

Sword Arts (Kenjutsu, Iaido, Kendo)

Art of Sword :

One weapon that stands out from almost all martial art and military training, is the sword. Whether gleaming in the hands of a Hollywood actor or brought back to life via the imagination while reading Myamoto Musashi's, "Book of Five Rings," one thing stands clear: along with this popularity comes the quest for developing HIGHLANDER like skills. A desire to wield the sword with precision and deadliness.

In the Martial Science we have 3 specific ways that we teach the sword and each of these ways requires the use of a different sword. First you have a Bokken or wooden sword. Then you have a Shinai or bamboo sword and last you have a Katana or Real Sword. When learning to master the sword, it is important to have the right tools. Now there is also training in different sizes of swords - such as the Wakizashi, but the training principles are the same; you simply substitute the weapon in question.

In terms of learning to fight with a sword, kenjutsu has a more complete curriculum. Kendo of necessity limits the range of techniques and targets. Kendoka generally use shinai, which allow techniques which do not work with real swords. Kenjutsu practitioners do not usually use shinai in training, preferring to use bokken (wooden swords) or katana (steel swords) in order to preserve the cutting techniques of real sword fighting. Kenjutsu training largely consists of practicing cutting technique and performing partner kata. For safety reasons, free-sparring is seldom practised with bokken or katana.

It was natural for the samurais to practice everyday with their sword. To the samurai the sword was their foremost weapon and privilege - other groups in the society was forbidden to bear swords. Furthermore the practice with the sword was much more than preparing for battle. Around the japanese sword grew a whole philosophy. It has many names, as ken, katana, tachi, and to.

The sword arts themselves are divided several ways. First is by type, ken or iai (sometimes called batto). Also at the same time they divide by origin, the three families of sword arts; Muso ("empty"), Kage ("shadow"), and Shinto ("new sword") styles. Some types mix these dependant on origin and application. Within each type are the three styles. All can be recognized by their employment of various characteristics.

There are two organizations within Japan that have tried to consolidate these sword arts. The Zen Nihon Kendo Renmei (All Japan Kendo Federation) oversees certification requirements for kendo, kenjutsu and some iaido ryu. The Zen Nihon Iaido Renmei (All Japan Iaido Federation) is a much younger organization and oversees certification of some kenjutsu and many iaido ryu. However, the more traditional of the ryu have not joined either of the two organizing bodies and have remained independent and free of oversight.

It should be finally noted that many martial systems included sword arts as a part of their curriculum. In other cases, predomanently sword martial systems have included other types of weapons. And finally there are still other systems which teach only sword arts. The most traditional ryu would teach the sword as their primary weapon, and perhaps some other arts (weapons or empty hand). Only in modern budo or bujutsu have the empty hand arts become primary with the sword playing a supporting role.

Sword training revolves around our structure of "Gorin Goho Gogyo" (five equally balanced

interacting rings that symbolize the five major methods of technical study). This includes: Suburi (sword swinging drills), Tanrenkata (solo forms), Battoho (combative drawing and cutting methods), Tachiuchi (sparring) and Tameshigiri/Shizan (cutting straw and bamboo targets). Students typically train using a Bokuto (wooden sword), and later advance to training with Iaito (or mugito, non-sharpened sword) and finally Shinken, or 'live blade'. At more advanced levels, the student begins to test their acquired skills through test cutting practice on tatami omote makiwara (rolled up tatami mats, previously soaked in water), and eventually Nihondake or Mosodake (Japanese or Chinese bamboo).

The study of swordsmanship improves one's skills of balance, coordination of mind and body, and increases awareness of detail.

WHY WE TRAIN:

Practice in the art of the sword is to refine and discipline our spirit.

GOALS THROUGH TRAINING:

Annei Chitsujo - Peace and order in all we do.

Anshin Ritsumei - Spiritual peace, enlightenment and calm resignation to fate. Anshin ritsumei also means controlling our fear through the calm acceptance of circumstances.

WHY TRAINING WITH THE SWORD IS SO UNIQUE:

It is an instrument of great beauty, as well as a weapon used in striking down oppressors, thereby giving life to those who are oppressed. Because training leads to the use of real swords, this art form requires most sincere training. The powers of focus and concentration will be developed to the fullest. As focus and concentration improve, we are placed more closely to our inner selves. This harmony of mind, body and spirit expands to harmony with and awareness of our environment.

Kenjutsu ("the art of the sword")

Kenjutsu is usually recognized as combative. It always begins with the sword already drawn with an aggressive intent. The first recorded historical systematic teachings of the Japanese long sword began about 800 AD. Since that time, over 1200 different ryu (schools) have been documented.

Many exponents of kenjutsu began to question if a higher understanding could be achieved through practice and study with the sword. These kenshi (swordsmen) developed the art of the sword (kenjutsu) into a way of the sword (kendo). To signify their advances, they coined the name kendo. This divisive move began around the middle of the 14th century.

Kenjutsu is considered a classical bujutsu (art of war or martial art), having been well formulated prior to the Meiji reformation (the classical/modern dividing line). Classical kenjutsu ryu (schools) tend to be quite secretive of their techniques, being very closed to outsiders. Classical kenjutsu ryu are the closest to classical warrior training in the modern world. Examples are Yagyu Shinkage Ryu, and Tenshin Shoden Katori Shinto Ryu.

Kenjutsu wear is traditional, consisting usually of hakama (split skirt trousers), keikogi (a heavy weight jacket worn tucked in) and obi (belt). As a rule, there are no belt colors in kenjutsu, but only titles; Deshi (student), Renshi (instructor), Kyoshi (teacher) and Hanshi (master).

Kata (prearranged forms or exercises) are the usual way of learning the intricate motions required. Initially one practices solo, but later pairs or multiple kenshi kata are performed. The standard practice tool is either a bokken (simulated wooden sword) or an actual live blade. Actual cutting,

and thrusting of the blade against water soaked rolled mats and bamboo poles, called tameshigiri, give the more advanced exponent practice in actual impact of the live blade against a target. KENJUTSU is the art of samurai swordsmanship; Kenjutsu schools proliferated from the 9th century onward. Many of the seryu appear repeatedly in the chronicles of bujutsu. By the end of the Tokugawa period (1600-1867), there were more than 200 active kenjutsu schools.

