

Kyu-Butokuden Home of Japanese Martial Arts: Crisis and Revival

Kyoto once prospered as the capital of Japan and there are many historical cultural assets that remain in the city today. Among these is Kyu-Butokuden, Japan's oldest martial arts competition hall, which, along with the Heian-Jingu Shrine, was built in 1899 as part of a project to commemorate the 1,100th anniversary of the establishment of Heiankyo (present-day Kyoto). The hall was designed by MATSUMURO Shigemitsu, who is also responsible for the architecture of the former main building of Kyoto Prefectural Government Offices (an Important National Cultural Property). The Martial Arts School was later founded beside Kyu-Butokuden.

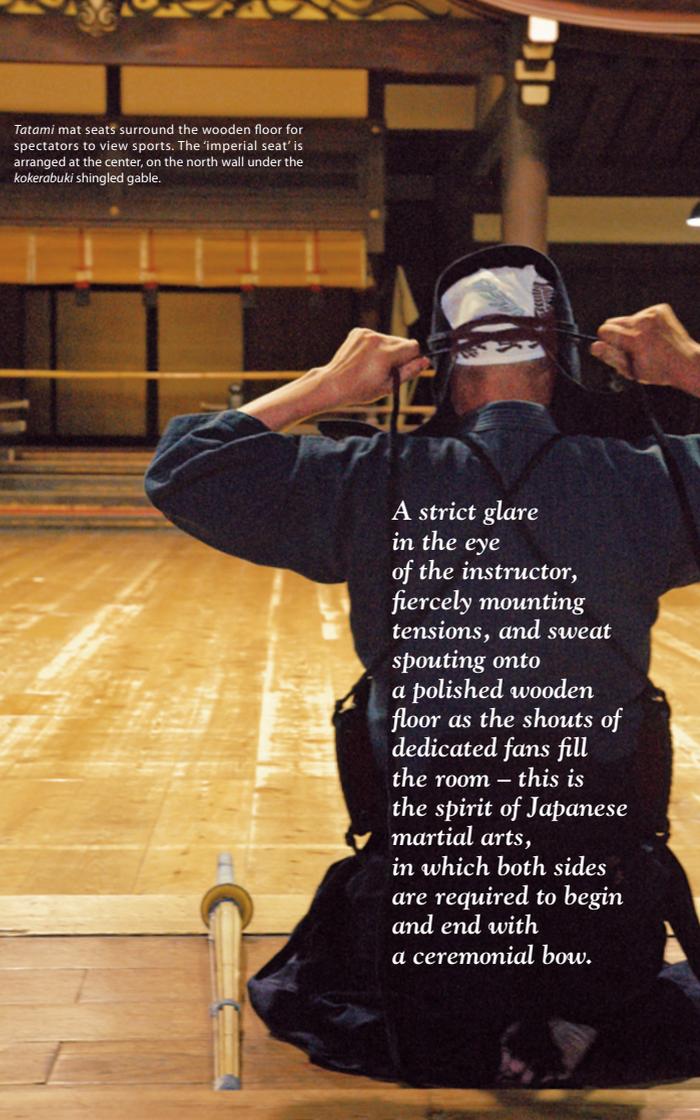


These facilities became the home of traditional Japanese martial arts, and produced many noted martial artists and educators. Following World War II, however, U.S. military forces took over the facilities and the Martial Arts School was closed down. Even after American troops pulled out, Butokuden stood unused for an extended period of time. However, as calls for preservation and rehabilitation of this historic hall grew, its restoration was completed in 1987 with support from many martial arts enthusiasts. Being an important venue in the long history of Japanese martial arts, Kyu-Butokuden was designated as an Important National Cultural Asset in 1996. Surviving for more than one hundred years, it still remains a stately architectural structure. This martial arts hall of fame is now also used as a venue for international martial arts competitions, presenting visitors with a feel of the precious essence of Japanese martial arts.



The 'Imperial seat'

Tatami mat seats surround the wooden floor for spectators to view sports. The 'Imperial seat' is arranged at the center, on the north wall under the kokerabuki shingled gable.



*A strict glare
in the eye
of the instructor,
fiercely mounting
tensions, and sweat
spouting onto
a polished wooden
floor as the shouts of
dedicated fans fill
the room – this is
the spirit of Japanese
martial arts,
in which both sides
are required to begin
and end with
a ceremonial bow.*

Kyoto City Budo Center is a venue for various martial arts competitions and practices

■ **Kendo** (Way of the sword) / **Iaido**
Kendo is a martial art that descends from *Kenjutsu* (Technique of the Sword), which developed among samurai communities in medieval times. The purpose of Kendo is to train the mind through the acquisition of varied techniques. Bamboo swords are used to train, instead of Japanese swords. Each practitioner wears protective armor with features that include a helmet (*men*), gloves (*kote*), breastplate (*do*) and flaps (*tare*).



While in Kendo the intention is to sword-fight against an opponent, **Iaido** is based on gracefulness and technical accuracy of motion – the process of drawing the sword from its scabbard, defeating an imaginary opponent and replacing the sword in the scabbard are the main assessments in competition.

■ **Judo**
Judo is a martial art based on Jujutsu. It is the only Japanese national martial art



that has made its way to the Olympic Games, and is currently practiced throughout the world. One attractive feature of this martial art is that by using throwing and ground fighting techniques, even a practitioner who is physically quite small is able to defeat a larger opponent.

■ **Sumo**
This national martial art involves ritual elements adapted from Japan's traditional Shinto religion. Nowadays, fans of Sumo wrestling exist throughout the world.



■ **Kyudo** (Japanese archery)
The aim of Kyudo is to achieve a total integration between stabilization of the body, the mind and the bow techniques. Even the slightest agitation of the mind will affect shooting. To improve precision hits, an archer needs to maintain a completely steadfast mind.

■ **Naginata** (Japanese pole arm)
Naginata resembles Kendo in the style of clothing that is worn and follows a similar manner of competition. The most



originated in the 1640s. In Japan, Tai Chi Chuan has been practiced for some 40 years by many. In recent years, this martial art is being enjoyed by both the young and old, as a means of managing health and for competition. Chinese martial arts are

internationally known as "wushu." In Japan, the generic term "bujutsu taikyokuken" is used to refer to Tai Chi Chuan and other various Chinese martial arts.

noticeable feature of this martial art is the length of the weapon. The practitioner manages to take a strike while making thrust motions, beating down a weapon that is two meters or more in length.

■ **Karatedo**
This martial art developed in Ryukyu (present-day Okinawa) and was introduced to the main islands of Japan in the Taisho Period (1912-1926). It spread through interactions with Judo and was finally established as Karatedo in the Showa Period (1926-1989). One major difference between this martial art and Judo is that the Karatedo practitioner uses strikes to punch and kick opponents.



■ **Aikido**
This martial art was created through a combination that encompasses the strengths of all the various martial arts. Here, the outstanding feature is that one does not attack first. A practitioner is able to defeat an opponent regardless of physical differences by combining

the opponent's force with his or her own force so as to handle attacks and apply reversal techniques. There are no competitions held. Aikido practice concentrates on training forms and techniques.

■ **Shorinji Kempo**
This is a martial art first created in 1947 by SO Doshin in Japan itself. Through its teachings, techniques and training system, Shorinji Kempo aims to develop individuals who are confident, brave, active, kind and beneficial to the society they live in. Shorinji Kempo offers students a basic method for developing personal discipline, through the practice of helping one another and living in harmony with others.

■ **Wushu Tai Chi Chuan**
Tai Chi Chuan is based on ancient Chinese martial arts and is believed to have