

Discuss the  
importance of  
emptiness in  
swordsmanship



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Importance of Emptiness in Swordsmanship The way of the sword, also known as kendo, has been practised and cultivated as a martial art from medieval times, flourishing in Japan from medieval times. This system involves a path of thought, which has largely preserved similar spirit realization and vision from the Japanese samurai's discipline of mind up to the present day society that is post industrial. A concept that is central to kendo is Mushin, which is an awareness state that is attained in combat with the aim of producing thoughts which are fluid in nature. One becomes invulnerable to distractions from outside. The mind enters into a state of emptiness.

This state of emptiness is akin to a cup which is empty, ready to be filled. It is a force that is boundless and forms the mind facet that is central to the practitioner of kendo, and which the practitioner will experience during practice. The importance of emptiness can not be over stressed. It is of significance importance that one conquers the disturbance that is inside him, since fear arises within the body of oneself. Then, the swordsman is ready to face opponents (Westgeest 65).

Mushin, or emptiness, extricates all concerns that are extraneous, focusing the body, mind, spirit and the moment, and allows all to function in a harmony that is fluid. This allows transformation of these entities, usually separate, into an action that is unitary in form and purpose (Westgeest 65).

This spiritual and mental development accompanying kendo study has remained, passed on from one generation to another, mostly of warriors.

Emptiness can trace its roots in Zen Buddhism, where meditation of monks involved a similar act of emptiness during prayer. It is thus not surprising to

note that the code of swordsmen, known as Bushido, has its roots in Zen  
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Buddhism and also in Shintoism. Shintoism is another root factor in the development of emptiness in swordsmanship.

#### Works Cited

Westgeest, Helen. Zen in the fifties: interaction in art between east and west. Amsterdam: Waanders Publishers, 1997. Print