

Oko Kyudokai Teaching Lineage



Onyumishi Kanjuro Shibata XX Sendai was a 20th generation master bowmaker and archer and 3rd generation "Bowmaker to the Emperor of Japan" (retired).

In 1980, by the invitation of The Venerable Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, a Tibetan meditation master, and founder of Shambhala International and Naropa University, Kanjuro Shibata XX came to the United States from Japan to teach Kyudo and together with Trungpa, founded Ryuko Kyudojo (Dragon-Tiger Kyudo Practice Hall) in Boulder, Colorado.

Since then Shibata Sendai has traveled extensively and established Kyudojos throughout North America and Europe. In 1985 he established permanent residence in Boulder, Colorado.

Born in Kyoto, Japan in 1921, Shibata began his Kyudo training in the Heki Ryu Bishu Chikurin-ha School of Kyudo at the age of eight. At a young age he also began training in bowmaking with his grandfather, Kanjuro Shibata XIX, in the family workshop. In 1959, upon the death of Kanjuro XIX, he officially became Kanjuro Shibata XX and assumed the duties of Imperial Bowmaker.

For many years he was the master of Taiyusha Kyudojo in Kyoto which was founded by the 18th Kanjuro Shibata in 1883.

The Kanjuro Shibata Lineage

In the mid 16th century the first Kanjuro Shibata lived in Kyushu, the southernmost of the four main islands of Japan and was the master bowmaker for the powerful Shimazu samurai clan. In ca.1553 he moved to the then

capital city of Kyoto where he worked primarily for the Tokugawa clan and received the title of Onyumishi (Lord Bowmaker).

Since then each generation of Shibata Bowmakers has taken the name Kanjuro and is the holder of the title Onyumishi. In addition to making bows for warriors and nobility, the Shibatas also made hama-yumi (sacred bows) used in Shinto and Buddhist rituals.

During the Meiji Restoration, Kanjuro Shibata XVIII was appointed as the "Bowmaker to the Emperor of Japan." The most important duty of the Imperial Bowmaker is producing the Goshimpo-yumi which are enshrined at the Grand Imperial Shrine at Ise and replaced every twenty years.

Kanjuro Shibata XX officially retired from his duties as Imperial Bowmaker in 1994 in favor of his son. This event coincided with Kanjuro XXI's initial offering of Goshimpo-Yumi (Divine Treasure Bows) at the Grand Imperial Shrine at Ise. Although retired from bowmaking, Shibata Sensei continues to travel extensively teaching kyudo. Kanjuro XXI, along with continuing the family bowmaking tradition also makes annual teaching trips to Europe.



Kanjuro Shibata XIX at Sanjusangendo, Kyoto

Many of the Shibatas have also been master archers of the Bishu Chikurin branch of the Heki-ryu School of Kyudo and in 1883 Kanjuro XVIII founded Taiyusha, a Kyudo practice hall in Kyoto. The 18th, 19th, and 20th Kanjuros were head masters of Taiyusha until it closed in 1991. The Shibatas were also heads of Kyoto Bowmaker's Guild for many generations.