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**HOW TO MAKE BOKKEN** BOKKEN (木剣, bok(u), "wood", and ken, "sword"), is a wooden Japanese sword used for training, usually the size and shape of a katana, but sometimes shaped like other swords, such as the wakizashi and tantō. It should be noted that bokken (木剣) is not a proper, nor a common term in Japan. Ken (剣) is used as a prefix for terms having to do with the sword as in Kendō (剣道 "way of the sword") and Kenjutsu (剣術 "art of the sword"). In contrast, tō (刀) is used as a suffix as in shōtō (小刀:しょうとう, short sword) and daitō (大刀:だいたう); thus bokutō (木刀, "wood sword") is the correct terminology. These should not be confused with shinai, the bamboo sword used in kendo. A bokken is used as an inexpensive and relatively safe substitute for a real sword, in training for several martial arts. Bokken are also used in the AJKF Nihon kendo kata, a form of training to develop technically correct movements. In 2003, the All Japan Kendo Federation (AJKF) introduced a type of practice using bokken. Bokuto Ni Yoru Kendo Kihon-waza Keiko-ho is a set of basic exercises using a bokuto. This form of practice, is intended primarily for kendoka up to ni-dan, but is very useful for all kendo students. Suburito are bokken designed for use in suburi. Suburi, literally "bare swinging," are solo cutting exercises. Suburito are thicker and heavier than normal bokken and users of suburito have to develop both strength and technique. Their weight makes them unsuitable for paired practice or kata. Historically, bokken are as old as Japanese swords, and were used for the training of warriors. Miyamoto Musashi, a kenjutsu master, was renowned for fighting fully armed foes with only one or two bokken. In a famous legend, he defeated Sasaki Kojiro with a bokken he had carved from an oar while traveling on a boat to the predetermined island for the duel. The following list is the basic styles of bokken made: Daitō or tachi (katana-sized), long sword; Shoto or kodachi or wakizashi bo, short sword, (wakizashi-sized); Tanto bo (tanto-sized); and Suburito can be made in daito and shoto sizes but are meant for solo training. They are much heavier and harder to use, developing greater muscles, increasing skills with 'normal' sized bokken. One famous user of the suburito-sized bokken is Miyamoto Musashi who used one in his duel against Sasaki Kojiro. Bokken can be made in any style of weapon required such as nagamaki, nodachi, yari, naginata, kama, etc. The examples above are the most widely-used. The All Japan Kendo Federation specify the dimensions of bokken for use in kendo kata. Tachi: Total length, approx. 102 cm; tsuka (handle) approx. 24 cm. Kodachi: Total length, approx. 55 cm; tsuka (handle) approx. 14 cm. The quality of the bokken depends on several factors. The type and quality of the wood and skill of the craftsman are all critical factors in the manufacture of a good quality bokken. Almost all mass produced inexpensive bokken are made from porous, loose-grained southeast Asian wood. These bokken may be easily broken when used in even light to medium contact drills and are best left for non contact work, such as in kata. Furthermore, the wood is often so porous, that if the varnish is stripped off the inexpensive bokken, one can see the use of wood fillers to fill the holes. While most species of North American red oak are unsuitable for construction of bokken, there are some Asian species of red oak that have a significantly tighter grain and will last longer. Superior woods, such as American white oak, also known as Kashi (not to be confused with Japanese white oak, known as Shiro Kashi, which is an evergreen species and lacks the weaker spring growth rings of the American oaks), has been a proven staple, having a tighter grain than red oak wood. Another choice, hickory wood, seems to have a very good blend of hardness and impact resistance, while still having a relatively low cost. The use of exotic hardwoods is not unusual when looking at some of the more expensive bokken. Some are made from Brazilian cherrywood (Jatoba), others from purpleheart, and some very expensive ones made from lignum vitae. Tropical woods are often quite heavy, a feature often sought