it were, you are very likely to get what you want.”

The above is a very decent introduction to the art of elicitation. There are several techniques used to get people to reveal more than they thought they would.

First is repeating back what the person said. This takes a variety of forms.

At the end of a statement, or a conversation, sometimes it is best to give a brief summery of what the person has said. Repeat back what the person said, putting it into your own words. This allows the other person to correct you if you have a mistaken impression. It also impresses on them that you are really listening to them. This version is rarely used during elicitation and is used more in normal conversations.

Next is just repeating back the last few words of what someone said. This is a way of kicking the conversation back to the other person, filling in the silence. In general, you want to direct the conversation to the other person, getting them to talk instead of you. So a typical exchange might be, “My boss is a jerk. Aside from skimping on staffing, he tries to get us to put in extra hours off the books.”

“Off the books?”

“Yeah, he could really get in trouble for it if anyone goes to the labor boards. But that is not the only thing he does that could get him in hot water if I ever decide to give him what he deserves. Just the other day....”

An advanced version of this is to concentrate not just on the last part of the sentence, but on the part of what they say that you want expanded on. Holmes uses this in the following exchange.

“He might, sir, but it weren’t his way. Many a time I’ve heard him call out at the prices they charge for a few odd bags. Besides, I don’t like that wooden-legged man, wi’ his ugly face and outlandish talk. What did he want always knockin’ about here for?”

“Ah, a wooden-legged man,” said Holmes with bland surprise.

“Yes, sir, a brown, monkey-faced chap that’s called more’n once for my old man. It was him that roused him up yesternight, and, what’s more, my man knew he was comin’, for he had steam up in the launch. I tell you straight, sir, I don’t feel easy in my mind about it.”

With a simple statement of surprise about a peg legged man, Holmes gets the woman to divulge much more information.

This moves into the idea of give and take. While you want the other person to talk the most, you have to be ready to volunteer information yourself. This can be to fill gaps in the conversation, reassure someone when they start to realize just how much they are giving away, or to pull someone out a bit more on a subject. Sometimes you have to offer up your own story to encourage others to share their’s. Of course, you don’t try to one up the target with your story. More often, you are trying to get them to one up you.

A possible example, “My boss once tried to get us to sign off on a report that we had never seen any safety violations. But I wasn’t willing to do so. Eventually he backed down and took a hit on his insurance premiums.”

“Ah, but did he ever try to get you to lie about an accident and say it was the fault of the worker, and not the cruddy equipment he had? I had that happen where I am.”

Every so often, interject a comment of your own if someone is talking a blue streak. It can be only a few words, but it prevents people from fully realizing that they have been going on and on, revealing stuff they might best not. If they are going on about cars, all you might need to say is something like, “I always thought having a car that wouldn’t break down easily was better than one that impressed others.” And that is enough to get them to go on while having the impression that you both are taking part in the conversation.

Another technique is quoting facts at the other party to get them to expand on things. It can be a simple statement of fact, such as the dangers of a certain profession. In that case, they may expand to explain the dangers they face at their jobs. Another is the method Holmes used to get a better description of the boat. He guessed on small aspects, twice. People sometimes have a need to correct

others, which a trip to social media will confirm. So if you make a small misstatement, you are likely to get more than a, “No, that is not correct.” You will get the actual information quoted at you.

Some people want to be seen as knowledgeable. If someone says they read something about something closer to them that they are not aware of, often they may start to volunteer information on a related topic just to show that, while they might not know the particular fact just told them, they are still in the lead in terms of knowledge about the subject.

By quoting a news source, real or invented, you kind of confront them but can direct their efforts to prove it wrong against something else. Of course you can always say you heard incorrectly, or that it is yet another case of the media getting it wrong.

Related to this is naiveté. Put yourself in the position to be the learner to their teacher. When they say something you want to expand on, do something like express amazement or disbelief, allowing them to explain how it can be exactly as they state. No matter how much research you have done on the subject, make sure to appear to be clueless, and your interest is only to fill in gaps of knowledge raised by the conversation. When using this to pull out information, be certain to end the conversation with some other topic, since as we now know, people tend to remember the start and end of a conversation but not so much what went on in the middle.

A move that gets the ball rolling and sets things up for the other tactics mentioned here is a simple statement that is slightly provocative. Say something like you have never understood why there are braille pads on the ATM machine at the drive in window. The other person, if they know the subject, is likely to start filling in the gaps in your knowledge. (In the case of the ATM, many blind people are driven to the bank in taxis, and being able to do their banking from the back of the cab allows them to avoid going in and out while the taxi keeps its meter running.) It is a sort of question, but doesn't seem to be. You use it often when you know the person can at least partially explain.

Using this also can springboard off into other tactics such as naiveté or repetition of something they said.

Encouraging people to complain is also a good way to pick up a lot of juicy information. Some people complain more than others. But if you find a hot button with them about the government agency they work at or something similar, you can expand on that quite easily. Also, many people appreciate the chance to get things off their chest, especially if you make cooing sounds about the hardships they must face. In the case with the Holmes quote, he might have expressed sympathy with how the good woman had been left alone while her husband went off with nary a word, and with a very active kid to take care of as well. That might have led to her going on about he always doing such things, and how long it was before he came back with the peg legged man the last time.

Much of the above material is taken from books such as “Confidential- Uncover Your Competitor’s Top Business Secrets Legally and Quickly- and Protect Your Own” by John Nolan. Here is the link to the book on Amazon. Unfortunately, it is out of print and copies can go for 200 dollars or more.

https://www.amazon.com/Confidential-Business-Secrets-Getting-Keeping/dp/097213560X/ref=pd_ybh_a_20?_encoding=UTF8&psc=1&refRID=GZQJ1WEHFDKM6W3P922G

Another book that is truly excellent is, “It Not All About ‘Me’” by Robin Dreeke.

https://www.amazon.com/Its-Not-All-About-Techniques-ebook/dp/B0060YIBLK/ref=sr_1_4?crid=2XO6INEU1S9WT&keywords=robin+dreeke&qid=1622559505&s=books&prefix=Robin+Dre%2Cstripbooks%2C191&sr=1-4

It is also available to read for free on Kindle Unlimited.

Local Knowledge

In the Shoninki it states,

“The lessons of the shinobi are those of infinite possibilities and adaptations, not all of which can be taught. One important lesson is to try to know skillfully all you can about the various provinces and areas. Another is to know how to read an area and the hearts of the people and use that to skillfully do your task.”

In the Bansenshukai it says,

“One should learn the layout and customs of various lands.

“Study the following thoroughly, their way of doing things, dialects, topography and such, know where the mountains, forests, rivers and marshes are. Know where it is steep and where it is flat, the width of village roads, as well as even the narrowest of paths and those used by deer.

“As a result, when times get unsettled and you fall behind, if you have searched out and memorized this information you can still reach the location. In addition, if while entering the enemy territory you are asked something involving the layout or customs of it, you can quickly and easily respond.”

While the ninja were only talking about the areas in Japan, the modern day ninja should know a bit about the world. He must be well read in a variety of things, always on a quest for knowledge. Instead of watching celebrity shows featuring has-been actors, he should be honing his knowledge as well as familiarizing himself to what is going on in the world.

A start is to delve deeply into where he lives. Should he ever be sent to a distant land as an agent, he would be expected to know all about his new home shortly after he set down roots. How can he expect to find out all he can in that situation without any experience even where he lived before he took on the task? So those that would be ninja should take the time to become minor experts in the city or region they live in. Going to another country, with another language and ways of doing things, will make it hard enough even with practice.

First thing to be examined is the library. For ninja, who were gatherers of information, a local library is a gold mine. The internet

has largely pushed libraries aside, but there are still a lot of resources that can be accessed, usually without calling attention to oneself.

When you get a library card, note what is needed. This won't be the requirement everywhere, especially under a repressive regime. Still, it will get you thinking as a mental exercise. What would it take to get your hands on one under a false name? It has become less common, but many a false identity has been built starting with a library card.

In most first world nations, libraries have computers that can be used to access the internet without showing any identification. If where you live has a large homeless population, you might not have ready access as they tend to come in at the start of business and stay there all day. Smaller branches, away from soup kitchens and other resources for the homeless, will probably give you greater access. These computers of course provide a way to look up information without leaving a trail that leads back to you. For that matter, most libraries also have wireless access so you can use your Tor browser, such as a laptop with the Tails operating system.

Check out your libraries web site for clubs, activities, and classes. You can learn programming and other skills. These also might be a good way to test out your ability to use a cover story. Most states allow residents to get library cards at any library system, So if you live in San Diego you can get a Los Angeles library card and join things there. For that matter, many of the clubs and such don't require you show any ID. So you can take a risk by joining an activity such as a tai chi class and get to know people introducing yourself under the identity you are creating. If you goof and are discovered, it is not like it is in your back yard and you are likely to see any of them again.

There are resources you should become familiar with that can be found in the local branches. One example is the Polk Guide. This is a book that lists every street inside the area. Going to the street listing, you can go down the list and find the name of everyone on the street. So if you know someone lives at 12345 Main Street, with the Polk Guide you can get their name. The books are made for every part of America, updated yearly, and are hideously expensive.

They are not the only resource on the local area, and librarians are usually pretty eager to show what is available to you.

While at the library, become familiar with newspapers, magazines, and other periodicals. It should not be needed to say that you should start reading up on the news of your area. Some news stories can be found for free on the web pages of the local news sources, others are for the print version only. You can access all of the info without breaking the bank by means of the library. Some sources, such as magazines, can even be accessed online through sources the library provides. I personally read *The Economist* (an excellent source of international news) and *5280*, a magazine devoted to Denver and the surrounding area, through an app I can access through my library card.

There is usually a paper that dominates the region, such as how the *Los Angeles Times* is read and sold in almost all of California, and smaller newspapers that cover the county or city. Even if you subscribe to one or more, take a trip about once a week to glance through the others to see if there is anything that might be valuable to you. Most often, there is a bin with old newspapers and magazines ready for the recycle center. They do not mind if you take them home. You can start a scrapbook of articles on local news items of interest, using them to start online searches to get deeper knowledge. These are not sensitive topics that will attract attention, but things that most would know and you have to get up to speed on. This is not so much for the case where you live in an area for years, but rather to get used to when you move to an area and all of the things the locals are familiar with are foreign to you. Find references to festivals, events, local characters and such as quickly as possible to not stand out. Try it out in the familiar setting of where you live now so you know how to do it if ever you find yourself in another part of the world.

For that matter, you can put together your own documents gleaned from online stories that run across your feed on social media. Pick a program that allows you to search by key words and set up chapters such as “politics”, “crime”, “events”, and the like. Then, whenever something of interest shows up on the page of the local news sources you follow on Facebook, cut and paste them into

the document for reference. This assumes you follow social media on a computer rather than a smart phone of course.

There are institutions that you should know fairly well. Even if you don't plan on being a ninja, knowing what hospitals are in the area and what they specialize in is a good thing to know. The same goes for police stations. If you are ever followed by a motorist in the midst of road rage, stopping at a station is your best bet to get out of it without violence.

Take interest in the museums, clubs, and everything else that people use to educate or amuse themselves. Different venues attract different classes and backgrounds. The local symphony will have a different clientele than the rodeo. A ninja must be expected to move through all classes as if they were born to it, and it does not help if the first time you go to the opera you gawk and don't know what to do. Take in a grunge concert as well as a performance of interpretive dance. While there, reach out and talk to folks in a non-threatening situation. If an assignment ever places you in that culture, it is best to have at least passing knowledge of how things work ahead of time.

If you always use a car, try out local transport. Find out how to use the local bus, light rail, or whatever. There may be a time when you have to use them in a stressful situation with your life on the line, and you don't want it to be your first with you stumbling over even where to find them. For that matter, if your car throws a rod and you are stuck with public transportation until it is ready, it is nice to know how without any fumbling.

Many major metropolises from Tokyo to Denver have day long or longer passes. Typically, you can buy a pass at a station or location on the edges of the metro area that will allow you unlimited transport on it within the boundaries for a set period of time and until you return to where you bought the pass. It of course costs more than a fare for a single direct trip to a location inside the area. But if you plan on spending 12 hours exploring an area, with frequent stops, it is a bargain. This is a great chance to get to know an area. In my case, I live an hour south of Denver and can use the light rail pass to go all over and get a feel for what different parts of the city and surrounding ones are like, as well as see what sort of things they have. Waiting for the next bus or train is also a good time to practice

your cold approach skills with others. There is already a sort of time constraint if you are on the train and obviously have to get off sometime. Asking the best way to transfer to where you want to go is often very useful as an opening.

Which brings us to another topic, exploration. As much as you can learn online and from books, there is nothing like getting on the ground, seeing things for yourself, and soaking in the feel of the area.

One big shame is that people that live near major tourist places never seem to visit them. You might move to, say, San Diego. The zoo there is world famous. But since you are going to be there for years, there is no rush to visit. You always have the chance to visit, so you put it off in favor of other things. Finally, relatives come to visit for the weekend and you finally go in order to let them see it in the limited time they are there. Something about all this seems messed up to me.

Instead of putting off to “someday,” try things out now. If you are in a relationship, instead of hitting the same bar or movie theatre once again, try someplace new, like the museum of art or a picnic in a park you have never visited. Take walks through cemeteries filled with historic corpses. When visiting Kentucky, my host drove me past a cemetery near his house over 300 years old. I asked to visit it, and he admitted that after decades in Lexington, until I came along he never bothered to get out of the car and wander among all the crumbling gravestones. And it was really beautiful and educational, with plenty of resources explaining the important people buried there.

So start with the touristy stuff. Make it a mini holiday or date. Concentrate first on what everyone local would normally know, such as Grand Central Station in Manhattan. Move onto less common places, never giving up the sense of exploration and allow yourself to fall into a rut.

Again your local library probably has many guides for getting to know the area. Walking guides are now pretty popular, many available through the library in digital versions you can download in seconds. Those guides are only a start. Denver at least has published guides on dive bars you can visit. It can be fairly

educational to sit and talk with the frequent patrons, probing them for insight into their part of the world.

Take new routes and make a point of going to places you have never visited before. Find at least a few new ways to get to your home off the beaten path. It may be that a major disaster closes the normal routes and you need the less known ones to get out.

Take up riding a bike, put a bike rack on your car, and travel to places around you to explore. You can of course just drive through them. But biking allows you to take your time to know a place better, and it gets in your exercise at the same time.

Make a point of visiting new shops, especially ones outside your area of expertise. Thrift stores are a fairly special type of place. There, you can get clothing already looking worn for a low price and pay cash. For me, I love to visit ethnic food stores. Of course, most of them are asian, but I found some new types of cheese for sale in a halal market, and a good source for mutton in one geared toward people from India and Pakistan.

But again, step outside your area of expertise. Visit craft stores even if you don't make anything other than lunch. Wander around hardware stores especially if you don't any tools and call pros whenever you need something done. Get used to what these types of places have and don't be afraid to talk to the staff.

Walk around your local airport, even if you never would fly from it. Do the same with various large hotels, maybe spending time in the lounge or bar. Ask about their facilities for events, maybe asking the staff for a little tour of what they have available. Have a back story prepared for why you are looking into things, like maybe an extended family reunion if the main plan to go on in another city and organized by your sister falls through. Don't be very committal of course. Say it is something you are thinking about since your sister is complaining that even a year out she is being overwhelmed.

One of the first things you should do when moving into an area is go online and visit the city's crime map. Typically, the local government will have a map with points on it showing where crimes have recently taken place, and what kinds. An area with several armed muggings is obviously a place you want to avoid, or at least have more caution while going through.

There usually are free maps of various types available in a variety of places, like the tourist center. Pick up a few for areas around you and put them up on something like the wall you stare at while on the toilet. When you are bored or have some free time on your hands, look them over, study them, and plan excursions.

If you feel daring, and a ninja should, take on a back story of someone gay and visit the bars and clubs that cater to that clientele. My advice is to be a bit stand offish and drop hints that you are living a lie with a wife. And be sure to have good boundaries set and be confident in dealing with people, because anyone who has a hint of being straight up to then but considering a gay relationship is going to be mobbed by men. A good aspect of building a cover story based on being a gay man still in the closet is that anyone you meet in the gay clubs will understand if you don't respond to them when you meet on the street while walking with others, and rarely will even try to approach you outside of "The Life." The lifestyle of a gay man trying to pass himself off as just another straight is one filled with more secrets than a CIA agent. By pretending to be a married man just starting to be aware of your true sexuality, you can explain away many of the mistakes you make in that setting. Seriously, if you aren't willing to push your limits by pretending to be interested in a gay relationship, what chance do you think you have taking all the risks a ninja must face?

There are other lifestyles you can set up that you can abandon. Go to a church fairly far from you and use your new identity. Or a comic convention and/or club. Try clubbing under your new name. The possibilities are almost endless.

There usually are a few clubs or activities going on. Usually there are a few groups set up just to let businesspeople network with others outside of their market. Then there are everything from square dance groups to western shooting clubs. Pick one or two that interest you and go as yourself. Pick many others that do not really match your interests and go and talk to them trying not to use your real name. In this case, try to stick to your first name and deflect questions about you as much as possible. You might use some to help develop your back story, but you might find that the ladies in the book club are rather fetching and not want to start any potential

relationships based on a lie. Leave your options open by keeping your personal information to yourself and not saying anything that commits you to your cover story.

