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THE DISSEMINATION OF JAPANESE SWORDSMANSHIP TO KOREA BOK-KYU CHOI

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the dissemination of Japanese swordsmanship to Korea. A series of fight books compiled in Korea, the *Muyejebo* [1598], *Muyejebo Beonyeoksokjip* [1610], and *Muyeobotongji* [1790] illustrate the influence of Japanese fencing. Japanese *kage-ryu* was introduced to the Korean military as a form of kata and sword combat pattern training, which featured the typical Koreanisation of Japanese fencing. During the 18th century, four different Japanese fencing methods were documented in the *Muyeobotongji* – *toyu-ryu*, *ungwang-ryu*, *cheonryu-ryu*, and *yupi-ryu*. Efforts to introduce Japanese fencing have continued in modern times, especially under Japanese rule (1910-1945) when *gekiken* and *kendo* were promoted in Korea and spread widely throughout the country. After the liberation, *kendo* became a target of nationalist and anti-Japanese sentiments. In an attempt to 'erase' its Japanese character, *kendo* was transformed into a Korean-style sword art. Militarism gave birth to Japanese *kendo*; nationalism transformed it into Korean *kendo*.

INTRODUCTION

Korea, China, and Japan, which are geographically near to each other, are also historically and culturally related. A practice that originated in one country would often spread to the others and transform existing cultures or promote new ones. Martial arts were no exception. Korean, Chinese, and Japanese martial arts have evolved under mutual influence. When examining martial arts such as *Joseon sebeop* ('Ancient Korean Sword Methods'), long sabre, karate, taekwondo, judo, kendo, hapkido, etc., regardless of whether they are classical or modern in origin, it is not difficult to see evidence of cultural exchange and dissemination.

Japanese swordmanship was no exception. These techniques had long been renowned among neighbouring countries including Korea and China. It is possible that Japanese fencing was transmitted to Korea as early as the Three Kingdoms era (1st–7th century AD) through physical conflicts as well as the exchange of envoys and commerce. However, it is only in the latter half of the 16th century that we can confirm the details of the dissemination of a specific type of Japanese fencing.

It is not always easy to trace the exact nature of martial arts dissemination due to the lack of written records. Martial arts were basically systems of embodied knowledge built upon battlefield experience. Historically, it was typical for martial arts to be 'instructed orally, learned by heart'. Detailed written records are a more recent phenomenon. Previously, the death of the person who mastered a type of swordmanship could potentially mean the disappearance of the art. However, the later recording of martial arts, especially in training manuals, makes it possible for us to approach classical martial arts in a scholarly fashion.

This article examines the spread of Japanese fencing to Korea over two time-periods. The turning point is the era of modernization in the late 19th century, specifically the establishment of a modern police force in 1895. It is important to note that the dissemination of Japanese fencing to Korea was not a one-time event that happened at a certain point in history. Rather, it was spread through the culture over a long period of time.

Japanese fencing was principally a military art before the modern era, after which it changed into the modernized sporting form observed in the 20th century. While it developed as a sport, it also became a mechanism to promote ideologies such as militarism and Japanese nationalism in both Japan and Korea. Subsequently, Japanese kendo in Korea became a driving force in the creation of a variety of different Korean swordmanship styles in the modern era.

This paper investigates the various characteristics of Japanese fencing under several historical circumstances throughout the ages.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE DISSEMINATION OF JAPANESE FENCING TO KOREA

The most important and direct instrument of martial arts dissemination in pre-modern times was war. Japanese fencing was introduced directly to Joseon during the Japanese invasion of Korea between 1592 and 1598. This is known as the Imjin War in Korea, Bunroku no Eki in Japan, and Wanli Chaoxian Zhanzheng in China. Joseon suffered successive defeats in the early stages. Even the capital city, Seoul, fell in just 20 days from the outbreak of war, whereupon the king and his people had to flee the city.

Among the reasons for these initial defeats were Joseon's military tactics and their martial arts system. The main threats to the Joseon dynasty before the Imjin War had been the Jurchen and Japanese raiders (*wokou*). Until that time, Joseon placed a heavy emphasis on cavalry, because the Jurchen who plundered the Northern borders of Korea also primarily employed cavalry. Typically, the Joseon military preferred to shoot firearms from a long range followed by bow and arrows, and lastly cavalry chases. This military tactic was also applied to dealing with the Japanese raiders. The Joseon horn bow's shooting range was superior to Japanese bows. It was thus possible to block the approach of the Japanese raiders using long range projectiles. Japanese fencing, which was a specialty of the Japanese army and raiders alike, could not be implemented.

