

Sensei

Sensei, ***Seonsaeng*** or ***Xiansheng*** (先生) is an honorific term shared in Japanese, Korean and Chinese; this is literally translated as "person born before another" or "one who comes before".^[1] In general usage, it is used, with proper form, after a person's name and means "teacher";^[2] the word is also used as a title to refer to or address other professionals or persons of authority, such as clergy, accountants, lawyers, physicians and politicians ^[3] or to show respect to someone who has achieved a certain level of mastery in an art form or some other skill, e.g., accomplished novelists, musicians, artists and martial artists.

Contents
Etymology
Use in Buddhism
See also
References
External links

Etymology

The two characters that make up the term can be directly translated as "born before" and imply one who teaches based on wisdom from age and experience.^[4]

The word prefaced by the adjective 大, pronounced "dai" (or "ō"), which means "great" or "large", is often translated "grand master". This compound term, "dai-sensei", is sometimes used to refer to the top sensei in a particular school or tradition, particularly within the iemoto system. For a more senior member of a group who has not achieved the level of sensei, the term senpai (先輩) is used – note the common use of 先 "before"; in martial arts, this is particularly used for the most senior non-sensei member.

The Japanese expression of 'sensei' shares the same characters as the Chinese word 先生, pronounced *xiānshēng* in Standard Chinese. Xiansheng was a courtesy title for a man of respected stature. Middle Chinese pronunciation of this term may have been *senʃaŋ or *sienʃaŋ. In modern Standard Chinese, it is used in the same way as the title "Mr". Prior to the development of the modern vernacular, *xiānshēng* was used to address teachers of both genders; this has fallen out of usage in Standard Chinese, though it is retained in some southern Chinese Chinese varieties such as Cantonese, Hokkien,

<i>Xiansheng</i>	
Chinese name	
Chinese	先生
Literal meaning	"[one] born before" > "elder"
Transcriptions	
Standard Mandarin	
Hanyu Pinyin	xiānshēng
Wade–Giles	hsien ¹ -sheng ¹
IPA	[ɕjén̚.ʃón̚]
Hakka	
Phák-fa-sú	sîn-sâng
Yue: Cantonese	
Yale Romanization	sīn-sāang
Jyutping	sin1 saang1
Southern Min	
Hokkien POJ	sian-sin̍
Tâi-lô	sian-sinn
Pu-Xian Min	
Hinghwa BUC	sǐng-sǎng
Middle Chinese	
Middle Chinese	sen-shang
Old Chinese	
Baxter–Sagart (2014)	/*sʰər sɾeŋ/
Zhengzhang	/*swɑːn sʰleːŋ/
Korean name	
Hangul	선생
Transcriptions	
Revised Romanization	seonsaeng
Japanese name	
Kanji	先生
Hiragana	せんせい
Katakana	センセイ

Teochew and Hakka, where it still has the meaning "teacher" or "doctor". In Japanese, *sensei* is still used to address people of both genders. It is likely both the current Southern Chinese and Japanese usages are more reflective of its Middle Chinese etymology. For Hokkien and Teochew communities in Singapore and Malaysia, "*Sensei*" is the proper word to address school teachers. Malays in Singapore traditionally addressed Chinese physicians as "*Sensei*" too.

Transcriptions

Romanization

sensei

Use in Buddhism

In Sanbo Kyodan related zen schools, *sensei* is used to refer to ordained teachers below the rank of rōshi. However, other schools of Buddhism in Japan use the term for any priest regardless of seniority; for example, this title is also used for Jōdo Shinshū ministers in the United States, whether they are ethnic Japanese or not. In the Kwan Um School of Zen, according to Zen master Seungsahn, the Korean title *ji do poep sa nim* is much like the Japanese title "sensei".^[5]

In Nichiren Buddhism, members of the Soka Gakkai International refer to the president of the sangha, currently Daisaku Ikeda, as Sensei.

See also

- Japanese martial arts titles
- Rōshi
- Chinese: sifu
- Sanskrit: guru
- Zen ranks and hierarchy

References

- "先生". *Kōjien Japanese Dictionary*.
- "Sense". *Kenkyusha's New Japanese-English Dictionary*.
- Tuttle (1973). *Secrets of the Samurai*. Ratti & Westbrook.
- Akiyama, Jun. "Aikido Information: Language: Sensei/Shihan as "Teacher" in Japanese" (<http://www.aikiweb.com/language/goldsbury1.html>). *AikiWeb*. Retrieved 2010-12-02.
- "Zen Master Seung Sahn – Inka Means Strong Center and Wisdom" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20120406213535/http://www.kwanumzen.org/1987/inka-means-strong-center-and-wisdom/>). Kwanumzen.org. Archived from the original (<http://www.kwanumzen.org/1987/inka-means-strong-center-and-wisdom/>) on 2012-04-06. Retrieved 2011-12-06.

External links

- What is a Sensei in Judo? (<http://www.judoinfo.com/sensei1.htm>)
- Karate: What is a Sensei in Karate? (<http://karatecoaching.com/what-is-sensei-%E5%85%88%E7%94%9F-who-can-be-a-sensei/>)

Retrieved from "<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Sensei&oldid=999715116>"

Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License; additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy. Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization.