

A commentary on the Prof. Tom Jenkins' essay, "Okugi Kanji Questions"

by Prof. Tony Janovich

In the Kilohana 4th Quarter 2012 newsletter, there is an article by Prof. Tom Jenkins regarding some questions about the Japanese characters found in the Shinnin board. The article originally appeared in 1996. This commentary will set the record straight with the true and accurate facts.

Well over two decades before there was Kilohana, one of the items Prof. Kufferath gave me was a list of the upper boards in Japanese. This list showed the board names for Shinnin, ShinYo and Shin Gen and their listed techniques all in Japanese characters. I asked him where this came from and he told me that it was from Prof. Okazaki. On another occasion he gave me the cover sheet of his Shin Yo list, which had Shin Yo no Maki written in Japanese. I asked him where that came from and he once again said it was from Prof. Okazaki. Prof. Kufferath had given these items and other items to me and different instructors over the years including Fermin Urmeneta, Ramon Ancho, Clive Guth, Marc Mandarich, Tom Westfall, Bob Hudson, George Arrington and others. They were not hand-copied, but were photocopies.

In his article, Prof. Jenkins' main point seems to revolve around one character that appears twice in the Shinnin list, that of "hebi" 蛇, meaning "snake/serpent". These two Shinnin techniques are usually seen as "Ebi Shime, 蝦絞" and "Ushiro Ebi Shime, 後蝦絞". The Kanji document lists these two techniques as "Ebi Hebi Shime, 蝦蛇絞" and "Ushiro Ebi Hebi Shime, 後蝦蛇絞". The reason that both the Ebi and Hebi characters appear on the list is unknown, but this is how it is written on the paper.

Hebi is the "kun reading" or Japanese derived reading of the character. The "on reading" which comes from the Chinese way of voicing this character is "JA". This is also the character that is used for the first syllable of my last name on my Hanko, or personal seal. In his essay, Prof. Jenkins attempts to invalidate the advanced Kanji document that my teacher gave to George Arrington by saying that my name was part of the above two technique names. Prof. Jenkins then states that the list was "home-brewed" by me. This is ridiculous and has no basis in fact.

Here is the true and accurate story in two parts:

Part 1 - The origin of the upper boards Kanji is spelled out above. My teacher, Prof. Sig Kufferath, told me that he received some notes in Japanese from Prof. Okazaki and that these included the upper boards. My teacher gave a copy to me and then throughout the

years gave it to others including George Arrington. These were never given a second thought and just part of our teachings.

Part 2 - The origin of the "JA/Hebi" Kanji on my personal seal is as follows. For several years, my teacher used a rubber stamp that read "NIKKO JIU-JITSU SCHOOL PROFESSOR S. KUFFERATH" to validate diplomas. This can be seen in the Picture section of my website, www.kodenkan.com. Sometime later, about 1978, my teacher told me that we needed a Kodenkan seal in the style used by Prof. Okazaki and that he and I also needed personal seals. We went to a Japanese woman he knew who ran a Japanese goods shop near Mountain View and we gave her our names. She then sent our names and the name of our school to Japan where Kanji with on-readings that matched the syllables of our names were selected. We had no input in their selection, thus Prof. Jenkins' premise is completely wrong and invalid. The one and only reason that character is on my seal is that they wrote it for the syllable "Ja". The shop called us when the 3 seals came in and we started using them.

This whole nonsense about the kanji for the upper list is ridiculous. The Shin in the upper boards such as ShinYo in our teachings is 神, which is kami or spirit. This is in my article "Success is in the Beginning", which was proofread and signed by my teacher Prof. Sig Kufferath. This use of Shin/Kami for upper boards is also seen in Japanese newspaper articles on Prof. Okazaki from the 1940's in Hawaii.

Nobody is forcing anyone to use these interpretations, this is what we teach. This was passed on directly to me from my teacher. Just like we do many of the techniques different than others, if you don't like it, then don't use them. This nonsense started when representatives of Jujitsu organizations came to Prof. Kufferath and I and asked questions about the upper boards kanji. It was not our problem that our answers did not match what they taught and that they did not like the answers.

It would seem that the only "home brewed" lists are by Prof. Jenkins, who apparently tried to reverse engineer the kanji from the English phonetic spellings and thinking the instructors scroll is some kind of strict doctrine. It should also be noted that some instructor scrolls have mistakes in them. Some have characters crossed out and correct kanji put in next to it. Some mistakes were not caught and are in there still, just like misspellings in English papers. Also a lot of the oratory in the scroll is actually from the Imperial Rescript on Education from the Emperor Meiji.

I will keep and teach what I was taught, told, and shown by my teacher Prof. Sig Kufferath, who actually knew Prof. Okazaki and studied directly under him.