



剣道場床建築工房

<http://architecture-dojo.com/>

We provide seamless, complete service from supply of flooring materials, installation and technical support, and advice.

We are experts in wood flooring materials. Contrary to general contractors, designers and architects, we truly understand the factors and requirements unique to the kendo-jo flooring. After all, we are also ardent practitioners of the art of kendo ourselves.

As experts in the unique requirements of kendo-jo flooring, we provide flooring solutions which are safe and make “keiko” , the exercises and training, easier to do. We use 100% domestic Japanese species, uncoated, to create floors with the right amount of structural elasticity or “give” . Unlike urethane coated flooring found in gymnasiums, we provide kendo-jo flooring which has a kind of warmth and a proper amount of cushion, creating a high level of safety.

Gokan Ltd.

One kendo-shi's reflections on the kendo-jo

I began practicing kendo while in primary school. Even today while running a specialty wood flooring company in Shinkiba, Tokyo, I continue to practice kendo.

I used to believe that torn Achilles tendons, heel injuries, calluses and other foot injuries were a natural part of practicing kendo.

Then, a few years ago, I had the opportunity to perform “keiko” at a “real” dojo. The burden placed on my feet was quite different than any other dojo flooring that I had experienced before. This was the first time I had experienced what a real kendo-jo floor was supposed to feel like.

The floor felt cushioned, gentle and warm to the feel. Even when stepping heavily as is done during kendo “keiko” , I felt little of the shock or burden of the step in my feet. With this type of floor, older people with weaker feet and hips and those with big blisters in their practice can practice “keiko” safely with less risk of injury.

As a professional in the wooden flooring industry, I could not help but wonder why the same actions on two different wooden floors felt so differently.

I decided to travel around Japan to the older, traditional kendo-jo and research the reasons why the floors were so much better. What I realized is that the ideal floors were in kendo-jo dedicated solely to kendo, and not a general purpose dojo



where other martial arts are practiced.

In other words, gymnasiums are designed primarily for sports where the athletes wear shoes, whereas in kendo where the kendo-shi are barefoot. The non-slip surfacing on the gymnasium floor surfaces has a damaging effect on the kendo-shi's feet.

The floor of a gymnasium is too hard for the feet of the kendo-shi when the feet thump down upon the floor and often causes pain the heel. During the ten years plus that I and other ken-shi have been practicing kendo mostly in gymnasiums, I realize that this is the reason for so many of the injuries.

So why has this problem arisen?

First of all, in the construction planning stage, planners had insufficient knowledge of kendo floors. Essentially, a gymnasium floor was constructed, but the name “kendo-jo” was slapped onto the structure.

However, even someone like myself who does kendo did not notice the problem, so it is probably too much to ask that architects who do not practice kendo to have specialized knowledge.

Another problem, is the mentality of the contractors and others involved. Often, the modus operandi is “just get it sold and out the door” with insufficient thought into what is the right solution.

Even if the architects, suppliers and others wanted to build a kendo-jo in an ideal manner for the kendo-shi, there are too few experts or available information to make it possible.



In the end, inevitably, the specs become the same, a urethane coated gymnasium floor.

I don't think that is acceptable.

So, what kind of kendo-jo is really made for the kendo-shi?

I know how easy it is for someone who has only a little experience with kendo to perform “keiko” on a real, solid wood floor built specially for kendo.

There is little demand for new kendo-jo's, and very few people involved in their construction have ever gotten their hands on the “Kenshi News” publication to help them. The knowledge for constructing a proper kendo-jo has just never been disseminated.

However, although there is little demand for new kendo facilities, it is quite strange that there has been so little research into the safety of the ken-shi.

As a flooring specialist and a practicing ken-shi, I wish to promote greater safety in the kendo-jo. I also wish to promote the greater utilization of native wood.

Based on my own “keiko”, experience and research, I would like to introduce to others around the world real kendo-jo flooring made for real ken-shi. And as an expert wooden flooring, I am committed to furthering my knowledge in this field.

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Gokan Ltd. **Mr. Hideki Maeda**

The ideal kendo-jo floor is...

