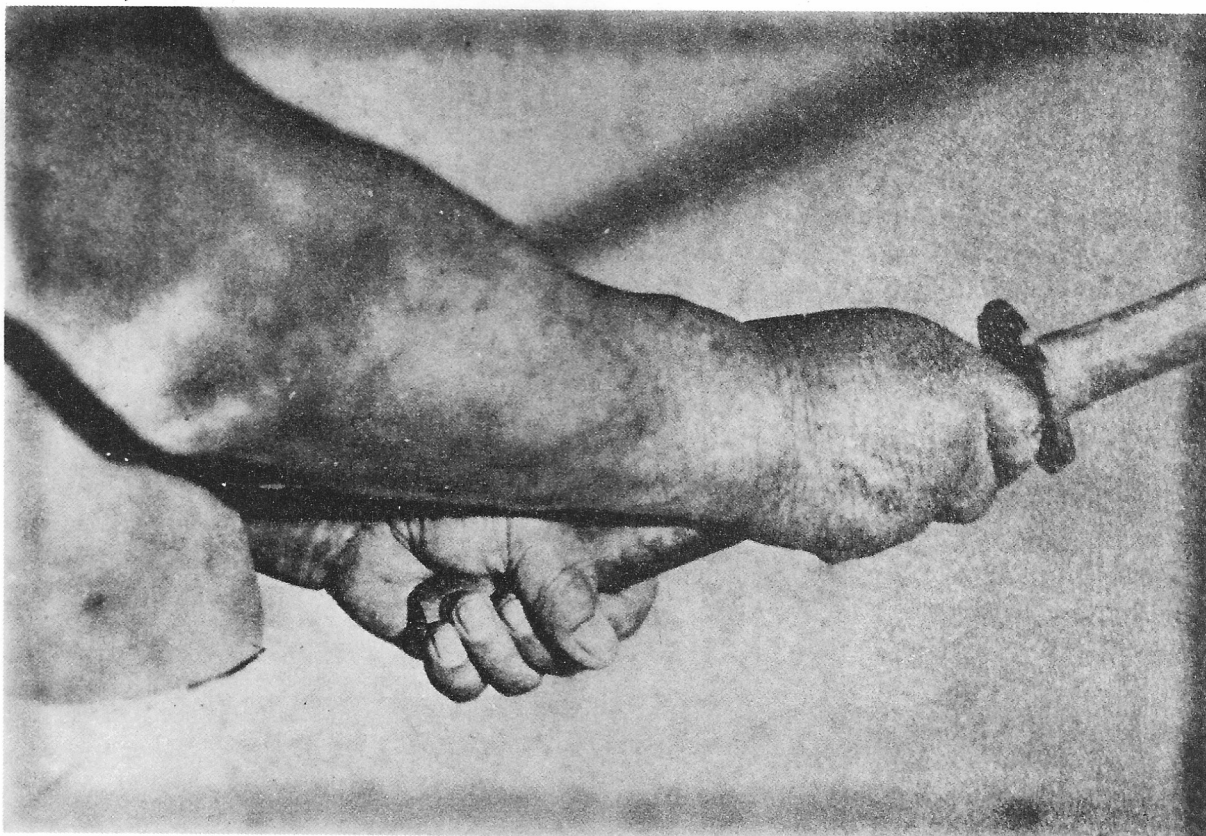


Guide to

KEN-DO



*This photograph shows the excellent form
"Seigan" of late Sasaburo Takano, who
was one of the greatest Kendo-man through
Meiji, Taisho and Showa eras.*