Look into local politics as much as you can. Do some online research into those that call the shots, and the policies that are in place as well as being discussed. Then take the time to sit in on meetings of your local governments. There may be one for the city you live in, and another for the county. If you feel comfortable with that, sit in on a session of your state legislators. Come early to note those that seem to be regulars in the audience, Take note of them and maybe come back to another session mainly to see if they indeed are frequent attendees. These may wield a lot of influence without appearing in any news articles or records.

Stay to the end and note if they put hot button issues at the start of the meeting, so that people will leave right after they are discussed. The issues that are toward the end might be things they want to keep out of the public eye as much as possible, such as awarding lucrative city contracts to companies they have stakes in.

Listen to various radio stations for a few days. Go from news to classical music to country western. Do the same for TV stations, especially the news programs. Pick up free newspapers from the supermarket and read through them.

Moving Like A Ghost

Ninja just would not be ninja unless they know the skills of being invisible. While Yonin (overt acts) are the bulk of their tasks, the ninja must be able to slip into the shadows to fully function.

There is a lot of information out there on stealth. Much of it is good. Stealth requires little in the way of actual instruction, but loads of actual practice.

What differs the ninja from most that teach stealth is the core principle of raising the senses. Instead of starting with techniques of silently walking and related skills, the ninja starts with honing his senses so that he is better able to determine what is going on around him. Instead of a straight blast through while keeping himself concealed, the ninja would take frequent stops and take in the area. There they would both plan the next leg of their journey or stalk, and take in everything in the area for dangers of detection. If he could detect someone before they had a chance to hear them, they could take precautions such as staying still until the target passed by.

An example of this importance on even the least used of senses happened to a friend of mine. During a night of bright moonlight, he approached an open area while staying in the shadows. Before he stepped into the light to cover the ground, he caught the faintest whiff of cigarette smoke. He immediately froze and started scanning the area, not seeing anything at first. Then, one of the shadows across the way lightened up just a bit, then went totally dark again. Most people wouldn't have even noticed the light at all. After at least a minute, my friend heard a faint exhale. Sometime after that, someone (Guard? Night cleaning staff?) stepped out into the light, extinguished their smoke and walked back into the building. The facility had a no smoking anywhere policy he later learned, even for people working at nights and outdoors. Whoever nearly spotted him merely wanted to hide the fact that he was killing his lungs on his break. Most of the time it will be your ears or your eyes that sound the alarm, but this case shows that almost anything might save you.

The first step in honing your senses, easily done by anyone no matter where they live, is to take time to notice them. Set aside a day

and concentrate on a single sense throughout it. After a few days, move onto the next sense.

I suggest you start with taste. Get up and have breakfast. If possible, blindfold yourself. Take more time than you usually do to get through the meal. Stop frequently to just let the flavor sit there. Don't try to think much about what you are tasting, just concentrate on experiencing it.

Take frequent sips of water to clear the palate. But even then, you will notice that water has its own taste. Too often we discount the cost of even water, no matter if we paid several dollars for a bottle of it. Roll the food around the mouth. Some parts of your tongue cannot pick up certain types of tastes, while others can. You might find that parts of your mouth other than your tongue can pick up flavors. For me at least, olives register on the roof of my mouth, but not on my tongue. Weird, isn't it?

During the day, at work or whatever, breathe through your mouth and taste the air. Smell and taste are very close and often work together. Make yourself taste what you would largely leave to your nose.

As a meal, or part of a snack, put together various types of food that will cover a wide range of tastes. Have a lemon slice along with a piece of chocolate, sunflower seeds, a piece of cold chicken, and many other things. Again, close your eyes at least and run the food around in your mouth.

After a few days of rest from this, wake up in the morning and notice what you smell before you even open your eyes, if you are able to remember as soon as you wake. (I've never been able to remember to be honest.)

Using the nose of course is all day. Your sense of taste can go hours without having a major stimulus. But since the nose breathes in and out all day, you will find that you are now in danger of being overloaded. Take frequent breaks to stop and concentrate on what you can smell. You will quickly find that much of the time when you thought there was nothing to smell, there is at least something.

Find a variety of things to smell. Avoid heavy smells that blot out all others, such as incense for the most part. Grab a blade of grass and hold it up to your nose. Stop before you drink your first cup of

coffee in the morning and sit there for a minute just drinking in the delicious aroma. Don't avoid bad smells. You might find that they are far more bearable than you believed if you take the time to concentrate on them a bit.

Next is the sense of touch, and the level of difficulty goes up tenfold. You are constantly touching something, if only whatever you connect to the ground with. When you cut off a sense, when it is restored your appreciation of it goes up. That is why blindfolding yourself not only helps bring out the other senses, it increases your observation skills when it is taken off. But it is near impossible to get rid of the feeling of touch. The clothes you wear constrict and rub against you. Your feet are in contact with the floor whenever you stand, and your legs and buttocks when you sit, your back, side or stomach when you lay down. It is constant, so you can't isolate it and come back. As Arthur Schopenhauer stated, "Mostly it is the loss which teaches us the worth of things."

Still, exploring the sense of touch can be the most eye opening. Take frequent breaks as you go through your day and examine what you are in contact with. Stand still and, if you are wearing trousers, take the time to figure out how you could determine that merely through touch. Where is it contacting the skin? What parts of your body feel constrained by what you wear?

Go barefoot from time to time. Walk on carpet, grass, and move up from there if you like. Reach out and touch things, running your hands over them. Then run other parts, like your elbow, over them. You might sit at one type of desk, the next person over might use another. Close your eyes and run your hand over yours, and then his. See if you can tell the difference merely by the way they feel.

That night, consider taking a hot bath, or maybe a cold shower. Let yourself feel the temperature without judgement, and then allow yourself to revel in the luxury of the bath if you so chose. Personally, I often take a piping hot bath on cold winter nights Japanese style. That means that you clean yourself off and rinse off any trace of soap before you step into the water. After leaving the water to stand all night, I get into the frigid water the next morning. The contrast is amazing, and while I might not find immersing in cold water to be exactly pleasant, the feeling can only be described as 'real' to me.

Next to last is the sense of hearing. Strange as it may sound, a good pair of ear plugs come in handy at this point. Carry them around for as complete an absence of sound as possible. Do not use music or anything to block out exterior sounds, go for silence instead.

Put them in for a few minutes when safe, then take them out and note all the sounds that come to you. Do this in what is normally considered quiet places.

Even without ear plugs, take a few times during the day to just stop and listen. It could be the lawn mower being used down the street, the wind, a conversation, or anything else. Try to avoid adding to the noise with music. Take time to appreciate it, but not during this exercise. As much as possible cut out the noises we add to the clutter and note how much is left for you to pick up.

Last is sight. We are flooded with what we see everyday, so we have to limit what we can when we want to make our sense of it stronger. Start small, taking a look at an object such as a rock on your desk. Throw away any temptation to classify things and take in what hits your eyes without judgement.

We tend to give names to things and discount any observation from then on. This does have a purpose, saving energy and allowing us to work on other things such as science, mathematics, cures for dangerous diseases, and everything else. But when we need to notice details, we need to toss away preconceived notions. And that is what names and such are all about. We may look at something and say, "leaf." If we get as far as, "oak leaf" we feel pretty good about our powers of observation. But when you pick up a leaf and look at it, really look at it, you note the veins that run through it, the nature of the edges, the gradual grading of colors from the center to the end, and so much more than a mere word as "leaf" can convey.

Set an alarm to go off a few times during the day to catch you by surprise. When it goes off, step back mentally from whatever you are doing (if safe) and take in whatever is in front of you, be it a vast landscape of incredible beauty or a rat infested back alley.

After you finish these exercises, occasionally put aside time to sit and listen to your senses. Try for at least once a week to turn off the

television, turn off the phone and everything else that can distract you and just sit.

Where I live in Colorado is called the Front Range. That is the strip that runs from North to South at the base of the Rocky Mountains. To the east, plains stretch to the border of Kansas and beyond. Looking to the west, mountains topping out at over 14,000 feet jut toward the sky.

Every spring daylight savings kicks in and what used to be five am becomes six, when I have to rise, feed my kid and get him ready for school. I am not a morning person. And I really dislike having to get up before the sun makes an appearance. It will be weeks before the day lengthen enough for the alarm to go off after it become light enough to see my hand in front of my face.

Still, there is an up side. After I have done all I can to get my son prepared, and every year he takes on more of that task, I have time to myself. I wander outside, facing the west. As the sun approaches bit by bit, the sky at first lightens. Then I get to make out the mountains. Because of their height and the curve of the earth, their peaks get hit with direct sunlight before there is even a hint on the horizon that the sun is on its way.

Most of humanity is still hunkered down in their beds, putting off awaking as long as possible. The sounds are largely that of nature. The birds in the area are a riot of melodies. There are a few distant roars of engines, mainly trucks on their way to deliver things so that when the stores open their goods are waiting for them. Instead of the oppressive roar of civilization, it strikes me more like the start of an endeavor.

Sometimes, during the day when there is little more than the roar of humanity, I will sit in the same spot reading a book and listening to music on a portable speaker my wife gave me before she passed away. But this magic time at the start of the day is reserved for the symphony of nature.

The early spring chill soaks in, and I let myself feel it, knowing that in mere weeks I will be turning on the fan instead. When I bring along a sweater or a blanket, I take the time to tuck it in and note the warmth it bestows on me.

On a few occasions, animals like deer, raccoons, or foxes cross in my line of sight, hurrying to get to a safe location before the cover of night completely retreats. More than once they have noticed me, turned and gave a look as if to say, "What are YOU doing out at this time" then continued to scurry on their way.

Often I will make a mug of coffee while making my son breakfast and top it off before I set up outside. I cradle it in my hands, feeling the warmth spread through my fingers and banish the cold a bit. I lift it to my lips, not drinking it in yet. Instead I let myself feel the ceramic on my lips as the aroma of French roast wafts past my nostrils. When I let myself take a taste, I do so in small sips, letting the magic liquid spread through my mouth, spreading both its taste and its warmth. I need to express no shame as I loudly slurp it bit by bit for full flavor.

From time to time, I put together a plate slightly larger than my palm with things like olives, fruit, cheese, and maybe a muffin. (I call it first breakfast in a nod to Tolkien.) Over the course of maybe 30 minutes I will stop, pick up a piece and savor it bit by bit.

To the east, the sky goes from a dark purple to blue, then there is a transition period where it becomes a blend of yellow at one point and orange at another. The mountains follow a similar process of change.

Most days I tarry long enough for the light to get close enough to directly fall on me. Then I go inside, make second breakfast, and clean up a bit. Then it is time to retreat to my work space, open tomes written in distant lands, and converse with men long dead to help bring their wisdom into a new world.

This noticing of nature and appreciating it is possible no matter where you are. Even in the largest city, there are spots of green, even if it is a house plant or a rock. As William Blake put it, "To see the world in a grain of sand, and heaven in a wildflower, hold infinity in the palm of your hand, and eternity in an hour."

You must realize that the ninja were a lot closer to nature than most of us are today. They lived in the midst of rice paddies, their shafts of grain thrusting toward the sky as well as being a hunting ground for foxes, weasels, and a variety of life. The mountains that

surrounded Iga were teeming with life, and the ninja would train there, far from the prying eyes of their villages.

It might be possible to hone your senses without a nod to nature, but it goes against our heritage. The time that we built huts and raised grain is a small blip when compared to the vast length of our existence. We evolved on the plains of Africa, hunting and gathering while avoiding becoming the lunch for one of the species better blessed with sharp claws and teeth, as well as larger sense organs like the nose. By getting away from the trappings of civilization, we make it easier to tap into the senses that allowed us to find food and keep ourselves safe in the time before we could build walls.

Start with a leaf or rock, observing and experiencing them. Then make a plan to move out to a place of nature. It could be a park, a hiking trail, or camp ground. Maybe start easy with a park, extract all you can from it, then move onto the next step with a bit of experience under your belt.

Ultimately, even a small patch of grass can serve. Lay on your stomach and look at it from both on high and while your head lays on the ground. Smell the earth, let the blades of grass tickle your cheek, hear the sounds as plants get moved.

This is not to say that arid ground is of no use. All that matters is that it is part of nature, largely untouched by the hand of man.

If you go to a hiking trail or large area, practice wide seeing vision. Stand and put your arms out to the sides. Set your arms so they point out, as if you were on a cross. Pull your arms slightly to the rear and bring your fingers in so they face to your front. See if you can see them. Pull them forward until you can notice. Keep practicing this when you can to increase what you notice in your peripheral vision.

Look out on the vista and take it all in at once. It can be overwhelming at first and so requires practice. A key point in this and in observation is to suspend self and judgement. Experience what you see, don't think about it. Practice this alternating with the close in examination of a leaf and the like. But while out in the vast area of a hiking area or something similar is a perfect chance to practice wide vision and drink in nature, don't let it go to waste.

As you enter nature, you need to let go of all that you had in civilization. If you force yourself to camp for several days, leaving behind your ties to your old life and distractions like cell phones, you will reach this state naturally. But too often, people rush to the camp site or hiking trail and never allow themselves to become part of nature before they have to take off to be back at work in time. So, even when your time is limited you must strive to set aside the bits of civilization that cling to us. A small ceremony of some sort might be in order. Mountain mystics of Japan, which whom many ninjas took part in their austerities, would take time to thank the gods of the mountains before they started their journey inside their range.

As you hike along, take your time. Do not rush. It is better you move only 500 yards down the path and experience each step before returning than go five miles and miss out on most of what is going on.

Find a spot on the path that you can leave if permitted. Sit down, maybe with your back to a rock or tree. Then merely sit. You don't have to do anything active. Bring along a lunch and spend the entire day in one spot if you want. It may sound tiresome and boring, but a person that lets themselves be open to all that goes on in the world can sit under a tree for a day and have enough material to write a book.

Think of yourself as being part of what you are sitting against. Later this practice will serve you well and is part of the reason the ninjas of Japan were considered to literally become invisible. But for now, just think of yourself as part of the tree or rock and surrender yourself to it. Give yourself time to let the animals and creatures in the area get used to you. The more time you spend almost completely still in the same spot, the more nature will return and carry on their normal life. For this reason, try to get a bit off of any beaten trail frequented by humans. On the other hand, it is educational to see just how soon you can pick up that humans are coming based on the actions of the animals in front of you.

At first, you won't see much. It will take time for the creatures to return to their normal life around you. Take the time to concentrate on a rock, the horizon, or anything else. Do not be so intense that you fail to notice the animals as they return.

Take your time. You can easily spend the entire day in one place. At first you will be tempted to get up and experience more by visiting more of the area. Resist it. This is about quality over quantity. You may find your thoughts going back to your work, your favorite television program, etc., but try to bring yourself back to the present. This is much the same as simple concentration meditation, but easier when you have contact with nature.

Clear your mind while observing. Leave it a blank slate. Let things come and go, avoiding any deep thoughts or make conclusions about anything. This can be done almost anywhere with no cost or preparation. Back in the city, bonsai plants and such are wonderful things to practice this on if you have a small apartment in a major city, but anything and anywhere is fine enough.

While you are on the hiking trail, you can touch on another aspect of stealth. Walking down the path, probably from where you parked your car, travel down the path about two minutes at your normal pace. Then take a few seconds to shake things out, relax, center yourself, and then turn around and travel back at one tenth the speed you came out or more. Since you walked two minutes, it should take you 20 to get back to where you started. You need not do this constantly. Feel free to stop and take in all that is around you. I advise this especially when people approach. Make a show of just standing there, watching something as they pass by so as to not attract attention. Then wait a bit and see how long it takes for the sounds of nature to return.

This is a start, only a start.

At the same time, pay attention to the noise you make in your daily life. You might be surprised at how much sound you give off. Try to do simple tasks as silently as possible to get used to the idea. Whether it is opening the fridge or taking trousers out of a drawer, make no sound. Of course, you can do this when you are in a room alone so as not to draw mirth from those in your life.

Blindfold yourself and walk around the house, putting away anything that might be dangerous or breakable. Feel things and let other senses other than your sight take over. An advanced version of this is to get friends to set up a rope through various types of terrain and move along it blindfolded. Make sure it is safe, and have

someone stand beside you to make sure accidents don't happen. Again, pay attention to all the senses other than sight.

Start to stretch and limber up your body. Stealth movements are taxing, and you don't want any joints popping in the midst of sneaking up on someone. If you are preparing to stalk, a quick warm up and stretch is in order if possible. But stretching should be a near daily thing.

Work on your balance. Standing on one leg for long periods of time both builds the muscles of the legs and develops a better sense of balance, but it prepares you to be able to freeze mid step.

When you learn basic stealth walking, get a friend also going through the training and have them walk in circles around you, and switch back and forth. Both sides are in training. The stalker learns to walk softly, the sitter in the middle with his eyes closed hones his sense of hearing and maybe more.

It is amazing how you can pick up other people like this. You may find that you can't hear the steps of the other person, but when he steps in between a source of sound and you, the drop in volume can be noted.

Some even close their eyes and put their fingers in their ears so they strengthen senses other than sight and sound.

If you have a few friends going through training with you, a few simple games takes this to the next level. Have one person as the stalker, everyone else stand with their backs to him, usually on a line, with their eyes closed. The stalker of course tries to stalk one of the others. If someone thinks they pick up him coming up behind them, they take a step forward and turn around. If they are wrong, they step back to where they were. If correct, the stalker returns to the starting point and tries again, maybe toward the same person or maybe a new target. If the stalker taps someone on the shoulder, he takes their place and the new person takes over stalking.