- comfortable and feels good when practicing keiko
- places a minimal burden on the feet of the student
- has a long usable life span

With these three points in mind, plywood type flooring which does not reduce the impact upon one's feet will not be considered. Therefore, we will only consider natural wood flooring

Just having natural wooden flooring does not ensure that it is suitable for a kendo-jo. In selecting a wood species most suitable for kendo-jo flooring, we can only recommend one kind.

One of the first characteristics to look at is the "slide". The ease or difficulty of sliding one's feet across the floor in all directions needs to be just right. The feet cannot slide too easily nor too difficult to slide one's feet across the floor.

In order for the kendo-jo floor to possess the appropriate sliding levels, the wood surface needs to have a certain amount of softness to it.

In Japan, decisions on kendo-jo flooring usually boil down to either hinoki (Japanese cypress) or sugi (Japanese cedar). However, when considering surface hardness, hinoki is harder than sugi and is therefore less desirable in this aspect.

Kendo master Hiromichi Nakayama similarly stated, "Hinoki is a very good material, but in winter, it becomes too slippery and breaks one's form. To the degree possible, the material should be a solid

board end to end of very old sugi of at least one "sun" in thickness. The material may be expensive, but it will last a very long time." *Note: "sun", pronounced "soon" is a traditional Japanese unit of length measuring 30.3mm (0.8382").

The material should be mostly of the reddish heartwood. With larger portions of mixed white sapwood, unevenness tends to develop between the two. Similarly, if there are many knots present, unevenness will develop around the knots. Knots will also chip, split, partially or fully come out; requiring various procedures to fix the problem and result in unexpected repair costs.

From all of the above, the choice material is sugi, which Japan has in abundance. Sugi has few knots and its heartwood is red. We use natural Japanese sugi for our kendo-jo flooring.

We handle a variety of wood. We can also offer hinoki, pine and other species. For customers who desire a species other than sugi, we can help you. Please let us know your needs.



What is a genuine kendo-jo “elastic” floor structure?

Overall, what is important for a genuine kendo-jo floor?

Material thickness, length, width, coatings, durability, construction method and various other factors. If any of these factors are missing or not satisfied, you just cannot make the ideal kendo-jo floor.

The number one thing to keep in mind is the safety of the kendo-shi (practitioners of kendo)

Making a safe kendo-jo floor sounds like an easy thing to do, but unlike judo, almost no research has been conducted regarding what makes a kendo-jo floor safe for the kendo-shi.

In order to make a safe kendo-jo, we need to look at the following issues:**type of wood , size of the wood , cushion , construction method , installation**

When these are effectively and wisely combined, we have kendo-jo which . . .

- **is safe**
- **has a long usable life span**
- **reduced costs**



However, to actually realize this, one must have an extensive knowledge of wood, extensive knowledge in construction and construction methodology, as well as experience in kendo itself.

Having all three of these bases covered makes me one of a kind in Japan. As such, I am uniquely positioned to assist with kendo-jo flooring needs.

We will continue to make efforts to promote both wood and kendo.

When a new kendo-jo floor is to be built, please contact us. We will be glad to help.

What is ideal coating?

We recommend no coating at all. For the following two reasons, we recommend the kendo-jo flooring remain unfinished.

When coated with urethane, the flooring loses the appropriate amount of “slide” . This places an extra burden upon the feet.

We use only natural sugi which has been dried over a long period of time.

Unlike laminated wood products, our material retains its “elasticity” , maintains an appropriately hard surface and is less prone to wear between the

growth rings which creates ups and downs on the surface. Because of this, an oilwax finish is not needed.

An oilwax finish allows for the long term protection of the beautiful colors, but it also makes the surface harder and may affect both the “slide” of the floor and also affect the “give” or elasticity.

An uncoated flooring allows for the proper amount of elasticity, “slide” and warmth of the floor, so we recommend that floors remain uncoated



Customer comments and stories in the media

The March 19, 2011 edition of the Japan Forest Products Journal newspaper ran a story about one of our kendo-jo flooring which used 100% native Japanese woods.

In the story, Mr. Kitada, the most senior manager for the kendo-jo, stated:

“Compared to the usual urethane finished flooring, there is less heat from friction between the bottom of the foot and the floor. There is less strain on one’s feet when the moving foot comes to a stop. Since we practice barefoot, the temperature is another issue we notice. This flooring has more warmth than a urethane coated floor.”



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