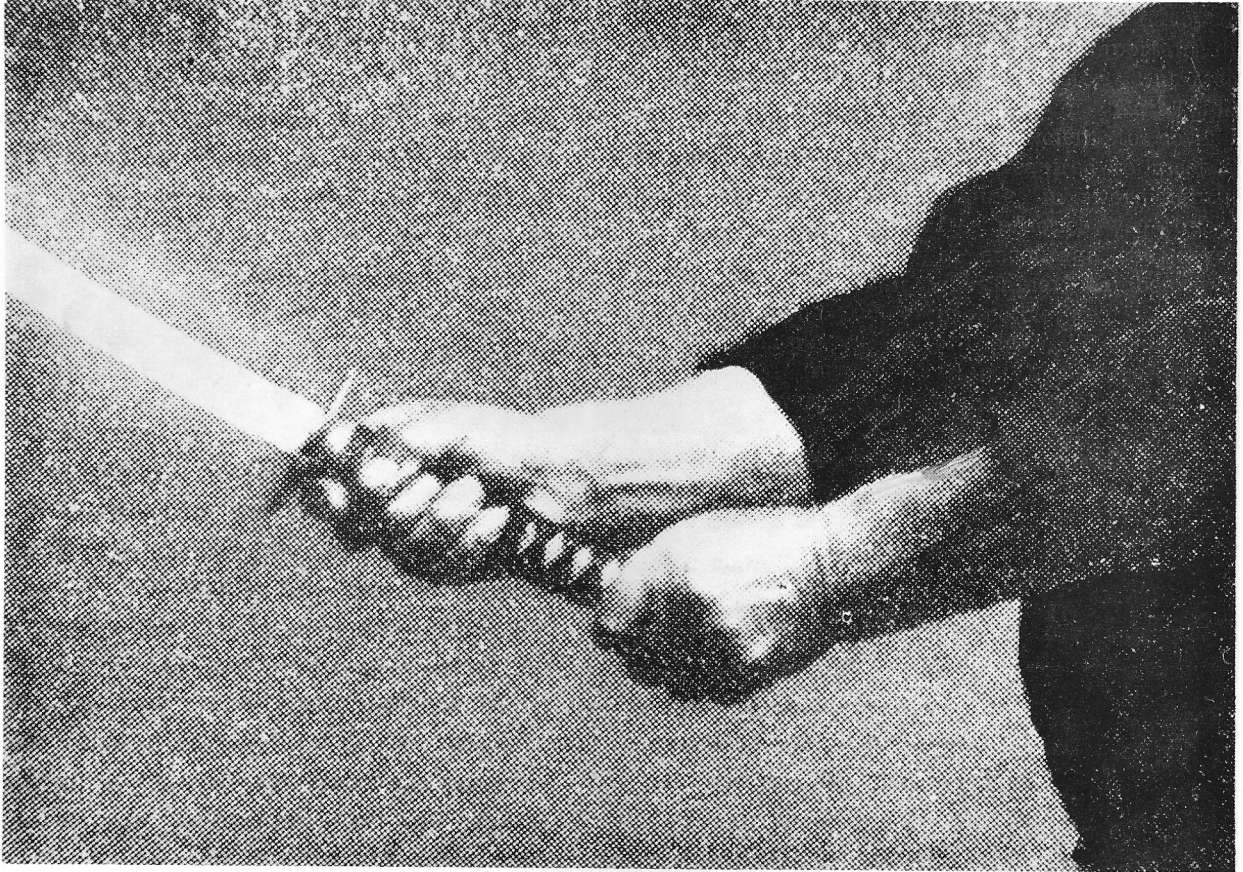
WAKI-GAMAE

Mr. TAKANO



HASSO

Mr. TAKANO



"Ken-do", as it is played today, was developed about two hundred years ago, when the "Shinai" bamboo sword was devised to enable the safe and free practice of the ancient military art of sword.

During the 16th century, when Japan was in the period of successive and nation-wide civil wars, the techniques of sword manipulation were studied as a matter of life and death. Warriors were trained to brandish a sword as though it had been an extended part of their arms. Wooden swords were used more freely to study and

practice the art of sword-fighting. Eventually basic ways were selected for manipulating a sword to be called "Kata" fundamental forms of "Ken-do".

