

# The Martial Arts and "kuatsujinken"

(or the art of remaking man by cutting away inner violence with the sword)

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For many centuries, the martial arts were a means of survival. The "**bujutsu**" or arts of war were based on the idea of "**satsujinken**": **the sword that takes away life**.

The aim of the great masters who created the "**Shin Budo**", the modern martial arts, was to purge the "arts of war" of their original violence and aggression and transform them into the "**means to pacify and educate**".

My experience as a teacher has shown me very clearly that the way a person practises is very often a reflection of their inner state. For example, an over-large ego and repressed violence always come out when practising a martial art. **The state of mind shows in a person's movements**.

To stay faithful to the aims of those who devised them, the modern martial arts need to be a means of spiritual purification. The kanji character for "budo" translates literally as "way (dō or michi) to stop violence (bu)".

The approach called "**kuatsujinken**" means purifying the spirit through martial arts. "**Kua**" is life or return to normal life, "**tsu**" is a contraction of "jutsu" meaning art or technique and "**ken**" is the sword. "**Kuatsujinken**" is therefore the **principle of cutting away with the sword everything that is bad in man**, so that he can regain a peaceful mind based on harmony (**ai**). This principle "ai" makes it possible to cut away from the mind whatever prevents a person from recognising their true nature, i.e. their fears, violence and ego.

What exactly should be cut away? Everything that is not "ai" i.e. that prevents us from being in harmony with ourselves, the others and the universe. The idea of "**aiki**" or **harmonisation of spiritual energies** is general to all martial disciplines and not confined to aikido.

For the peoples of Asia, man is a microcosm in the macrocosm, that is, the universe. The fact of having an over-developed ego cuts man off from the universe in which he lives; self-centredness acts like a prism to distort reality and the truths he needs to find if he wants to give meaning to his life. The martial arts should help us to study ourselves and to forget ourselves. And to forget oneself means to cut away or at least reduce one's ego.

*Homo sapiens* or "wise man"? Somehow we begin to doubt it when we contemplate the state of the planet and of mankind.

The modern martial arts, if properly understood, should enable man (*homo*) to find a certain wisdom (*sapientia*) which seems increasingly absent in a competitive world too often short on humanity and harmony.

Looked at in this light, the "**Shin Budo**" are a long way from other purely competitive sports, based on the aggressiveness and self-centredness needed to win at all costs and be "**the best**", usually for a very brief time. On the contrary: the "**Shin Budo**" encourages the individual, through study and practice, to seek **excellence** throughout life.