Due to the tactical success of firearms and bows, the sword came to be perceived as a supplementary weapon, rather than a critical tool, within the Joseon infantry and cavalry. Over time, short, straight knives called '*jikdan*' (which means straight and short in Korean) became standard issue, and the importance of the sword diminished.¹

However, the sword was used as a main weapon by Japanese armies in close quarter combat during the invasion of Korea. Their tactic was, first, to draw the enemy's attention to flag bearers, then to fire arquebuses (guns), followed by surrounding Joseon troops with cavalry, and finally finishing the battle with spearmen and swordsmen.² The arquebus, superior to Joseon's firearms, was the crucial factor enabling the Japanese to gain victories in the early stages of the battle. They also made full use of their strong spear and swordsmen.³

1 **The Annals of King Jungjong**, vol. 60, February 18, 23rd year of the reign of King Jungjong (1528). Refer to the website onwards. **The Annals of the Joseon Dynasty**. <http://sillok.history.go.kr/>

2 **The Annals of King Seonjo**, vol. 72, February 17, 1596.

3 During the Imjin War, Korea's short arrow (**pyeonjeon**), China's long spear, and Japanese arquebus gained notoriety [Park 1790].

There were several reasons why the Japanese military gained dominance in close quarter combat. One of the main ones was psychology. The Japanese, apparently, did not fear death. According to the records of Joseon: 'Whenever we fight they lunge forward only with a one-meter long katana [and] we have no way to stop it' [*Muyedobotongji*, Vol.2, 'Waegeom (Japanese Sabre)']; 'When the enemy rushed in without fear of death, the Joseon soldiers were utterly helpless as their blood covered the enemy's cruel blade. Although the soldiers carried swords and spears, they had no time to wield them' [*Muyedobotongji*, 'Giye Jilui (Questions and Answers on Martial Arts)'].

Secondly, the quality of the Japanese katana was superior to any hand-held weapon employed by Joseon. It was longer than the swords of both Joseon and China, and it was lighter and stronger. In fact, the weapons of Joseon often broke when they clashed with the Japanese katana. Finally, Japanese fencing was indomitable. The Japanese katanas were wielded with two hands, making them very powerful. When combined with jumps and changes in direction, a soldier could cover almost a 5-meter radius.

The tide of the war began to reverse as the allied forces of Joseon and Ming China won in the battle of Pyongyang castle in 1593. At that time, the main player in the Ming forces were southern troops from Zhejiang and Fujian. They were well-trained and experienced in repelling the wokou (Japanese raiders) in coastal areas of southern China. These soldiers were also trained in Qi Jiguang's tactics of combining firearms and close quarter combat techniques. From a distance, cannons and firearms were used, and in close range, the 'Mandarin Duck Formation' was applied. This was a specialized combination of close combat weapons including shields, thorn spears, long spears, and tridents.

The Joseon government endeavoured to introduce Qi Jiguang's tactics and martial arts throughout the kingdom. Consequently, various training manuals were compiled. The *Muyejebo* [*Illustrated Manual of Martial Arts*], compiled in 1598, was the first manual of close combat fighting systems produced in Korea. Six martial arts weapons were illustrated in the manual: the shield, thorn spear, long spear, trident, staff, and long sabre (jangdo).

Another training manual, the *Muyejebo Beonyeoksokjip* [*Sequel to Illustrated Manual of Martial Arts*], was compiled in 1610. This book contained different martial arts than those detailed in the *Muyejebo*. These were fist method (*gwonbeop*), blue dragon moon sabre, staff with a blade (hook spear), and *waegeom* (sword combat). In 1759, the *Muyesinbo* [*New Illustrated Manual of Martial Arts*] was compiled and included 18 martial arts disciplines, such as the Silla sword, twin swords, Japanese sword, etc. Finally, the *Muyedobotongji* [*Comprehensive*

Illustrated Manual of Martial Arts], compiled in 1790, is the final edition of the Joseon martial art manuals, with six equestrian arts added to the previous eighteen arts.

The aforementioned manuals all describe Japanese swordsmanship; jangdo in the *Muyejebo*, and *waegeom* in the *Muyejebo Beonyeoksokjip*, *Muyesinbo*, and *Muyedobotongji*. For almost 200 years after the Japanese invasion of Korea in 1592, there was a concerted effort to both study and implement Japanese fencing techniques within Joseon military training.

Nevertheless, the introduction of Japanese fencing was not an easy task. Japanese swordsmanship was a military secret and therefore difficult to research. That made it difficult to quickly train Joseon's soldiers. In addition, there was difficulty in spreading Japanese swordsmanship throughout the military as there was still a strong preference for the bow as a traditional military weapon. Nonetheless, Japanese fencing was practiced and implemented in the Korean military for nearly two centuries.