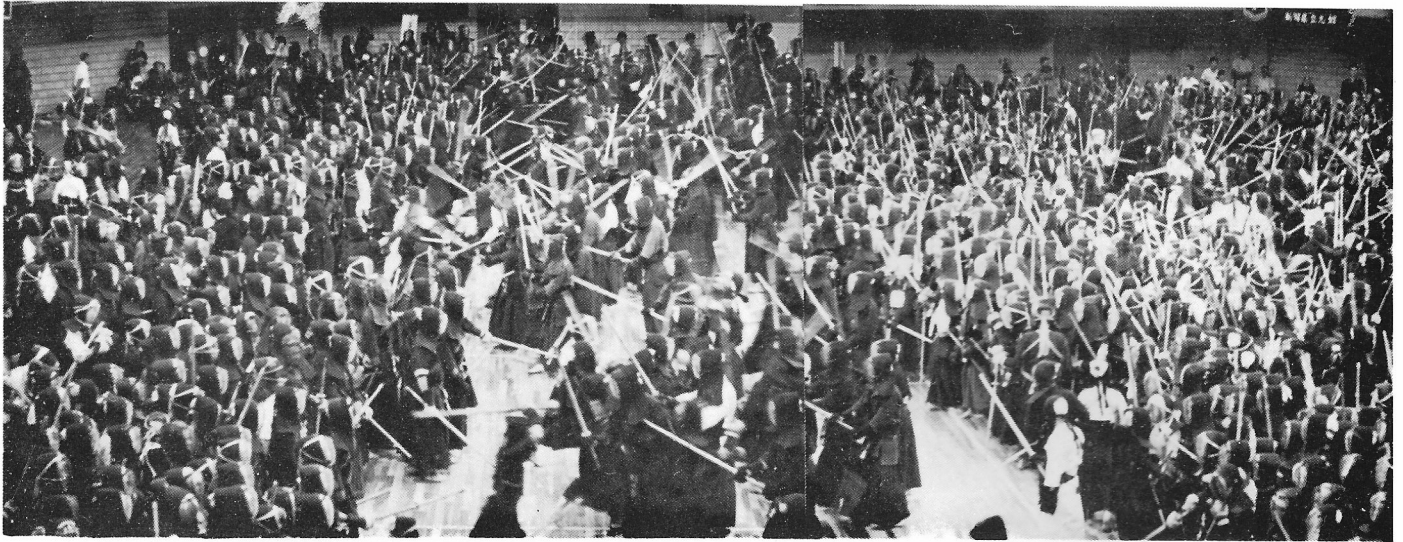
Under the warring environments there were many expert swordsmen, claiming originality in one way or the other to establish schools of their own, counting in number as many as 600 in history.

In the warring days it was, of course, their immediate object to kill their opponents. In doing so, "Bushi" warriors were taught to cause instant death without unnecessary agony to

the slain. It was an etiquette in the sword fighting.

"Kata" forms have continued to be most important in "Ken-do" to master. But mere combinations of "Kata" forms are not sufficient to cover techniques required to meet all happenings in sword-fighting. The free practice was thus in need to encourage the development of "Shinai" bamboo swords and protective gears for safeguard.

Today "Ken-do" followers train themselves primarily by using bamboo swords and learn "Kata" forms by using real or wooden swords.



Boys in the Ken-do practice.

"Ken-do" A Philosophy

One of the traditions still alive in Japan is "Budo" or the Training Way of Bushi warriors. It is a lofty philosophy that maintained the Bushi class in high morale through three centuries of peace for the Tokugawa feudal government.

"Bu-gei", as used separately from "Budo" is the technique of fighting for the obvious purpose of winning over rivals. In the Tokugawa Period "Bu-gei" was taken up for the character-building of men in the Bushi class to be then called "Budo". Of 18 such technical courses of training Bushi were trained in "Judo", "Kyu-do" (archery), "Ken-do" and "Sumo" (wrestling) have remained to date to be popularly practiced.

In the post-war period the ban on "Ken-do" was continued, when "Judo" had been allowed to practice as a sport. Aggressive elements traditionally associated with "Ken-do" must be interpreted by the Occupation Forces suggestive of militarism in potentiality.

In this age of nuclear power swords are obviously of little value in fighting. On the other hand the real merit of "Ken-do"

as a means for character-building has been more and more deeply appreciated here and abroad.

Mr. Ichiro Yano, chairman of the board, Daiichi Mutual Life Insurance and ardent follower of Ken-do gives the following four points in support of the Japanese Way of Sword:

- 1) Ken-do teaches good manners.
- 2) Ken-do helps build spiritual power to face and overcome problems in life.
- 3) Ken-do helps develop self-command and steady mind to meet and handle unexpected happenings.
- 4) Ken-do helps develop instant judgement and quick action.

