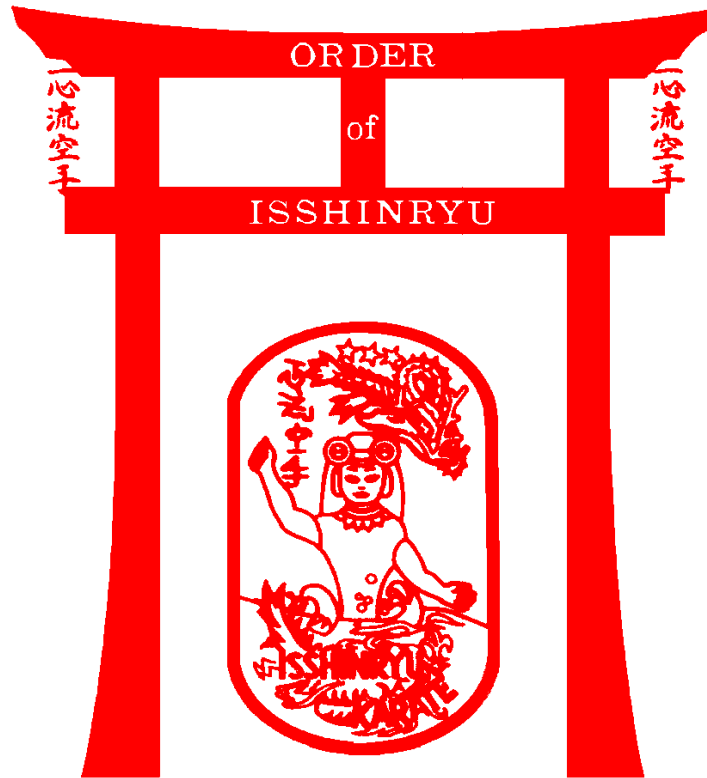


Order of Isshin-Ryu

Founded January 15, 1971



Kendo Seminar

*Hombu Dojo
May 24, 2008*

Kendo

Kendo (Way of the Sword) is the descendant of the more military aspect of swordsmanship called Kenjutsu. The bushi, or classical warriors of Japan, used their swords in Kenjutsu to establish and maintain social order in Japan from the ninth to the middle of the seventeenth century. Thereafter, the role of the classical warriors as a ruling group became largely a symbolic one¹. Therefore, the need to modify the art into a “way” became rather apparent.

Kendo is the senior, most respected and popular of the modern budo disciplines². The exact founding date of Kendo is unknown. Modern Kendo is based on a legacy of classical Japanese swordsmanship that is at least as old as the history of the Japanese nation...though the precise national form practiced today was developed after the close of World War II³. During the mid-17th century, protective gear was beginning to be developed in order to protect the practitioners from harm. Also, the invention of the bamboo “shinai” around the same time called for a change in the name of sword arts being studied from Kenjutsu to Kendo.

Kendo training develops the mind and body much the same way as any other type of martial art. Its theory, techniques, and methods of training, developed by the various schools⁴, have been handed down through centuries and today have been molded into an educative sport with all of the action and history of the past contained within its present training⁵.

It is said that when one practices karate kata, he or she is literally following in the footsteps of the greatest Okinawan masters to have lived. Therefore, Kendoka of today are practicing what the great swordsmen of the past have taught and in return will pass on to others the techniques stemming from the beginning of Japanese military history and the age of the samurai.

There are various “standard” exercises in the practice and study of Kendo. The most widely practiced drill is called Kiri Kaeshi. This drill calls for the student to perform a series of angled ‘cuts’ or ‘strikes’ to the training partner’s head. The drill is performed to enhance the student’s understanding of distance, rhythm,

¹Modern Bujutsu & Budo, The Martial Arts and Ways of Japan, Vol. III. Donn F. Draeger, *Weatherhill, Inc.*

²Modern Bujutsu & Budo

³Modern Bujutsu & Budo

⁴Approximately 300 different Ryu were in existence around the 17th century.

⁵This is Kendo, The Art of Japanese Fencing. Sasamori & Warner, *Charles E. Tuttle Company*

and endurance. Other drills widely practiced are called Ashi Sabaki (footwork drill) and Happo Giri (8-count cutting drill with a wooden sword).

The main targets used in Kendo are the head, ribs, throat and the right hand only. The left hand may be a target only when the opponent has raised his shinai over his head in an attack posture. A point is called only when the top 6-8 inches of the shinai strikes the intended target. However, this is not an automatic point. The student must also demonstrate proper movement and kiai for a point to be awarded during a match.

It is customary for a Kendoka to collect Tenugui (headband) of the various dojo that the student visits in his training. The process of a Kendo student visiting various dojo to polish his skills is called Musha Shugyo (this is akin to our Sho Dan-Ho process). A black belt in Kendo is usually indicated by having the students name in Japanese Kanji printed on the Tare (waist protector).

The following is a brief glossary of the equipment used in Kendo training:

- Bogu** - entire set of Kendo gear
- Do** - chest/ribs protector
- Men** - helmet
- Kote** - gloves
- Tare** - waist guard
- Keikogi** - top of uniform
- Hakama** - bottom portion of uniform
- Tenugui** - headband
- Shinai** - bamboo sword
- Bokken** - wooden sword