DISSEMINATION OF JAPANESE FENCING 1: SSANGSUDO (DOUBLE-HANDED SABRE)

During the invasion of Korea, Joseon made various efforts to adopt Japanese fencing. At that time, neither fencing nor spearmanship were widely transmitted or practiced in Joseon [*Muyedobotongji*, 'Giye Jilui (Questions and Answers on Martial Arts)']. Knowledge of Japanese fencing (in order to counter the Japanese threat) was therefore regarded as a necessity.

Two years after the Japanese Invasion of Korea in 1592, the Joseon government discussed the matter of learning fencing techniques with military leader Luo Shangzhi (駱尚志) of the Ming dynasty [The Annals of King Seonjo, September 17, 1592] with the aim of implementing these ideas. About 70 hand-picked soldiers were sent to Luo's camp to learn fencing techniques [The Annals of King Seonjo, October 7, 1592]. They learned various martial arts, such as spear, sword, thorn spear, and jangdo (long-sabre). The jangdo method was derived from the Japanese kage-ryu fencing school. Qi Jiguang obtained the kage-ryu scroll (mokuroku) during the Taizhou Battle (台州大捷)⁴ in 1561 and adopted this fencing technique as a training method for his soldiers. It was then passed on to Joseon during the Imjin War.

4 Qi Jiguang killed 1,900 enemies and won a great victory against the wokou when they invaded Taizhou (currently Zhejiang province in China) [Fan 2001].

The name jangdo ('jang' means long and 'do' means sabre) is derived from the fact that it is longer than an ordinary sabre. The overall length of the jangdo was about 136cm. The blade was 105cm, the handle was 31cm, and it typically weighted 1,500 grams. Considering that the overall length of the ordinary sabre is 90cm, with the blade measuring 69cm, the handle 21cm, and the weight 900 grams, the jangdo is 1.5 times longer and 1.6 times heavier.⁵

In reference to jangdo, Qi Jiguang states:

This sabre [jangdo] became known when wokou began to invade China. When they appeared armed with this sabre, the glint from the blade alone terrified our soldiers. The wokou were good at jumping, and in a single leap could cover nearly three meters. Combined with the sword's 1.5 meter length, this enabled them to cover 5 meters in every direction. Our soldiers were unequipped to engage in close-quarter battle, and they were unable to effectively wield their long weapons. Their two-handed sword technique was so powerful and their blade so sharp that one of our soldiers was cut completely in two. The bodies of our soldiers were cut into two parts. This was because the blade was sharp and the force was strong when used by both hands.

[Fan 2001]

The kage-ryu (the School of the Shadow) was founded by Aisu Iko (1452-1538) when he was visiting the Udo Shrine, Hyuga province in Kyushu, where a deity in the shape of a monkey is said to have appeared to him in a dream and transmitted a new style of swordsmanship. His school was named after the shadowy apparition that enlightened him. The kage-ryu was transmitted to Kamiizumi Ise-no Kami Nobutsuna (上泉伊勢守藤原信綱, 1508-?). Kamiizumi created a new kage-ryu, which was a mixture of the kage-ryu of Aisu and the swordsmanship traditions of Kashima and Katori. The Yagyū Shin kage-ryū, Taisha-ryū, Jikishin-ryū, Jikishin kage-ryū, Shin shinkage-ryū, and Shin shinkage ichien-ryū are all current schools that trace their lineage back to Kamiizumi [Hurst 1998].

The kage-ryu scroll listed in the *Jixiaoxinshu* (*New Book of Effective Discipline*, compiled by Qi Jiguang) is the oldest record of the kage-ryu swordsmanship school [Figure 1]. This record is composed of 'secrets' written in a cursive calligraphic style, followed by four sketches depicting shadows holding swords and 15 drawings of sword postures. This scroll was also included in the *Wubeizhi* (*Treatise on Armament*