Expatriating on the above merits of Ken-do, Mr. Yano first refers to "Reigi" or good manners. The word may be interpreted to mean decorum, as far as certain rules in conduct are strictly observed in Ken-do and are always accompanied by "respect" to the opponent. All conducts in the Ken-do practice are thus governed by good manners and respect to all including the "Shinai" sword and other outfits used.

2 How strong your opponent may be, you are required in Ken-do to fight face to face.

Fighting spirit thus trained should be of great help in tackling serious problems in life.

3 Dread, fright, doubt and perplexity are four mental elements that must be overcome in Ken-do. By training oneself in Ken-do it is aimed to reach a state of mind where egos should not disrupt calm and objective views of the surroundings.

4 A chance to strike an opponent in Ken-do is made the most only by instant judgement instinctively arrived at. Training for such mental reflection is bound to benefit persons in other lines of life.

Ken-do, apart from "Ken-jutsu" or the art of sword-fighting, is not practiced to kill opponents but to train oneself in character building. It has much in common with "Zen" Buddhism in purpose for attaining spiritual awakening.

The art of manipulating a sword is only the means. Unlike in other sports, physical power and technical skill are counted less important, when compared with the ultimate objective of Ken-do in attaining the mental and spiritual enlightenment.

Often physical handicaps and ages are overcome in Ken-do in reaching a height in the traditional "Way of Sword".

The Outfit



A heavy cotton suit is worn under the guarding outfit with a "Hakama" skirt (a pair of crousers may be substituted.) for the practice of Ken-do.

"Men" (face guard), "Kote" (gauntlets), "Do" (plastron) and "Tare" (pendents) are worn for protective purposes.

The "Shinai" bamboo sword is up to 1.15 meters long and 300-450 grams in weight. It is made by putting together four split pieces of bamboo.

It consists of the leather-covered point, the blade, the back with a string, the guard and the leather-covered hilt with the blade tied around at a spot about one-third of its length from the point. An effective strike or thrust is made by the top half of the blade.

As "Katana" or the sword was considered to represent the spirit of Bushi warriors, the Shinai is

treated carefully and respectfully. It would violate the Ken-do etiquette, for instance, to walk over the Shinai.

Speaking of the order of putting on the outfit, the Tare pendants come first. With the large pendent placed in the forecenter it is applied to the abdominal region. It is tied in front under the large pendent by the cords attached to both ends.

The Do plastron is then put on. It is applied to the breast and belly and secured by the cords.

The Men face-guard is put on securely on the head by the cords tied at the back after bringing them up and down around the head.

Lastly your hands are put in the Kote gauntlets in which the Shinai sword is held for commencing the practice.

Ken-do Decorums

As an approach to character-building the practice of Ken-do begins with manners and ends with manners.

Straight Sitting



With the knees spread a little apart the body is placed on the big toes which are put one on the other. The head is kept straight up with the eyes fixed straight forward as though to look at a mountain far in distance.

The chest is kept thrown out and the shoulders are relaxed. The elbows are bent outward and the hands are placed on the lap. With physical strength concentrated in the lower abdomen, you breathe quietly through the nostrils.

The Shinai sword is put on

the right with the blade facing towards the body.

A bow is made from the position of straight sitting with the hands placed together in front of the knees. In taking a bow the head is lowered to one or two inches from the floor.

Straight sitting is no comfort to strangers to the peculiar Japanese position. It is said to help clear one's mind and key up oneself to the Ken-do practice.

Respect

Respect must first be paid to Take-no-nushi-no-mikoto and Karutsu-nushi-no-mikoto, legendary deities who fought off enemies at the founding of Japan. All Ken-do practice halls have a miniature shrine in worship to these deities.

To the instructor it is required to make two standing bows before and after a practice session. Respect is similarly paid to seniors and elders and is mutually exchanged with fellow Ken-do followers.

How to Carry The Shinai

The Shinai sword is carried in the left hand, when standing, with the blade facing upward. It is held at the sword-guard and put lightly against the waist

with the left elbow slightly bent outward. The sword is slanted about 45° to the floor.

Standing still with the sword in hand, the ankles are put together and the feet are pointed outward at about 60°.

Again it is important to concentrate strength in the lower abdomen where the center of gravity of the body is to be found.

A bow is made from this posture to the opponent by slanting the upper body slightly forward before each practice session.