Notwithstanding the policy of strict secrecy adopted by various masters, the methods and techniques practiced in each school of kenjutsu were usually influenced by those popularized in other fencing schools. There was perpetual effort on the part of hundreds of experts to discover and perfect new methods in swordsmanship. Out of this effort grew a habit that was perpetuated to modern times:

When a warrior had mastered one system of sword-play, he set himself to study all others by traveling through the provinces, fencing against other experts and, in the event of defeat, constituting himself the victor's student.

Competition was merciless, since defeat often meant ruin. A kenjutsu master with a well attended school and a substantial income from the lord of a fief stood to lose everything in an encounter with an itinerant expert. Victory, on the other hand, meant opportunity, income, and a prestigious position. Many a kenjutsu student risked his life repeatedly to establish a reputation that would enable him to become the leader of his own school. Naturally, there was a noticeable reluctance on the part of established sensei to partake in direct confrontations with other fencing teachers or with the wandering champions who were always ready, if not eager, to issue a challenge at the mere mention of a reputation.

Gradually, legislation was enacted to curb the bloodshed in these personal contests of fencing skill. Training with live blades in the dojo of pre-Tokugawa Japan had already been restricted to inanimate targets, such as the makiwara, made of rice straw, or to controlled kata performances—still employed in schools where kenjutsu with a live blade is practiced.

The main phase of kenjutsu was training with the katana, the regular sword. Ancient sword techniques appear to have been first systematized in 1350 by Choisai and Join. Techniques were generally divided into two groups, the first comprising cutting (kiri) and thrusting (tsuki) used in attack and counterattack, the second comprising parries used in defense. Targets were clearly identified.

According to orthodox laws of fencing, no warrior was proud of wounding an enemy in any manner other than established by strict samurai code. The long sword was to be directed at only four points: the top of the head, the wrist, the side, and the leg below the knee. Stern warnings issued by many sensei concerning the degrading use of certain practices, would seem to indicate that observance of the code was by no means a general phenomenon. Unpredictable cuts, thrusts, and parries directed against any available target; psychological ploys; and reliance upon tactical surprise were all said to have been so widely employed that they appear to have been the norm rather than the exception. Almost every student of kenjutsu fancied himself the possessor of a secret, unique, and irresistible method of penetrating every other swordsman's defense. Sensei were constantly devising new strategies for the katana, alone or in conjunction with other weapons, which accounts for the many styles associated with this weapon.

A warrior also learned the techniques of other, minor specializations of kenjutsu. He could usually fence equally well with the wakizashi (short sword) or the intermediate sword (chisa-katana), and explored in detail the efficiency of the nodachi, the long sword generally worn on the back with the handle jutting out behind the shoulder. Kenjutsu reached heights of beauty and efficiency with the simultaneous use of two blades-the katana and the wakizashi, or chisa-katana-in the two-sword style made famous by Miyamoto Musashi in his school, nito-ryu. Immensely difficult were those techniques which called for the use of one or two swords against several opponents armed with swords or spears. Gliding pivots and spins predominated in such exercises.

Today, of the ancient kenjutsu and all its specializations, there are only a few, strongly modified forms extant in Japan, many of which are embodied in the highly ritualized kata of kumi-tachi. Bouts with wooden swords, called bokken, are also staged between students of ancient sword disciplines. Kendo is the most popular modern derivation of feudal fencing. Kendo has its own weapons, techniques, ranks, and purposes, all of which are heavily impregnated with the traditions of ancient Japanese swordsmanship.

FORMS OF KENJUTSU :

JIGEN RYU Aggressive style of kenjutsu founded by Togo Bizen no Kami in the 16th century; the foremost martial tradition for the Japanese warriors of Satsuma.

SHINGEN-RYU Traditional kenjutsu school dating from the 16th century under the patronage of the Nanbu clan.

KENDO Known as the "way of the sword," it developed from kenjutsu (art of the sword). Kendoka wear traditional samurai dress. The feet are bare. A hakama (divided skirt) is worn with a tare (apron or groin protector). The keikogi (kendo jacket) is similar to the one used, in judo, but is worn tucked into the trousers. Hands and forearms are protected by kote (wrist gloves) and the chest is covered by a do (breastplate), held in place by cords fastened around the shoulders. Finally, the men (head-guard), a steel visor and padded cloth, protects the head, throat, and shoulders.

The kendoka uses a shinai (practice sword)-four polished staves of bamboo held together by a long sheath that forms the handle. There is a small leather cup at the tip and a cord to the handle holding the sword together. The shinai is sometimes as long as 3 feet 10 inches. When performing kata, a practitioner dispenses with body armor and wears only the hakama and keikogi, and uses the bokken. For important, formal demonstrations a real sword, mainly the katana (long sword), is often used.

The keikogi's color denotes grade. There is less emphasis on rank here than in other martial arts. A white keikogi indicates the lower kyu (grades), beginning at 6th and progressing to 1st. A black keikogi denotes the higher den (rank), starting at 1st dan and working up ultimately to 10th. From 4th to 6th dan, a kendoka may be awarded the title of renshi (polished expert); and from 8th to 10th that of hanshi (master). Contest ability, mental discipline, and technical knowledge take a practitioner to 6th dan, after which advancement is obtained through teaching ability and service to the art. For the hanshi degree, a kendoka must make original research and take an examination set by the technical board of the All-Japan Kendo Association. The hanshi and renshi awards can

be authorized only in Japan.

The object of a kendo contest is to land two scoring blows on a target area. There are eight target areas: o-shomen center of the head; hidari-men, left side of the head; migi-men, right side of the head; hidari-kote, left forearm; migi-kote, right forearm; gyaku-do, left side of the rib cage; migi-do, right side of the rib cage; tsuki, the throat. All are attacked by cuts except the throat, which can be threatened only by a lunge. Competitors often use only one hand on the shinai-to obtain extra distance-but powerful blows are performed with two hands. All blows are called kiri (cuts) in which a kendoka attacks with the cutting edge of the shinai. When striking, the arms should be fully extended, hips remaining square to the target. After striking, the shinai should slide freely up the target without being disengaged.