This exercise is extremely valuable when done right. There are a few traps you can fall into. First of all, put aside ego and a desire to be better than others. It is an exercise, not a competition. People should push themselves to see how much they can get away with without being caught. Those being stalked should move only when they are sure there is someone coming up behind them.

Next skill to learn is patience and endurance. The character “nin” of “ninja” means endurance. To be skilled at stealth, one must be patient and able to put up with a lot of discomfort.

Start by finding a spot, preferably a place in nature. The important thing is you won't be disturbed during the exercise. Sit still for an hour. Set an alarm. If you must, imagine there is someone with a rifle trained on you, uncertain if you are a rock or someone they should shoot on sight. Don't swat at bugs or anything like that. Try to even limit your breathing.

As simple as this sounds, it is excruciating to pull off. Take it easy and don't allow yourself to suffer injury by lack of blood circulation. You will find that if you sit in a strange position, even a little, you risk parts of your body having a lack of blood flow. This is an exercise you should try several times, trying it in different areas and positions, all the while taking care.

Next, the difficulty goes up. Find an area that is isolated and mark off an area about 100 yards long, Get on your belly and low crawl across the ground, moving with slow and smooth movements. It should take you no less than an hour to cover the ground. You cannot have any jerky or rushed movements. For a full hour, you must move as slow as a snail. Don't expect to be able to do so on your first try.

The next exercise is to mark off 50 yards or so and take whatever amount of time you need to get through it without making a sound. Try different conditions, both in location and weather. Obviously, in the middle of a rain storm you will find it easier not to have any sound given off.

In terms of techniques, there are two parts to stealth. The first is not being seen, the second not being heard. When far away from others, the restrictions of silence can be lifted a bit. In absolute darkness, the need for silence goes up since people stop relying on their sight and pay more attention to what they hear.

In general, lower is better. You can move faster by getting higher. Low crawling on the belly is the slowest, hand and knees is faster. Walking, even hunched over, is faster still. If you spend all your time low crawling, you probably won't be able to cover enough ground in the time frame you have. So you must compromise. This is where

stopping and being able to sense what is going on around you becomes vital.

When you are low, you do not give off much of a silhouette. Silhouettes are the second easiest thing for the eye to see, only movement is easier. Third is color, especially when the light is low. When you are low, you have a better chance of seeing others as they are silhouetted against the skyline, or even just the walls.

There are two main ways of crawling, high and low. High is what we normally call hands and knees. This covers ground faster and is a good compromise.

Low crawling is using the shins rather than the knees, and your forearms and hands instead of just hands. Push off with the forearms and shin to raise yourself slightly off the ground and glide forward a few inches before settling on the ground and repositioning your limbs for the next movement. Snipers have used this to travel across vast swaths of open ground in full view of the enemy. They wear special suits, called ghillie suits, and take hours, if not days, to cover just short distances. Their movements are so slow, and so smooth, that the eye does not pick them up. They wait for small breezes to stir the grasses around them to cover over their movements.

This takes a lot of intense training. It probably won't be needed for the type of job a professional penetration tester requires.

One way of crawling allows you to stay fairly low without dragging a lot on the ground, with all the noise that has to be covered up. Touch the ground with only your hands and toes. This is very taxing and should be practiced as an exercise. To not get too tired, use it when you need to, switching to something else when it is not.

When crawling like this, try to clear out things like dried leaves with the hands, then note where the spot is as you move forward to try to get your foot in the spot. With a bit of practice, you will be able to move the foot directly into the spot just cleared when you need to emphasize silence, such as going through a stretch of dry leaves. But this hunches the back and raises your profile from the ground.

To build up the muscles to do this crawl, don't just crawl facing the floor. Use your hands and feet to scuttle around while facing towards the sky and build up your strength and endurance.

The next step (pardon the pun) is to get on your feet. Here, the slower you go the more silent you can be. So there is still compromise. When close to another, you slow it down so there is no sound at all. When walking down an empty corridor, you can probably afford to step up the pace. Again, stop and listen, smell, and otherwise use all your senses to figure out if there is a chance of someone else being in the area. Stop frequently to do this, especially when approaching corners and other spots where you might suddenly be exposed.

The most basic way to stealth walk is to place your weight on one leg and extend the other. Place the foot down starting with either the heel of the foot, or the outside. Slowly roll the foot so that it is not flat. Be ready to stop at the slightest hint of noise. This may be something you feel through your foot. Slowly shift weight so that your lead leg now bears all the burden. Continue by moving up the rear leg and take a step.

The above is simple to explain, simple to learn, and takes months if not years to get good at. Smoothness is key. Frequent practice is vital. It is the core to the bulk of what you will use.

A rarer form of walking is the cross step. While the previous stealthy way of walking is found among many cultures such as the American Indian, cross stepping developed in areas where there were need to move among man made structures, and rarely for hunting animals.

Start by standing up with the knees slightly bent. Cross one leg in front of the other. Then step out in the same direction with the rear leg. If you are moving to the right, the left crosses over the right and the right leg follows.

This can be used to get through narrow areas. That is the frequent explanation given for its use. But it is mainly used to hug walls and stay close to them. Keeping a wall to your back as you move forward, or even facing the wall, allows you to merge with it in an instant. When you stop, merge and become one with the wall. If someone walks past the corridor you are sneaking down, chances are they won't notice anything because there is little to no silhouette. When stopping to access the situation, hug the wall. Slowly move your head back and forth while moving this way. You need not pay

much attention to the wall at your back, but moving your head in this way allows you to note what is both in front of you and behind.

This way of stepping is also said to allow the ninja to cover great amounts of ground while running. Some say the ninja were able to travel extreme distances in short periods of time using this method. If anyone tries it out and confirms it, please let me know. I can point to no actual instance of someone attempting to prove if it works as advertised or not.

Ancient texts list many names for different ways of walking. A list in one source is as follows,

Sashi-ashi (sashi means to insert and this method also is silent and like a branch of a willow but the tips of the toes are inserted first to find a silent place.)

Suri-ashi (suri means to grind) or Shime-ashi (constricting, in the above, the heel is brought down without sound as if to push (suri) into the ground and then bound tightly (shime) to the ground as it searches for quiet spots.

Uki-ashi (Uki- to float. This is lightly and agile stepping like a monkey on a tree branch.)

Tobi-ashi (tobi is to jump. Walking with large steps as if to jump into space.)

Kizami-ashi (mincing steps, when traveling in groups, step close together in a narrow range to hide numbers.)

Izari-ashi (edge forward, slow and cautious steps forward.) Oh-ashi (large leg- crawling with the upper (large) part of the leg touching the ground.)

Ko-ashi (small leg- crawling with the lower (small) part of the leg touching the ground.)

Kitsune- bashiri (fox run) or Inu-dori (dog's way, moving quickly without sound as if in the blink of a lightning flash.)

Usagi-aruki ("rabbit walk", Walking like a leaf traveling over a pond.)

Tsune no ashi (Normal step, Walking as a normal person would.)

(Source, Koga ryu Ninjutsu.

https://www.amazon.com/Koga-ryu-Ninjutsu-Ancient-Principles-Applications/dp/B08HB68NDD/ref=sr_1_3?

As an example, the ninja had a term for using the moon as part of their skills at stealth. They called it Getton. They also used stars, (seiton), and cloudy days (uton).

As esoteric as that sounds, using the moon and such to hide, they were things that the ninja understood and were able to use through their use of observation.

Consider a bright, moonlit night. It is much easier to see someone by the light of the moon. But the brightness gives more contrast with the dark. While being out in the open on a full moon makes it easier to see you, there are still shadows. Because of the relative brightness of the moon, it is more difficult to see into the shadows. There is of course contrast during the day between the open and shadowy places, but the general level of light is also more, so shadows help, but not as much as at night during the full moon.

Uton meant cloudy days, or nights in this case. While the moon shining brightly makes everything either easy to see or very difficult, overcast nights diffuse the light, so that you can see under the trees almost as well as someone in the open. This is much the case during clear and starry nights (seiton) but the stars are something that can be obscured as you stand or walk in front of them. By staying close to the ground and looking up, it is easy to see where people are by noticing where the stars go out.

There were ten methods classified under “heaven” as part of the ninja method of hiding. Three have already been discussed. The rest are, Niton (sun), Muton (mist), Raiton (thunder), Denton (lightning), Futon (wind) and Setton (snow.)

This classification of heaven is actually part of an old method of splitting things into three parts. So tenton (heaven escape) is the first, followed by earth (chiton) and humans (jinton.)

Chitonjuho (ten methods of escaping using earth) was composed of Mokuton (trees), Soton (grass), Katon (fire), Enton (smoke), Doton (earth), Okuton (buildings), Kinton (metal), Sekiton (stone), Suiton (water), and Toton (hot water.)

Jintonjuho (ten methods of escaping using humans) was composed of Danton (men), Joton (women), roton (old people), Yoton (young people), Kiton (nobles), Senton (untouchables), Juton (animals), Gyoton (fish), Kinton (birds) and Chuton (insects.)

In the last category, a few examples might help. Of course, using both innin and yonin (showing one's form in disguise compared with stealthy movement to not be seen) taking on the roles of various types can be utilized. But there is something in general about using people, and the various creatures such as birds, insects, and animals.

Different animals react differently and that reaction can be used, most often as an extra set of senses. While the ninja made efforts to heighten their senses, it cannot be argued that animals have far greater ones. In nature, you are either hunter or prey. If you are the hunter, you need to be aware for potential meals in the area. If you are prey, you need to avoid becoming a meal. Since we banded together in tribes and started growing our own food, humans stopped being really a part of either. We rarely were in danger on our territory, and we had the luxury of a stable food supply.

Various animals react to humans and others in various ways. By knowing how they normally act, you can plan to avoid trouble and maybe use them to tip you off.

During the Vietnam conflict, a Long Range Recon Patrol (LRRP) was deep in territory controlled by the enemy. As they made their way during the day, an owl flew by them, looking behind it. Owls usually come out at night, so they knew that something had disturbed it. So they set up a hasty ambush and sure enough, soon after they were in position a patrol of enemy soldiers came following the path of the owl.

Birds if you go near them usually take off all at once in a loud explosion. Insects tend to stop chirping. Each species reacts differently, and sometimes within a species there are vast differences between their reactions, whether they are nocturnal or not, and various other factors. Knowing what they are like and can do is not an academic exercise. True knowledge must come from experience and so the classifications are only a guide to get the student to look into various creatures and start their own journey of discovery.

One may think that because they live in an urban area, that they do not need to know any of this, but cockroaches and rats, as well as other critters, are part of major metropolitan areas. The more an animal gets used to humans, the less they are startled and show

fear. If they frequent an area and encounter humans a lot, they get used to that fact. So whether the rats ignore you or freak out tells you the chances of guards coming by as part of a patrol.

Knowing the habits of various creatures allows you also to know where they are likely to rest or build their nests. Stumbling across one while trying to be silent is of course to be avoided. When they move might be part of what covers your movements. If rats move down an street at certain times of night, it is unlikely small sounds will cause concern.

Humans are a special case. Not only can you pretend to be part of the enemy's forces when wandering around a camp at night, but even when it is needed that you do not show even a bit of yourself they are useful.

Following a patrol or an individual was a time honored trick by the ninja. The Shoninki calls this Junin. Today, many people gain access through gates that require cards by joining groups and slipping in with them after someone opens the door with theirs. That is an example using yonin, the overt art of the ninja. But it is also common to stealthily follow someone or a group, letting them give cover for you. Any guard dog that barks as they pass will be assumed to be reacting to the people the guards can see, and not the following ninja. A ninja might position himself next to a gate where there is a card reader for drivers to use. Once the truck heads through, the ninja tails along. The ninja might sit back and observe an area as guards and the like go through, sometimes for days, just to tell where there are pitfalls of various types to avoid them.

People can be used to set off various traps so the ninja is not discovered. By trap, you can mean areas where the insects stop chirping or birds rise up in flight. With humans already there, the reasons for these actions will thought to be known.

In most cases, it will not be a clean cut distinction between innin and yonin. One might get through the outer perimeter by use of stealth. The outer limits of an area, whether it be a battle camp or a corporate office, is on alert. But once you get past that, the vigilance relaxes most of the time. So after low crawling past the gates, it is often best to just stand up and make ones way, looking like everyone else. For this reason, the garb the ninja used wasn't all black, or in

any way looked like a commando outfit. Instead, they stuck to drab colors, but varied them just like everyone else would. So they may have worn dark brown trousers, a dark green shirt, black arm coverings, and clothes like that. Hidden pockets could be sewn in to carry items they didn't want to reveal. In such an outfit, they could hide in bushes as well as pretend to be a servant delivering a message.

Today technology does not preclude these principles, but none can deny you have to know what is out there and maybe how to use it.

The Bansenshukai is filled with directions on how to make various torches and how to use them. They had torches that gave off light for long periods of time, were resistant to rain, could be put together in a hurry, and various other qualities. Today, we use flashlights.

One thing we know now is that red light doesn't do much damage to our night vision. Lens caps for flashlights, goggles, and even bulbs can easily be purchased, usually at a store geared toward astronomy fans. Elite units spend a few hours in rooms lit by red lights prior to a night mission. When having to step outside into normally lighted rooms, they wear red goggles. The goggles also come in handy if when on a mission they have to get near or use regular light.

To see in the dark better, understand there are two types of sensors in the eyes, rods and cones. One is better for seeing details, the other for seeing in the dark. The exact center of your vision is where it is weakest at seeing in the dark. So look at something, then run your vision around it in a circle, catching bits and pieces from different angles of the eye.

Night vision devices come in three basic types; active, passive, and heat.

Active night vision relies on using a light source that falls outside the normal band that the human eye can see and a special scope that can see it and projects a vision humans can see on a monitor. This is the cheapest and probably most common form of night vision you can get your hands on.

There are pluses and minuses. Since it provides its own source of light, you can use it anywhere to see, including the bottom of a

mine shaft shut off from any exterior source of light. The cost is also a plus. But the arc of light is visible to anyone that has the right scope. So a patrol going through no man's land, sweeping the area with their scopes, stands out like a beacon to a sniper looking out also using a scope, but with the light source turned off. There is also the matter of range, with everything beyond the range of the light being invisible.

For these reasons, passive systems are more preferred. They do not use their own source of light of any sort, instead taking any light available and amplifying so that it is visible to the human eye. They can pick up the light the active systems use as well. Models like this were used in the Vietnam conflict. But early generations suffered from being easily burned out by a sudden flash of light. If the guard you were observing suddenly lit up a cigarette, you were left holding a paperweight that cost thousands of dollars.

Modern models have got safeguards in place to trip if there is a danger of overload. They are now commonly available for civilian purchase in most free countries. They cost more than active light models, but are still rather reasonable and the cost keeps coming down each year.

Heat systems are frequently called FLIR for Forward Looking Infrared. They pick up the heat and relay it in visible light on a monitor. The result is similar to what you see in the movie "Predator." A few decades ago they were so large, requiring cooling elements, that they were only really seen on things like police helicopters. Time has made them both smaller and less expensive. There are even versions that snap over the lens of smart phones. They tend to be much more expensive than any other type of night vision. During the 2020 pandemic, many stores mounted them at the entrance to monitor anyone coming in with a fever.

IR lights useable with the active versions are easily bought. They have various uses. Some make license plate holders with IR bulbs ringing them. Many common surveillance cameras see into the IR. License plate holders that have IR light thus are like shining a flashlight into the camera, making them unreadable. Since the light is invisible to the naked eye, no one without a scope is any the wiser.

Some have even made hats and the like to shield the face from being picked up by a camera.

Some smart phones can see into this spectrum of the light. Others, such as the iPhone 4 and later models, put in a filter. Strangely, while the main camera of the iPhone 4 has the filter, the Facetime camera facing the user does not.

Of course, if you have a scope that will pick up the light spectrum of the active versions of night vision, you can see any light source. If the area you are infiltrating has active IR lighting and camera system, you can easily tell they are there when they are on. Small lights using IR bulbs can be set up with their own power sources at points that you have to monitor at a distance, so anyone coming into the range of the lights can be seen by you with your scope.

Obviously, there are many, many uses for these types of things and many cautions on them being used on you. The technology changes over time, and reading up on the matter is needed.

One simple piece of equipment that can help see in the dark is the common pair of binoculars. They, and telescopes, work by compressing a wide viewpoint into a smaller one. This also goes for the available light. While nowhere as good as night vision gear, they are surprisingly effective in seeing things otherwise invisible in the night. In general, those models with wide forward lenses condense more light. But even straight tubes can be very helpful. While you can't expect to read a newspaper using them, seeing into the shadow of a tree under a full moon becomes a possibility at about half a football field away with most models. They also have the advantage of not attracting the same sort of attention night vision devices might. A border guard finding them in your car might not even think twice, but would question why someone would have an IR scope. They can be purchased almost anywhere at a cost that makes it easy to justify throwing them away as you exfiltrate. Certainly, at least a passing familiarity with them is justified.

Developing Psychic- Like Powers

Within the Togakure-ryu, a ninjutsu tradition that claims a history back to the 12th century, there is a test given before someone is allowed to be a full fledged teacher. The tester sits with his back to his teacher with his legs tucked under him, a position known as seiza in Japanese and the bane of many non-Japanese martial artists forced into it during bowing in. The teacher has a sword in his hands. In the old days, this was a real sword. Now it is something that will sting like bamboo, but the main injury in case of failure is to the pride. After a few seconds of gathering their spirits, the tester suddenly and without warning brings the sword down upon the head of the student. If the student can sense the attack and move out of the way before he can get hit, he passes.

