

# BELT SYSTEM

Traditionally and originally, most if not all Kyu grades of all styles of martial arts wore a white (Obi) belt, which usually consisted of between four and ten steps or levels of apprenticeship. These levels of Mudansha (non-certified) grades were proficiency indicators leading to Yudansha (certified) ranks within the black belt or Dan grading system of all martial arts. Jigoro Kano (1860-1938), a practitioner of two styles of Jujutsu (Tenshin Shin'yo-Ryu and Kito-Ryu) respectively, took out the intended killing element and purpose of the arts of that day and formed sport Judo in order that all could study an art form without major injury. In 1882 he founded Kodokan Judo and created the modern day Keiko-Gi or training uniform as well as the Kyu colored belt system, which consisted of one level each of white, green and brown then into black or Shodan. He is also the gentleman most responsible for bringing the martial arts to the general public.

Prior to WW II, most arts (Karate's and Jutsu's) continued to use the white to black grading system, as each were non-competitive, but combative and defensive in nature and purpose. The exposure of Karate by servicemen stationed in Okinawa, Japan and Korea after the war made Karate and Judo known to the World. Its popularity grew in the 50's and 60's and today is taught and practiced worldwide as a competitive art and sport. Today, most schools (Ryu's) have adopted the colored belt system where one will find an array of multi-colored belts running the full spectrum of the rainbow and consisting of up to as many as 12 or more Kyu grade levels.



Shobudo has stayed much in the ways of old! In the beginning days of Shobudo, one learned by physical application of many techniques in combination from one principle into another as the art was not formally written about or organized into a specific order of instruction. Promotion standards were from white belt straight into black. This worked out fine as our class was very small, concentrated and learning one on one six days a week, three hours a day with *Shihan* McGale and *Soke* Nakasato ... and confined to Okinawa only! This went on for almost four years and we were not concerned at that time with colored belts. As we separated, grew, expanded and organized, a need for a structured syllabus of instruction of proficiency level standards was adopted. In 1985, introduced were four Kyu grades. White belt (*Yon-kyu*) for beginning students: Shobudo patch for (*San-kyu*): green belt for (*Ni-Kyu*): brown belt for (*Ik-Kyu*): then Shodan.

Unique still today, is our Dan belt system. From day one of the late 1950's, belts were presented upon promotion with embroidered seal, name of the art with rank in kanji, along with name of individual in English. No other art that I know of does this and we have and will continue this tradition. Unique also to Shobudo are the colored stripes representing levels of teacher status for Yondan and above. The Hakama is worn starting at Yondan.

In Budo,

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*Kaicho*

*Sh o b u d o J u j i t s u K a i*