(See Illust. 1)

How to Take Out The Shinai

Before taking out the Shinai (or a wooden or real sword), you go into the "Son-kyo" crouching position at a proper distance from the opponent by taking a short forward step. Then grab the sword by the right hand and pull it out in



a big circular motion. It is

stopped where the fist comes right in front of the navel. The left hand is then placed on the Shinai at its end. The Shinai is held to point to the opponent's throat.

"Sonkyo" Crouching Posture



This is the position to take before and after a Ken-do match. It is a crouching position on the toes with the hips placed on the ankles. The knees are lowered as much as possible and spread to keep the body in balance. The right side of the body is put slightly forward. The head is kept straight without leaning forward while the mouth is closed tightly, breathing quietly.

The process is more or less reversed for putting back the Shinai. The right foot is arranged with the left to take the Sonkyo position. After turning the Shinai around to the left as though to put a real sword into the sheath, it is held by the left hand for returning to the standing position. A bow is then exchanged with the opponent.

Ken-do Postures

Natural Posture (Shizen-Tai)

The "Shizen-Tai" natural posture is a basic factor in a successful training for Ken-do and all other fields of "Bu-do". It is a state of the body, where all muscles are in natural relaxation without undue strains or stiffness. One is often tempted to neglect the natural posture in the near-sighted attempt to improve the Ken-do techniques, causing to fail in the ultimate objective of character-building.

This fundamental principle should be kept in mind in taking any of the following elementary "Ken-do" postures:

Middle Posture (Sei-Gan)

This is the most important posture in Ken-do, in which the Shinai is held at the middle position. In this posture the head is kept straight and the jaw is drawn in. The eyes are kept wide open to watch all movements by the opponent and the mouth is shut to maintain the mind alert and sharp. The shoulders are dropped and relaxed and the chest is thrown out for easy movements of the body.

The right hand takes the lead in sword movements. It grasps

the hilt with the right elbow bent and relaxed. The arms should not be stretched out in fear of being struck on the elbow.

The left hand is the essential factor in the attack. It holds the hilt at the end with the small finger almost covering the very end. The Shinai is held tightly in the left hand by the middle, third and small fingers.

The Shinai is positioned at the end a few inches in front of the navel. It is important not to hold on to the Shinai too tightly so that all strength and vigor may be concentrated on the moment of an attack.

The Shinai should point to the opponent's throat, as such a position of the sword is considered ideal for guarding oneself as well as attacking the opponent.

As for the lower body the right foot is put about a half step in front of the left, pointing straight forward and keeping the heel slightly touching the floor.

The left foot should also be pointed forward with the heel lifted a little. The knees are kept relaxed to effect their spring actions.

The body weight should be shared equally on both feet.



JODAN (left)



JODAN (left)



GE-DAN



GE-DAN



JODAN (right)
Mr. TAKANO



SEI-GAN
Mr. YASOJI NAKANO (8 DAN)



HASSO
Mr. MASANORI YUNO (8 DAN)



HASSO
Mr. TAKANO



WAKI-GAMAE
Mr. TAKANO

Overhead Posture (Jo-Dan)

The Shinai is held over the head with the eyes fixed at the face of the opponent. The posture is taken, as the left foot is stepped out and the left fist is raised directly in sight.

The overhead posture is an aggressive position to overpower the opponent.

Low Posture (Ge-Dan)

It is a defensive posture, the Shinai pointing at the opponent's right leg.

"Hasso" Posture

In the Hasso (eight phase) posture the Shinai is held up at the right shoulder. It is a cool-minded posture to watch the opponent's moves and to take an immediate action on whatever may develop.

Side Posture (Waki-Gamae)

The Shinai is held on the right side with the sword point slanting backward. It is also a position to watch movements of the opponent.

Shouting

One practice peculiar to Ken-do is loud and sharp shouting made to inspire oneself and dispirit the opponent. It is also said to be an excellent means of giving exercise to internal organs.

There are two types of shouting. One is to shout out the point of a strike in instantaneous declaration of what is aimed at such as "Men!" and "Do!". The other is "Yeah!" or "Ei!" used to stir up own spirit and discourage the opponent.