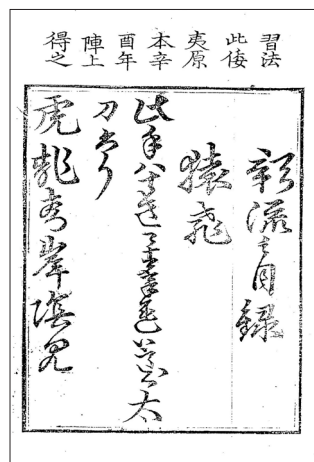


Figure 1:
Kage-ryu Scroll from
Jixiaoxinshu

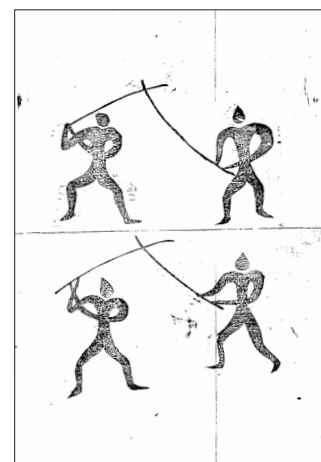


Figure 2:
Kage-ryu from
Jixiao Xinshu



Figure 3:
Kage-ryu from
Wubeizhi



Figure 4:
Kage-ryu from
Wubeizhi

5 There are two different conversions that can be applied to the length in the Joseon period. One is about 21cm for 1 cheok, the other is about 31 cm for 1 cheok. Here 21 cm is applied.

Technology), another encyclopedia of martial arts which was compiled in China in 1621.⁶ However, the shadows depicted in the *Jixiaoxinshu* are depicted as ‘monkeys’ in the *Wubeizhi*, and the shape of the sabre is also different [Figure 3].

Importantly, the *Jixiaoxinshu* and the *Wubeizhi* both have 15 illustrations of sword techniques, but they are merely isolated illustrations without any explanations, or even names given for the postures. It is difficult to ascertain how these were trained in jangdo techniques.

The first appearance of the jangdo in the historical record can be seen in the *Muyejebo* [1598]. Here, the jangdo is trained on a virtual straight line. The swordsman moves forward with each consecutive posture and then retreats to the point where he started. He then repeats the same pattern except with different combinations of techniques. When retreating, the swordsman takes First Retreat Defensive Posture, Second Retreat Defensive Posture, and Third Retreat Defensive Posture, each of which is different. Although the jangdo swordsmanship is composed of 15 different postures, the total number of postures used for the whole form (*turo*, *kata* or *hyung*) is 38 due to repetition [Figure 6, Figure 8]. The names of the jangdo postures were not recorded in the Chinese training manuals [Figure 4]; all names were added subsequently by Joseon personnel. The Joseon version of *Jixiaoxinshu* compiled in 1664 utilised the same 15 jangdo posture names [Figure 7] that were seen in the preceding *Muyejebo* of 1598 [Figure 5].

Another feature of long sabre swordsmanship is how the *habaki* (*donghoin* in Korean – a metal collar between blade and hand guard) is held when wielded. Generally, the function of the *habaki* is to fix the blade to the hilt to improve stability, to protect the blade, and to tighten the sabre when it is inserted into the sheath. Due to the long blade, the center of gravity is located far from the handle. While it has the advantage of increasing impact force by increasing momentum, it also hinders smooth operation. When the situation warrants it, the *habaki* can be held with the other hand to improve the balance of the long sabre [Figure 5].⁷

6 The *Wubeizhi* (*Mubiji* in Korean, *Bubishi* in Japanese, and *Treatise on Armament Technology* in English) was edited by Mao Yuanyi (茅元儀: 1594-1644) and published in 1621. It is the most comprehensive military book in Chinese history. It contains 240 volumes. Contents related to ancient martial arts are collected in volumes 84 to 92. Bow, crossbow, sword, sabre, spear, trident, shield, thorn spear, staff, fist, and examination are included. Most of them are extracted from other sources. The staff method came from the *Shaolin Gunfa Chanzong* (Exposition of the Original Shaolin Staff Method); the sabre, shield, thorn spear, fist, etc. came from the *Jixiaoxinshu*; and the double-edged sword technique was obtained from Joseon and described using the name of Joseon *sebeop* (朝鮮勢法) [Editorial committee of Zhongguo wushu dacidian 1990].

7 There is also a similarity found in European long sword technique. In the case of the long sword, the blade near the guard is not very sharp and is specifically designed to be held and used in this manner.

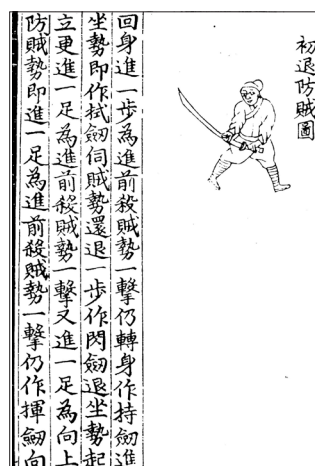


Figure 5:
Jangdo
from *Muyejebo*



Figure 6:
Comprehensive chart of jangdo
from *Muyejebo*



Figure 7:
Jangdo
from *Jixiaoxinshu*
(Joseon edition)

