Hinkaku

(Masayuki Shimabukuro, Hanshi)

In the past, I have tried to explain the importance of developing one’s dignity through the study of iai – and that dignity is vital to the development of one character. In the past I have used the word ‘fukaku’ to describe this idea of dignity. I have thought long on this and feel that I have not used the proper word. “Fukaku” does indeed have a literal translation to English as dignity, but from a Japanese perspective, it implies visible manifestations of dignity – how one appears, how one acts in public – as seen by others on the surface. But fukaku can be superficial, with no depth to it or projected with the wrong spirit.

What I instead wish to discuss is the much harder concept of “hinkaku” for which there is no single English word that succinctly relays the many layers of meaning. I struggled long to come up with an English word that describes “hinkaku” and could not. This difficulty is deeply related to cultural differences as one’s understanding of words are built up over time by being brought up and immersed in their native culture. A good example of this is comedy. I was watching a comedy special on television with a friend brought up in America, and on several occasions the comedian would tell a joke that others would laugh at, but would only bring confusion or blank comprehension on my part. I turned to my friend and asked him to explain the joke, and though he tried, I still could not ‘get it’. This is the same difficulty of trying to describe the meaning of the word “hinkaku”.

One can easily see hinkaku in another person – they seem to radiate calmness, sincerity, compassion, they are never upset, always treating others with respect – all of which you know with certainty emanates from a true source from inside, not just outward acting. One can display fukaku but still be hollow inside with no hinkaku, but one who has hinkaku will also have fukaku – and it will not be superficial or false.

As budo-ka, it is vital we strive to develop hinkaku so that we keep on the path of developing our character, so that it is sincere and not false or arrogant through rank or technique only. But this is not easy, nor will it come quickly. There are many paths one can take in an attempt to develop hinkaku, some better suited than others. The highest is thru the study of iai and the use of the sword. The sword shines with its own inner spirit unlike any other implement made by man and is ideal for the cultivation of hinkaku because its keen edge cuts through all pretenses and can most easily separate true character development from the pursuit of ego.

Your practice of iai in the dojo should strive to embody the following five precepts as a way of developing hinkaku:

1) Reiho – which is more than just the stylized steps of etiquette of opening and closing class. It means to take care of yourself as a human, your family and friends, your natural surroundings, your belongings, your community, and your faith. It means to take care of and tend to all these things with sincerity and with respect.

2) Shisei – which does mean posture from a literal sense. But its deeper meaning also calls one to be aware of your bearing at all times and not just for waza, but how you carry yourself as you move about, when you talk to others, how you sit, how you stand. Your outward shisei then affects your inner bearing to be correct as well.

3) Chakuso – which means your outwards dress or clothes. It means they should always be clean and fresh, well cared for, no holes or mission buttons, or smelly. Your appearance is a reflection of your inner character. Torn and frayed clothes that are dirty show a character that does not care for himself or others.

4) Giho – which means your technique when you practice iai. As you practice iai, your technique should be big, not compact and hard; it should be graceful and natural, not robotic.
or rehearsed dance steps; you should have shining eyes when doing iai that projects energy and has a sense of life to it.

5) Shugyo seishin – which means training your spirit. Your training of iai is primarily done in the dojo. But your training should not start and stop only when you enter and leave the dojo as if you are turning on and off a switch. Your training should be practiced constantly – especially outside the dojo! You must carry that feeling of learning and progressing when you are inside the dojo to the outside real world. This is where you put into use those things you have learned in the dojo of how to treat others, how to carry yourself, how to perceive things around you, and how you react or blend with them and not let them offset your center. If you do not carry your training outside of the dojo, then you are not realizing all of the work you have done in the dojo for your benefit and to others.

If you practice all of these things I have mentioned, then you are developing hinkaku, and others will begin to see hinkaku in you as well. When you consider all that I have attempted to describe as hinkaku, then the closest description would be ‘perfection of character’, and it is the study of iai that is ideally suited to this task because of its beauty and strength.

Upcoming Events

(Erik Tracy, Renshi)

Just a reminder about some very special events.

West Coast Instructor Seminar
The West Coast Koshukai is an instructor seminar which Hombu will be hosting the weekend of May 19-20. If you are a JKI/KNBK certified instructor, you are encouraged to attend this special seminar with Hanshi. Get your enrollment forms in now! If you have any questions for enrollment, please send me an email.

Gasshuku 2012
This year’s Gasshuku will be held in Anaheim, CA on August 17-18 as a special adjunct to the Origin’s International Martial Arts Festival (Hosted by Disneyland Sports) to be held at the American Sports Center. Friday August 17 will be an all day training seminar with Hanshi. Saturday’s events include a JKI/KNBK taikai following the DNBK format. The Festival continues on Sunday with a Master’s Demonstration which everyone is welcomed to stay and watch. You can visit www.originsevents.com for information about the Festival. But actual enrollment for the Gasshuku will only be thru the JKI/KNBK - look for more information on the JKI Website in the next several weeks for specific enrollment information for Gasshuku.