

# The Five Spirits of Budo

By Dan Penrod – August 27th, 2006

- ❖ **Shoshin:** (初心) Beginners Mind
- ❖ **Zanshin:** (残心) Lingering Mind
- ❖ **Mushin:** (無心) No Mind
- ❖ **Fudoshin:** (不動心) Immovable Mind
- ❖ **Senshin:** (先心) Purified spirit; enlightened attitude

There are 5 fundamental minds or spirits of budo; *shoshin*, *zanshin*, *mushin*, and *fudoshin*, and *senshin*. These very old concepts are largely ignored in the modern aikido dojo. The budoka who takes the time to understand the lessons of these 5 spirits in his heart will mature to become a strong and competent martial artist and human being. The student who does not take the time to know and embrace these spirits will always be lacking in his training.

## Shoshin

The state of *shoshin* is that of a beginners mind. It is a state of awareness that remains always fully conscious, aware, and prepared to see things for the first time. The attitude of *shoshin* is essential to continued learning. O-Sensei once said, “*Don’t expect me to teach you. You must steal the techniques for yourselves.*” The student must

play an active role in every class, seeing with a *shoshin* mind, in order to steal each day's lesson.

## **Zanshin**

The spirit of *zanshin* is the state of the remaining or lingering spirit. It is often described as a sustained and heightened state of awareness and mental follow-through. However, true *zanshin* is a state of focus or concentration before, during, and after the execution of a technique, where a link or connection between uke and nage is preserved. *Zanshin* is the state of mind that allows us to stay spiritually connected, not only to a single attacker, but to multiple attackers and even an entire context; a space, a time, an event.

## **Mushin**

The ASU handbook, defines *mushin* to be “*No mind, a mind without ego. A mind like a mirror which reflects and does not judge.*” The original term was “*mushin no shin*”, meaning, “mind of no mind.” It is a state of mind without fear, anger, or anxiety. *Mushin* is sometimes described by the phrase, “*mizu no kokoro*”, which means, “*mind like water*”. The phrase is a metaphor describing the pond that clearly reflects its surroundings when calm, but whose images are obscured once a pebble is dropped into its waters.

## **Fudoshin**

An unshakable mind and an immovable spirit is the state of *fudoshin*. It is courage and stability displayed both mentally and physically. Rather than indicating rigid, inflexibility, *fudoshin* describes a condition that is not easily upset by internal thoughts or external forces. It is capable of receiving a strong attack while retaining composure and balance. It receives and yields lightly, grounds to the earth, and reflects aggression back to the source.

## **Senshin**

*Senshin* is a spirit that transcends the first four states of mind. It is a spirit that protects and harmonizes the universe. *Senshin* is a spirit of compassion that embraces and serves all humanity and whose function is to reconcile discord in the world. It holds all life to be sacred. It is the Buddha mind and O-Sensei's perception of the function of aikido.

Fully embracing *senshin* is essentially equivalent to becoming *enlightened* and may well exceed the scope of daily aikido training. However, the first 4 spirits are probably attainable to any serious student through awareness and hard training. Embracing these states of mind can reward the student in countless ways.

*Shoshin* can free a student from a frustrating plateau of learning, giving him the sight to see what he would not see before. *Zanshin* can raise one's total awareness enhancing randori and free-style training. *Mushin* can release the student's anxiety under pressure enabling better performance during testing. *Fudoshin*, can provide the confidence to stand one's ground in the face of overwhelming physical attacks. The serious aikidoka should find ways of incorporating these budo spirits in his daily training.