The kiai (yell) is even more important in kendo than in other martial arts. A score cannot be registered without the shout that accompanies the blow. The kiai has three functions: attack, to aid mental and physical coordination, and to unnerve the opponent.

Kendo originated more than 1,500 years ago. The first references to kenjutsu, in fact, are contained in the three volumes of the Kojiki, a medieval history. The earliest reference to any non-lethal practice weapon is about 400 A.D., and the weapon mentioned was the bokken (wooden sword), whose weight, length, and balance were approximately the same as the real one.

Like other Japanese martial arts, kendo has innumerable ryu (schools). The earliest of these was Nen-ryu, founded in 1350. There is some dispute as to who originated the style; some authorities claim Kamisaka Yasuhisa and others Somashior Yoshimoto. This particular style was taught until the 18th century by the Higuchi family, but has now disappeared. In the 20th century kendo has spread to most parts of the world, including Europe and North and South America. Apart from Japan, the U.S., Canada, and Brazil are the strongest nations.

Kendo, as practiced today, is neither a fighting art nor a pure sport; many consider it primarily a spiritual discipline. Many instructors claim the real purpose of kendo is to learn to settle the problems of life without ever having to draw the sword. See also kenjutsu.

Further reading. *Fundamental Kendo*, All Japan Kendo Federation, 1973; *Asian Fighting Arts*, Donn F. Draeger and Robert W. Smith, 1969; *Modern Bujutsu and Budo*, Donn F. Draeger, 1974; *Secrets of the Samurai*, Oscar Ratti and Adele Westbrook, 1973; *MartialArts of the Orient*, Roald Knutsen, 1975; *This is Kendo*, Junzo Sasamori and Gordon Warner, 1964; *Official Karate Magazine*, Nov.1968.

GEKKEN Common name for kendo (way of the sword) during the Meiji era (1868-1912) in Japan. While higher institutions of learning preferred to develop what they called kendo, gekken was used by militarists to bolster a sense of nationalism among the people.

HOKUSHIN ITTO RYU Style of kendo (art of the sword).

HOZAN-RYU Style of kendo (way of the sword).

KEN-NO-MICHI Variant of the word kendo (way of the sword) that arose in the early Tokugawa

period, from about 1600-1750.

FOUR POISONS OF KENDO: The four deep-rooted emotional or intellectual problems to be overcome in kendo; tear, doubt, surprise, and confusion. By resolutely confronting many opponents, a student tries to to ster objectivity and a calmness ot mind in which every situation is perceived with equal clarity.

KUM DO Korean sword art and sport identical to Japanese kendo. The Korean Kum Do Association was established in June 1948, and the National Kum Do Championships were inaugurated in 1953. The foremost kum do master is Haksuh Jung.

KUMITACHI Sword exercise practiced in Japan as long ago as A D. 789, when kumitachi entered the curriculum of the sons of kuge, or noblemen, at the capital city of Nara. The introduction ot kumitachi is still commemorated each year in the Boy's Festival held on May 5, and marked annually by a large kendo meeting in Kyoto.

NIHON KENDO KATA "Japan Kendo Formal Exercise." Known as the Dai Nippon Teikoku Kendo Kata (Great Japan Imperial Kendo Formal Exercise) when it was founded in 1912, it consists of 12 techniques, 9 with the odachi (long sword) and 3 with the kodachi (short sword). This kata, created by a cross-section of high-ranking swordsmen of the Butokukai, is the foundation ot all modern kendo practice.

SHINAI-GEIKO Swordsmanship training using the shinai. It was developed during the latter Edo period (early 1700s) in Japan and is the direct forerunner of modern kendo. Opponents attacked each other vigorously but always observing certain rules to ensure safety. Kaho, or prearranged forms, was reduced in importance. Further reading: Modern Bujutsu and Budo Kenjutsu [(The Art of Japanese Swordsmanship)] :

[Note : This article is contributed by Sensei David T. Bish , Red Dragon Ju-Jitsu]

A master swordsman must size up his opponent. No two swordsmen fight the same. Ito Ittosai, a great Japanese swordsman was reckless in his style. "Learn by being cut" was his philosophy. He believed one should be concerned more with not losing rather than winning. Proper timing is a key element of this concept.

In his book *Go Rin No Sho* (A Book of Five Rings), Miyamoto Musashi, remarked that his entire strategy was based on timing and rhythm. Musashi was the founder of the Nito or two sword method of fighting in Japan. It is believed that he learned the rapier and dagger techniques of the Europeans from traders in Southern Japan and used these techniques to develop his own style.

In traditional martial arts, no other weapon has held the status of the sword. It is the center of training for the majority of the arts. Ken-jutsu may be studied as a separate art or as a subordinate art of another major system. At the Red Dragon Ju Jitsu Dojo, the basics of Ken-jutsu are required for advancement to the rank of Blue Belt. It is also taught as a stand-alone art.

In terms of skills, few weapons require the demands of swordsmanship. The sword moves much faster than the fastest person, the skill in timing and judgement will benefit the Martial Artist in all other aspects of their training.

Ken-jutsu should not be considered the same as Kendo. Kendo is a sport form of swordsmanship and an offspring of Ken-Jutsu. In Kendo, the targets are restricted to the head, wrist, body plate, and throat. In Ken-Jutsu, any target is fair game.

The study of Kenjitsu has no belting system. It is a pure study of the art and mastery is developed through practice. Students must learn the basic stances along with the basic attacks and defenses. Mastery is derived from actual combat or Kumite using a wooden Bokken. After the student has been properly instructed in the techniques of combat and practices of various timing drills they are pitted against other students under the direct supervision of the Sensei who referees the match.