in bokken despite the brittleness of these heavy and hard materials. Many of the exotics are suitable for suburi (solo practice), but not for paired practice where there is hard contact with other bokken. Some online retailers offer bokken constructed from polypropylene plastics. The exact applications and benefits of such a weapon vary depending upon the user. Bokken are wooden swords primarily used for martial arts weapons training. They are used in Japanese martial arts such as Kendo, Kenjutsu, Ninjutsu, Budo/Bujutsu and Aikido. Bokken are traditionally constructed from hardwood (traditionally red or white oak) and are roughly the same shape and weight as the Katana. However, there is a version known as the Suburi Bokken which is much heavier. The Suburi was designed to develop the muscles used in sword based martial arts and to increase the speed of practitioners. The idea is that students will get used to training with a heavier weapon and then a "normal" sword or Bokken will feel lighter to the user (much the same principle as training with ankle/wrist weights). While the Bokken is generally used as a practice weapon, it can also be an effective weapon in its own right and was allegedly used by one of Japan's most famous swordsmen Miyamoto Musashi to compete in (and win) in duels against opponents using Katana. For other traditional weapons (i.e. Nunchaku), please visit the main Martial Arts Weapons section. Bokken Basics Sparring match between a Bokken and a wooden European longsword Japanese wooden sword used for training Various types of bokken A bokken (木剣, bok(u), "wood", and ken, "sword") (or a bokutō 木刀) is a Japanese wooden

swort used for training in kenjutsu. It is usually the size and shape of a katana, but is sometimes shaped like other swords, such as the wakizashi and tantō. Some ornamental bokken are decorated with mother-of-pearl work and elaborate carvings. Sometimes it is spelled "boken" in English. Bokken are traditionally composed of red oak or white oak, although any hardwood can be used. In comparison, practice swords made of flexible, soft wood such as bamboo are referred to as shinai. History It is hard to determine precisely when the first bokken appeared due to secrecy in ancient martial arts training and loose record-keeping. While various mock weapons were surely used during the earlier periods of Japanese history, usage of bokken in their modern form first emerged during the Muromachi Period (1336-1600) for the training of samurai warriors in the various ryū (schools of martial arts and swordsmanship) of the era.[1] If a steel katana is repeatedly used, it can easily become nicked and the edge flawed, potentially leading to a broken expensive sword. Bokken are safer than fighting with real swords, and are considerably more durable: a wielder can make contact with other trainee's swords with little fear of damage.[2] While bokken are safer for sparring and practice than katana, they are still lethal weapons in the hands of trained users. A famous legend to this effect exists involves Miyamoto Musashi, a ronin known to fight fully armed foes with only one or two bokken. According to the story, he agreed to a duel with Sasaki Kojiro at the early morning on Ganryūjima, a tiny sandbar between Kyushu and Honshu. Musashi overslept the morning of the duel, however, and made his way to the duel late. He carved a bokken from an oar with his knife while traveling on a boat to the duel.[3] At the duel, Sasaki was armed with his large nodachi, yet Musashi crushed Sasaki's skull with a single blow from his bokken, killing him. While many elements of the story are likely apocryphal, the potential danger of a bokken from the legend is real.[1] Before the Meiji era, bokken were very likely manufactured by woodworkers not specialized in bokken manufacture.[citation needed] At the beginning of the 20th century bokken manufacture started more formally, mainly in Miyakonōjō, a city on Kyushu Island. The last four remaining bokken workshops of Japan are still located in Miyakonōjō.