There are things still beyond our ability to explain them. I refuse to accept the idea that we can never hope to explain them, just that we haven't figured out yet. I also reject the idea that I must accept anyone's else's explanation. They are still mysteries to us until they can be proven one way or another.

What some people call psychic powers, others call intuition. And sometimes, working backwards, intuition is based on some very sound observations made below the level of conscious thought. Honing these senses can yield very powerful results.

There was once a horse that performed solving simple math problems. On stage, it was asked what two numbers added together were. It then stomped out the correct number every time. It was a huge success as a show, and the owners honestly believed in its abilities since there was no guile on their part. So when they were invited to test things in a lab, they happily agreed.

In the lab, the horse failed to give the correct number. As it turned out, it was picking up on the subtle signals hundreds of people in the audience were giving off. Everyone watching knew the answer when it was asked what three plus five was, and the collective tension rose just about when it hit eight, then they gave off a feeling of relief that told the horse to halt there.

If a horse can pick that sort of thing up, what is stopping us? It may not be as sexy as the idea of powers that would let us into

Professor Xavier's Academy for Young Mutants, but such things are of value. The slight edge we get is what may save us, or help us complete our mission.

This is how I view the test from Togakure-ryu, often call the sakki test after the Japanese word for "killer intent." You read... something. But is it the actual intent, or are you just taking a lot of bits of information and piecing them together, just like in the intelligence gathering process? No one can really say for sure.

The advice I got from my teachers in Japan was to merely take walks, preferably at night. The idea was to just walk. Don't listen to music, don't talk with friends on the phone, just walk. Note what you see and experience, but then let it pass without holding onto the thoughts they might give rise to. Just walk, taking in everything.

Well, for years I did just that. I finally took the test not too long before I was ready to leave Japan and return to America. Many people are eager to take the test, jumping on the chance to try it just as soon as they qualify. Their reasoning seems to be that if they fail the first time, or the 12th, they have plenty of time to take it again. For me, there was no rush. The training in Japan is not separated by rank and I could go to any class I wanted to. Unlike many Japanese residents, I did not do seminar tours. Indeed, when I went back to the states I was running down people like Marc MacYoung who had plenty of experience with real violence to learn from them. So it was a surprise to many when I finally raised my hand when it was asked at the end of class if anyone wanted to take the test.

One reason I had put off taking the test was that the rules suddenly changed while I was living there. One day the word came down that Hatsumi Masaaki, the head of the Togakure-ryu, would no longer be giving the test himself. Instead, senior teachers would be administering it under his gaze as they prepared for the passing of the torch. Furthermore, as much as possible people would be tested by senior members from their country.

To be blunt, many of the Americans that were allowed to give the test didn't impress me. It wasn't just a matter of skill, or lack of it. Stories were rife that many would give the test and then forever hold that over the person, demanding they pay them to come and give

seminars in return for the favor they gave them in swinging the sword.

The reason I finally took the test was that a friend of mine knew that I had never taken it and encouraged me to do so. When I told him my reluctance to let just any American give it to me, he said he would try to help. When Americans that could give the test visited Japan, he asked if I respected them enough to take the test. Finally, he found one that I greatly admired and he got him to agree to stand up and give the test to me when I raised my hand.

But the Boss, as the head of Togakure-ryu is often called, threw us a curveball. He spoke up as the American who agreed to give me the test started to walk up. He said that as far as he was concerned, I was Japanese and the most senior Japanese teacher there would give me the test. This was an honor far greater than passing the test as far as I was concerned, and I could have left the room happy at that point. The teacher I ended up taking the test from was a man named Nogushi- sensei, a man I did not consider my teacher, but whose classes I had frequently attended.

I sat and prepared myself. Then I twitched. This is fairly common as people let their nerves control him. It is quite common for people to roll long before the teacher is even in position with the sword. Quite often, they keep rolling and rolling, eventually getting lucky and rolling just as the teacher is about to strike. I've seen that happen a few times, and am convinced that it is a strategy for some. The thought of me moving for nothing angered me. I did not know it at the time, but the friend that arranged for me to take the test told me later that Noguchi had moved to position the sword just as I moved, so he thinks I was picking up something.

That was unknown to me, and I was filled with a mixture of shame and anger at the idea of maybe being one of those people that roll too soon, or rolling and passing by luck rather than actually picking up anything. I made an instant choice to sit there, let myself be hit, and come back later to try again. I would technically be one of those that failed the first time, but I needed to know that I passed because I deserved to. So I resolved to let myself be hit, accepting my fate.

Things didn't work out that way.

I found myself a few feet away, looking back at where I had been sitting, and wondering what the HELL just happened to me. The room exploded in applause as everyone broke out clapping. My friend said it was the best test he had seen in months.

Was my resolve to take a blow on the head a factor in my passing? I can't say for sure one way or another. There is a poem passed down in the Togakure-ryu that, crudely translated says, "Those that say this technique come from ME close their ears to the teaching of the spirits." By giving up, I may have won. Those that seem to want to control everything and be the master of their fate seem to do the worst at the test. But in the end, no one can say for sure.

I passed along what I was told to my students when I started teaching in America. A few years later, we visited Japan. One of my students, and a good friend, took the test while we were there. He was asked when he stood up who his teacher was. He pointed to me, and again the Boss said that I was considered a Japanese and so the test would be given by the most senior Japanese teacher in the room. This turned out to be one of my teachers by the name of Oguri sensei. My friend/student passed on the first try as well. So I do believe there is some merit in taking long walks at night, allowing yourself to experience all that is going on with no attachment to any thoughts that might rise Experience, acknowledge, and let go.

A contrast in approaches to the test is in order. Stephen Hayes is a name probably familiar to those that have read even a little about the ninja. Though he was not the first foreigner to visit Japan and learn the art of the ninja, he was one of the early ones. In the early 80s, he helped set off the ninja boom with all the books and articles he put out. Though he is now persona non grata as far as the Japanese are concerned, his works were very influential in the early days when there was a desert in terms of available information in English about the ninja.

In one of his early works from Ohara Publications, which also put out Black Belt Magazine, Hayes demonstrated various exercises meant to increase the psychic abilities of the reader. There were things such as cards with illustrations on them that a partner is supposed to look at, and the tester would guess. (This is the same

thing Bill Murray was doing when we first see him in the movie Ghostbusters.) Another was to close your eyes and imagine a globe of energy around you. The partner was to then extend their arm through the imaginary barrier and, if the tester sensed it, he was to open his eyes and see if he was correct.

Many people followed these instructions. For years, Hayes was the only American to visit Japan and he was the first American to pass the test as a result. However, when I moved to Japan it was common knowledge that Hayes had failed the test perhaps dozens of times before finally passing it. Some Japanese told me directly that they believed that he finally got lucky and rolled just at the right moment rather than by any skill he had. More than one person has told me that they failed the test after trying Hayes' methods, and only passed when they gave up and were prepared to just be hit.

After blogging about the matter, I got a lot of responses from people explaining their experiences with the test. A common thread was that those that tried to pass the test failed, those that just let things happen passed. As a result, I came up with a theory for why Hayes with his methods of picking up intent, failed so often.

There is what is called the OODA loop. It stands for Observe, Orient, Decide, and Act. The first part is getting information, the second deciding its context. Only then can you choose what to do and lastly you act. In terms of the sakki test, with a sword coming at you, this process is far too slow. It is like self defense. If you see an attack, then make a choice as how to respond and only then act, you are going to be punched across the street.

Quite simply, there has to be something more primal at play. If you consciously know what is going on, it is too late. It has to be like when you snatch your hand away and only THEN realize there was a poisonous spider approaching it.

It is my belief, which I freely admit is not backed by scientific studies, that the walks where you experience things and then let them go, so you are in the moment and not thinking about plans for later, the talk you had that morning, and everything else, hones this ability to pick things up and act while bypassing the conscious mind. After a lot of experience driving, someone might see a large object fall off the back of a truck in front of them on the freeway and move

immediately to another lane that is safe without ever giving it a thought until afterwards. This, I believe, is just another manifestation of taking action without thought that we are more familiar with.

Most situations are not as desperate as dodging swords, but honing this ability and listening to our total sum of our existence instead of just conscious thoughts are of obvious value. Of course, the first step is just acknowledging that our instincts are often quite correct. Far too often we ignore any feelings of unease or danger. We don't want to react and appear to be foolish. This often has bad results. In Japan, the news often reports that people from Africa will tell Japanese women that they must feel unease because they are black. It has led to many bad incidents that have flooded the media. The message going out to women now is that anyone that tries to discount a woman's reluctance by accusing them of racism probably has ill intent toward them. Any man that honestly thinks a woman is pulling back from them because of racist ideas would be far more likely to feel disgust towards them and go find a woman more worthy instead of playing emotional blackmail.

If you get a bad feeling from someone or a situation, listen to it. There is a chance that it is a false positive. For example, someone might resemble a person that hurt you in the past, so red flags go off in your mind. But if you feel uneasy about something, it bears examination. If you realize the reason why you feel that way, and it is not a valid reason, you can reject it. This is far from dismissing any feelings you have as being silly as a matter of course, or with just a quick consideration. Of course, you can't take proactive measures for the most part, such as shooting someone that gives you a bad feeling. But it is best to do things that keep you safe until your unease is proven to be unfounded.

A good book to expand this idea is "The Gift of Fear" by Gavin DeBecker. The premise of the book, and reason for the title, is that fear is our bodies way of telling us that the unconscious has picked up, but the conscious mind has yet to.

https://www.amazon.com/Gift-Fear-Gavin-Becker/dp/0316235776/ref=sr_1_1?crid=NN2JQEYH9WTJ&dchild=1&keywords=the+gift+of+fear&qid=1622495499&srefix=The+gift+of+fear%2Caps%2C210&sr=8-1

An example he gives is a case where a woman said that she was flummoxed by her dog's reaction to her boyfriend. She thought the man was the sweetest man alive, but the dog hated him with a passion, barking and barely being able to be restrained from attacking him. They filmed an interaction with all three parties. On looking at the video, it was obvious that the woman, consciously thinking the man was pure and noble, was giving off body language of fear of him and the dog, like the horse, was picking up on those signals.

Introspection is important when developing these sort of skills. A good exercise is to go out in public and sit down where you can observe the mass of humanity going by. Without speaking to anyone, pick out people and try to determine what they are thinking and what they are going to do. Then, ask yourself why you believe what you do. Examine your feelings and your reasoning. Then repeat with others. The more you practice, the better you get. From time to time, if possible, do this with people you know you will interact with later. Subtly ask them questions to see if your impressions were on mark or not. But even if they give one answer, maybe saying your instinct was wrong, it might be that they are not aware of what they were thinking anymore, or are a bit guarded about things. It is sometimes difficult to get the truth out of people, as the example with the woman with the dog proves.

On the other end is to get away from people and do the exercises in nature from the stealth chapter. Getting in tune with yourself seems to be the first step in connecting with others below the surface so to speak. Hours spend sitting alone, quietly observing as the patterns of nature take place around you, seems to yield great results. Though I can't prove it, I believe that stepping back from humanity is rather like blindfolding yourself. Just as you notice everything you see much clearer when it comes off, so to are you more in tune with body language and the like for a while after you return to humanity.

A good book to explore this concept is "Left of Bang." The author gears it a lot toward the military, but the basic concepts are easily adapted to other situations.

https://www.amazon.com/Left-of-Bang-audiobook/dp/B0187WEVXY/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=left+of+bang&qid=1622495855&sr=8-1

One important concept the book introduces is the idea of setting a baseline. It is nearly impossible to come into something cold and be able to tell if something is off or not. When you get a bit of familiarity with something, only then can you really tell if something is normal, or a sign of danger.

This goes for everything like the way things are on the street to personal relationships. Talk to someone for a while and you get to know how they react. When there is something that upsets them, you can pick it up easier. Mind you, it is difficult sometimes to tell exactly what is going on. Some use this to be able to tell if people are lying to them. After a conversation in one manner, when asked about something the body language, pace and tone of the voice, and other things can suddenly change. While this may indicate falsehood, it could be something else, so use caution. If you turn the conversation into the topic of rape and the man you are talking to changes behavior a bit, it may be that he has raped someone, or it may be that his sister was and he feels her pain vividly.

While examining territory, like that which you live in, knowing the baseline of an area might save your life. Different times of day, as well as the day of the week itself, can change the feel of a street. But if a street outside a club has always been humming with activity on a Friday night, but is calm and subdued this night, you may want to take caution and/or ask someone. The locals closer to the news might know that there has been a flare up between two rival gangs and the street is home to a place one of them considers their home base.

One of the rules set down in the book is the idea of threes before action. One thing that sets off alarms may be a fluke. Two, coincidence. But if three or more things appear, it is time to duck. Of course, there are times and circumstances where just one might cause the need to act. But to overcome our tendency to explain away things that should warn us, the three things to act rule should be put into place. Better safe than a statistic.

A simple exercise that can help a bit is to keep a journal of your feelings. Take time to just sit down and examine your feelings and put them down on paper. By making the effort to put what is going through your mind, you force yourself to examine yourself and what is happening to you. If you aren't good with what you are, you really can't hope to be able to read others to the best of your abilities. Before you expect to know others, you need to do your best to know yourself. This is another thing that going into nature helps with. People are more in touch with themselves a few days away from civilization. It is perhaps the best thing you can do. But a journal can be kept no matter where you are, as long as you have time to sit down and ponder what you are going to say about what is on your mind.

There are many, many things we do not understand. Part of me is frustrated by the lack of clear answers, while another is filled with joy that there are still mysteries to chase. Examining what we are is a task that can never be completed.

Breaking and Entering

Getting into things is a skill of the ninja, and not much needs to be said to justify this statement. It also need not be argued too much that technology has advanced far past what the ninja of the 17th century had to deal with. While the general principles of ninjutsu are still largely applicable in the modern age, nothing has changed as much as the techniques of entering a building since that time.

From the start, a common misconception needs to be dealt with. There are actually two different ways of getting into a place you are not supposed to. One is destructive, the other not. Much of the non-destructive is actually talked about in the open. This is because those that would break into areas for criminal purposes rarely care if they do damage or not. Getting into a place without destroying anything or leaving a trace is mainly done by two different types.

Penetration testers are those that get into areas that they are not supposed to in order to test the defenses. If they can get in, they can write a report and help those that hire them to plug the gaps in the defenses. As much as it stands to reason that companies would want all options and possible attacks to be dealt with in order to find ways of defending against them, in reality they rarely fail to say that anything that will leave permanent damage is off limits. So the penetration teams can pick locks, but not break through windows, even if it is far easier to do so than get in by any other means.

The other type that gets in without damage are those that need to do so secretly. If you are on a raid to destroy an enemy computer system in charge of making nuclear bombs, it makes no sense to conceal how you got in. But if your job is to plant a computer virus that might monitor such a program, or lead to the eventual destruction of the tools that allow it to come to pass, then getting in without doing anything that would let security catch on starts to make a lot more sense.

If the ninja is to plant bugs, then they have to know how to get in and out without anything like a broken window giving them away. At the same time, sometimes it is just a matter of getting in and burning the building to the ground. Both aspects must be covered. But

because of the situation, there are many more sources in the open for getting in without anyone knowing than something that might be of use to a meth addict trying to feed his habit as fast as possible.

There are already many videos online that can better teach things like lock picking. Video is a superior method to convey such information, so I am posting links that will be helpful. If the videos get taken down, I probably can find others and update this book.

For a good overview of destructive techniques, here is a video called B&E, A to Z. The original is out of print so to speak, so they allowed it to be put up on Youtube from what I have heard.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2GK9xZJhvQ>

Then we get into non-destructive methods to get in and out without anyone realizing they have been breached.

For a start, here is a video on how to pick locks.

<https://youtu.be/gTZddvAws9M>

A follow up video explains some common problems you might face.

<https://youtu.be/YnW7dilY1I8>

One simple method is called bump locking.

https://youtu.be/WpH_t0u5Ybg

There are two channels I highly recommend. One is the Not So Civil Engineer.

<https://youtube.com/user/amihirata>

The other is the Lock Picking Lawyer.

<https://youtube.com/c/lockpickinglawyer>

Between the two, there are hundreds of hours of videos explaining how to break into various locks and situations without leaving a trace.

There are other channels with their own videos such as this one explaining how to break into a master combination lock.

<https://youtu.be/w4wkCcsWs4c>

In contrast, if you have to get in quickly and don't care if the lock is destroyed, there are videos like this.

<https://youtu.be/oOSWXo9fpTI>

There are some playlists I recommend, such as the under door entry methods one.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oZapeDZDd-o&list=PLwxkGxLTPJTlxkqsmrWOnHAudf4rLv9A>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVtpz85CKa0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjuH6UoxXMg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=njU3r3aWm3k>

I suggest you take the time to explore these channels and see what they have.

At the same time, there are some decent books on physically breaking into buildings as part of being a penetration tester. One that I own and recommend is, Physical Red Team Operations; Testing by Jerimiah Talamantes. Like this book, it is available to read free if you have Kindle Unlimited.

https://www.amazon.com/Physical-Red-Team-Operations-REDTEAMOPSEC-ebook/dp/B07X4KB6GC/ref=sr_1_1?crid=2RV6EW7P1XCDDT&keywords=physical+red+team+operations&qid=1622554803&sprefix=physical+red%2Caps%2C196&sr=8-1

Strategy

The Bansenshukai states at one point, “The Shinobi should learn three things; guts, smooth talking, and wise strategy.”

Bravery isn’t something you can really learn from a book. I hope I covered smooth talking a bit. Now it is time to discuss strategy.