Training Sequence

The study of Ken-jutsu is more than merely wielding a sword. One not only learns the Kihon Dachi (basic stances) and attacks with defenses, there is much more to the study of the art of the Samurai. Any butcher can swing a sword but to be a master you must develop the mental and spiritual aspects of the art as well as the physical.

Shin-Ku-I (Body, Mouth, Mind) or more accurately Action, Word, and Thought is how the Samurai were evaluated. What makes the difference between a swordsman and a master is Ken Shin Ichi Nyo, or Sword and mind as one. One must train as if the sword was a part of them, if it is looked at as a separate entity you will never develop the skill to master the art.

The sequence of training in Ken-jutsu is as follows:

Kihon O Manabu - Emphasize the basics

Kaisu O Kasaneru - Development through repetition

Jiga Ni Tsuite - Controlling your ego

Dai - Kyo - Soku - Kei - Big - Strong - Fast - Light

Develop the techniques

Add power to the techniques

Increase your speed in the techniques

Perfect the techniques so that the power is derived from the speed and no longer requires strength.

Saigo Made Einoku Suru - persist to the end - NEVER GIVE UP. This is true for both the practice of the art and the attitude in combat.

Yudan Nashi - Never off guard

The motto of the Samurai was Shinu Kikai O Motomo, Looking for the opportunity to die. This was not a defeatist attitude. The Samurai held life in great esteem and were very selective on what "cause" they would lay their life on the line for. It is easy to kill a man when you yourself are willing to die.

Carrying the Sword (Teito)

The sword should be carried in the left hand with the thumb over the Tsuba. The sageo or strings should be secured between the index and middle fingers to prevent them from dragging. The Ha should be toward the floor in a natural drawing position.

Rei ni hajimari, rei ni owaru (Everything begins and ends with respect)

Bow of Respect (Hairei)

When bowing into the dojo or to the alter, the sword should be transferred to the right hand with the Tsuka toward the rear and the Ha toward the ground. This is a sign of deepest respect and trust since holding the sword in this position makes it impossible to draw.

Bowing to the Sensei (Shirei)

All Seito line up in front of the Sensei taking seiza. The proper way to take the position of seiza is to snap the left leg of the hakama back between the legs and kneel onto the left knee then bring the right knee down. NEVER use the sword as a crutch to support your weight. This is a sign of disrespect. It would be better to fall on your face than to disgrace yourself in this manner. The sword should be lying on the floor on your right side with the Ha facing toward your right leg and the Tsuka toward the front. Seizarei is performed by first placing the left hand on the floor in front of you in an "L" shape with the tip of the thumb on midline. Next place your right hand down in the same manner so that the thumb tips meet forming a diamond shape. Bow the head approximately 4 - 6 inches from the floor centered on the diamond formed by your hands.

After the Sensei has returned your bow return to a seiza position by returning your hands to the rest on your knees in the reverse order of placing them on the floor. Rise to your feet, first the right then the left. Again, do not use the sword as a crutch to assist you.

Bowing to the Sword (Torei)

Depending on the school you attend, the Torei may be performed from either seiza or the standing position. Never-the-less, it is always performed prior to and immediately following any practice session. This is a sign of respect to your sword and a joining of your spirit with that of the sword's.

When performed from seiza, the sword should lie in front of you. The Tsuba should be positioned so that it is in line with the left knee, the Ha toward you and the Tsuka to the left. The seito would then perform seizarei to the sword as described above.

If Torei is performed from a standing position, the sword is held in front of the head at eye level with the Tsuka toward the right and the Ha away from you. Lower the head to below the level of the sword.

Wearing the Sword (Taito)

The katana is worn on the left side with the Ha facing upward. The Sageo are tied into the Obi of the hakama. The end of the Tsuka should be directly in front of the naval.

Standing Bow to Training Partner (Tachi Rei)

Prior to Junjo (training) and upon completion of training you and your partner should perform

Tachi Rei to show mutual respect. Any time you change partners or receive individual instruction from the Sensei, tachi rei should be performed.

When your training session has ended and you and your partner have performed Tachi Rei, you should again bow to your sword (Torei), Bow to your instructor (Shirei) and bow to the altar or at the exit of the dojo (Hairei).

Gripping the Sword (Tsuka No Nigiri Kata)

Many beginners tend to hold the sword too tightly. In the beginning, training should concentrate on gripping the sword properly. The sword should be held loosely but firmly. It should act as a natural extension of the dominant hand. There should be a space between the hands, this allows for better mobility of the weapon. The dominant hand should be next to the hand guard; this is the weapon's center of balance. The majority of the grip strength is applied by the little finger and the index finger is used for balance. Beginners are often taught to grip the sword with the index finger extended to train them not to use this finger for gripping. The non-dominant hand should grip the sword close to the butt of the weapon.

Drawing Cut (Nukit Suke)

Koiguchi no kiri kata - Opening the Koiguchi. The thumb of the left hand should push against the Tsuba slightly to advance the sword approximately ½ inch from the saya (scabbard). The middle knuckles of the right hand should rest on the bottom side of the Tsuka. As you draw the sword forward from the saya with the right hand, the left hand should be pulling the saya to the rear. Do not think of drawing the sword and cutting your opponent - think only of cutting your opponent. Drawing the sword is merely a means to the end and both the drawing and the cutting are the same action.

Raising the Sword (Furikaburi)

After the initial cut is made on your opponent, twist the right wrist inward to raise the blade above the head. The blade should be brought to a position parallel to the ground as the left hand raises to the Tsuka.

Downward Cut (Kirioroshi)

This is the Men uchi strike to end the suffering of your opponent. To allow another Samurai to bleed to death or die from infection of the wound would be to disgrace him. To die at the hands of a master swordsman was the ultimate sign of respect. Te no uchi or cutting technique refers to a straight cut or hasuji otosu. A wavering hand would only butcher the opponent more and add to his suffering. The cut must be quick, clean and straight.

Chiburi (Blood removal)

There are three main ways to perform Chiburi. They are as follows:

Kasa no Shizuku Oharao - After the cut is made, twist the wrist so that the Tsuka is now in front of

the head. Swing the katana in a circular motion over the head and snap the blade by twisting the wrist as it is pointing to your right.

