

Jitsu

The Japanese word Jitsu that Masunaga used means 'true' or 'real'. The same character, in Chinese, also means 'true' and 'real' but also means 'fruit' or 'berry'. These meanings are deep meanings in the Japanese too, because 'Kajitsu' 果実 means fruit and 'Minoru' 実る (which uses Jitsu as its first character) means 'to bear fruit'.

The modern character for Jitsu in Japan is 実. However, it's original rendering as the Chinese word 'Shi' is 實. This character is made up of three bits:

宀 is a roof, meaning what's below it is in a house.

田 is a pierced object

貝 is a cowrie shell

Strings of pierced cowrie shells were used for money in ancient China, so:

貫 means money but ...

It also has the connotation of piercing into something valuable and thus is used in Chinese combinations like 貫通 which means 'understanding thoroughly'.

Therefore, the full character for Jitsu is formed from 'Roof' over 'Money', that is, a house full of money. The house is a symbol of the image you display to the outside world. Therefore, the whole symbol means that what you display is also true of the inside. i.e the meaning of Jitsu is 'the same on the outside as it is on the inside' from which the western words 'true' and 'real' are invoked.

The picture of wealth filling the house also gives the connotation of 'ripened fruit', where the inside is ready to break out through the outside skin and, like a fig bursting open, where the skin is no longer hiding what is beneath.

Contrast this with:

Kyo

Japanese dictionaries translate Kyo as an unguarded moment, a fiction, a hollow, a cavity, empty, vacant, futile, fruitless, vain. It's modern character is :

虚

Also, in combination, Kyo is used to suggest falsehood. For instance, by combining a Mouth with Kyo you get:

嘘 which means a lie

What is the deeper meaning underlying all of these?

The old character for Kyo is :

虚

This is made up of two bits only one of which contributes to the meaning:

虍

is the radical which means Tiger. However, in this character it is only present to indicate the Chinese pronunciation of the word.

土

The other bit: contains the real meaning. It is a burial mound. You can see the mound at the bottom and the two things sticking up are the flags that were traditionally planted on the mound.



This is a very old symbol and means something like: “empty on the surface but lots buried underneath”

It also has the connotation, “what is on the surface is not the truth”

This is where the modern readings of lie, falsehood, vanity come from. The word ‘empty’ has the same connotation as the English ‘empty promises’. That is, it is not really empty, but empty of truth.

So Jitsu essentially means reality and truth while Kyo means pretence and falsehood.

I like this, because, in the West we often seem to discount the Jitsu and focus on nourishing the Kyo. The poor Jitsu is not respected or appreciated for the hard work it is doing.

This suggests another angle to working with Kyo and Jitsu, which reminds me of the true story of the Loyal Soldier. In 1960 an American ship landed at a remote island in the Pacific and was promptly attacked by a lone Japanese soldier who had been defending the island on his own since the Second World War. By that time he was almost insane with loneliness and uncertainty. The Americans took the soldier back to Japan and the way in which he was treated in his homeland is the Jitsu lesson.

Instead of telling him that his efforts had been useless because the war had ended almost 20 years ago, they praised his sincerity, his loyalty and his determination. They gave him a hero's welcome and decorated him. Given this appreciation, he was able to quickly let go of the stress, the insecurity and the insanity which his vigil had created and soon integrated into peacetime society.

I feel that we could treat the Jitsu similarly. By listening to the Jitsu and appreciating it, we can help it let go of its effortful existence without resentment.

Similarly, I like the idea that the Kyo may not be empty but is full of buried, unconscious issues. If we think in this way, the Kyo does not need to be 'filled' but 'uncovered'. Again, this needs respect, care and sensitivity, because chronic Kyo is frequently hidden because of some pain or trauma which cannot bear the light of truth too suddenly. But by viewing Kyo as full but hidden rather than needy and empty, it allows us to contact it in the same way we might approach a wounded animal, with care and respect but not with the condescension. The chronic Kyo needs acceptance and contact in order to emerge from its disguise but does not, in general, need 'treatment'.