



JAPANESE BUDŌ (MARTIAL WAYS)

The martial ways of Japan as we know them today are called budo. They are derived from fighting techniques used in the battlefields of feudal Japan known as *bujutsu*. The history of these fighting arts is quite extensive and examples are featured in ancient tales from over 2000 years ago. Teaching started to become more organised with the sudden rise of the *samurai* in the 10th century.

Social changes throughout history saw *bujutsu* systems evolve from battlefield combat techniques into holistic paths for self-perfection. This is what is meant by the term “bu-do”, or martial way. “Way” accentuates the spiritual and educational aspects of the combat arts. These new systems of budo focused on physical discipline and personal cultivation rather than battlefield effectiveness. After the late 19th century, budo further evolved into forms of physical education in Japanese schools. It still continues to provide a valuable means of physical and mental training for the general public today, and from 2012, budo became a compulsory subject in junior high schools.

Common teachings found in budo include: “train the mind and body and be courteous”, “strive for unification of the body, mind, and spirit”, and

“always show respect to others”. Whether in training or competition, a budo practitioner should not be primarily concerned with results, but should always strive to perform with correct posture, respectful attitude, and be mindful of etiquette. Practitioners are urged to win with modesty, lose with grace and understand that the greatest battle is ultimately with the self.

The place where Japanese budo disciplines are practised is called the dojo, or place where the Way is studied. Both teacher and students alike keep the training area clean, quiet, and safe in order to develop courtesy and maximise the self-development of those who train there.

In recent years, many countries around the world have started to recognise and value the special qualities of the Japanese martial ways, and have made them a part of their own country’s culture. They are studied not only as competitive sports, but also as cultural pursuits in which the ultimate objective is self-perfection and cultivating the individual skills, strength, and fortitude to be able to make a contribution to society at large.