When talking about strategy, we aren’t just talking about what goes on in the battlefield. The type of battles between people on an individual level, organizations, and the like are also what the ninja had to consider and use. One excellent source for all sorts of battle is the 36 stratagems from Asia. Most versions stick with the original examples, created in China and spread from there. Instead of concentrating on references that most people are unfamiliar with, the following are explanations that most of us today will be able to relate to.

The First Stratagem, Fool the Emperor and Cross the Sea.

This title comes from a story, of which there is more than one version.

Long ago, the emperor Taizong arrived at the Yellow Sea that separated much of China from Koguryo, modern day Korea. Looking out, he sees nothing but water for as far as the eye can see. When he started to despair, his generals had a counsel among themselves. A general, Xue Rengui, suggests a plan by which the emperor is fooled into making the journey.

Construction begins on a fleet to cross the ocean. While the emperor is reluctant to get onto the water, he is willing to stop by and observe the construction, even stepping onto the ships as they are being made. One day, he even has a banquet in one of the ships he thinks is close to completion. After he finishes eating, it is revealed to him that the ship is not only complete, but now launched and on its way across the water to invade. Seeing that things are not as bad as he feared, the emperor accepts the situation and lets his forces continue on their way to invade Koguryo.

From this comes the meaning of lulling the target into ignoring a possible threat by constant exposure to it without harm. This can take many forms.

The stratagem need not be limited to clash of arms. Richard Marcinko was a member of the elite navy SEALs who was charged with testing the security of navy bases. His unit used stealth and guile to penetrate their targets to expose the weaknesses that needed to be plugged to keep the facilities safe. One of their favorite tactics when facing sensors was to trigger them either from range or quickly get away after doing so. False alarms for motion detectors or sensors on walls are actually fairly common. Sometimes it is the wind that sets things off, but more often it is birds or animals. The scenario typically went that the first few times the sensors were set off, guards would rush to the area. Seeing nothing, they returned to other areas. After several false alarms during the night, the guards would stop showing up and it was then that Marcinko took his men over the walls.

The Second Stratagem- Besiege Wei to Rescue Zhao.

This of course has a story behind it. In ancient China, the country of Zhao requested help from Qi when Wei attacked it and laid siege to its capitol. Qi sent eighty thousand men, but instead of rushing to face the Wei forces in Zhao directly, they marched on the capitol of Wei, lightly defended now that its armies were on the road. The Wei forces could not allow this to happen, and so abandoned their campaign in Zhao to rush back and save their capitol.

The key to this strategy is to threaten something valuable to the enemy, but not a head on clash where they expect.

Guerrilla warfare is well suited for this stratagem. Especially when combined with conventional forces. The exploits of T.E. Lawrence, better known as Lawrence of Arabia manifest this stratagem in abundance.

When the first world war broke out, the Turkish Ottoman empire sided with the Axis of Austria and the German states. To put pressure on them, and keep hordes of Turkish soldiers from flooding the battlefields of Europe, Britain sent a small expeditionary force to the Middle East. While there were a few very fierce clashes, the mere existence of the British forces were almost enough to ensure the objective of keeping the Turks from turning the advantage against them closer to home. Unable to tell where and when the

British could march on their capitol, the Turks were never able to be much of a help to their allies.

Lawrence took this further, and on a smaller scale with less resources. As the Turkish forces maneuvered against the conventional armies arrayed against them, Lawrence recruited highly mobile strike teams that would travel through the desert quickly since they were lightly equipped, strike almost undefended targets and then fade away before rescue could come for their targets.

The targets they hit were supply trains, telegraph wires that let the Turks act as a team rather than scattered units and any place that didn't have much of a garrison. This forced the Turks to pull troops from facing the army and naval forces the British had to man stations and serve as quick reaction forces in response to the threat Lawrence and his bands presented them. Lawrence never had to hold ground, that was the job of the conventional forces who advanced on Damascus slowly but surely. His job was to hit soft targets and do as much damage as he could. He was free to strike when he wanted and only when the situation was right for him. The Turks never knew where he was until he struck, and a huge number of troops never were able to be used against the conventional forces because they were tied down by of his constant attacks.

This helped prevent the Ottoman Empire from bringing it's full might on the expeditionary force and destroying it. Had they been able to do that, the pressure on them would be lessened and they would have been able to throw their troops onto the battlefields of Europe. The use of a small force, supported by an even smaller force under Lawrence, the allies managed to keep their advantage in Europe and slowly drove the German forces back.

The Third Stratagem- Kill with a Borrowed Knife.

This stratagem is used when you get another to do your dirty work for you. It might be because it is easier for them to do so, or that you want to keep your hands clean.

Ninja used this to great effect. They would forge letters to senior generals under an enemy warlord. The letters would detail plots and such against the general's master, as if the negotiations were

already completed and he merely needed to set up the lord for betrayal at the proper time or signal. Then they would arrange for themselves to be captured while carrying them. At first, they would pretend to be resistant and keep the letter hidden. But as their interrogators made it clear that they would not leave alive without something in return, they would act more and more frightened and finally pull out the hidden letter and beg for their lives. The general, one of the most effective of the warlord's, would probably be taken out and executed at that point.

Sometimes this was a backup plan. The ninja sneaking into a fortress would have such a letter on him just in case he was caught and then he could possibly bargain with his captors for freedom. But even if he failed to gain his own freedom, he knew that at least he was taking down a key member of the enemy's staff.

Sometimes just setting two enemies against each other can be the application of this stratagem. Convince one enemy nation that another is about to invade and no matter who loses, you win. In personal relationships at work and such, pretending to be friends with someone you know is trying to pull you down, only to pass along stories that you say another rival is saying about him can get them at each other while you pick up the pieces.

The Fourth Stratagem- Await the Exhausted Enemy at Your Ease.

The essence of this stratagem has been known at least as far back as Sun Tzu's classic work, *The Art of War*. There in chapter 6, is this piece of wisdom.

"Those who are first on the battlefield and await their opponents are at ease; those who are last on the battlefield and head into battle get worn out. (cut) Thus good warriors make others come to them, and do not go to others."

Later, in chapter 7, Sun Tzu expands on this idea.

"Standing your ground, awaiting those far away, awaiting the weary in comfort, awaiting the hungry with full stomachs, is mastering strength."

There is almost always an advantage to defense over offense. The

exceptions are things such as surprise attacks. When dealing with huge armies, it typically requires about three times the size of the forces in defense and dug in to overcome them. Sometimes it takes even more. Small forces can defend against larger forces quite easily as long as they are given time to put up defenses that they can hide behind.

The tricky part is getting the enemy to come after you and destroy his forces on your defensive position.

This stratagem also incorporates the idea of an exhausted enemy. By making the enemy work in some way, you sap away their strength. Then when the clash happens, they are less able to fight. In 16th century Japan, the Hojo family employed the Fuma band, sometimes counted as ninja, as rappa. Their tactics were to attack the enemy on the eve of a battle. They cared little about doing great damage. A typical weapon they used was the single shot matchlock gun. Creeping up in stealth, they would launch a quick attack, firing their guns only once. Then they would escape before the defenders could rally and counter attack. Once the excitement had abated, the rappa would again start to creep forward to repeat as many attacks as they could that night. The next morning, the Hojo faced an army that hadn't gotten much sleep.

In the same way, the enemy can be given tasks to spread their resources and harry them. Rumors and false plots can be dropped in their lap for them to worry about and make vain efforts to counter. Everything that can be done to sap their strength before the clash helps give the edge to you. Partisans behind the enemy line can help destroy supplies and transport, making it difficult for the front line troops to bring as many resources to bear as they normally could. Disruptions among a rival company makes them less competitive against you.

When the disruptions are in place, then you sit back entrenched and waiting for them to come to you.

Mao summed up his version of this when he wrote, "When the enemy comes, we go. When the enemy rests, we disrupt. When the enemy is exhausted, we fight. When the enemy goes, we give chase."

The Fifth Stratagem- Loot a Burning House.

This means to take advantage of a misfortune an enemy encounters to press your advantage. When a enemy province has a famine, it is of course easier to conquer it. Sometimes, disasters can be induced by trickery and stealth. Ninja in Japan did their best to set generals against their lords, encourage the peasants under him to revolt and other acts to shatter their unity and ability to resist.

But the reference to a burning house rather than a burnt one is telling. Burning houses are a danger to all that enter them, which of course would include the looters. Because of the danger, people are actively trying to escape and stay away. That is the course that practical people take. Advantage is gained when either the strategist can deal with the danger, or there really is no danger in the first place.

A simple example of this is when a company has a temporary setback and everyone panics, selling the stock. Things may be overblown, and the company will recover and come back stronger than ever. Many a millionaire owes his fortune for buying when everyone is panicking,

Many key personal have been recruited and swept away when a nation is about to fall. America owes its space program to sending agents into Germany just after it was defeated and things were still in chaos to offer rocket scientists a refuge before things settled and the Soviets had a chance at them. Of course, the Soviets were doing the same thing.

The key to this is of course realizing when a threat is overblown or knowing a way that can deal with it. Public perception is very deceptive. Those that can see the truth behind the perception have a long term advantage. In this day where public opinion and attitudes is shaped by simple memes on Facebook, those that take the time to research the real situation in detail seem to be falling in number.

While it might be impossible to understand every situation that falsely appears to be a disaster, some specialized knowledge can help prepare one for recognizing opportunities when they present

themselves. While everyone is running to the doors screaming, Fire! the savvy strategist stops to pick up a few things the others have dropped in their panic.

The Sixth Stratagem- Clamor in the East, Attack in the West.

This is one of the most common tactics used. Pretend to go one way and then attack from another. You can see it in sports, business and warfare.

A key to it now is not making the feint too obvious. Make sure to let the enemy know your stated intent so he responds, but it is best if he thinks it was something he stumbled upon by chance or discovered through guile.

During World War 2, the allies prepared to attack Sicily. To achieve surprise, they used an elaborate plot to fool the Germans into thinking the invasion was coming through Greece instead. Central to this plan was finding a man who had died of pneumonia, and thus had water in his lungs. They built up papers identifying him as a major, dressing him appropriately as well. They then chained a case with plans for an invasion of Greece to his wrist and dropped his body into the ocean so it would wash ashore in Portugal. Though neutral, Portugal was allied with Germany and when they got the body back from the Portuguese authorities, there was faint evidence that the case had been opened and examined. Thanks to this, the invasion of Sicily went off a lot easier than it could have.

A common tactic, because it works, is to send off a small group of soldiers with radios for each. They are encouraged to talk among themselves on the radios pretending to be a division of soldiers. The enemy discovers the transmissions on his own, thus thinking that he has scored a coup and doesn't expect it as a trap.

An enemy spy discovered among you need not always be exposed publicly. He may be isolated from real information and fed information that you want the enemy to believe. False files can be stored on a computer for hackers to find. If the enemy has to root out the information, they are more likely to believe it. Make the acquisition too easy and they will suspect it for what it is.

The Seventh Stratagem- Create Something from Nothing.

General George Patton was originally absent from the invasion of Europe by the allies during World War 2. He was part of a plan to convince the Germans that the landings at Normandy were actually a feint and the real thrust would be at Calais. To achieve this end, an entire army was created out of thin air. Inflatable tanks were set up for German reconnaissance planes to photograph. Enough radio traffic to simulate an army was achieved with only a few dozen men. And of course Patton's assignment as head of this fictional army helped convince the Germans that it was real. Because of this deception, Hitler kept his tank forces back in reserve rather than rush them to Normandy to drive the allies back into the ocean. Without it, the invasion might never have gotten the foothold it did.

Today false online personas are common. More than a few businesses and governments have been compromised because someone thought they were flirting with a beautiful woman that was actually a 330 pound man on the other side of the computer. False businesses, resumes and many other things can be created almost as convincingly as if they existed in the real world.

Of course, convincing the enemy you have something you do not can blow up in your face. This was the fate of Saddam Hussein. One of the arguments for the invasion of Iraq and the toppling of Hussein was that it was uncertain if Hussein had been complying with the conditions against him building weapons of mass destruction. It wasn't that there was proof that he had them, just that there was enough to suspect that maybe he was since he was not complying with the inspectors and doing everything he could to interfere with letting the world know that he was in accordance with the agreements made after the first gulf war. Analysts have a theory that Hussein wanted the world to think he had weapons of mass destruction when he did not. By pretending that he had them, he could keep his enemies in the area at bay and use them as a subtle threat. He wanted people to think he had the ability to threaten them, but wanted to stay within the international standards for proof. He seems to have thought that if the US could not prove he had them (because he didn't) then they couldn't do anything against him while at the same time he enjoyed the benefits of everyone treating him like a man with a massive weapons cache he could unleash on them

at any time.

Of course, in the wake of the anthrax attacks in the US (see more under stratagem 13- Beat the Grass to Startle the Snake) the US was no longer willing to trust international opinion and standards of proof to protect itself. Not knowing if Hussein had weapons of mass destruction or not, in particular a bio- weapon program, President Bush ignored international calls in order to invade and topple Hussein. In the end, there was no threat that could be found, but Hussein ended up hanged in the end by his own people.

The Eighth Stratagem- Openly Repair the Walkway, Secretly March to Chencang.

This refers to an event in the third century B.C. between Liu Bang and Xiang Yu. The two had been part of a coalition that overthrew the previous dynasty, only to have bad blood rise among them. Liu Bang was assigned a territory in Hanzhong, far from Xiang Yu. He burned the wooden walkways leading to Guanzhong where Xiang Yu was as he moved to his new territory. This was to both make an attack on him more difficult and showed his intent to not march back with his army and start strife once again.

However, there came a time when Liu Bang did seek to conquer his rival and he sent a small force of men to repair the walkways. When told of this, Xiang Yu's general laughed and said such a small force would take years to undo the damage done. But instead of using the walkways, Liu Bang's forces made a secret march to Chencang. This caught the forces of Xian Yu completely by surprise and after a few years of campaigning, Liu Bang was triumphant and set up the Han Dynasty under him.

This stratagem is similar to that of the sixth, clamor in the East, attack in the West. The difference lies in the fact that there is actual preparations being made, but not one that the strategist is too loyal to. The preparations are made a bit obvious and maybe not that committed, but they are actual preparations.

In Japanese, there is a strategy in one of the ninja traditions of Kyojitsu Tenkanho . Early translations presented this as replacing truth with falsehood, but that is a bit off. Instead of truth and falsehood, a better translation would be potential and actual.

Tenkanho means ways of rotating between. So a better translation might be, Ways of rotating between the actual and the potential.

In practical terms, this means having more than one attack ready to put into action while not being committed to any one method.

When the enemy counters the current attack, it is abandoned and another that had been a potential attack then is put into play as the actual attack. The enemy is still dealing with the old attack and is surprised by the new one.

As an example, a throw is attempted but the opponent resists.

Resisting a technique means that it has been discovered and is no longer a surprise. Rather than try to overcome the resistance, a blow is struck. The hand that struck the blow had been in a position where it could launch even while the throw was being attempted. So it had been a potential attack that turned into an actual one at the same time as the actual attack in the form of the throw is dropped and becomes a potential attack. For once the blow is struck, it might be that the opponent can no longer resist the throw or is aware of its potential.

This stratagem requires a bit of assessment of the obvious ploy's effects. Most times, the enemy will see it and react. If they don't react or defend against the attack, perhaps thinking it a feint with no chance of success, then the obvious attack is the real attack.

The Ninth Stratagem- Observe the Fire on the Opposite Shore.

This stratagem is named from a scene from the famous story, The Romance of the Three Kingdoms. It is a well loved story in both China and Japan, and influenced many strategists in those countries. In it, Liu Bei watches a battle between Cao Cao and Sun Quan from across a river. Cao Cao had been lured into setting up his boats side by side so his army could walk across the river. When they were connected, Sun Quan set them alight and the light was visible for many miles.

In this stratagem, you sit back while your enemy battle it out. Unlike the fifth stratagem, loot a burning house, you do not get involved at all. While you might start the flames, and maybe fan them a bit, you keep your distance and let two or more rivals rip each other apart. Later you can step in and defeat the greatly reduced foe

who is the winner. Many times, foes will unite if there is a common external enemy. In countries like Yemen, there is a good amount of warfare between the different tribes, but any foreign invader helps to unite them all to cast them out.

There are of course many ways to start conflicts between rivals. But in these cases, no one must suspect that you had a hand in starting the trouble that is ripping them apart now. So there must be no overt sign that you are gaining anything from the conflict. During World War 2, the last Koga ninja by the name Fujita Seiko was sent to China on a mission to assassinate Chang Kai Shek, leader of the Nationalistic forces. He was persuaded to cancel his mission by one of the officers in China that had been there for a long time and realized the situation better than the military leaders back in Tokyo.

As much as possible, Mao's forces during that time tried to sit back and let the Nationalist forces do the bulk of the fighting with the Japanese. Chang was a great military leader and the Japanese feared him much more than the less active Mao. That was the reason the military in Tokyo wanted him dead. They did not see what would happen if he was taken off the board.

With Chang dead, the two Chinese factions would probably unite under Mao. They would stand united against the Japanese and be much more efficient. Even though the communists tried to keep away from any fighting, preparing instead for a time after the Japanese were gone, there were sporadic clashes between them and the nationalists. This would end once Mao was in control of all the Chinese.

