



WHAT IS WARAKU?

What is a Budo?

The image that comes to many people's mind when the word Budo is mentioned is some kind of fighting technique. Two people sparring, extreme physical training, being hard on the body to develop a stronger spirit, or something to that effect. For many people, Budo implies a fighting or at least a self-defence technique, the image of defeating an opponent.

The English translation of the Japanese Word Bud oil martial art, but that translation was made after the meaning or implication, even in Japanese, of Budo had changed.

While Budo may be an art form, it is not martial, its origins are not in military tactics or training, and only later in its history did people start looking at it primarily as a fighting technique. Before that time, Budo was a type or religious practice, developing out of or with the Japanese Shinto religion.

Budo utilizes the physical body as a way to become closer to God, the Universe, or anything that is an ideal for an individual. People who do Budo (called Budoka) learn a philosophy or logic and use their physical body to fully study, test and use that philosophy.



Budo should be something that everyone can not only study, but also physically practice and improve in because if everyone cannot share in it, the logic and philosophy are incomplete. People who do Budo try to improve themselves and help others to improve themselves as well.

In “martial arts” or modern fighting techniques, strength is developed from the outside in. In Budo, the strength and energy that is developed comes from the inside out. It starts from the core of the body (the pelvis, lower back, and lower abdomen), which creates a center from which the energy can flow. There is also spiritual power or energy that is believed to exist in the core, and by focusing on that part of the body the energy is awakened.

By awakening this energy first, the body can then develop strength and energy starting from the inside and center of the body, which strengthens and balances the rest of the body. This development is not strictly physical, it is mental and emotional as well, its balance and energy connecting all parts of the person.





What is Waraku?

Waraku is a Japanese Budo that was developed by Master Hiramasa Maeda and is based on the many techniques and philosophies he has studied. Master Maeda first started studying Budo when he was in his early teens. He started studying full contact Karate when he was in High school, and was a very talented student, worked extremely hard, and learned very quickly. By the end of high school he had already started teaching and competing, but several incidents in his life made him feel that there was something else that he was looking for. In the 1980's he discovered and began studying kototama tsurugi at the Oomoto (a school of the Shinto religion) complex in Kameoka, Japan. From Kototama tsurugi, Master Maeda began to develop his own techniques and philosophies, which became Waraku. In 2000, Waraku began to spread throughout Japan with new branches still forming today.

The name Waraku has two meanings. The most common meaning is peace and goodness forever. Waraku brings mental, physical and emotional balance to the individual as well as their surroundings. The other meaning is circle, spiral and intersection. The movement of energy in Waraku is based on the shape of the spiral, a very powerful shape found everywhere in nature from the double helix of DNA, to whirlpools and typhoons, to black holes and galaxies. This shape is powerful because it starts from a core point and spirals out, making overlapping circles which do not lose momentum and energy like only one circle would, the energy and momentum is carried and multiplied.

In some movements Waraku, a bokken, or wooden sword is used. This wooden sword is a physical representation of the tsurugi, or . Tsurugi means water, water, fire, which is an important concept in Waraku.

The intersection or joining of water and fire represents the spark of life. The water, water, fire, shows the overlapping of water and fire, which is where the energy and strength come from. The movements of Waraku start with Hachariki, or Eight Energies, which is practiced with only the body. Then Hachiken, or Eight Swords, which is fundamentally the same as Hachiriki, but done with a bokken. From Hachiriki and Hachiken come 75 ken, or 75 swords, which are combinations of the movements of Hachiken. From the 75 swords come many variations, but all are the same basic shape. The movements of Waraku help align and balance the body and develop energy and strength from the inside out. They utilize the core of the body (the pelvis, lower back, and lower abdomen) and focus on aligning three energy points, or tanden, which run through the center of the body. There are other aspects to Waraku than just the physical behaviours as well, but the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual aspects are all connected. The skills of Waraku develop the core of the body, which includes the pelvis, lower back, and lower abdomen.

The core is the body's center and balance point, if the core is in balance and alignment, the rest of the body can follow. The balance that comes from the core creates a base of energy and strength for the body, This strength is not only physical, although a lot physical power can originate in the core, but because it is the body's center and balance point, as the physical body becomes more centered , a mental and emotional energy and strength develop as well.



There are three energy points, or tanden, that run through the center of the body. By aligning these three points, including the core, the body becomes more balanced and stable. The energy points are the joden, chuden and kaden, or upper, middle and lower energy points, respectively. These three energy points are also control points for the directions the body moves: horizontal, vertical, and front to back. The upper energy point is located in the center of the forehead above the bridge of the nose, where the "third eye" is, and controls horizontal movement. The middle energy point is located between the upper and lower energy points, in the middle of the body, at about the solar plexus, and controls forward and backward movement. The lower energy point is located about 5 centimeters, or 1,5 inches below the belly button, in the middle of the lower abdomen, and controls vertical movement. When these energy point are aligned, energy flows easily in and out of the body.

To help keep the movements of Waraku balanced, there are four points around the body, where energy is gathered during the movements: top, bottom, left and right, with the center being a fifth core point. The names of these points are heavens, earth, fire and water, respectively, with the core being the tie or intersection of the points. The four points are the same distance from the core, creating the balance of top to bottom, left to right. The movements of Waraku gathers energy from all points to make an even and full circle around the body. The movements start at one of the points and spiral through all others to gather energy and momentum, and to keep them balanced.

There are sounds, like names, for each of the movement or behaviours of Waraku. These sounds are called Kototama, or words from the spirit. All words, or especially sounds, carry the energy to communicate feelings or images. The image of the movements is communicated to the mind and body when these names are said, keeping kind and body connected. The basic sounds are a, o, e, and i, with the core being u. These sounds correspond with the points around the body (heavens, earth, fire, water and the intersection). The names or sounds of the 75 jin grew out of these basic sounds. The emotional aspect of Qaraku comes from the belief that every person is born with a core, like a spirit or soul, and four basic attributes or feelings. The four feeling or attributes are happy, peaceful, powerful and miraculous. The soul and four attributes correspond with the sounds and points around the body. Keeping the different parts of the person connected, the mental, emotional and physical aspects, keeps the person balanced and helps the entire person develop rather than one part being more dominate than the other parts.

Waraku can be done alone or with others. Because muscles strength, body size, height, age, etc., are not important in Waraku, anyone can practice together. The practice with others is another form of communication, the giving and receiving of energies, learning how to act and react to other people. The skills developed alone and with others are supposed to be used in everyday life. They help of course with physical movement, balancing the body, but also with things like communication with others. The more and longer Waraku is done, the more the effects are felt and noticed in daily life.