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HISTORY:

During the Tokugawa era [ca. 1650] in the Saikaido Province of ancient Japan, there lived a famous and well-respected samurai by the name of Saikouhou Matsuyama. He had a beautiful young daughter by the name of Ju Shin, meaning “gentle spirit”. During that historical time period women were not allowed to train in the martial arts. However, being a doting and loving father, Saikouhou would let his daughter sit quietly on the edge of the tatami as he practiced his jujitsu techniques. She would watch every one of his movements intently. Every day, after he left, Ju Shin would slowly go through the motions of each technique her father had practiced. Eventually Saikouhou caught on to what Ju Shin was doing, but since she had translated his lightning faster moves into such a smoothly flowing slow form that looked like a dance as beautiful as his daughter and she kept her knowledge to herself, he didn’t give her “dancing” any thought and allowed her to continue to watch him during practice.

One day, as she had done innumerable times before as part of her daily routine, Ju Shin walked to a nearby meadow that had a sparkling brook with many wildflowers growing on its banks. She would always pick a number of them to bring home to her father, arranged as a bouquet, because she saw that they made him happy.

Unfortunately on this particular day two ronin spied her picking flowers and decided to take advantage of her. As they grabbed her to subdue her, she executed the techniques she had patiently learned from her father over the years and practiced hundreds of times as part of her “dance routine.” Her smoothly flowing forms sped up incredibly and she devastated both of her attackers within a few seconds.

Ju Shin ran home as fast as she could. Saikouhou, seeing her disheveled appearance, demanded to know what had happened. Ju Shin told him of the two attackers and where she had left them in the meadow. Saikouhou immediately ran to the site, found his daughter’s two assailants nursing their wounds, and quickly dispatched them to eternity, beheading both with a single quickly arced slice of his katana.



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Although Saikouhou was extremely upset with the incident, as was Ju Shin, he hugged her and comforted her, letting her know how proud he was of her. He also told her that he never assumed that her slow dancelike movements would ever manifest themselves into the effective self-defense system he used in warfare, much less that a young girl could so effectively defend herself. He could think of no greater honor to bestow upon Ju Shin than to classify all of her slow graceful movements as “Ju-Shin” in honor of her name – Gentle Spirit.

Now, the real history of Ju-Shin:

Early in my Jujitsu studies with Sensei Jack Seki in the 1960's, he mentioned in one dojo session that women in old Japan were not allowed to practice jujitsu as men were. They were allowed to practice many of the same moves, but did them slowly with another female partner, in an almost dancelike form, as prearranged sequences called kime-no-kata. Seki also encouraged us to practice techniques slowly so that we would learn how to execute them smoothly; that speed would come naturally with continued practice. He also encouraged us to practice our techniques like this at home, with an imaginary partner, as it would improve our skill level.

As part of my training I took him seriously.

Over the years I have looked back on this tidbit of instruction/insight and wondered what esthetic name could be given to title this type of slow execution of effective jujitsu techniques other than kime-no-kata, which is a very generic term. Although I had come up with a number of Japanese names, none of them really conveyed the idea of the slow movement of the art while retaining all the physical, attitudinal, and philosophical elements that go into the art of jujitsu. This problem had bugged me for years because I wanted to come up with a simple name that conveyed these ideas within the physical framework of combining jujitsu techniques together into different sequences where one technique flowed smoothly into another as you practiced defending yourself against an imaginary attacker or several attackers in the spirit of Jujitsu.



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Then, in 2013, I started writing my seventh book for Ohara Publications. One of the things I was looking for was a Japanese term that conveyed the idea of the importance of maintaining one's physical and emotional balance while executing jujitsu techniques. I was able to develop a list of different terms from some good resources, a few of which have made it into my newest book.

However, sometimes inspiration comes from unexpected directions. Early in 2014, one of my short term students, Sharon Takeshita, decided to do some research for me on this topic as well, at my request. One of the terms she got from one of her relatives was "ju shin", meaning center of gravity. Unexpectedly she had also found the solution to the "name" problem I had been seeking for decades. She had "hit the nail square on its head." As you know there are different meaning for the romaji words "ju" and "shin", depending upon the kanji used. I then looked at the name Budoshin Jujitsu, and the kanji used for "ju" and "shin". The "shin" kanji was identical but the "ju" kanji was different. By changing the kanji for "ju", *Ju Shin* [center of gravity] became *Ju Shin* [gentle spirit]!

Ju-Shin, or "gentle spirit", had been looking at me for over 48 years in the name "Budoshin Jujitsu" and I never made the connection. It took a Sharon's simple act of giving me the "key to unlock the door" and to help me gain the invaluable insight I had so long sought. I now had an appropriate name for the slow smooth movements involved in executing a series of basic jujitsu movements in a coherent and balanced manner. The general concept of kime-no-kata, or "prearranged forms" now had a formal and appropriate name I could live with: Ju-Shin.