Loud and sharp shouting is an important element in the Ken-do practice but any vulgar and coarse shouting is strictly despised and prohibited.

Strikes (Cuts) and Thrusts

In Ken-do an effective strike (cut) is scored only on the front and sides of the faceguard, right gauntlet and both sides of the plastron of the opponent. A strike on the left gauntlet is counted effective, only when the opponent is raising it for an overhead position or coming down with it from overhead position.

A thrust is effective only on the opponent's throat.

The following are basic tricks for striking or thrusting the opponent:

Strike on the Front Face

The strike on the front face is the most important and basic trick in the Ken-do attack.

The Shinai is raised to a position where the right elbow is about to be on the level of the shoulder, as the right foot is advanced a step forward and a strike is given on the forehead with the arms fully stretched.

The sword must be raised straight up and the strike must be made with all force behind the fully stretched arms. It is important to have the right arm stretched to "push" the sword with the right hand and "pull" it up with the left hand for making the strike. The grips on both hands must be kept secure so that the left hand does not go higher above the right hand.

Strike on the Left Face

The Shinai is circled overhead to the right to strike down on the left side of the opponent's

face at the temple. It is important to give the sword a big circular swing so that the blade is turned to the right direction for an effective cut.

Strike on the Right Face

The sword is circled around overhead to the left to strike the opponent on the right face.

Strike on the Gauntlet

The Shinai is swung as in the case of a frontface strike in smaller action and blown down on the right gauntlet of the opponent.

The swing may be made smaller, as you improve in the trick.

"Maki-Gote" and "Nuki-Gote" are more difficult variations of the Kote gauntlet strike.

Strike on the Right Plastron

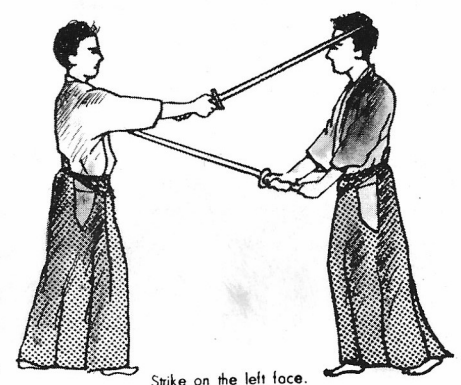
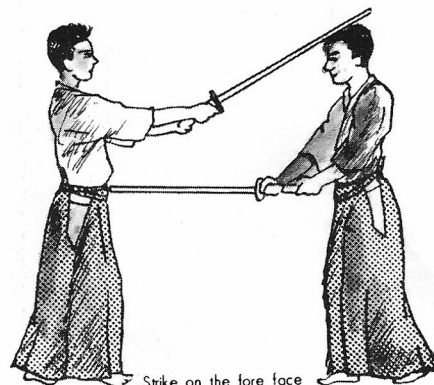
The sword is raised a little, as the right foot is advanced a step to strike the opponent on the right side of the plastron.

It is important to keep your body and left arm straight and turn the blade in the right direction for the cut.

Strike on the Left Plastron

The Shinai is lifted a little, as the right foot is advanced in slant to strike the opponent on the left side of the plastron, diagonally from the upper right. Both elbows are stretched out for the strike.

The strike is reminded to be more difficult in turning the blade in the right direction.



Forward Thrust

The grips of both hands are squeezed in and arms stretched to thrust the opponent at the throat.

It is the most aggressive trick of Ken-do to overpower the opponent.

There are right and left thrust

tricks as variations to the above

It is, of course, not sufficient to master such basic tricks to be anybody in Ken-do. Their combinations and variations must be learned to be a Ken-do artist. Only through hard and determined training you will master Ken-do and master yourself through Ken-do.

The secret teaching "Flint Fire" advocates to attack the opponent at a flash of sparks.

Similarly, there are many well versed secret teachings in Ken-do, which represent high principles to be adopted otherwise in life.

"Clear Mirror—Still Water" indicates a state of mind never to miss any move or happening.

"Water and the Moon" is used to refer to a height achieved in the Ken-do practice to indicate a complete and natural harmony of the mind and body. These and other Ken-do sayings are often used to describe or control conducts in life.

