

1.1 Definition of Japanese martial arts

Throughout the course, we will deal with Japanese martial arts (In Japanese, it can be translated in several ways such as Budō (the way of the warrior), Bujutsu (the technique of fighting), Bugei (the art of fighting).).

As a starting point, let's make sure what is the definition. The link in below is a definition of Japanese martial arts written on the official website of Nihon Budōkan (Japanese Budō Association) which is an organization founded in 1962 (with a financial support from the Japanese government) to promote Japanese martial arts both domestically and internationally.

https://www.nipponBudōkan.or.jp/english/teigi_eng

“Budō is a form of Japanese physical culture that has its origins in the ancient tradition of bushidō – literally, “the way of the warrior.” Practitioners of budō develop technical martial skills while striving to unify of mind, technique and body; to develop their character; to enhance their sense of morality; and to cultivate a respectful and courteous demeanour. Thus, budō serves as a path to self-perfection. Budō as a general term refers to the modern Japanese martial arts disciplines comprised of jūdō, kendō, kyūdo, sumō, karatedō, aikidō, shōrinji kempō, naginata, and jūkendō.”

There are several things draw our attention, for example:

1. It emphasizes on “Japaneseness” and an association with “traditional warrior” (Bushido).
2. It emphasizes on the benefits not only for the body but also morality, politeness and mental stability. [On the website, the Philosophy of Budō section says even more about 1 and 2. See also: https://www.nipponBudōkan.or.jp/english/rinen_eng]
3. It indicates there was a radical change: Budō as a general term refers to the modern Japanese martial arts disciplines.
4. Most of the ten disciplines (jūdō, kendō, kyūdo, sumō, karatedō, aikidō, shōrinji kempō, naginata, and jūkendō) also end with ‘dō’.

Discussion 1.1: Does the Nihon Budōkan’s definition correspondent with your impression about Japanese martial arts?