

CHUDOKAI
expressBU, KEN, JU
by Dave Lowry

In Asia, since ancient times the spear has been the symbol of the warrior. Rendered into calligraphy in ideographic form, the spear is a basis for many kanji. It is the root for *bu*, the prefix used in a number of words concerned, not surprisingly, with things of a martial nature. There is *bugei* (martial skills), *bushi* (the feudal class of warrior gentility), and *buke* (an ancestral warrior family).

It would seem logical that the character for the spear alone would be sufficient to connote *military*. But, in making up the kanji for *bu*, the brushstrokes for *spear* are accompanied by additional strokes that mean "suppressing a revolt." The whole character for *military*, then, actually refers to "quelling an uprising by use of the polearm."

Smothering insurrections has been the purview of the military throughout civilization. Nowhere more than in Japan has it been the task of the warrior caste to enforce order. In the best of times, these military efforts restored peace and promoted culture in Japan. In the worst, they reinforced cruel oppression and crushed the spirit of the land. And so the bushi, the only well-armed class of old Japan, were both heroes to the people as well as tools of tyrants.

The spear used in the Japanese martial arts, the yari, is not a projectile weapon. It was wielded on the battlefield like a polearm. The yari's tip is pointed for thrusting, but the blade typically is long and edged on both sides. The yari could be used to slash either right or left. So it is apt that the yari, a weapon to cut in opposing directions, would form the basis of so many words dealing with the martial. Just as he may today, the warrior in feudal Japanese society could cut both ways: for good or for evil.

静動
中中
のの
動静

QUOTE:

"Dochu no sei,
seichu no do.

**Stillness in motion,
motion in stillness."**

-Ryu Magazine

REMEMBER...

Instructor's
Conference

August 8

Pinery Trip '09

September 4—7

Aiki Buki Test

September 10

Harmony in the
Hills

September 25—27

Kyu Test

October 1

Dan Test

October 3

INSTRUCTOR'S CLASS/CONFERENCE

Saturday August 8 @ 4pm (approx)
The Conference will begin immediately after the completion of Summer Synergy

PINERY TRIP 2009

Friday Sept. 4—Monday Sept. 7
Join us for our annual end of summer dojo outing at the Pinery Provincial Park in Grand Bend, On

AIKI BUKI TEST

Thursday September 10 @ 8:30pm
All students who are eligible are encouraged to test

HARMONY IN THE HILLS:

St. Albans, West Virginia
Friday Sept. 25—Sunday Sept. 27
Join us in St. Albans for this great training weekend
Visit www.usamaf.com

KYU TEST

Thursday October 1 @ 11:00am & 7:00pm
All students are encouraged to test

DAN TEST

Saturday October 3 @ 12:00 sharp
Students who are eligible and prepared are encouraged to test

BU, KEN, JU

cont'd



To test a sword crafted by the master smith Muramasa, its owner held the blade's edge against the current in a stream. A leaf floated by; it touched the blade, and by the force of the current alone, it was sliced cleanly. The test was considered an ultimate trial of a sword's quality—until someone thought to try it with a sword made by Muramasa's master, the great Masamune. The Masamune sword was thrust into the stream, and another leaf swept toward it. Then, miraculously, the course of the leaf changed. It floated *around* the deadly edge, sailing on intact, as if the Masamune sword possessed a beneficent power beyond that for simply causing destruction.

The sword, or *ken*, along with the jewel and the mirror, is one of the three sacred treasures associated with Japan's mythic creation. The crafting of the ken, too, is veiled in a ritual of mysticism. The swordsmith, even today, works at his forge attired in the white garments of the Shinto priest. Accompanied by apprentices wielding long-handled hammers, he chants and bangs a rhythm on the

anvil, as a bar of molten iron glows and is then smashed into fiery sparks. Quenched, refined, the metal is flattened and folded again and again to make thousands of laminations. The process takes place before a Shinto altar and other consecrated trappings adorning the smithy, and it includes steps both religious and technical known only to the smith. The product is a weapon to inspire a kind of worshipful awe, as did Masamune's blade. The ken exists in a dimension between the substantive and the fantastic.

