

Kunoichi - Women Ninja

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Women played a very important roll in the ninja clans of the past. Known as Kunoichi, the female ninja could often use their own femininity to get very close to the enemy. Using psychological warfare and mind manipulation as weapons, the kunoichi could get in close enough to poison the victim without leaving a trace.

Kunoichi were trained in a variety of weapons, similar to the ninja, but because of the different situations they would face some smaller close range weapons were used more often. Weapons like blinding powders, poisons, daggers, rope and even the fan were often carried because they could be used at close range and would be easy to transport without notice.

Imagine a young woman crying, and how it would make you feel. You'd probably want to try to help her, and maybe even offer her some assistance. This is just one example of how the kunoichi could trick someone into walking right into a trap, a very powerful weapon.

BRIEF HISTORY

Throughout the Ninja's long history, female Ninja have been employed. In most cases these were very unique strong-willed women who proved themselves worthy by donning the Ninja garb and fighting for their families and beliefs. However, these women were a rare breed and were not common. That all changed in the late 1500's when the warlord Moritoki Mochizuki was killed in the battle of Kawanakajima in 1561. His widow, Lady Chiyome Mochizuki, was left in the care of the Daimyo Shingen Takeda, who was the uncle of her late husband. Under Takeda's leadership, she accepted the task of creating and overseeing an underground network of female Ninja. Takeda's plan was to have fully trained female operatives who could act as subversive agents used to gather information and deliver coded messages to his allies.

Lady Chiyome set up her operation in the village of Nazu in the Shinshu region and began her search for potential candidates for training. Her greatest resource was young women who were recently orphaned, the victims of the civil war that engulfed the entire country. She also drew from a pool of girls who were lost or abandoned. These young women were indebted to her for saving them from a horrible life on the streets, and Lady Chiyome never let them forget that fact. The girls were taught all the skills of a Miko (shrine attendant) who served at the Shinto shrines all across the land. This allowed them to travel virtually anywhere without suspicion. Along with this religious knowledge, the girls were also taught to become highly efficient information gatherers, seductresses, messengers and when necessary...assassins. As far as physical training, the Kunoichi arts were more focused on one-on-one combat over large scale battlefield tactics. The Kunoichi's unarmed fighting skills were very similar to her male-counterparts, except they were adapted to fit her size and strength. However, this is where the similarities ended. Instead of armor, the Kunoichi was protected by an illusion of weakness. Instead of a long sword, the Kunoichi was armed with an arsenal of lethal weapons that were easily hidden from sight or did not appear to be weapons at all. Instead of hiding in shadows, the Kunoichi was able to move freely within villages, towns, castles and temples.

Over time, these female Ninja set up an extensive network that served Takeda well. He was always well informed of all activities, putting him one step ahead of his opponents at all times. In many cases, his Kunoichi would spread rumors to cause confusion and dissension, or on rare occasions, they would assassinate by use of poison or surprise attack.

KUNOICHIJUTSU TODAY

Kunoichi-jutsu revolves around the art of deception. These warrior-women base their training on surprise tactics and hidden weapons. A Kunoichi never wastes time or energy in combative situations. Their unarmed fighting and weaponry skills make use of strategically placed vital attacks that are designed to incapacitate their opponents very quickly. Ever-vigilant, the Kunoichi is never a victim. Although she may appear weak and helpless, it is a ruse. In reality, the Kunoichi uses her outward appearance and conditioned emotional responses to manipulate those who would cause her harm.

The Kunoichi's fighting skills are taught in a series of Nature-based responses involving Full moon (upward circular blocks), Half moon (downward circular blocks), Soft breeze (side to side blocks), Rain (upward and downward blocks), Thunder (jamming), Lightning (distracting), Fog (escaping), Gale wind (attacking) and Storm (combination skills). In accordance with their names, these responses tap into the powers of nature to provide very effective defenses against an attacker. The main emphasis of the Kunoichi unarmed system is to appear vulnerable, attempting to draw the opponent into close range. Once there, the Kunoichi initiates an appropriate defense and counters with aggressive techniques that focus on the throat, eyes and hair, followed by a variety of secondary attacks.

KUNOICHI SWORDSMANSHIP

The main weapon of the Kurai Kotori Kunoichi are the Koshigatana, or twin short swords. Because of their light weight and short blades, these weapons can be maneuvered extremely fast. They are used to apply a variety of slashing techniques, trapping parries, redirections and blocks.

Female

Ninja weapons are a set of tools made famous by the secret sisterhood of Ancient Japan. These women were experts in deception and masters of assassination. Female shrine attendants, concubines and servants moved about a Feudal Lord's castle with ease. Since these women went virtually unnoticed, they were capable of committing acts of espionage with little or no interference. Unable to outwardly display weapons, but still needing to be armed should their presence be detected, the Kunoichi improvised. The Kunoichi made use of their normal attire along with an arsenal of smaller hidden weapons in the event that conflict should arise.

From their garb they developed four unique weapons. Their Geta (wooden shoes) were used to initiate deadly bones attacks. The Obi (sash) provided them with a flexible weapon that could be used to entangle and control their enemies limbs. A non-threatening Kushi (wooden comb) was used to rake at their victim's eyes. And the Kasa (umbrella) was used to shield them from attack long enough to unleash one of their concealed weapons.

From their hidden arsenal of small weapons, the Kunoichi was able to unleash vicious attacks. The Kakute (spiked ring) was worn reversed so its small spikes could not be seen, but when exposed, its strike left painful tears in the flesh. The Kaiken (small dirk) is a double edged dagger that the female Ninja is extremely efficient with. A small pouch containing ten Nekote (steel claws) provided the Kunoichi with the ability to turn her fingers into sharpened blades. In the case of escape, the female warrior was armed with two hindrance weapons. First, she possessed a thin container that housed a handful of Hari (sharpened needles) that could be hurled at the enemy. Secondly, she was armed with a pouch of Metsubishi (blinding powder) that, when thrown in the enemies face, caused the eyes to blur

and restricted the respiratory system.