[citation needed] Another notable spot where bokken were manufactured and sold as tourist souvenirs was Aizuwakamatsu; the resulting bokken were frequently inscribed with the markings of the Byakkotai, a youth battalion that committed mass suicide nearby during the Battle of Aizu. During the late Showa era in the 1970s and 80s, these suicides were romanticized as a bold and heroic act, and bokken marked with their emblem sold well.[4] The "standard bokken", mostly used in Kendo, Iaido, and Aikido, was created by master Aramaki Yasuo in collaboration with the All Japan Kendo Federation in the 1950s and was the first standardized bokken ever created.[5] Usage Various styles of bokken The bokken is used as an inexpensive and relatively safe substitute for a real sword in several martial arts such as aikido, kendo, iaido, kenjutsu, and jodo. Its simple wooden construction demands less care and maintenance than a katana. In addition, training with a bokken does not carry the same mortal risk associated with that of a sharp metal sword, both for the user and other practitioners nearby. While its use has several advantages over use of a live edged weapon, it can still be deadly, and any training with a bokken should be done with due care. Injuries occurring from bokken are very similar to those caused by clubs and similar battering weapons and include compound fractures, ruptured organs, and other such blunt force injuries. In some ways, a bokken can be more dangerous as the injuries caused are often unseen and inexperienced practitioners may underestimate the risk of harm. It is not a sparring weapon, but is intended to be used in kata and to acclimate the student to the feel of a real sword. For sparring, a bamboo shinai is typically used instead, for obvious safety reasons. In 2003, the All Japan Kendo Federation (AJKF) introduced a set of basic exercises using a bokutō called Bokutō Ni Yoru Kendō Kihon-waza Keiko-hō. This form of practice is intended primarily for kendo practitioners up to Nidan ranking, but can be beneficial for all kendo students.[6] Suburitō (素振り刀) are bokken designed for use in suburi. Suburi (素振り), literally "bare swinging," are solo cutting exercises. Suburitō are thicker and heavier than normal bokken and users of suburitō must therefore develop both strength and technique. Their weight makes them unsuitable for paired practice and solo forms. Miyamoto Musashi's bokken made of an oar in his legendary duel with Sasaki Kojiro was presumably a suburitō-sized bokken. As late as 2015, bokken were issued to the Los Angeles Police Mounted Unit for use as batons.[7][8] Types Bokken can be made to represent any style of weapon required such as nagamaki, nodachi, yari, naginata, kama, etc. The most widely used styles are: daitō or tachi (katana-sized), long sword shōtō or kodachi or wakizashi bō (wakizashi-sized), short sword tantō bō (tantō-sized) suburitō can be made in daitō and shōtō sizes Additionally, various koryu (traditional Japanese martial arts) have their own distinct styles of bokken which can vary slightly in length, tip shape, or in whether or not a tsuba (hilt guard) is added. The All Japan Kendo Federation specify the dimensions of bokken for use in the modern kendo kata, called Nippon kendo kata.[9] Tachi: Total length, approx. 102 cm; tsuka (handle) approx. 24 cm. Kodachi: Total length, approx. 55 cm; tsuka (handle) approx. 14 cm. Bokken are traditionally composed of red oak or white oak, with white oak varieties being slightly more expensive and prestigious. Other common tree varieties used included ebony, biwa, and sunuke in Japan, and hickory, persimmon, ironwood, and walnut for trees native to the Americas. Biwa trees were used at least partially due to a folk superstition that wounds inflicted by biwa wood would never heal.[1] See also Aiki-ken Iaido Jō Kendō/Kenjutsu Kinomichi Waster References ^ a b c Lowry, Dave (1986). Bokken: Art of the Japanese Sword. Ohara Publications. p. 21-27. ISBN 978-0-89750-104-0. ^ Ratti, Oscar; Westbrook, Adele (1991). Secrets of the Samurai: A Survey of the Martial Arts of Feudal Japan (1st pbk. ed.). Rutland, Vt.: C.E. Tuttle Co. p. 272. ISBN 978-0-8048-1684-7. ^ Wilson, William Scott (2004). The Lone Samurai: The Life of Miyamoto Musashi (1st ed.). Tokyo: Kodansha International. p. 19. ISBN 9784770029423. ^ "修学旅行でよく見た「お土産の木刀」を全国へ広めた会社は今". デイリーポータルZ. October 25, 2018. 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