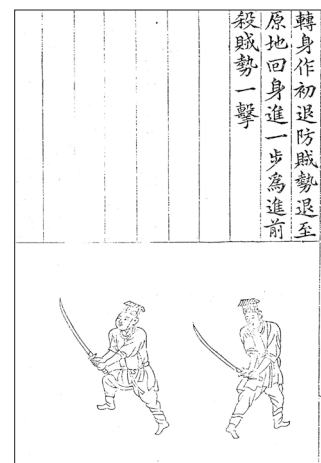


Figure 8:
Ssangsudo
from *Muyedobotongji*

It could be argued that these jangdo techniques reflected Chinese military influences as they were initially reconstructed by the Chinese. The long sabre was practiced in Joseon military camps for nearly 200 years, until the late 18th century. The *Muyedobotongji* was compiled in 1790, with additions made through the end of the Joseon dynasty. However, by the time of the *Muyedobotongji*, several changes in swordsmanship had occurred.

The most obvious change was the length of the sword. Comparing Figure 5 with Figure 8, we can clearly see the reduction in size. Both figures represent the Initial Retreat Defensive Posture. In Figure 5, the soldier holds the habaki with his right hand, while in Figure 8 (right-hand side image) the soldier holds the handle with both hands. This change occurred because there is no need to grab the habaki when wielding a standard sized sabre.

Although the *turo* (kata) of *ssangsudo*, or double-handed sabre of the *Muyedobotongji*, was virtually identical to the long sabre of *Muyejebo*, the *ssangsudo* sabre is different from the jangdo in that it is a standard-length sabre, also known as a *hwando*. The process from kage-ryu to jangdo to *ssangsudo* highlights the process by which Japanese fencing became both Sinified and Koreanised. A period of 200 years is enough time for these changes to occur.

DISSEMINATION OF JAPANESE FENCING 2: WAEGEOM

Japanese swordsmanship has been introduced through many avenues other than Chinese military camps. First of all, some of the Japanese troops that were captured or surrendered during the Japanese Invasion of Korea were excellent swordsmen. The Joseon government hired them to teach Joseon soldiers Japanese fencing by providing them food and government posts [*The Annals of King Seonjo*, August 15, 1594]. In particular, they organised children's troops and taught them swordsmanship [*The Annals of King Seonjo*, July 17, 1595].

After the Imjin War, the Joseon government took steps to create separate units of Korean people who had been repatriated from Japan (prisoners) and who were familiar with firearms and swordsmanship [*The Annals of King Injo*, April 20, 1627]. As diplomatic relations with Japan were restored and a process of exchange resumed, Japanese residents were allowed to live in certain areas of Korea and to engage in commerce and trade. It is conceivable that Japanese swordsmanship was transmitted in this way at this time as well.

It also seems likely that swordsmanship was transmitted through political and cultural missions dispatched by Joseon to Japan. The

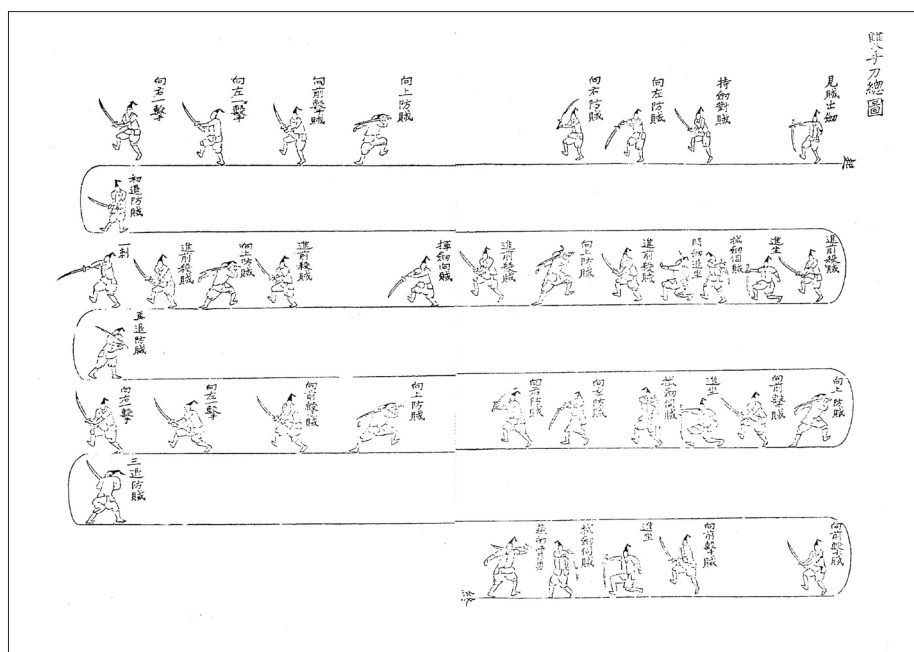
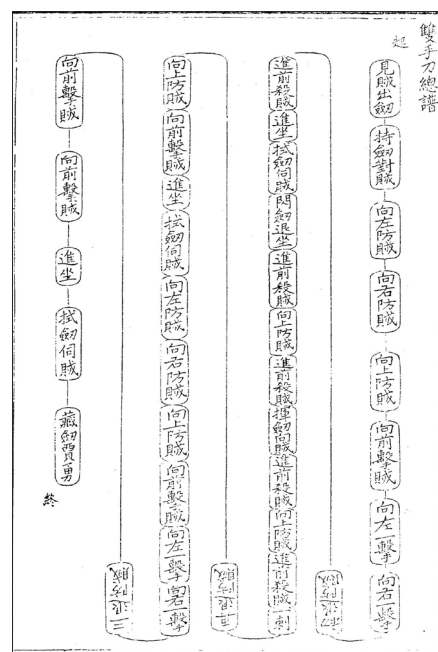