Katana O Kaesu - Loosen the grip with the left hand except for the little finger. Flick the right wrist out while pulling the back of the Tsuka to the left with the little finger of the left hand.

Chi no Shizuku O Otosu - Tilt the blade to a 45 degree angle and rest the tip on the right outer thigh and allow the blood to run or drip off.

Noto (Resheathing)

When replacing the Katana, circle the sword in front of you, bringing the mine to rest on the koiguchi. Slide the mine along the koiguchi until the Kissaki drops into the opening. Raise the Tsuka rotating the Ha upward and slide the blade into the saya with the right hand as you slide the entire saya forward with the left hand.

Distance and Timing (Ma ai)

Ken-jutsu requires an extreme awareness of distance and timing. Unlike unarmed combat, where an accurate defense may result in an opponent contacting with a strike or kick, in Ken-Jutsu, the same mistake could result in death. Distance and timing is what makes great martial artist great. No matter how strong the attack, if you are not there when it arrives, the attack is ineffective.

Knowing when and from where to attack is paramount. An ill-executed attack is just as deadly as an ill-executed defense. Faking an attack against an experienced swordsman is useless. He will see through your fake and avoid it, launching his counter-attack before you have a chance to recover.

Unlike the movies, actual sword-combat last only for a few passes. A spectator may not realize what has happened before the combat has ended. In training, a great deal of time is devoted to distance and timing. There are multiple drills the student must work on to build these skills.

Metsuke (Eye Contact)

Where should your eyes be focused during combat? There are many different schools of thought on this question. The best advice is to look at the level of the solar plexus with Enzan no Metsuke, or Distant mountain site. This allows you to see the entire body all at once. If you watch only one portion of the body you can be fooled by a master swordsman. All parts of the body cannot fake a movement at the same time.

Kokyu (Breath Control)

When practicing kata, take three deep silent breathes attacking on the third breath. Think positive thoughts with each inhalation and disperse negative thoughts with every exhalation. The breaths should enter the nostrils, circle the crown of the head and settle to the Tan Tein.

Iaido/Iaijutsu :

With Iaido we learn to draw the sword as fast as possible and to retaliate with a counter attack against one or multiple adversaries. Thus Iaido is complete martial art, it is the ideal complement

for Kendo.

The kata, predefined movements, practiced on your own are the basis for the techniques used in Iaido. These exercises are practiced with a copy or a real sword, they are totally inoffensive.

Iaido develops the coordination between body and movements. And more, augments the ability of concentration of the participant. Certainly it seems the same as a form of "active" meditation.

Iaido is the martial art of attacking an enemy at the moment of drawing the sword and emphasizes the mental attitude and awareness required of such an action. Originally, it was developed as a response to sudden raids by the enemy and was designed to cut down the enemy in one stroke.

Today, students practice the kata (forms) to train their minds and characters.

Iaido is the practice of sword techniques which embody a series of cutting and thrusting movements in the drawing and resheathing of the blade. These movements are performed against an imaginary opponent, and requires great concentration.

"The essence of swordsmanship" lies in its perfection.

It does not mean to cut the enemy, but rather to cut the enemy within oneself.

Iaido and Kendo are sister arts. They are practices in the same spirit and, like the two wheels of a cart, they form together the art of Japanese swordsmanship.

It was natural for the samurais to practice everyday with their sword. To the samurai the sword was their foremost weapon and privilege - other groups in the society was forbidden to bear swords. Furthermore the practice with the sword was much more than preparing for battle.

Around the Japanese sword grew a whole philosophy. It has many names, as ken, katana, tachi, and to.

The sword was thought to purify your spirit; the training became a kind of meditation in motion. A truly noble man handled his weapon with an entirely different style than the less noble, and the most noble thing would be if he never needed to draw his sword at all. All of the better samurais knew that to return victorious from a fight depended much more on your spiritual qualities than on your physical skills. The samurais' training was much about being like the sword - pure, straight and sharp.

It was also an amazing weapon they had in their hands. The Japanese sword is yet today an impressive work. It consists of thousands of layers of steel, and it is as sharp as modern razor blades. Such a weapon must be handled with respect.

To practise with the sword it is necessary to do it by yourself, pretty much like boxers do. This kind of training is called Iaido and it is preformed in kata, that is certain patterns of movements. You perform a series of blocks and cuts against an imaginary opponent. Each kata begins with drawing your sword as protection against a figured attack. You repeat the kata again and again under concentration.

Iaido is defensive, since each kata assumes that you are attacked. You never start attacking in Iaido. When you practise Iaido you can use either bokken, Iaito or katana.

I - The first the word means present.

AI - The second word means harmony. The sign is a mouth under a roof - everyone in the house speak as one. Unity.

DO - The word means road, like a quest, a road to insight and spiritual clarity. The sign shows a head and a frozen step, like when a deer stops for a moment, looks around and then rushes on.

Iaido is read backwards and translates into: "the way to harmony in the present".

Bokken

Bokken is a wooden sword, also called bokuto. The wooden sword has the same alleviated deflection and proportions that the real sword, but it is more roundish instead. The best material for a bokken is oak or something just as hard. Miyamoto Musashi, the legendary samurai from the 15th century, fought many of his duels with bokken instead of a real sword. The wooden sword is a very useful weapon itself and it is much nicer than the sharp one, but when you train with your bokken you should handle it as if it were sharp - otherwise you don't learn the true sword art.

Iaito

A training sword made of steel is called iaito. It is not a real handicraft, but it is much cheaper. When you practise iaido it is a good thing to buy an iaito as soon as possible, in order to better acquaintance yourself with the sword. When you buy an iaito it is not necessary to buy one of the most expensive ones; that would just be a waste of money. Furthermore, if you don't feel adventurous don't buy a sharp sword. You shouldn't buy a sword from a souvenir shop either.

Katana

The real, handcrafted sword is called katana. These things are really expensive and a senseless investment if you don't have iaido as a passion. A katana must be treated very carefully; you have to clean it everytime you've used it, otherwise it will stain. When you practise with your katana you should be aware of its sharpness and if a less capable person uses it, it could be dangerous. Even the most skillfull iaidokas cut themselves on their swords.

