

Appendix II

THE KOSHORYU FAMILY CREST COAT-OF-ARMS

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Japanese family crests are called *mon* or *monsho* which literally means thread markings (embroidery). Originally, they were used on banners (hata), armor, and cloth curtains (tobari) which surrounded the commander's encampment. Their original purpose was to identify warriors on the battlefield who wore armor and could not easily be recognized. Many of the designs used to reflect the influence of China were various patterns were embroidered on formal clothing worn at the royal court. Some of the symbols used to represent flowers (chrysanthemum, peony, lotus, etc.) of heavenly bodies (circles and various diamond shapes). In the Heian period of Japan (794-1160), some of these designs were adopted by Buddhism in the form of occult ornamentation and calligraphy. In fact, close observation of a famous scroll of the thirteenth century, *Scroll of the Mongol Invasion*, reveals a Japanese crest similar to the Kosho Crest, and which consisted of a circle containing a pine, bamboo, and plum blossom, in addition to other symbols.

Kosho-Shorei Ryu Kenpo is a martial arts system originally practiced by the Koshoji monks of the Shaka-in Temple, a temple of the Rinzaï sect located on Mount Kinkai in Kumamoto, Kyushu, Japan. The Kosho-Kenpo system consisted of techniques modified from Chinese *chuan fa* and combined with Jiu Jitsu and with the other martial and philosophical arts of the Koshoji Temple. These arts were used to protect the temple and to train Buddhist monks and Kenpo instructors. At one time, over four hundred monks trained at the temple.

The Kosho Kenpo system is symbolized in the Kosho Crest presented on the cover of all Kosho-Shorei Ryu Kenpo books. Its meaning is as follows:

The outer circle (Wa) represents completeness, perfection, harmony, integrity, peace, and symbolizes that what is contained within the circle is all that is necessary to sustain and to nurture life.

The octagon (Sumikiri) represents the eight aspects of the Kosho Kenpo system (1. energy collection; 2. meditation; 3. philosophy; 4. Japanese Yoga; 5. Proper nutrition, consisting of proper diet, healing arts and herbalism; 6. Kenpo arts of punching, kicking, and self-defense techniques; 7. Push-pull arts, and; 8. Jumping patterns which permit escape from danger with no physical contact.) The octagon also represents the eightfold path of Buddhism.

The three inner circles (tsuki-to-hoshi) represents astronomical bodies (moon and stars), and are called the three warriors. Each of the three hand positions contained within the circles represents different physical systems of self-defense, and also has specific meanings.

The praying of Buddhist hands position (Kigan) means, "Praying to God for help when someone attacks me." It symbolizes that the Kenpo student wants only peace, wants to avoid conflict, and is asking for God's help.

The lower right circle contains the open hand position (Kai-shu). Its meaning is, "I am carrying no weapons in my hands *or* in my heart." The center hole between the thumbs and forefingers symbolizes a panoramic view of a majestic mountain. It is beautiful when viewed from a distance, but has imperfections when viewed from up close. It means, "To see only the good in man," not the small imperfections.

The lower left circle contains the covered fist (Hoken). It means that the right fist, symbolic of the physical part of man, should always be covered by the left hand, itself symbolic of the spiritual part of man. Hoken means, "Cover or hide the fist." A more precise meaning is, "The fist is a treasure, so do not show it in public. Rather, hide it in the pocket"

The pine needles (Matsuba) to the right of the praying hands symbolize a thousand years of life. Matsuba means, "The evergreen lives a long, young, and healthy life." Pine branches are used as Christmas and New Year's ornaments in Japan, and the needles are used for medicinal purposes.

The bamboo (Take) under the two lower circles symbolizes resiliency and is associated with long life. According to Chinese legend, the Phoenix, a bird of immortality, dined on bamboo while nesting in the branches of the paulownia. The bamboo also symbolizes honesty, and that nothing is hidden beneath the surface. When bamboo is cut open, the inside is empty (nothing hidden).

Finally, to the left of the praying hands position is the plum flower (Baika). This is a symbol for fortitude in Japan. The plum flower blossoms before other flowers in the chill of winter when snow still remains on the ground. Baika means, "The Japanese plum flower stands for beauty, courage, and nobility." Together with the pine and bamboo, the three plant symbols are known as the three companions of the deep (Saikan Sanyu).

