

A Guide for Judo Teachers

Symbolism in Judo

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Li Tei Feng took refuge under this willow and survived the storm. But he also learned from the willow's attitude toward the storm how he would have to behave toward men and things later in his life in order to last.

In Japan there is the story of the young doctor Akiyama who, in spring, watched in his garden the young branches of the oak tree break under the heavy load of snow, while the branches of the cherry tree bent to the ground, let the snow glide off and straightened again undamaged.

India says "the weak will conquer the strong" and Lao Tse says "be like the water, adapt yourself to everything, always recede but never submit."

In the West, time and again, "to give in" is interpreted as "to surrender," "not to stand ready to fight." "To recede but never submit," however, clearly shows the difference. Confucius says at another time "the noble man adapts himself but does not blindly yield."

Another symbol in Japan is the cherry blossom, which is said to be beautiful even in death. The lotus blossom is another symbol which presents itself to the observer pure and immaculate. Both symbols stand for the spirit and soul of man.

A symbol which we meet frequently is the fan and the sword. The fan symbolizes the female element in Judo: the tender, the flexible, the beautiful; the sword, on the other hand, symbolizes the male element in Judo: the hard, the rough, the dangerous.

This symbol has been taken over by many organizations and associations in all countries of the earth.

The Kodokan emblem is a symbol which among others has been taken over by the Black Belt

Association in the USA and the DDK in Germany. It portrays an eight-leaved cherry blossom and symbolizes the power of glowing iron amidst the silky, flexible, white blossom, or else "strong towards the inside, soft towards the outside."

The red circle within the blossom is supposed to symbolize our inside: concentrated and hot like glowing iron. The white circle is supposed to symbolize our outside: humble, plain and pure.

Another interpretation of this symbol speaks of an imitation of Queen Amaterasu's mirror, which is being kept in the Shrine of Ise. When I look in a mirror I shall always think: may my inside be strong and concentrated; my outside pure and humble.