

Passaic Bujinkan Buyu  
**Shinra Bansho**

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## Shinobi Notebook #2

# Passaic Bujinkan Buyu Shinra Bansho



## What is Ninjutsu?

("Methods of perseverance") is best described as the collection of philosophies, strategies and techniques of self-protection and accomplishment developed over the last thousand years, by the ninja - legendary shadow warriors of Japan. Ninjutsu is the traditional Japanese method of espionage; involves stealthy movements and the use of camouflage, methods of gathering information, nondetection, avoidance, and misdirection techniques.

## Ninja / Shinobi



A ninja or Shinobi was a covert agent or mercenary of feudal Japan specializing in unorthodox arts of war. The functions of the ninja included espionage, sabotage, infiltration, assassination, as well as open combat in certain situations. The underhanded tactics of the ninja were contrasted with the samurai, who were careful not to tarnish their reputable image.

In his Buke Myōmokushō, military historian Hanawa Hokinoichi writes of the ninja:

*"They traveled in disguise to other territories to judge the situation of the enemy, they would inveigle their way into the midst of the enemy to discover gaps, and enter enemy castles to set them on fire, and carried out assassinations, arriving in secret".*

During the unrest of the Sengoku period (15th - 17th centuries), mercenaries and spies for hire arose out of the Iga and Kōga regions of Japan, and it is from these clans that much of later knowledge regarding the ninja is inferred. Following the unification of Japan under the Tokugawa shogunate, the ninja descended again into obscurity. However, in the 17th and 18th centuries, manuals such as the Bansenshukai (1676) — often centered around Chinese military philosophy — appeared in significant numbers. These writings revealed an assortment of philosophies, religious beliefs, their application in warfare, as well as the espionage techniques that form the basis of the ninja's art. The word Ninjutsu would later come to describe a wide variety of practices related to the ninja.

## Meaning of the Ninja Kanji

The ninja kanji has two elements: **NIN** means to hide and **JA** stands for person. Its original Chinese meaning is patience, endurance, but in Japan NIN evolved into Shinobi, meaning to hide, to sneak in. The kanji **NIN** gives an unmistakable picture of what the Chinese and Japanese understand by patience: a blade upon the heart!

The kanji **NIN** has two parts. In the upper part there is the **blade**; its left element has a long dot, as if it were a drop of blood dripping from the sword. The lower part is a **heart**.



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刃心  
刀

者

The SHA kanji, pronounced as JA in NINJA, means person. Although unrecognizable in the actual form of this kanji, the original pictogram of JA, depicts an old person with long hair who walks with a cane.

## Famous Ninjas

Many famous people in Japanese history have been associated or identified as ninjas, but their status as ninja are difficult to prove and may be the product of later imagination. Rumors surrounding famous warriors, such as Kusunoki Masashige or Minamoto no Yoshitsune sometimes describe them as ninjas, but there is little evidence for these claims. Some well known examples include:

- **Mochizuki Chiyome** (16th cent.) - The wife of Mochizuke Moritoki. Chiyome created a school for girls, which taught skills required of geisha, as well as espionage skills.
- **Fujibayashi Nagato** (16th cent.) - Considered to be one of three "greatest" Iga jōnin, the other two being Hattori Hanzō and Momochi Sandayū. Fujibayashi's descendents wrote and edited the Bansenshukai.
- **Fūma Kotarō** (d. 1603) - A ninja rumored to have killed Hattori Hanzō, with whom he was supposedly rivals. The fictional weapon Fūma shuriken is named after him.
- **Hattori Hanzō** (1542-1596) - A samurai serving under Tokugawa Ieyasu. His ancestry in Iga province, along with ninjutsu manuals published by his descendants have led some sources to define him as a ninja. This depiction is also common in popular culture.
- **Ishikawa Goemon** (1558-1594) - Goemon reputedly tried to drip poison from a thread into Oda Nobunaga's mouth through a hiding spot in the ceiling, but many fanciful tales exist about Goemon, and this story cannot be confirmed.
- **Kumawakamaru** (13th-14th cent.) - A youth whose exiled father was ordered to death by the monk Homma Saburō. Kumakawa took his revenge by sneaking into Homma's room while he was asleep, and assassinating Homma with his own sword.
- **Momochi Sandayū** (16th cent.) - A leader of the Iga ninja clans, who supposedly perished during Oda Nobunaga's attack on Iga province. There is some belief that he escaped death and lived as a farmer in Kii Province. Momochi is also a branch of the Hattori clan.

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- Yagyū Muneyoshi (1529-1606) - A renown swordsman of the Shinkage-ryū school. Muneyoshi's grandson, Jubei Muneyoshi, told tales of his grandfather's status as a ninja.

## Ninja Training

The skills required of the ninja has come to be known in modern times as ninjutsu, but it is unlikely they were previously named under a single discipline. Modern misconceptions have identified ninjutsu as a form of combat art, but historically, ninjutsu largely covered espionage and survival skills. Some lineage styles (ryūha) of ninjutsu such as Togakure-ryū were known in the past.



(Hatsumi Sensei 34<sup>th</sup> Soke of Togakure-ryū Ninpo)

The first specialized training began in the mid-15th century, when certain samurai families started to focus on covert warfare, including espionage and assassination. Like the samurai, ninja were born into the profession, where traditions were kept in, and passed down through the family. According to Turnbull, the ninja was trained from childhood, as was also common in samurai families. Outside the expected martial art disciplines, a youth studied survival and scouting techniques, as well as information regarding poisons and explosives. Physical training was also important, which involved long distance runs, climbing, stealth methods of walking and swimming. A certain degree of knowledge regarding common professions was also required if one was expected to take their form in disguise. Some evidence of medical training can be derived from one account, where an Iga ninja provided first-aid to Li Naomasa, who was injured by gunfire in the Battle of Sekigahara. Here the ninja reportedly gave Naomasa a "black medicine" meant to stop bleeding.

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With the fall of the Iga and Kōga clans, daimyos could no longer recruit professional ninjas, and were forced to train their own shinobi. The shinobi was considered a real profession, as demonstrated in the bakufu's 1649 law on military service, which declared that only daimyos with an income of over 10,000 koku were allowed to retain shinobi. In the two centuries that followed, a number of ninjutsu manuals were written by descendants of Hattori Hanzō as well as members of the Fujibayashi clan, an offshoot of the Hattori. Major examples include the Ninpiden (1655), the Bansenshukai (1675), and the Shōninki (1681).

## Important Vocabulary

### Numbers 1 – 10

ichi	one	(一)
ni	two	(二)
san	three	(三)
shi,yon	four	(四)
go	five	(五)
roku	six	(六)
shichi,nana	seven	(七)
hachi	eight	(八)
kyuu,ku	nine	(九)
juu	ten	(十)

### Greetings

Ohayou:	Good morning.
Konnichiwa:	Good afternoon.
Konbanwa:	Good evening.

### Partings

Dewa mata:	See you.
Oyasuminasai:	Good night.
Sayounara:	Good Bye
Yoi ichinichi o:	Have a nice day.
Gokouun o inorimasu:	Good luck.