Worse for the Japanese, Mao was communist and the Soviet Union might be tempted to break its non-aggression pact with Japan if they could support Mao at that point. This would be much more than the Japanese could deal with. In the end, Fujita ignored the order and felt justified because he was not a soldier himself, and so was not bound by the duty to obey any order the generals handed down. Mao and his communists instead used this stratagem as they sat on their hands for the most part while the Nationalists and Japanese battled each other. It was kind of a combination of this stratagem and loot a burning house as they concentrated instead on building a network of people loyal to them instead of engaging in any military

operation they could avoid. Years later, after the Japanese were thrown out due to America's efforts, the communists were able to turn on the nationalists and within a decade made them retreat to Taiwan, where they remain to this day.

The Tenth Stratagem- Hide Your Dagger Behind a Smile.

Pretending to be a friend while setting them up for an attack is not a rather unique strategy. Every culture has tales of those that pretended to be friends but turned out to be the worst enemy. In Shakespeare, Iago set up Othello by this means. Wormtongue from Lord of the Rings is familiar to most now. The most current, popular, version might be the character of Littlefinger from the series of Game of Thrones. While he never makes a hostile enemy, he is always prepared to stab anyone he knows in the back.

This strategy is found so often because it works so well despite the wide spread knowledge about it. People know on one level that not everyone that acts nice are trustworthy, and yet we can't seem to help ourselves but like those that act kind to us and drop our guard a little.

There are other applications other than personal behavior. More than once, armies have been surprised by an attack in the midst of peace negotiations. Ironically, often the more the attackers outnumber the defenders, the easier they fall for this trap. The weaker party obviously has quite a bit to gain by currying as much favor and building up good will. Most of the time, this is just what it appears. The weaker force realizes the folly of open conflict and hopes to make the best of defeat by making the stronger like them as much as possible. But on occasion, this charm offensive is cover for a sneak attack of some sort.

People tend not to trust compliments and promises made in person. But when they are relayed by a third party, they are very much appreciated. Do not rely on people taking you at your word. Instead, arrange for someone else to sing your praises of how much you appreciate and value their friendship. Make solid actions to show you are a friend, ones that require small sacrifices on your part. They will gain you much trust, which you can exploit in the end.

Stratagem Number Eleven- Let the Plum Tree wither in Place of the Peach.

This is a simple reference to making needed sacrifices. It comes from an ancient Chinese poem that goes,
A peach tree grows by a well.
A plum tree grows next to it.

When insects attack the root of the peach, the plum tree sacrifices itself and withers instead of the peach tree. If trees sacrifice themselves for one another, can brothers forget each other? Sacrifice in conflict is well known. It is a key strategy in both chess and the Asian game of go. However, doing it in reality is a bit more difficult. While it makes logical sense to leave a unit surrounded and keeping the enemy busy while the rest of your forces cross a river safely, when it is real people the choice is not as cut and dried. As the screams for help over the radio get shriller and shriller, the temptation to reverse your decision will increase. Those that are monsters most often claw their way to the top exactly because they are willing to use these sorts of tactics that decent people will balk at.

In business, giving something up like a division so that you can concentrate on your core strengths, isn't as harsh. But there is still a lot of ego and politics that may be invested, so one must learn to be able to steel oneself to make the cut when it is needed. In Japan, battles had to be controlled by line of sight. This meant that the general tried to set up camp in an area where he had as much a view of the battlefield as possible, maybe on a low mountain. For his messengers to find him, he kept a large banner or other token that let the world know where he was in full view visible from miles away. This sometimes worked against him as enemy forces often tried to infiltrate the camp and assassinate him. In response, a retainer willing to sacrifice himself for his lord was dressed in the general's armor and perched on his seat. These brave men were called Kagemusha- shadow warriors. If a messenger came up and delivered a report, he could be told that the real general was nearby. But if it turned out that the messenger was really an enemy assassin, then the retainer would die in the place of his lord.

One must be willing to cut lose things for the ultimate victory. If you let your ego become part of what you do, whether it be a stock

you buy or a strategy, you will be tempted to hold onto it when setting yourself free from it is the best way to recover.

Stratagem number 12- Seize the Opportunity to Lead the Sheep Away.

This title comes from a tale of a destitute man who comes across a flock of sheep while on the road. He eyes them enviously and imagines having one to eat or sell to improve his lot. But the shepherd is nearby and watches him warily. Giving up on his idea, he makes his way through the flock. On the other side, he looks back and notices that the shepherd has wandered a bit off, in the opposite direction and his attention is fixed on a point far away. Taking advantage of the momentary lapse in attention, the traveler scoops up a sheep and quickly leaves before he can be spotted.

Taking advantage of opportunity is a skill in itself. Fortune favors the well prepared as the saying goes. While it might seem easy to jump on mistakes and lapses the other presents, both being able to see such mistakes and being prepared to take advantage of them are a skill that needs to be developed.

In classic strategy, an objective might be given to take a hill. To achieve that aim, plans and a route that moves around to the less guarded rear might be planned for. However, if when starting the route, if the commander observes that the enemy is abandoning the mountain top, he can change his march to take over the positions the enemy abandons. The problem at that point is insuring that all other units realize what has happened so that they are not attacked by their own troops, such as a pre-arranged artillery attack.

To be a good strategist, one must have a mind that adapts to the circumstances instead of trying to force his will on the world. When chance comes along, the mind must be trained to accept it instead of trying to rely on the plans and plots already set up. Like water, the flow of strategy must change and take the shape of whatever vessel it finds itself in. There is a place for making things happen by means of plans and things you set in motion. On the other side of the coin is the ability to go with the flow and recognize opportunity when it comes your way.

Stratagem number 13- Beat the Grass to Startle the Snake.

In essence, this means to hit in one area to get a desired reaction in another. Buddhist priests tried their best to avoid taking life. If it came down to either their life or a snake, they probably would be forced to take the life of the snake. To avoid this, they carried staffs as they walked, beating the ground with it to startle the snake and have it move out of the way to avoid a confrontation.

There are several applications for this simple idea of hitting in one place to get a reaction in another.

Miyamoto Musashi wrote, "In military science, when you cannot perceive the enemy's state, you pretend to make a large scale attack to see what reaction the enemy will make. Such a move can be a true attack, but not very committed, that allows you to see what sort of counter reaction the enemy can mount."

In ninjutsu, there was an art called Yamabiko no Jutsu based on the term for mountain echo. The ninja would reveal some information to a certain source and see what effect it had on the other side. It was a very effective way to reveal leaks. One merely had to insure that a certain story that the enemy had to react to was only told to one person and if the enemy reacted to it, you knew that person was the leak.

In the series Game of Thrones, Tyrion Lannister uses this to find out which of the people surrounding him is a spy for his sister Cersei. Telling five different people five different wedding matches he had made for Cersei's daughter, when Cersei finally came in screaming about his plans he knew which of the five was in her pay.

Even in person, this stratagem of hitting one area to effect another can be used. Small probes can be sent out in conversation to judge reactions. A quick and unexpected reference to someone might yield a reaction before the person thinks to cover their emotions and thus give insight into their true feelings. In some cases, small barbs can send someone into rage and they reveal more than they would had they kept their wits about them. Areas of concern can be noted by bringing them up and seeing if there is an attempt to change the subject right after.

Stratagem number 14- Borrow a Corpse for the Soul's Return.

This means to bring back something to breath new life into something else. It is not very commonly used in tactical situations and more often seen in strategic and political ones. There is a great appeal to the past. People tend to see it as better as the present, no matter what the actual facts are. When bringing something new into the world, it is often easier to get it accepted if it is portrayed as a variation of something in the distant past. In the 20th century, many countries thought to move beyond nationalist sentiment which they thought primitive and not as appealing as the new economic and social systems they triumphed. Nations were thought to be part of the past, and ideology was the future.

In reality, people still thought of themselves as people of certain tribes, and the nation was often the manifestation of that tribe in their minds. They did not respond well to calls for unity with other peoples based on a new view of how things should be, instead clinging to the idea of their country as their home.

This was the case when Germany invaded the Soviet Union during world war 2. The Soviet Union was actually composed of several peoples with their own languages and cultures. When the leaders urged their peoples to resist the German invaders, they were surprised to find that many of the non-Russian peoples actually at first welcomed the Wermacht, at least until the Nazi party official took over. And even among the Russian people there wasn't much support for the idea of dying for the glory of international communism.

But once the professional German army advanced forward and left the conquered areas to the branches of the Nazi party tasked with subjugating the peoples the seeds of resentment were planted. The Soviets then found that appealing to the nationalism of Mother Russia was far more effective than any appeals to any ideology. The posters of everyone united under the flag of international communism fighting the Nazis were replaced with a picture of an old woman representing Mother Russian urging her children to defend her from the German invaders. It struck a much deeper cord among the populace to refer to Russia rather than the Soviet Union.

Robert Greene in his book, *The 48 Laws of Power* has as his 45th law, "Preach the need for change, but never reform too much at

once.” This is an excellent law of his. For as much as people talk of the need for change when you ask them, at heart they lean toward the familiar and known.

Stratagem number 15- Lure the Tiger Down from the Mountain.

A tiger in his home territory is a frightening thing. It knows the area and can use it to its best advantage. As appealing as the mountain might be to others, as long as the tiger roams it, it is off limits to all but the most foolhardy. Once the tiger is away from the mountain, it is much more easily captured. And with the tiger away, the mountain is open for acquisition.

The trick then is to apply the idea of divide and conquer. It might be to take a protector away from that which you desire, or bringing an enemy out of his strong point where you can more easily defeat him.

When William the Conqueror invaded England and faced King Harold II at Hasting, Harold's forces were set up behind secure defensive works. However, the bulk of his forces were levies raised from his vassals and not really disciplined troops compared to the Normans. By means of probes to the line, William's forces managed to get many of the men to break ranks and pursue them out into the field, where they were slaughtered by the Normans. Had they stayed in place, enduring the taunts and missile attacks, the country of England might be a very different place indeed.

Many a time, coups have been set up while the head of the nation is out of the country. The leader may have deep support inside the country among such forces as the military. But without him being there to coordinate, friendly generals do not know who to team up with to counter the coup. This goes even for bloodless political upsets in parliaments. More than once a prime minister has left on vacation or an official visit only to find they have been replaced by the time they got back. Without the ability to be on the ground, the tiger cannot mount as effective a defense.

Stratagem number 16- To Catch Something, First Let It Go.

A cornered animal is at its most dangerous state. When the rat has no escape, it has been known to do deadly damage to the cat in

an attempt to take it with them. An enemy with no chance of survival has nothing left to lose and will fight with a spirit of acceptance and calm. But when there is a small opening of escape, the forces fall apart in their attempt to flee.

Sun Tzu wrote of the dangers of an enemy that was backed into a place of no escape. Instead he advised that a small gap be left in the line surrounding them instead so that they could focus on trying to get out instead of digging in and taking as many of your forces with them.

It has been said that the bulk of deaths on the battlefield happened not during the formal clash of arms, but after one side has broke and was attempting to flee.

It seems obvious that when an enemy is intent of fleeing he is not able to mount as effective a defense as when he is dug in. A WWII cartoon by Bill Mauldin has a hapless GI complaining, "When they run we try to catch them and when we catch them we try to get them to run."

But the danger really is in facing an entrenched enemy, even if it is in debates and arguments. Little can be gained from telling someone that they are wrong. The loss of face prevents many from admitting their mistake even in the face of overwhelming evidence. Instead of admitting they are wrong and moving on, they dig in and double their bets, bring in more and more absurd points in an attempt to maintain a sense of dignity. Instead of facing these types head on, it is better to give them an out and find some sort of common principle both your arguments are built on. With a way to move onto something else and leave the old debate behind, many will follow the line of the new conversation and eventually be able to come back and modify their views in line with the reality you presented.

Seeking victory in a debate with a friend rarely leads to a stronger relationship. Avoiding disagreements is a key starting point, but if their rises discord then a way of finding a way that neither side is seen as wrong is vital to maintain a relationship.

On the other side of this equation is the placing of your forces so that you either prevail or die. Generals have been known to burn bridges or the ships that carry their forces so that their troops know

that they either conquer the enemy or die. With no retreat possible, the only way left is forward.

On occasion, captured troops have been released so they can return to the enemy. This has proven effective in cases where the enemy has spread stories of prisoner massacres and torture in order to try to keep their troops from defecting. The enemy tries to do like those that burn bridges by making it seem that there is no other choice but to follow him no matter how dire the situation. But when word gets around that those that surrender are treated fairly and with mercy, the dire situation spurs them on to flee into prisoner status rather than die with their commander. While they did not release prisoners, during WWII American forces tried to convince Japanese soldiers to surrender by having prisoners do broadcasts telling their former comrades that the stories they were told about prisoner treatment were untrue. It has little effect for the most part.

Stratagem number 17- Toss Out a Brick to Attract Jade.

At its most basic level, this means to give something of low value in return for something of higher value. If you consider it as such, it is the widest applicable and the center of all trade. What is useless to one person is valuable to another and vice versa. Any exchange such as sacrificing a pawn or dealing with a customer can be considered an application of this principle.

However, there is often the connotation that there is a bit of trickery involved in the exchange. The classic example quoted in many sources on this stratagem is that of a gift in the form of a large bell given to an ancient realm in China by one of its rivals in a sign of friendship. The kicker is that there were no roads between the two bitter enemies that could transport such a large gift. So roads and bridges were constructed to make the passage of the bell possible. Sometime later, the gift giver sent his soldiers down those same roads in a successful invasion.

The obvious western example would be the Trojan Horse from antiquity. Most know the basic story, but a part that escapes notice in most telling of the tale is that to get the horse into the city, part of the gate defending the populace had to be destroyed. So it was not only

the soldiers that popped out that led to the downfall, but the weakening of the defenses.

Of course, the name Trojan horse has been adapted to the modern age in regard to virus programs that the victim downloads and installs themselves, usually in return for the promise of some sort of gain or benefit like a free video or ebook. This is the key to the use of this stratagem, even in cases where the gift is totally legal.

When trying to influence someone, a common but very effective tactic is to do a small favor for the target first. This makes them feel obliged to respond in kind. Buying a man lunch might lead him to sign a huge contract. So the relatively small cost of the lunch is the brick, while the multi- million dollar contract is the jade. It is even more effective when the act of kindness is unexpected. Many medical salespeople treat doctor's offices to lunch which they bring in for the staff. It works, but not as well as the sudden act of kindness. The same now goes for samples in stores. At the start of those tactics, people felt an obligation they needed to return by buying something. But in both the doctor and the sample cases, people have come to see it as a simple transaction. One party gives another something in return for the chance to hear a sales pitch. It is not seen as a kindness, but as a part of a pre-agreed transaction that requires nothing more than listening. So it has lost its effectiveness as people come to see that free lunch as their right rather than a kindness.

Stratagem number 18- To Catch the Bandits, First Capture Their Leader.

This saying comes from an eighth century poem by a man named Da Fu who was tired of the half measures his government was taking against various problems. It goes,

If you draw a bow, draw the strongest.
Is you use an arrow, use the longest.
To shoot a rider, first shoot his horse.
To catch a gang of bandits, first capture its leader.
Just as a country has its borders, so the killing of men has its limits.
If the enemy s attack can be stopped, why have any more dead and wounded than needed?

Taking out the head of the enemy's forces is of course the obvious use of this stratagem. But a wider view is to look at the key element of what faces you and taking it out for victory. Spotting this key point is sometimes much harder than eliminating it.

In the tradition of Togakure-ryu ninjutsu, there is a saying that the highest level is having the eyes and mind of god. In Japanese, the characters would normally be pronounced, Shinshingan. But there is an alternate reading to the characters that makes it read kanjinkaname . That that word, written with different characters, means the essential point. The hidden meaning is that in all things the ninja must look for the key point that holds everything up. Once he has discovered that in the enemy, he knows how to best bring him down.

Taking out the king, emperor, president for life, etc is almost always a good way to totally destroy the enemy forces without killing many soldiers. Chess simulates a medieval battlefield and the key to victory is of course putting the king in check, which is to say capture or kill it.

But the exceptions are important to note. When there is a strong leader and all are in harmony under him, then taking him out is a good way to win all in one fell swoop. But when there are factions that are just waiting to step in, sometimes it is best to leave whoever is nominally in charge where he is, arrange for a little trouble among the rival factions and then sit back and observe stratagem #9, observe the fire from the opposite shore.

Conflict resolution can often best be done by finding the key element for which all the debates about are really just the branches of, and not the trunk. Find these key points can be difficult, but well worth the effort. Many times in debates today, people throw out things to support their position. When their arguments are shown to be false, they fall back to another argument. Try to correct the mistakes a person who believes that the world is secretly run by lizard people and you will see the truth in this. No matter how many times you destroy their arguments, you probably can never get to their key point and convince them that we aren't all being ruled by an intergalactic cabal. If you can't convince them, it is sometimes best

to just distance yourself instead of wasting time and resources attacking their arguments in a futile attempt.

If a man has a reputation as a fair person and draws his power from there, then showing that he is corrupt will destroy him. There are numerous cases of rabidly anti-homosexual religious figures who have been put out to pasture over some scandal involving an underage boy. Whatever the bedrock your enemy stands on is the key thing to taking them out of the fight. Finding it is often not easy, but well worth the effort.

Stratagem number 19- Steal the Firewood from Under the Pot.

