

The Way of the Sword «Kendô» and Japanese Calligraphy «shodô»

Kendô (剣道) the way of the sword is a modified, modern way of the original Japanese sword fight as the samurai learned and lived it. Kendô as a path not only pursues the techniques and tactics of sword fighting, but also the spiritual development of people. One should gain strength of character, determination and moral strength through kendo. Shodô is not a martial art, but the goals of character development and the basic aesthetic principles show strong parallels. That's why I like to do calligraphy for martial artists.

With the end of the Tokugawa shogunate in 1867, the warrior caste was abolished, and protective equipment and the bamboo sword Shinai (竹刀), which replaced the harder wooden sword, were developed as early as the 18th century. Along with the armor, hits could now be performed without seriously injuring the partner. In Kendô competition, the goal is to hit one of the specified hit zones head, forearms, torso or throat with the shinai.



> Right: swords made of split bamboo «Shinai».

Today in Japan, kendo is probably one of the most popular sports along with sumo and baseball. Kendô is also enjoying increasing popularity in Europe. This was probably due to dealing with Japanese culture and the desire for relaxed concentration at work and in leisure time.

The Kendô armor consists of head protection, protection for hands and forearms, trunk protection and the 垂れ Tare "loin protection". For competitions, this tare is used to identify the swordsman, whose face is invisible behind the headgear. The tare is inscribed with the person's last name and the name of the kendô club.

> Right: Kendô fighter in armour, clearly visible the tare with inscription.

Such a labeled tare is called 名札 Nafuda "name tag" or Zekken. The word ゼッケン «Zekken» written in katakana is a foreign word in Japan and is said to



be derived from the German word «Decken». Here "Decken" refers to a numbered blanket placed under the saddle of a horse when riding or horse racing. The word could also be derived from German "Zeichen" or "Säckchen". The word "Zekken" is commonly used in Japan for starting numbers in athletic competitions.

For kendô, one usually writes in white on a dark blue or black cloth. The name of the club or the associated organization is written horizontally at the top, the family name is written vertically in the middle.

> Right: Specification for the design according to the Kendô association «Katana Frankfurt»



> Right: I recently designed a Nafuda or Sekken for a Kendô fighter and he had it embroidered according to my templates. Above the name of the kendo association in regular script and the name of the bearer in cursive script.