Iaido is the gendai bujutsu (modern martial art) form of iaijutsu, the Japanese art of drawing and cutting simultaneously with the blade. The name iaido first appeared relatively recently (in 1932), but the art itself is as old as some of the oldest koryu (old schools) of the Japanese sword arts.

Jinsuke Shigenobu (c. 1546-1621 A.D.) is traditionally given credit for inventing the art. It is said that when he was about 25 years old (around 1560 A.D.), he went to the Hayashizaki shrine in Okura village, Kitamurayama-gun (modern Yamagata prefecture) in Oshu (the modern Tohoku area). There he prayed to Hayashi Myojin and received divine inspiration for his own system of drawing the sword. He then renamed himself Jinsukeshingenobu Hayashizaki in honor of this inspiration and called his art battojutsu and named his system Shimmei Muso-ryu, although his students renamed it Shimmei Muso Hayashizaki-ryu.

To this day there is a wooden statue believed to be Shigenobu in the Hayashi Myojin shrine, as well as a sword that may have belonged to him. Among the various schools that developed from his system were Jushin-ryu, Shigenobu-ryu, Hayashizaki-ryu, Hayashizaki Shigenobu-ryu, Hayashizaki Jinsuke Shigenobu-ryu. Other styles that derived from Hayashizaki's teachings are the Tamiya-ryu, Sekiguchi-ryu, Hoki-ryu, Eishin-ryu, and Mugai-ryu. The Tenshin Shoden Katori Shinto-ryu claims to have developed a sword-drawing art almost a hundred years before Hayashizaki, but they also recognize Hayashizaki's prominence as the spiritual leader of the art.

Hoki-ryu is one of the oldest koryu and is said to have been founded by Hoki no kame Hisayasu Katayama. He demonstrated isono-nami (the secret of fencing) before the Emperor in 1610 and was rewarded with the court rank of jyu-go. Hoki-ryu is said to be similar to the Muso Shinden-ryu of iaido.

Iai is considered a classical bujutsu or budo. It is more difficult to characterize iai, as the student progresses the -do aspects are left behind and the -jutsu aspects become more pronounced. Iai is believed to have its origins about 1200 AD, with about 800 ryu cataloged since then. It is possible that the present art of iai had its origins in an ancient reference to "tachi-gake" from about 1000 AD.

Iai is differentiated from the ken styles in that the sword is initially at rest in the scabbard instead of already drawn for combat. Iai is composed of drawing the sword (nukitsuke), bringing it to combative use in minimum time, and returning the sword to the saya (scabbard). Starting positions for iai can be from combative postures or from everyday setting or standing positions.

Traditional gi are worn as in kenjutsu. Advancement can be either in the traditional method, without dan and kyu, or can include it similar to kendo. Iai within the Zen Nihon Kendo Renmei is ranked, and several instructor credentials are also available; called renshi, kyoshi and hanshi, which are also available in kendo.

The reason for the kendo federation having oversight of iaido is quite simple. Early this century, kendo practitioners were aware that kendo was not properly teaching the sword. A shinai is not a Nihon-to (Japanese sword) and does not handle like a sword. Kendo did retain ten kata as a part of their promotion process, but they were felt to be insufficient to properly teach the "way of the sword."

In the late 1950s the Kendo Federation invited classical iai expert swordsmen to form a commission to investigate courses of action. The result was a selection and adoption of seven iai kata. This list was later revised to ten kata by a later commission. These kata formed the basis of the Zen Nihon Kendo Renmei Seitei Gata.

These ten kata form the basis of kendo based iai. Further advancement is made within classical ryu. Examples are the Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu and the Muso Shinden Ryu. These two ryu are splits of the same branch and remain quite probably the most practiced ryu of iaido. These were the first to allow the public to join their ranks and participate as outsiders.

The Seitei Gata have three opening positions. Seiza is used for the first three and is considered a non-combative position. Tate-hiza is used for the fourth kata and is considered neutral, that is neither combative or non-combative. Finally, the last six kata are started from tachi-ai, and is also considered neutral. There is one other opening position which is considered combative but is not used in seitei, called iai-goshi.

The reason for non-combative or neutral starts is that these are the positions of everyday life. One could expect a surprise attack at anytime, and the ability to react from an everyday starting position was considered essential.

The traditions and roots of iaido can be followed quite far into the history of Japan. A samurai called Hayashizaki Jinsuke Minamoto no Shigenobu is considered to be the originator of iaido for most modern schools. He died approximately in 1616 at the age of 73.

In the beginning IAIJUTSU was a part of KENJUTSU. When time passed and as a result of the relatively peaceful TOKUGAWA period many masters saw in iaido an excellent way of developing spiritual, mental and physical discipline. IAIDO was born.

The Japanese art of sword practice comprises two ways, or DOs. A teacher of swordsmanship once said that iaido exists only as long as the sword stays in its scabbard. When it is drawn, kendo is born. Iaido can be considered to be a defensive art, whereas in kendo one concentrates on attacking.

In practice iaido training consists of practising forms called kata. KATA means a series of movements, where one practises various kinds of sword manoeuvres. Each kata consists of four parts: NUKITSUKE (drawing of the sword from its scabbard), KIRITSUKE (cutting action), CHIBURI (shaking blood off the blade) and NOTO (the sword is returned to the scabbard).

In iai one practices without an opponent.

The techniques vary considerably and they are performed from differing starting positions: crouching, sitting, lying, standing or walking. Every direction of attack is studied: left, right, front and rear, in dark and light. Sometimes one studies situations, where there are external obstacles such as a confined space, which does not allow a normal draw, or perhaps an obstacle hanging low above the student. There are techniques used against another iai opponent and forms used for countering an enemy, who tries to prevent the iaidoka from drawing his sword by grasping the hilt or the scabbard, either from the front or the rear.

