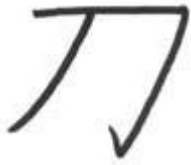


NIN is made up of 2 parts: on top is blade or katana:



This kanji is among the simpler to understand; to me it looks like the end of a tanto. Others get the feeling of a blade sweeping through the air...can't say that I get that but the feeling is the same. That is a blade...its sharp and scary.

Below blade is heart or kokoro:



I've been trying to understand this kanji...apparently it can also translate to center, feelings, or spirit. There are 4 strokes, I'm sure this has some significance...maybe as one's heart or center it has a balance of 4 elements with the beat of the heart understood as the 5<sup>th</sup>. But thus far I'm simply accepting it as heart.

So, the kanji for NIN itself:



It is written as "blade over heart", giving the feeling of needing to keep heart even when threatened, or "to persevere." However, depending on the feeling with which the kanji is written (literally the "mood" of the brush strokes) it could be read as "heart under blade" from this we get the feeling of "hiding" the heart under blade and the common picture of the black-clad heartless assassin.

Looking at Hatsumi Sensei's Kanji:



You can see that two of the strokes in "heart" are connected as a single stroke...like a line of blood or a stab wound...that changes things huh? Can't translate it as "blade over heart" or the more pessimistic "heart under blade", but instead as "blade piercing heart". This makes our translation of NIN into "to persevere" seem pretty poor. Even if the blade pierces our heart we must not fail.