The kanji for ken has a simple radical, two strokes representing the long blade of the sword, and another component that means "a combining." A combining of what? Perhaps of the fire and prayer and pounding of steel that produce the sword. A combination of its edge, hard and keen as a diamond razor, and its spine, sturdy and flexible to absorb the shock of cutting. The "combining" in the kanji could refer to the sword's incarnation as an object of beauty and as a brutal tool for cleaving a human neatly at any angle. Or could it be the combining of the reality and the legend that, like the test of the ken of Masamune and Muramasa, have long characterized the dual nature of the Japanese sword?



In springtimes long ago, the sages of China were given to celebrating the season by sipping rare teas, composing verse, and dining on fresh bamboo shoots. The emergence of *takenoko*, as young bamboo is called in Japanese, is a remarkable phenomenon throughout Asia in the spring. Pushing up with vigor, green sprouts of bamboo can pierce concrete if it lies between them and the sun. They grow with such force that they can actually be heard in the act: a rustling sound of renewal in the quiet spring night.

The energy of all young shoots in the plant world is extraordinary, especially so considering their delicacy. The slightest breeze can bend new growth. With nothing more than a bit of twine and bamboo poles as guides, the Japanese gardener can train the young boughs of a pine in fantastic shapes. Tender plant shoots can be trained, bent, and swayed, but so long as they are alive, they cannot be stopped. They are, for all their tenderness, indomitable.

The character for spear rests atop that for tree to create the kanji for *ju*. The etymological implication is that the growth of the tree has the power of a spear thrust. Ju--and this is the familiar prefix of judo and jujutsu--refers to the forces of pliancy. Ju is flexible strength, gentle potency. It is tenacity of a sort that embraces malleability. It bends to endure. Ju is durably soft; it receives in order to resist.

In a sense, *ju* is the process of turning to an aggressor the other cheek--only to use the movement of the turn to effect his defeat. The *bugeisha* who seeks to implement *ju* cannot settle for the brute stroke of the sledge. He needs the sensitive probe of the surgeon's scalpel. *Ju* requires a connection to the opponent, physical at the beginner's level, more mental at the expert's, to palpate for strengths and weaknesses. Once discovered, *ju* can be applied to adapt to both these, the physical and the mental. To establish this connection in the dynamic action of conflict, the muscles and mind of the *bugeisha* flex and conform to ever-changing circumstances. Like the bamboo's spring growth, the *ju* of the *bugeisha* is always yielding yet as unstoppable as the season itself.

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SEISHIN TANREN

Spiritual forging, the higher purpose and end of all physical technique in budo ("martial way," a term referring to those modern martial arts distinguished by their goals of spiritual and moral development). The oftentimes punishing physical ordeal of training is designed not to focus the attention on the body but to help the trainee learn to transcend bodily cares and the duality of perception that inhibits performance. For proper execution of techniques, the student must not concentrate either on physical mechanics or theory as isolated elements. They must be united, blended together by the spirit in the heat of training into a living whole. The hundreds of thousands of repetitions of techniques are used to numb the mind, and, in a sense, to free it from self-absorption.

- www.fightingarts.com

SEI 精 SHIN 神 TAN 鍛 REN 鍊

HARMONY IN THE HILLS 2009

USA Aikido Association

Chudokai Aikido Federation International

International Iai-Tate Do Federation

Presents

Aikido Fall Camp '09

at St. Albans High School

St. Albans, WV

September 25, 26, & 27 2009

Instruction by

Kyoshi Kevin Blok

8th Dan Aikido

Shihan Roger Jarrett

6th Dan Aikido

6th Dan Iaido

www.usamaf.com

Don't miss out on this unique Martial Arts Camp that allows beginners through Black Belts of all styles to experience the dynamic throwing, joint locking, pinning and weapons techniques of Aikido. This camp has always been a great success. We are again this year at St. Albans High School. SAHS is a modern facility that will serve us very well for our event. Please visit www.usamaf.com for hotel and additional information.

This will be an exciting camp, and we encourage you to reserve your space quickly, for space is limited. Should you have additional questions or concerns, please contact USA Martial Arts at (304) 722-4512. We look forward to seeing you in West Virginia!



初心
SHOSHIN