Iaido cannot be considered to be a sport. It could perhaps be compared with the Japanese art of archery, kyudo. In both the student tries to hit or shoot, not an opponent, but something in him- or herself. There is a pre-set form to an iaido kata, which is studied endlessly. This form is honed and polished until the result is a beautiful and harmonious whole. A real iaido master is in harmony with his sword - the sword is a part of him.

A real Japanese sword (katana), practice sword (iaito) or wooden sword (bokken) is used in iaido practice. The sword is handled with respect and observing good manners. In the beginning and at the end of a training period the student bows to his sword. One does not step over somebody else's sword or touch it without the permission of the owner.

Iaido does not actually mean overcoming an enemy, but overcoming one's own self. The only and the most dangerous opponent in iaido is the iaidoka himself. Victory in iaido consists of a forgiving heart and avoidance of fight. Iaido means training toward human perfection. In it there is never a murderous intention to kill another human being. With endless practice the iaidoka learns to understand his place in the universe.

KENDO - "The way of the sword"

What is Kendo?

Kendo is Japanese fencing derived from the ancient art of Samurai swordsmanship. Using a simulated sword made of bamboo slats, and wearing protectors, the kendoist competes against an opponent according to established scoring points and regulations. It is excellent training for mental as well as physical discipline.

Kendo is Japanese fencing. You play Kendo wearing traditional Japanese garments and armour, and the curved steel sword has been replaced by a bamboo sword.

The emphasis in Kendo is on technique and on the principle 'less is more', and is suitable for both

men and women. The only thing you need to begin with is a certain amount of spirit.

The purpose of practicing Kendo is:
To mold the mind and body,
To cultivate a vigorous spirit,
And through correct and rigid training,
To strive for improvement in the Art of Kendo;
To hold in esteem human courtesy and honor,
To associate with others with sincerity,
And to forever pursue the cultivation of oneself.

Thus will one be able
to love his country and society,
To contribute to the development of culture,
And to promote peace and prosperity among all people.

To make your Kendo effective,
You must first make it beautiful....

The concept of Kendo is to discipline the human character through the application of the principle of the sword. The purpose of practising Kendo is to mould the body and mind, to cultivate a vigorous spirit, and through correct and constant training to strive for improvement in the art of Kendo, to hold in esteem human courtesy and honour, to associate with others with sincerity and to forever pursue the cultivation of oneself.

The weapon is a sword made from split bamboo, called shinai Protective armour called bogu cover the chest, a helmet called men protects the head and throat, gloves called kote protect the hands and an apron called tare protects the lower part of the body.

The targets are the top of the head, the throat, the wrist and the lower chest. Contact should only be made via the upper third the shinai.

Kendo is generally considered a classical budo (martial way), being formulated before the Meiji Restoration. In its most modern form it is practiced more as a sport and to improve the mind of the individual, rather than a form of combat.

In the beginning, kendo was a technique for training in kenjutsu without the bodily consequences of mistakes inherent in bokken or live katana or tachi practice (live blades). The standard weapon of kendo is a shinai, which is a split stave of bamboo with a leather tip cap and a leather handle. There is no curvature and the shinai is quite light in weight.

Traditional gi (clothes) are worn, but over this are budogu (fencing armor), similar to what western fencers wear. The men (a face mask with throat protector), the do (a breastplate), the kote (gloves and gauntlets), and a tare (heavy apron). Legal strikes are to the wrists, the sides of the do, and three cuts to the head (left right and center) and one thrust (the throat). An defined area (a square about 10 meters on a side) is the legal mat area, and two legal strikes as called by judges are required to win a match. Advancement is done by way of kyu and dan, similar to colored belts in other martial ways. But the obi (if worn, sometimes deleted) always remains the same color. At the higher dan levels one is required to show some minimal competence with a live blade in ten kata,

with both long (daito, katana or tachi) and short (shoto, wakizashi) swords. Classical ryu have all but disappeared within kendo, and so the emphasis is much more on the sport aspects.

In modern Kendo, there are two types of attacks: strikes and thrusts. Strikes are allowed to only three points on the body-the top of the head, the right and left sides of the waist and the forearms. Thrusts are usually permitted only to the throat. Unlike western fencing where two opponents show each other only their sides, in Kendo the opponents stand face to face and these four target areas were chosen because they are the most difficult. In competitive matches, it is not enough for your bamboo sword to just touch the opponent; points are awarded only when the attacks are done properly to the exact target with good control and a yell or Kiai. The first person to win two points wins the match.

Matches with partners are of great significance for two reasons: they give opportunities to try out and master techniques that are part of daily practice, and they allow you to test your skill and strength in friendly competition with another person. Of course many things help you to put your technicals skills to best use, but perhaps psychological factors are amongst the most important.

Metsuke (fixing the gaze):

Kendo theory establishes the following priority of importance for physical and mental aspects of technical skills: icchi-gan (first-eyes), ni-soku (second-feet), san-tan (third-courage), shi-riki (fourth-strength). As can be seen by the order, the eyes -hence the direction of the gaze, or metsuke - receive primary emphasis. The terms direction of the gaze includes two major parts: fixing the gaze and moving your eyes.

Maai (interval):

In kendo maai means the distance between your body and the opponent, but it is not merely a matter of space since it includes the time element that arises as a result of the relation between your two bodies. The basic interval is called Issoku-itto-no-maai. This basic maai allows you to strike the opponent by taking one step forward and to evade his attacks by taking one step back. In addition there are toi-maai where you and the opponent are farther from each other than in issoku-itto-no-maai (this is a position of relative safety) and Chikai-maai where you and the opponent are closer than in issoku-itto-no-maai. In this maai it is impossible for you to trust or strike correctly unless he moves back.

Strikes and Cuts

Successful kendo strikes and thrusts must be a combination of the operation of the mind, the sword, and the body. None of these three operating without the assistance of the other two will result in good strikes. The kendoka who can achieve unity of mind, sword, and body in even brief techniques is an advanced kendo expert. The ability to do this is the ideal toward which all kendoka must strive. The goal of repeated practice and training sessions is not to make points and win matches, but to develop perfect strikes and thrusts by cultivating the ability to coordinate these three elements completely.