At its most simple application, this means to take the supplies of an enemy away instead of meeting him in battle. A wider view is to find the key element of support and distance the enemy from it. Capturing supplies really isn't a tactic commonly found in Eastern warfare for some strange reason. Sun Tzu wrote about how capturing one chariot of the enemy's was much more effective than acquiring several on your own. But actual cases where the supply lines of the enemy were targeted seem rare. This is probably due to the nature of war at the time, when armies would send out foragers and take what they wanted from the peasants. In both east and west, an invading army stripped farms and villages of anything not nailed down. The common response, barely meriting a mention in the annals, was to grab anything an invading army could capture before they arrive and burn the rest. This meant great hardship to the peasants that were caught in the middle, but the upper classes tended to only give lip service to caring about those they ruled.

During World War 2, the allies seem to have caught onto the idea much better than the axis. German bombing had the intent of trying to terrorizing the populace into forcing their leaders to sue for peace or capitulate. Germany had the blitz, where entire cities were targeted to punish the English people. They developed the V1 and V2, very advanced rockets for their time which paved the way for the space program. But they at best came down somewhere on a city full of civilians and were never targeted at a factory or military base.

Ernst Rommel was perhaps the best general of World War II. Despite overwhelming odds, his Africa Corps kept the allies on their toes. But because the allies had broken the cipher the Germans used, most of his supplies ended up on the bottom of the ocean. Had he gotten the petrol and supplies he needed, it is likely he would have been the victor of the campaign.

But support isn't always limited to supplies. In revolutions, the rebels often try to capture the hearts and minds of the populace. If the people do not support the government, it becomes more difficult to stay in power. If the people actually support the rebels, then it is even more difficult. In many cases, rebel assassins have targeted popular representatives of the government, leaving alone those that are hated. While the occasional corrupt official might be killed in a big show of helping the people, it is often wiser to leave alive anyone like that who makes the government more hated.

20. Fish in troubled waters.

This means to take advantage of chaos and other sorts of bad situations. It is like the stratagem of looting a burning house, but the circumstances are different. In the prior stratagem, you wait for a rival to misstep and leap on the opportunity. In this, you pounce on any chance that comes your way, even one not involving the enemy.

When a temporary scandal strikes a company, its stock might fall way below what is justified. A savvy investor might not have even heard of the company before it is splashed across the top of newspapers causing a lot of panic selling. At that point, quick and complete research into the company might determine if the panic is unjustified and the stock is a bargain that will probably go back up.

The key is preparation and being able to move when such opportunities present themselves. Just because there is a situation that looks like an opportunity does not mean one should always jump in. If the panic is justified, then that needs to be known. Having resources like men, cash or friends able to move at a moment's notice is needed to pull this stratagem off. To prepare for this sort of opportunity, there has to be a reserve of resources that can be tapped into. Since you don't know what will happen, it is difficult to have well laid plans in place. To use this, you need to be rather quick

on your feet and able to come up with plans on the spot.

When the hated regime in Romania was overthrown, mobs stormed the headquarters of the secret police. They tore the place apart and tossed almost all the files out the windows. A few people picked up those files and they turned out to be very useful to other intelligence agencies later on. But none of the agencies that were watching Romania seem to have gotten the idea to send some of their assets down to pick them up at the time. A great chance was lost due to the lack of anyone thinking to take advantage of it.

Vladimir Putin owes his position as head of Russia due to the confusion and chaos that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. First the Iron Curtain fell, then there was a very incompetent government that followed. Putin thrived in the chaos, building his resources to take power. If the Soviet Union hadn't fell, or if Boris Yeltsin had been more effective, then Putin would still be a minor figure in Russian politics.

When others panic, the wise man sees opportunity. When new technology comes along, some businesses are going to go under while others rise. Knowing which will do what is a matter of research and study.

Stratagem Number 21- Shed Your Skin Like the Golden Cicada.

This means to build up a false facade to fool the enemy, that you are still the same that the enemy can take advantage of while you move onto something else. It can take many forms. Japanese warlords had to observe the battles they were waging. That meant they usually took a position on a rise that was obvious to the enemy. The headquarters he observed from was a very tempting target. To prevent assassins from killing the general, a retainer was often dressed in his armor and sat on his seat. These men were called Kagemusha- shadow warriors, but had nothing to do with the ninja. If an assassin managed to dress as a messenger, he would end up killing the wrong man. If it was a true messenger, after delivering his message to the kagemusha, he would be told to repeat it to the real general who was then pointed out to him.

False identities are an application of this stratagem. One can get

access to many people posing as a reporter. Access to a facility can be gained by pretending to be a janitor.

Stratagem number 22- Shut the Door to Catch the Thief.

Stratagem 16 warned that an enemy cornered is a desperate and dangerous foe. The key here is that you wish to capture, not destroy, the enemy. With the option of surrender, their situation is not so desperate and there is less danger. But before you capture, you must cut off all routes of escape.

The irony is, many times people are captured, then killed. The Soviet Union captured many Japanese soldiers when Japan surrendered. They were kept in work camps for years before being allowed home. The number that died under the harsh conditions is staggering. When the survivors were released back to Japan years later, many said they would have fought to the death if they had known what they would have faced as a prisoner.

In discussions, it is most often wise to leave the other side a way out that saves them face. Trying for victory seldom ends well even if it happens. But when it is needed, it is best to make the other side state a principle that they stand for. Then show how your side represents that principle. By making them take a stand on a principle, you shut the gate on their retreat.

Stratagem number 23- Befriend a Distant Enemy to Attack One Nearby.

Gaining allies is almost never a bad thing. While it might seem that an ally that was far away can't be much help, that is rarely the case. Strong friends far away can still be of great value if you know how to use them.

When selling weapons, there is always a fear that they will be turned against you. If you try to buy war material from a neighbor, they may refuse. Or if you are in conflict with another state they may sell just enough to both sides so that both get beaten down until they can sweep in and take over. But a nation on the other side of the world rarely has that fear or agenda.

Distant allies might not be able to directly intervene in your battle, but they can supply things such as goods or even political cover. Looking at the Middle East, you find all the players have patrons among the super powers. The cover Russia and China gave Saddam Hussein in the UN Security Council is the only reason he lasted so long. Israel would not exist if it were not for their friendship with the US.

And sometimes distant allies can directly help with conflict, especially in the modern age. Japan, Germany and Italy had an alliance despite none of them sharing a border with each other. The allies were not able to concentrate all their forces against one enemy and spread themselves very thin shuttling forces all around the world. In the modern day, 19 men with box cutters can cause thousands of deaths even if only a small pariah nation supports them. Limiting your network of allies to only those nearby is no longer an option in the modern world.

In personal relationships, befriending the friends of your friends often pays handsome results. Or at least try to get along with them, as well as their relatives. If your friend's friends are hostile to you, they can put pressure to distance them from you. If you are good friends with all of your lover's friends, they will help keep rivals away.

Making friends with the secretary, mail clerk and other functionaries often reaps huge rewards in terms of access and the latest news. Instead of sticking to networking with people that have a direct impact on your career, make a point of getting to know those outside the power struggle for an objective view if nothing else.

Stratagem number 24- Borrow the Road to Conquer Guo.

Central to this stratagem is creating and using allies. This strategy refers to a war in 658 b.c. between the states of Jin and Guo. Yu was an ally of Guo. The king of Jin bribed the king of Yu with jade and a fine horse, securing an alliance. By allying with the kingdom of Yu, they were able to gain safe passage through their territory and attack from an unexpected direction, eventually conquering Guo. On the way back from conquering Guo, the armies of Jin conquered Yu. The king of Jin then took back his jade and horse.

Alliances are helpful, but often temporary as the example of Jin, Yu and Guo show. While it is good to have some on your side, trust should never be given too freely. Making friends and allies is good. Not only does it strengthen you if used correctly, but it also puts you in the perfect position to stab them in the back. Coming to someone presenting yourself as a potential ally to a mutual enemy is the best way sometimes to set them up for conquest.

Germany under Hitler allied with the Soviet Union to conquer Poland. There was a non-aggression treaty between them which gave both time to consolidate their gains and face other enemies. With the Soviet Union sitting on the sidelines, Germany was able to roll over Western Europe. Hitler was even able to convince Stalin that the build up of tanks on his border were there only to keep them out of the range of British bombers. Then, of course, Hitler attacked and was able to make great gains before Stalin accepted the reality of the situation.

Stratagem number 25- Replace the Beams with Rotten Timbers.

This refers to taking out the support the rival has, in whatever form it might take, and replacing it with something advantageous to you. This is less about taking away elements of support as replacing them with something that you can use.

In a company, those seeking rising to the top can attempt to impress their bosses with their work ethic and abilities. But at the same time, if they work to arrange that all the key positions around them are filled with their allies, it presents a coup undercover. Slow promotion of people to key positions, letting them know their advance is only due to your speaking up for them, gains allies in key positions so that when it is time to determine who will advance, there are many voices that are willing to speak up in support of you.

In espionage and politics, bribing key government officials is a time-honored strategy. Instead of eliminating them outright, you recruit them to work for you while still in place. From inside, they spread rot and discontent among those still loyal. In many such organizations there are those that place their own interests far ahead of the common one. Finding these sorts and getting them to do your work is a fine art.

The ninja of Japan spent a great amount of time finding corrupt officials and winning them over, if not to the side of their lord, then at least to not be as diligent in their duties. Ancient works of theirs had entire chapters on finding suitable targets and discuss how best to win them over. Bribery was only one tool the ninja used, along with threats and blackmail. The key was to get the official to make a small betrayal and move up from there. Convincing an official at the start to shift loyalty and take orders from another lord was too much to ask. Instead, small bribes might be paid to get them to look the other way for something of local advantage to the ninja. Each time after that small sin the requests would become greater and greater and before the corrupt official knew it, there was a mountain of things he had done that could lead to his execution if found out. At that point, the ninja could make the case and swallow up the small fish completely. From that point on, whatever order the ninja asked of him, he was not in a position to refuse and he worked not to fatten his pockets, but to bring down his lord from within.

Stratagem number 26- Point at the Mulberry, But Curse the Locust Tree.

This refers to the use of fear to control your opponent. It can be indirect, but then it starts to move into the area covered by stratagem #13. Beat the Grass to Startle the Snake.

Fear is a dangerous weapon to use. Used effectively, it can be quite useful. But if you do not have the ability to back up your threat with action, it can go terribly wrong.

Genghis Khan used fear with extreme skill. When his armies came across a city, he would issue an ultimatum. If they surrendered, they would be treated well. Indeed, conquered peoples under Genghis had a surprising amount of freedom as long as they obeyed orders and payed their taxes. But if they did not surrender, then every last man, woman and child would be put to the sword. And he meant it. It did not take long for stories of the massacres he is now famed for to reach the ears of any city that might find itself as their next target. Many more cities opened their gates to him than tried to oppose him, which led to his rapid expansion.

It is key that Genghis offered a rather nice alternative to destruction. If he had a reputation of killing everyone whether or not they resisted, then no one would have had a reason to give in and would have fought to the death. Fear most often has to be used in conjunction with something else to be most effective. Machiavelli is famous for his words that it is better to be feared than loved. He has been demonized for saying so by much of the world. But he makes a very good point if people calmly and logically consider his actual words.

He acknowledges that it is best to be feared and loved, much like the mediaeval people viewed god. But if it was a choice of one or the other, his advice was to be feared. There is much to recommend this course of action. People may love someone, and yet still betray them if the price is right. But if they fear the consequences of betrayal, they are far less likely to act.

This fear does not have to be overt and in the face of everyone at all times. As long as everyone knows that the threat is on the table, it does not actually have to be voiced. The mere fact that the stronger power does not have to make it plain what it can do to any offender makes that power of fear all the stronger.

When the United States bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it was the use of this stratagem. The situation was rather unique. Every setback the Japanese endured was accepted and did nothing to dissuade it from continuing to fight. The military was firmly in control and was willing to sacrifice tens of millions of its peoples so that they could survive intact. It was the possibility that a nuclear bomb might be dropped on Tokyo, and thus kill the emperor, that many believe forced Hirohito to smuggle out a recording ordering his people to lay down their arms. It might be that he really cared about the millions of people that might die in atomic fire, but they would have died in a conventional invasion and he showed no remorse at that thought. The novelty and newness of the atomic bomb created a fear far greater than the known dangers they had faced and endured. The unknown is always a source of fear. When you don't know what can be done, your mind fills in the blanks with the worse possible scenarios. Fujita Seiko, the last Koga ninja, was in contact with the military high brass at the time and his telling of their reaction made it

seem like they considered it just another sort of bomb, albeit on a much larger scale. The military was used to bombs and was willing to keep fighting. The emperor wasn't as steeped in such experiences and made the choice to order a surrender even though his own military tried to intercept the recording calling for it. The use of examples is key to this. When you show your power against another, you let everyone else know that you are willing to do it to them. A person who gets in a fight with a rival and does a good job of taking him down sends a message to others that he is not to be trifled with. So sometimes, finding the perfect fight with someone unable to match you is a good policy. With one victory under your wings, you make everyone else pause before they think of moving against you.

Stratagem number 27, Feign Madness But Keep Your Balance.

This is sometimes rendered as to appear stupid. In any case, the common theme with this stratagem is to make the enemy think you are no threat to them, until it is time to strike.

This is a common ploy for con men. Many swindles involve fooling the sucker into thinking they are taking advantage of a person less intelligent than them. When people who appear smarter make offers, many go on the defensive. But when you appear to be a fool, people drop their guard.

Some criminals believe themselves far more cunning and clever than the police that catch them. Given just a little nudge, they tend to spout off about how they pulled the wool over the eyes of the law and managed to pull off a crime. These boasts are often to informants and have led to hundreds of convictions.

It is somewhat ironic that this strategy works best with idiots that think they are smarter than most.

Ninja used this to great effect. By appearing to be foolish, they could get people to talk a great deal. Of course, fools are expected to not know much and so questions are not as suspicious coming from them. The ancient texts of the ninja have several references that, while it might be galling to appear to be an idiot, it was among the best strategies to get someone to let spill secrets.

Some women have used this without consciously thinking about it.

Until fairly recently, women were not seen as much of a threat in the workplace. Men were more likely to give up secrets, advice and other advantages because of it. It helped build up the man's image as being superior by helping the female that didn't seem to be able to take care of herself. That came back to haunt them later as the female rose ahead of them.

Stratagem number 28. Lure to the Roof, Then Take Away the Ladder.

This has been interpreted two ways. One is to lure the enemy to the roof and then take away the ladder. In other words, set a trap and close the door once they step inside. This is fairly close to number 22, Shut the Door to Catch the Thief.

The other interpretation is to lure your own allies or followers into a position where they must give their all working together or face complete defeat.

When your back is against the wall, there tends to be little of the divided attention and back biting that might otherwise vex you.

Whenever there is a choice to turn back, people are reluctant to throw themselves completely into something.

This is why there are many tales of generals burning their own ships, or bridges behind them. Without a means of escape, their troops are given the choice to succeed or die. On a personal level, many do not seem to work at their best until they are facing ruin. At least one writer admitted that to do his best work, he had to go out and gamble away almost all of his money. When life was comfortable, he could afford to slack. But when he was facing starvation he hit the typewriter.

Many countries have managed to get their soldiers to fight almost to the last man by painting the enemy as monsters. When surrender is an option, more will chose to take that option. But by means of propaganda painting the enemy as killing all who give up, some have managed to get their soldiers to put up a much fiercer resistance.

Desperation can be a strong force when channeled. The key is to not be drowned by it. This strategy is a risky one, since any chance of escape at all will be seized on. Those placed in a position of fight

or die might feel resentment at their situation and later seek revenge even if they come out unscathed.

Stratagem number 29. Deck the Dead Tree with Bogus Blossoms.

This is the stratagem of making yourself look more powerful than you really are.

The name comes from Emperor Yangdi of the Sui dynasty of China, who ruled from 604 ad, to 618.

Yangdi attempted to impress foreign guests with the might of China. He instructed restaurants on the routes merchants took to not charge meals for those coming from other countries, instead telling them that China was so rich it need not be paid for food. As part of this type of effort, he was said to have silk blossoms glued to trees in winter to mimic spring. It fell apart when visitors from outside China asked why the silk wasn't used to clothe the many beggars roaming the streets of the capitol. Since that time, the term "deck the dead tree with bogus blossoms" in Chinese means to pretend to be more than what you are.

Obviously, intimidating someone with something you don't have, bluffing as it were, is a wide ranging and universal tactic. Animals use it by puffing themselves up or giving deeper calls than their size would warrant. Some animals and plants mimic other poisonous species to avoid harm.

But this can be used in a more positive version. Investing in fine furnishing for an office might convince potential clients they are dealing with a more established business. The same goes for renting a car or borrowing fine clothes to impress people, like a date. Some people spend so much on clothing to impress the opposite sex that they barely can pay their bills. But it seems to work in getting someone to notice them. Fake Rolexes and Gucci bags are part of this, allowing people to appear better off than they are and reap the social benefits of appearing to be well off.

Stratagem number 30- Exchange the Role of Guest for That of Host.

This is the strategy of the palace coup. Those that are inside the organization or situation, but in a lower position, bide their time until the time is right and then seize power.

This is easily said, but often takes a lot of laying the groundwork. In a business situation, a strategist might wait years building allies and making sure the company is dependent on him. Then he can make a bid for power and topple those sitting in the boardroom. Michael J. Fox made this look easy in one of his first movies, "The Secret of My Success." In the interests of time, the alliances he built and relationships he formed were pretty much done during the course of a weekend outing. Even though in reality such a move would take far more time, it does fit the pattern of young blood from within the company casting aside the old. In the movie, his uncle never saw it coming and that is the ideal version of this ploy.