Ken-Do Matches

In Ken-do you are trained to see things with your eyes, react instantly to happenings and make moment judgements with your mind. In a Ken-do match you watch your opponent with your eyes, react quickly to his moves and grab chances for attack, as seen through your mind. The mind's eye is opened only by and through hard and long training, as in case of the Zen practice of austerities.

Some of the essential elements in the Ken-do matches are introduced below for you to realize the depth of philosophy aimed to uncover in the traditional Way of Bushi warriors.

Postures

Whatever postures you may take against your opponent, none of them would guard you, unless backed by your determined spirit. A Ken-do match is ultimately decided by the difference in mental power between you and the opponent.

"Kiai"

In Ken-do to be full of Kiai means to be full of spirits from the crown of the head down to the tip of toes. It is not to strain the abdomen but to have your whole strength naturally concentrated in the abdomen. It is not to yell at your opponent without effects but to have your strength and mind in complete harmony and unison.

Theory and Practice

All theories in Ken-do are of little value unless accompanied by the art of sword.

Though it is important to be well informed on the theoretical elements of Ken-do, it is more essential to master Ken-do tricks to win matches.

"Ma-Ai" Distance and Timing

Literally meaning "distance-between", Ma-Ai in Ken-do is referred to (1) distance and (2) timing.

(1) Each Ken-do player has his own "Ma-Ai" or preferred distance from his opponent for offensive or defensive actions. The Ma-Ai advantage is held by holding the opponent at one's preferred distance and having him out of his. You are taught to be far from your opponent and to have your opponent close to you.

(2) The same idea is applied timewise in Ken-do actions. "Ma" instead of "Ma-Ai" is more commonly used to describe the timing in Ken-do.

It is to catch the opponent off guard and out of alertness. Or it is to take advantage of the weakness of the human mind, as may be momentarily exposed by the opponent. Again "Ma" is to seek for timely gaps in actions of yours and the opponent. An old saying in Ken-do has that your opponent may cut you on the skins but you should not lose that very moment to cut him to the bones.

Offence and Defence

A complete harmony and coordination of physical movements and mental reactions in Ken-do is obtained only through hard training. Any offensive move must be accompanied by defensive measures in moment readiness and a defensive posture must be ready to turn offensive at an instant call. It is indeed a decision to make at a split of a second to advance or withdraw.

Off Guard

More often beginners are found off guard in mind, in posture or in action in a Ken-do match.

It is an important objective in the practice of Ken-do never to be off guard mentally in a Ken-do match or whatever circumstances one may be placed in.

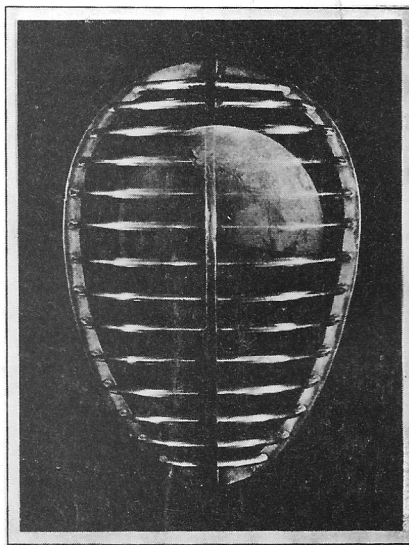
To be off guard in posture or in action means the lack of training. It may also well be traced to an incomplete training in keeping the mind always alert.

Continued Readiness

An intended strike very often comes out without aimed effects, requiring a next step to take immediately.

A Ken-do match is a series of actions, offensive or defensive, requiring uninterrupted concentration of the mind.

It does not mean, however, to attack the opponent half way to reserve your strength. On the contrary each attempt must be made with all your might to be as aggressive in the next action as it can be. Indeed Ken-do is a continued training of the mind and is hardly possible to learn in words. The philosophy of Ken-do is attained only by and through the body. It is a life-long course of training, often extending into the 70's and even 80's in age, as actually practiced by many.



This pamphlet has been written by Mr. Ichiro Yano, Chairman, Daiichi Mutual Life Insurance Co., as a guide to Kendo for foreigners.

This is being presented to you through the Information Office of the World Kendo Tournament and we hope it will prove useful to you all. Furthermore, the Information Office of the World Kendo Tournament hopes to publish an "Introduction to Kendo" in the near future.