Zanshin

In kendo the word zanshin (or remainder) is used to mean two things. First, it indicates the determination to continue fighting without letup and without carelessness. Kendoka demonstrates this willpower to his opponents upon completing a thrust or strike. Second, it means bringing one's own thrust or strike to a definite conclusion. Obviously the concept of zanshin has great significance in kendo education. Kendo teaching insists that in all cases one must concentrate on one's attention. Furthermore, kendo helps manifest the immense capabilities of the human being in insisting that the individual always be confident of his actions and know when to bring them to a conclusive peak. As the term zanshin indicates, the key to concentration and confidence in kendo is

preventing your spirit from dissipating and retaining it under your control. The way you do this is important. Too much consciousness about zanshin might cause you to cut off an attack too early, no prevent yourself from fully extending your spirit. The best way is to strike without thinking of retaining your spirit, to charge your entire body with power, and to act without concerning yourself with zanshin. If you follow this procedure, your power will regenerate, you will find your mental concentration remains strong enough to prevent your making careless errors.

Kiai

It is important to charge your entire being with mental power, to avoid carelessness, and never to fall under the mental sway of the opponent. Should the opponent show signs of manifesting a powerful mental approach, you must overcome it and forstall his intended actions. Part of the meaning of the shout, or kiai, is to generate drive and power by calling out in a string, clear voice and thus make your actions easier to perform. But you must remember that the kiai is not a one sided matter. The Japanese word suggests a coming together (ai) or spirits (ki). The kiai means that the spirit of one man is coming into combat with the spirit of his opponent. If your kiai is extremely strong, you will derive increased mental and physical power to make it easier for you to overcome the opponent and to make your own movements easier to carry out. You must also be careful not to let allow concern with the shout to deprive your body of freedom of movement.

Unity of Attack and Defense

You must always realize that kendo defense exists for the sake of attack and that kendo attacks are a kind of self-defense. Throughout repeated training sessions, cultivate the attitude that defense exists in attack and attack in defense. Gradually you will come to see that neither one of them exists apart from the other. In other words, you will attain a spiritual state of self-annihilation.

The Four Poisons

There are four deep-rooted mental or intellectual problems to be overcome in kendo. They are: fear, doubt, surprise, and confusion. These fears are known collectively as the "Four Poisons of Kendo". The only way to overcome the and to succeed in kendo is to follow the teaching, "overcome others by overcoming yourself". Kendo is a battle with these four poisons. By resolutely confronting these problems with many opponents, the student will attain a calmness of mind in which every situation is perceived with equal clarity and can look objectively at his surroundings. Only in this state of mind can one archieve the intuitive action necessary to strike an opponent effectively. Such a degree of mental training must be of benefit in all aspects of living.

Nihon Kendo Kata

Modern kendo developed from actual armed combat into a kendo involving kata and ultimately into the kind of kendo practiced today, in which the shinai has replaced the sword. In other words, from serious duelling in which the opponents protected themselves with armour and fought with swords, kendo developed sets of kata, which are performed without the the protection of armour but which make use of the experience gained in true combat. These kata were the object of repeated, diligent practice. As peace came to prevail in the world and as combat techniques altered entirely from those used in the past, actual combat kendo became impossible. Still kendoka found that they could not be satisfied with nothing more than kata in which no contact is made. Consequently, they evolved a kendo in which actual strikes are possible because the weapon is the harmless shinai instead of a sword. Kata kendo and shinai kendo starting from the same point in the tradition of the martial arts, grew to perfection as they complemented and reinforced each other. They have, however, come to be considered two entirely separate branches: kata kendo is called Koryu , or the older style, and shinai kendo is called kendo proper. Each has its own distinct characteristics. Together they interact to improve and enrich the nature of kendo as part of a physical training culture. Even though the points of attack in modern kendo are strictly limited, the

strikes and attacks are performed with a freedom of will that inevitably leads to an element of competition. If this spirit of competition is given fuller reign, kendo degenerates into a contest carried out solely for the sake of winning and losing. When this happens the purity of kendo techniques is lost. In comparison with shinai kendo, kata concentrate on training to develop correct movements. For this reason, in terms of technical purity it occupies a level much higher than that of shinai kendo. In short, kata can serve to improve and maintain technical purity in shinai kendo.

CLASSIFICATION OF THE JAPANESE SWORDS :

Katana (from around .8 - 1m in length)

Wakizashi (from around .4 - .7m in length)

Tanto (knife or dagger)

Tachi (a long katana, up to 1.2 and carried on back or worn blade down on hip)

Dai Katana (very long sword, up to 1.5m in length)

Note: Daito are the classification of long swords.

PARTS OF A SWORD

Point (Kisaki)

Ridge Line (Shinogi)

Temper Line (Yaki-ba)

Back (Mune)

Rivet Hole (Mekugi-ana)

Tang

Inscription (Mei)

MOUNTINGS

Scabbard (Sayu)

Guard (tSuba)

Handle or Hilt (tSuka)

Ornaments (Menuki)

PRACTITIONERS

Ken-Jutsu

Kendo

Iai-Jutsu

Iaido

NOTE: Principles of Bushido

THE UNIFORM

Hakama

Keiko-Gi

Obi

FIGHTING POSITION

Foot Foundation

Balance

Relaxed but Ready

POSTURE (Kamae)

Ready Stance (Heiko Duchi)

Middle Level (Chudan No Kamae)

Upper Level (Jodan No Kamae)

Lower Level (Gedan No Kamae)

Side on Head Level (Hasso No Kamae)
One handed Upper Level (Mizu No Kamae)

ETIQUETTE

Bowing (Standing)

Taking Seiza (note: control of hakama)

Placing Sword on the ground from seiza

Seiza Bow

Positioning of sword in hakama

HOLDING THE SWORD

DRAWING THE SWORD

PUTTING AWAY THE SWORD

FIRST KATA :

From seiza

Iai chudan kiri (Draw sword middle level cut)

Jodan no kamae (assume upper level position)

Men kiri (downward cut)

Chiburi (Flick of 'blood')

Noto (put sword away)