Figure 9: *Ssangsudo* from *Muyedobotongji*



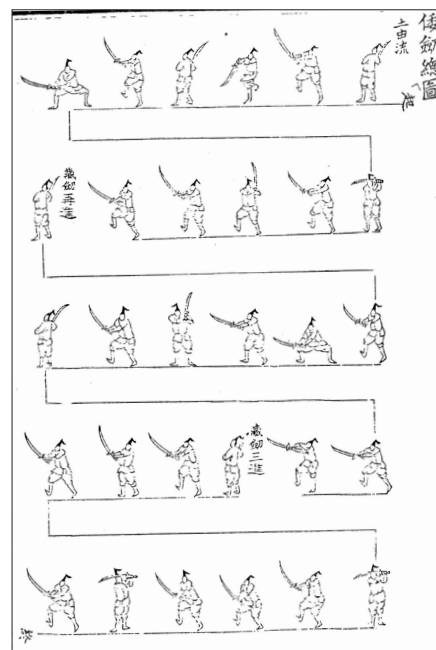
(a) Comprehensive diagram

(b) Comprehensive chart

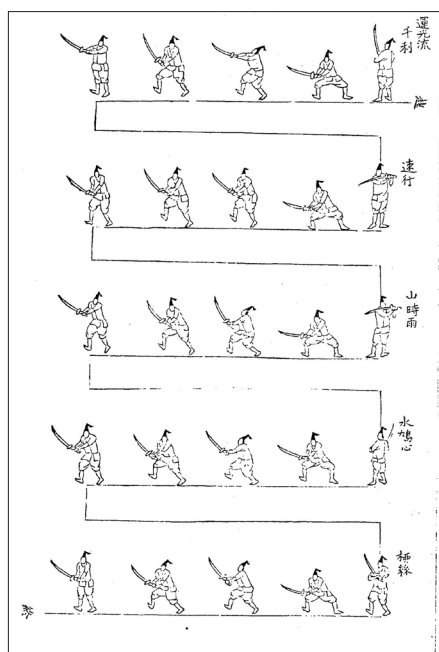
Japanese government held martial arts competitions in honour of the delegations from Joseon. Yagyu Munenori (柳生但馬守宗矩, 1571-1646), who was a swordsman of *Yagyu shinkage-ryu* and taught fencing for the Tokugawa (Shogun) family, directly contacted the Joseon delegation as general manager of reception. Yim Sugaen (任守幹, 1665-1721), upon visiting Japan as part of the Korean delegation of 1711, demonstrated Korean equestrian arts and also asked to see Japanese firearms and swordsmanship. Through processes such as these, Koreans were exposed to, and sometimes learned, Japanese fencing directly or indirectly. In particular, during the reign of King Sukjong (1674-1720), Kim Chegeon, a Korean swordsman, travelled to Japan together with the envoys and acquired sword manuals and also learned fencing techniques. Four styles of Japanese fencing – *toyu-ryu*, *ungwang-ryu*, *cheonryu-ryu*, and *yupi-ryu* – were recorded in the *Muyedobotongji* [See Figure 10; 'Waegeom (Japanese swordsmanship)']. According to the *Muyedobotongji*, there was an examination of Japanese fencing in November 1690 in front of King Sukjong. Therefore, it is likely that the introduction of waegeom had already occurred before that time.

However, there are several errors in the record of the *Muyedobotongji* concerning Japanese swordsmanship which require discussion. The waegeom chapter in the *Muyedobotongji* states that the *shintou-ryu* was founded by Minamoto no Yoshitsune (1159-June 15 1189), when it was really founded by Iizasa Ienao.