The old Soviet Union used this several times while maintaining its empire. Small amounts of advisors and troops were kept in many nations behind the Iron Curtain. When the local governments were either deposed or ready to turn their back on their

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alliance with Moscow, troops were sent in. It wasn't so much an invasion as a replacement, so well were they planned and the groundwork laid by those already there. The last time this happened was Afghanistan, and so fast that Western governments were unable to respond in any meaningful way before presented with a new reality to deal with.

Catherine I of Russia is the face of a less violent take over. Born to peasant stock, she managed to rise to become the lover of Peter I the Great. She gave him a son and later married him.

Peter died without naming a heir. In the years prior to his death, Catherine had built up a vast network of allies in the guards, politicians and business leaders. The forces of the church, senate and other political entities were quick to name her empress of Russia. Since they put her in power, they of course expected her to remain highly influenced by them.

However, in 1727, she created the Supreme Privy Council, staffed by

six of Peter's former advisors who had been pushed aside after Peter's death and transferred much of the power of the senate and government to it. Until her death, she reigned supreme. The peasant girl had become the host of the Russian Empire.

Stratagem number 31, The Stratagem of Beautiful Woman.

This originally meant using a beautiful woman to tempt or control someone. She could be used to bring the enemy under her sway, or set him up to fight a rival for her affections.

But taken in a broader sense, it can mean to use temptations to control someone. Instead of just sex, alcohol, drugs or many other things can be used. Parents that prevent their children from playing their favorite video games until they do their chores are unconsciously using this stratagem.

Of course, this mainly is a personal ploy against a single person, usually an influential one. But the use of opium to weaken the Chinese people can be said to be a version of this ploy. The use of cheap entertainment products and other goods by the Chinese now to the west might be said to be the modern version, which is indeed ironic. So too can market access be called an application of this, which the Chinese use to good effect when trying to influence other nations to follow their world political agenda. Many nations will not dare to do things to anger China for fear they will cut off access to their markets, thus bringing ruin to the businesses inside those countries that have become dependent on that consumer base. The use of sex and sex appeal is the first manifestation of this and is well known to all. Empires have been destroyed because of the lust some men have for women.

Tempting but forbidden things can be given, then used as blackmail. When homosexuality was persecuted and those that engaged in it risked death, seducing someone and filming it was a very effective means of keeping control of them. The same goes for drugs. While someone might be subverted for the price of being supplied with drugs, afterwards the threat of revealing they use drugs can be used. Actually, after the first time a drug addict betrays his oaths and passes along information, that betrayal as well can be used as a weapon. Spies are always trying to get their foot in the

door for some small favor from their targets, which they can possibly use to convince them to supply larger and larger favors.

While we think of temptations as being lurid things, such as sex and drugs, many of the most effective temptations are considered rather polished in society.

The ancient ninja knew this and in one of their most important surviving texts they have this.

“The Teachings of Kiichi, the Five Pleasurable Things

Beautiful women and striking men

Palaces and mansions

Quiet spots of great beauty

Entertainment and gay activities

Literature and arts

Calculate these five things and those that are caught up in them are certain to fall.”

The ninja knew that temptation could be for more than sex, though they did list beautiful women and striking men. Social ties too could be a form of temptation. Tempting people with events could be just as effective than carnal forms. And those that thought themselves above the boorish masses could be tempted with literature and arts to maintain that status in their minds.

Stratagem number 32, The Stratagem of the Open City Gates.

This is the strategy of the bluff. In this, you make the enemy think that your weakness is a plot to lure him in. By this means, you hope to get him to not take advantage of you when you are weakest.

This is named after an incident at the start of the time of the three kingdoms in China. Zhuge Liang was a very careful and skilled general and prime minister. His reputation as one to be feared at the head of an army was well established.

Circumstances worked against him and he faced a bit of bad luck at exactly the wrong time. After a loss at a small town, Liang sent most of his troops off to deal with the situation, leaving only 2,500 in the city he was based at. He thought that he was well behind any lines of conflict and didn't need that many soldiers. He was wrong. His rival, Sima Yi, moved on to Xicheng where Liang was stationed

at the head of 150,000 soldiers and determined to capture the famous strategist.

Outnumbered 60 to one, Liang faced a stark choice. Fight and his forces would be defeated and him either dead or captured. Run and he would be tracked down and captured in the end. Instead he chose a third option.

He ordered his soldiers to hide, threatening to kill any that showed themselves or talked. He took 20 and disguised them as street sweepers outside the city gates. Among them, he sat dressed in a long flowing robe with a lute and played it, only attended by two soldiers in normal dress.

The vanguard of Sima Yi saw this and rushed back to report the amazing scene. Sima Yi decided to go himself to see. At the sight of Liang so calmly sitting and playing music as the dust of 150,000 soldiers choked the skies as they approached him, Yi was convinced it was a trap. The reputation of Liang was such that he could not believe that he would put himself in such a position unless there was something Yi was not aware of that would bring about his destruction. He turned his army around and retreated.

To pull this off effectively, one must have a reputation of strength in some way, just as Zhuge Liang. An unknown opponent that seems weak will be treated as weak with no fear. Those that are known to be strong, and yet seem to be going out of their way to appear weak, will cause doubts to rise in the mind of the enemy.

Since it is so extreme and dangerous a tactic, examples in real life are few and far between. A humorous example from fiction is in the movie Princess Bride. Westly, the hero is newly returned from near death (mostly dead as one puts it). Unable to move, he is carried around. Laid on a bed, he is found by the villain, Prince Humperdinck. Westly details how he is going to leave the beaten Humperdinck in a state where children will scream in terror at his visage. When he regains enough strength to slightly move his hand, that is enough to cow Humperdinck into surrendering.

There is danger in using this, perhaps more than in any other stratagem. Zhuge Liang had no real option to run, and probably would have had he been able to. It requires a reputation that is known to the other side and an opponent savvy enough to recognize

a possible trap. Ironically, had a lesser general than Sima Yi come across the scene of Liang calmly playing the lute, he probably would have leaped at the chance presented him.

Stratagem number 33, The Stratagem of Sowing Discord.

This is the use of attempts by the enemy to breach your secrets to instead harm them. They are fed false information, which when they attempt to use causes them to fail.

The third stratagem of using a borrowed dagger listed a few of these cases. But this principle is wider and is the set up for those uses. Any purposeful leak of information, or turning an enemy's spies against him, is the use of this stratagem.

Sun Tzu wrote a bit about doubling spies, that is to say, subverting the loyalties of spies sent against you. While difficult, the reward is greater than almost any other sort of espionage.

“The enemy's spies who have come to spy on us must be sought out, tempted with bribes, led away and comfortably housed. Thus they will become converted spies and available for our service.

“It is through the information brought by the converted spy that we are able to acquire and employ local and inward spies.

“It is owing to his information, again, that we can cause the doomed spy to carry false tidings to the enemy.

“Lastly, it is by his information that the surviving spy can be used on appointed occasions.”

Another aspect is just supporting those that would cause trouble inside the enemy ranks. Political movements that threaten the party in power can be donated to by other countries using cut outs. The more the ruling party is dealing with a threat to their power, the less they can deal on the international stage. Putin is a master of this.

The election of 2020 was between Donald Trump and Joe Biden. Many tried to present Trump as an ally of Putin, while there were many stories of Biden being a tool for Beijing. No matter who won, both Russia and China came ahead as large portions of the American populace would see the person in the White House as an agent for a hostile power.

Stratagem number 34, The Stratagem of Injuring Yourself.

This is a play for sympathy in some cases, and a tactic to gain trust in others.

A spy trying to defect is sometimes looked on with suspicion. But if a spy had to shoot his way out of the country, leaving behind several dead soldiers, and his family was executed, then his story is far more believable. The natural question when someone seeks to change their loyalty is why they would do so. Revenge for a slight done them is a very convincing reason. A man whose family was sent to the gulag has a great motivation to work from within to tear down a system. So those seeking the same are far more likely to trust him, setting themselves up for betrayal.

This tactic is often associated with the assassin Yao Li of China. The king of Wu recruited him to kill the king of Wei. Getting close to such a guarded man was a problem. First, Li offended the emperor of Wu in public. For that he was arrested and his hand cut off. He then went to Wei and offered his service, vowing revenge. Even so, he was not quite trusted. But when news that Li's family had been executed for his actions and their bodies burned in public, the king of Wei took him into his confidence. When Wei invaded Wu by ship, Li was on the king's ship as a trusted advisor to the territory he had fled. In the middle of their advance by sea, Li grasped a spear and ran the king through, killing him. He was seized and killed, but he had managed to fulfill his task despite the most severe security because of the sacrifices he had made.

In business and politics, this ploy for sympathy is often in the form of taking responsibility for something quickly and making some sort of sacrifice to show contrition.

Michael Dukakis faced George Bush for the office of president. Dukakis as a governor had let Willie Horton have a furlough from prison, which he used to kill a family in a horrible fashion. The Bush campaign savaged Dukakis with this fact. It was a large part of the reason Dukakis lost.

After the election, Bush's media advisor was asked what would have happened if Dukakis had admitted he made a mistake and promised to learn from it. The response was that it would have been a dead issue from that point on. The Bush campaign, already saddled with mistakes it had made in the previous four years, could hardly then

use an acknowledged mistake by it's rival. But since Dukakis never really addressed the issue, let alone take responsibility, it was a sword used against him to the end.

In public life, overcoming a great disadvantage endears the subject to the public. Oprah has used her overcoming a truly hellish past to gain respect for her media career. The ploy does not solely rely on the sympathy of the circumstances, but also gains admiration for the strength in succeeding despite them. A bit of vulnerability in a biography tempers the strong image and stops the resentment so often found when people achieve great things.

When someone has to make a difficult request or refuse someone, this ploy can be used to great effect. Craft the situation as such that you are the person caught in the middle, besieged by those above you and placed to take the wrath of those you interact with. If you say that you were screamed at for giving an inch in the past, you place the other party in the position of knowingly subjecting you to the same abuse if he insists on pushing for the same type of bending of the rules. An example might be dealing with a belligerent drunk whom you have to cut off at the bar. If you dig in and say it is your decision, he is likely to up the ante and it might lead to violence. If instead you tell a tale of woe about how you were nearly shut down for toeing the line, you instead make him and you common victims of a vicious legal system. A friend of mine who worked as a bouncer once sent a drunk down the street towards city hall, at one in the morning, so that the customer could give them a piece of his mind instead of pushing the issue in the bar.

Stratagem number 35, Chain the Ships Together.

This is an unusual name for the strategy of using the enemy's greatest strength against them.

It comes from the situation where a general named Huang Gai sent a letter that he was going to defect to the enemy general Cao Cao. Cao was facing difficulty with his naval forces on the river between the two camps. His soldiers were pressed into being sailors, and on the small craft they soon got motion sickness from lack of experience. A military strategist by the name of Pang Tong joined

with Cao and suggested that he solve the problem by chaining his ships together.

By doing so, the ships were now a lot more stable. And they formed one mighty ship that could dominate any other ship that Zhou Yu could send against it. It truly was a marvelous, and immensely strong, ship composed of many.

One day after the mega-ship was on the water, a wind blew from the camp of Yu towards that of Cao. With it, a small flotilla of ships made their way across the river toward Cao's forces. Looking across, Cao saw that the banners on them had Huang Gai's name on them and concluded with glee that it was the forces that Gai had promised to bring with him when he defected.

Once they neared the shore where Cao waited, Gai ordered his lead ships set on fire and set into the wind toward the massive ship that comprised all of Cao's navy. This is called a fire ship and has been in use since at least the time of the ancient Greeks. They were mainly used against harbors and other places where ships were docked. This is mainly because a small ship on the open water had a good chance of evading the doomed attacker. And if the fire ship hit one ship in the open, the damage was likely to end with that ship.

But with all of Cao's ships chained together, it was a very large and slow target. Once the fire ships of Gai hit one of the chained ships, the fire spread to the others banded together. Soon the entire fleet was in flames and Cao was forced to flee with only a small portion of his previously massive army. So that the strength of the large and formidable ship was turned into its greatest weakness.

Nothing is completely invulnerable. Nothing is best in all things. There are some that have better strengths than others, but there is always a trade off. If you want to go fast in a car, you need a low center of gravity like a Ferrari or else taking curves will cause you to topple over. If you want to go out on rough terrain in a car, you need a high center of gravity like a Humvee or you will break the chassis. A small business that tries to undercut the price of a mega-corporation will probably fail. The economies of scale are too great an advantage. But if that smaller company targets a niche market too small for the larger ones to bother with, or builds up relationships with customers, the advantage of being small comes into play.

Ronald Reagan used this strategy with a bit of humor during his run for president. Many considered him too old to be an effective president. When asked about his age during a debate, he cheerfully quipped that he didn't want to use his opponent's youth and inexperience against him. It got him a laugh, put the issue behind him and planted the seed in the minds of many that many very effective world leaders were at their peak later in life after decades of experience.

Stratagem number 36, Running Away is Sometimes the Best Stratagem.

This is obviously not the most popular choice sometimes. It can take many forms. The most useful for most readers is accepting that one is wrong in an argument and admitting it. Most often this will strengthen a friendship and allow one to grow. Mistakes are very valuable learning tools, as long as we accept they are mistakes. When we let ego get in the way of accepting we are wrong and instead dig deeper into our position, we lose. This is easier said than done, for we are always unconsciously trying to justify things in such a way that we have a good self image.

This stratagem is especially valid in terms of self defense. Most martial arts taught today seem to be based on the sport aspects of beating the other person. In reality, unless you do a job such as a police officer, victory over the other person, leading to them lying unconscious on the floor should be a very distant second to the idea of merely getting home in one piece. And that means that in terms of self defense, running away and getting home safe is a very definite win. Sadly, for many men, their testosterone leads them into conflicts that they not only could have run away from at some point, but could have walked away from before it ever became violent.

When things look bleak, it is easy to consider retreat. Sometimes the real skill is being able to see the situation even when you back is not against the wall and realize that there is nothing to be gained by going forward.

This stratagem is well known in Japan, even garnering a saying in the language. Sanjurokei yori, nigeru ni shikazu roughly translates as, "rather than (considering) the 36 stratagems (in Japanese 36

stratagems is sanjurokei, found at the start of the saying), sometimes it is best to run away.” From this the Togakure ryu style of ninjutsu has created a rather amusing pun.

For the ancient ninja, getting back with the information they had gained was their prime mission. Body counts of defeated enemy did not bring them honor, fulfilling their mission to gather information was their sole considerations. Fleeing instead of fighting when possible was stressed. The unique fighting style of the ninja wasn't even called something like jujutsu as in other arts. Instead it was called tonpojutsu, or escape art in Japanese. Instead of defeating an enemy and holding him down as in many arts, either to take them prisoner or take their head as a trophy, the ninja art features things like escapes from holds and tossing people to the ground, then turning and running away. All the techniques feature running away at the end, sometimes tossing blinding powder behind them to discourage pursuit. It is said that this sort of training had to be done with those that would take up the role of ninja to overcome most male's instinct to finish a fight and completely defeat an enemy. Many martial arts that went through the peaceful Edo period established a list of 18 categories they specialized in. The number was set, the amount of actual categories was not. A school that specialized in sword might have categories for short sword, another for long sword, one for quickly drawing the sword and possibly others. A school that specialized in cavalry tactics might lump all that together in one category of sword, but have a category on riding, another on sword fighting from horseback, another on swimming with a horse, etc. They mainly served as a means for showing what was most important in the school with a nod to the idea of everything being neatly in 18 different sections. This was based on an ancient Chinese custom that gained popularity in the peaceful Edo period. These 18 categories are called the Juhachiban, with juhachi meaning 18 and ban meaning categories. In commonly used Japanese, it means the speciality of someone, such as a favorite song they sing at karaoke.

In the 20th century, the head of the Togakure ryu declared that there was 36 categories in their tradition, twice the number of normal styles. However, this was called the sanjurokei. Sanjuroku means

36, while kei means categories. But it is the same word used for the 36 stratagems. With this pun, the emphasis on the need for the ninja to consider fleeing whenever possible was made more obvious to those that could speak the language and were familiar with the common saying.

The above is just a stub of a much longer Kindle book available. The larger version can be read for free if you have Kindle Unlimited. From time to time, when I find a great example of one of the strategies, I update the book, so please come back every few years and re-visit the wisdom of the ancients.

https://www.amazon.com/36-Stratagems-Ancient-Wisdom-Modern-ebook/dp/B086Z776YP/ref=sr_1_7?dchild=1&keywords=don+rolely&qid=1622468860&s=digital-text&sr=1-7

Afterward

The path of the ninja is a long and solitary one. There is little that needs to be known, much that has to be practiced.

I hope this short volume opens some eyes and sets people on the correct path. Not all can be covered here, but perhaps there is enough to let people know what sort of things there are down the road.

Hatsumi Masaaki, head of the Togakure-ryu, has been saying that there are probably troubling times coming. Peace is only a small part of human history, with discord and strife instead being the norm. No one can predict the future, but none the less, it is best to be prepared for some eventualities.

At the core of ninjutsu is self development. I did not go much into this, because there are so many ways to polish one's soul, and some will work better for others. When you deal with the sort of matters that happen while running in the shadows, you either have a strong core or you are lost.

I encourage everyone reading this to take time daily to make themselves a little better than the day before, in a variety of ways. Improve your skills of course, but also take time to insure that you are the type of person your kids would be proud of.

Feel free to follow me on social media and my blogs at ColoradoSpringsNinjutsu.com for more information I put out from time to time. I thank you for letting me be your guide up to this point, now it is time for you to stretch your wings and explore.