

What is Koryu Bujutsu, and is Budo Taijutsu Koryu Bujutsu?

Ko is a word that means old, and ryu refers to flow or school. Put together, they form the word Koryu, which means "old styles, schools or traditions". Bujutsu is of course arts of war- that is, martial arts introduced solely for the purpose of life and death combat. The term **koryu bujutsu** refers to martial arts of mainland Japan that originated sometime up to and including the Tokugawa period (1603-1868).

Why have I included this page? Because there is a website, a very good website with a wealth of information, called [Koryu Online](#). I looked through their material, quite impressed, and purchased one of their books. I thought I had found a group of individuals who, in this modern age of sport martial arts and Power Rangers, strive for the same understanding in similar arts.

You can imagine how disappointed and distressed I was when I found [this page](#) and what was written near the bottom of [this page](#). There they address the question: is **ninjutsu** koryu bujutsu? They come to the conclusion, to put it politely, that it is not. I would like to address their opinions in a rational manner, viewing the issue first from their perspective.

Does ninjutsu exist in the form of independent ryuha? We have been told it does, and we believe the histories passed down to us by our teachers. I will not insist that anyone else believe the same. I will readily admit that the quantity of actual 'combat methods' in ninpo taijutsu is very limited. But what I would like to draw to your attention is that there is much more to Budo Taijutsu than 'ninjutsu', whether you believe in 'ninjutsu' or not.

It is not accurate to equate Budo Taijutsu with ninjutsu. Many people may not realize that there are other traditions which are a part of the Bujinkan Dojo. I can understand the disgust at the image of testosterone-charged wanna-be's running around the woods in cammo. I completely share those feelings of disgust. Such images, popularized during the 1980's and still in existence today, along with shoddy teaching practices, have poisoned the professional image of the Bujinkan Dojo.

Sadly, it appears that the folks at Koryu Online have allowed this bad and incorrect image to shape the opinion they have of our arts. Hatsumi Soke began distancing the Bujinkan Dojo from the 'ninja-boom' image by changing the name of the arts we practice to Budo Taijutsu. The concept that "Bujinkan Budo Taijutsu = Ninjutsu" is inaccurate.

Here are just a few examples of what I mean:

Those associated with Koryu Online recognize Yoshin Ryu Jujutsu, founded in "the latter part of the seventeenth century" by Akiyama Shirobei Yoshitoki, as Koryu Bujutsu. Then what about [Takagi Yoshin Ryu Jutaijutsu \(Jujutsu\)](#), founded by Takagi Oriuemon Shigenobu (1625 - 1711)? The second master of Takagi Yoshin Ryu, Takagi Umamosuke, was also the first soke of Takagi Ryu Jujutsu, and received menkyo in Takenouchi Ryu Jujutsu as well. The style is also related to Hon Tai Yoshin Ryu, which is also listed on their website. The history and connections of the Takagi Yoshin Ryu,

which is a part of the Bujinkan family of styles, clearly put it into the koryu bujutsu category.

What about the Kukishinden Ryu? This system supplies most of the Bujinkan's weapon training, and was founded by Izumo Kanja Yoshiteru in the fourteenth century. This system gives us training in kenjutsu - katana and shoto (daisho), yarijutsu, naginata jutsu, bojutsu, jojutsu, juttejutsu, tessenjutsu, yoroi kumiuchi (grappling in full samurai armor), and more. This style has been the focus of Hatsumi Soke's teaching nearly exclusively both in Japan and abroad for the last 7 year cycle. Kukishinden Ryu is related to Itto Ryu Kenjutsu. There are writings by the famous swordsman Itto Ittosai in the Kukishinden Ryu densho signed and dated March 1st, Tensho (1573). Hatsumi Soke's Stickfighting book, with the methods of the Kukishin Ryu (Kukishinden Ryu's parent system) is praised on the Koryu website as EXCELLENT.

The Koryu Bujutsu book sites the Bugei Ryuha Daijiten as a reference... we in the Bujinkan also site that 'martial arts dictionary' frequently in respect to our arts.

One might say that Budo Taijutsu is a modern synthesis, a point I would not argue with. **Budo Taijutsu is synthesis of koryu bujutsu**, at least in part. The claim that it is merely a collection of disparate arts is not fair nor true- one needs only to dig a little deeper to see the connections. I have not included this page in order to change any minds, or seek approval. I merely wished to make my opinion known. I believe that the ryuha of which Bujinkan Budo Taijutsu is undeniably comprised of at least some koryu bujutsu. Anyone can gain further insight into this by [researching further](#).