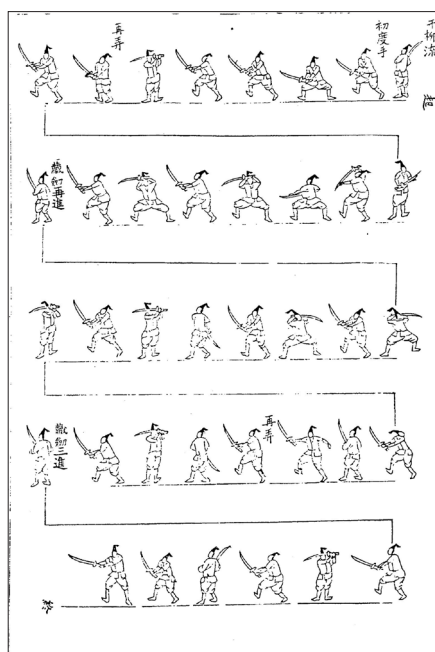
Figure 10:
Waegeom from
Muyedobotongji



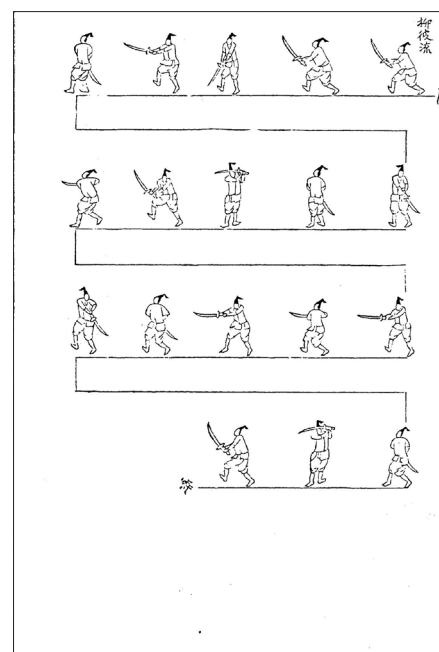
(a) *Toyu-ryu* 土由流



(b) *Ungwang-ryu* 運光流



(c) *Cheonryu-ryu* 千柳流



(d) *Yupi-ryu* 柳彼流

In addition, nine schools of Japanese fencing were listed – hojeon (戸田), juknae (竹内), dugun (頭軍), danseok (丹石), sangwa (山科), bakjeon (朴田), yusaeng (柳生), soya (小野), and gyeongjung (鏡中). Problematically, these swordsmanship styles are not found under these names in historical records in Japan. There are, however, some names which are written using similar ideograms (kanji/hanja) and therefore may be either an error in transcription and/or translation. Here, hojeon (戸田) may have been mistaken for toda (土田), dugun (頭軍) for togun (東軍), and bakjeon (朴田) for bokuden (卜傳). However, sangwa (山科) and gyeongjung (鏡中) have no corresponding ideograms in Japanese records. Among the fencing styles that Kim Chegeon transmitted, toyu-ryu (土由流) could possibly refer to toda-ryu (土田流) while ungwang-ryu (運光流) may be unko-ryu (雲弘流). Cheonryu-ryu (千柳流) and yupi-ryu (柳彼流) have no historical equivalents [Katou 2002].

The waegeom chapter of the *Muyedobotongji* also refers to *gyojeon*, or sword combat, where two swordsmen compete with each other after completing a pattern [Figures 12 and 13]. Therefore, it could be argued that it is not one art but two kinds of arts, turo (hyung/kata) and combat.

In the Joseon dynasty, the waegeom (倭劍) was originally called mogeom (牟劍) [*The Daily Records of Royal Secretariat of Joseon Dynasty*, March 16, 1744. <http://sjw.history.go.kr/>]. When examining the mogeom proficiency of a soldier, it would be divided into two sections. First, they would be examined on the series of techniques (turo), then checked for their level of application against a partner using a wooden sword wrapped with leather known as pigeom (皮劍). Even though they were essentially one art, it was often argued that it should be divided into two arts, waegeom and gyojeon (combat), simply because their instruction and practice were carried out separately [*The Daily Records of Royal Secretariat of Joseon Dynasty*, September 7, 1778]. Instead of increasing the number of martial arts, they integrated two arts under the one name; this is why there are two arts included together in the waegeom (Japanese Swordsmanship) chapter of the *Muyedobotongji*.

The sword combat in the *Muyedobotongji* is different from the previously described material in the *Muyejebo Beonyeoksokjip*. There were two separate traditions of sword combat practiced in Joseon. The fencing of the *Muyejebo Beonyeoksokjip* was based on the long sabre (jangdo) techniques with the addition of several new techniques, such as hajeop-se (Low Engagement Posture) and mugeom sajeokse (Wipe the Sword and Watch a Robber Posture), while the sword combat of the *Muyedobotongji* was derived from the four styles of Japanese fencing described in the waegeom chapter [Figure 11, Figure 12, Figure 13].

Figure 11:
Waegeom from the
Muyejebo Beonyeoksokjip



Figure 12:
Sword Combat from the
Muyedobotongji

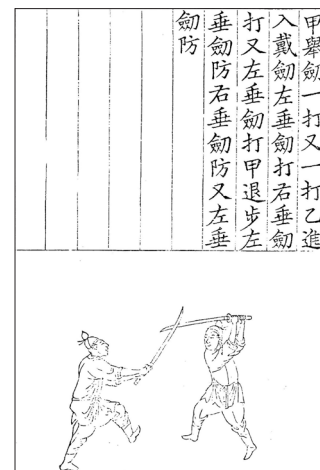
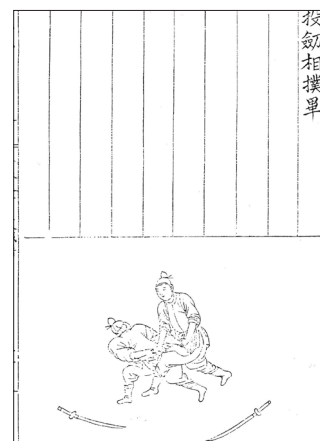


Figure 13:
Sword Combat from the
Muyedobotongji



The *Muyedobotongji* describes the combat sabre as a single-edged sword but notes that originally the sword was double-edged. When practicing sword combat, a one-meter stick wrapped in leather was often used to reduce injuries [*Muyedobotongji*, 'Waegom (Japanese swordsmanship)']. Of notable difference was that the Japanese yagyu kage-ryu-style used bamboo wrapped in leather rather than wood.

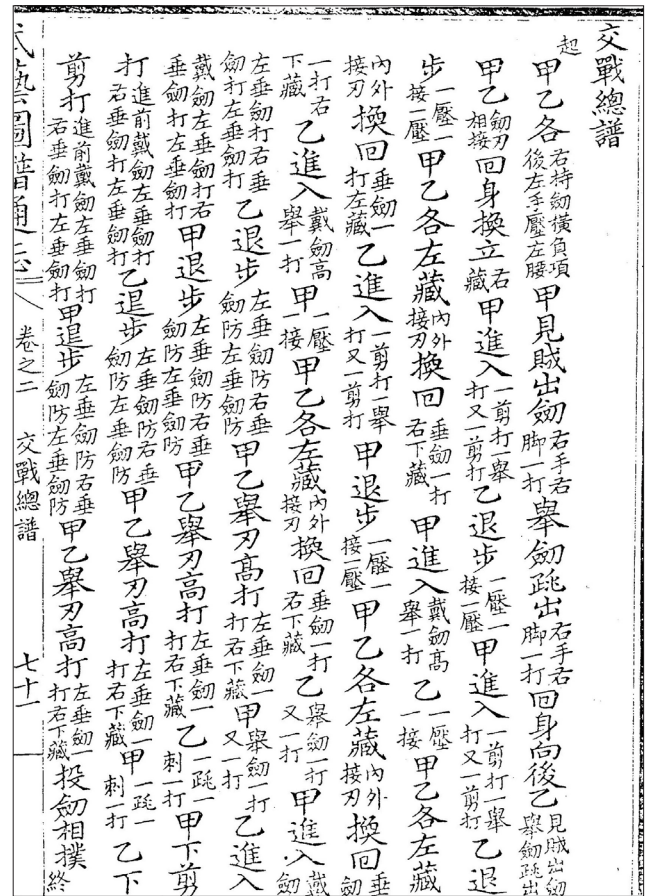
Another feature of the sword combat described in the *Muyedobotongji* is that the engagement ends in grappling. It was assumed that the sabre was lost/dropped in the melee. This tendency to end in wrestling can also be seen in the gwonbeop (Fist Methods) chapter of the *Muyedobotongji*.

THE INTRODUCTION OF MODERN JAPANESE FENCING TO KOREA

The military traditions of Joseon underwent significant upheaval in the latter half of the 19th century. The whole of East Asia was being influenced by Western imperialism. Japan, China, Russia, and the United States were leading imperialist powers, and Joseon was becoming a battleground on which these four countries were competing for power. Japan was the quickest to assert its influence. It was the first modernised country in East Asia and it quickly sought to transform Korea into a Japanese colony. In 1876, Joseon signed the ganghwa-do Treaty under Japanese coercion.

In 1881, in an effort to strengthen the army, the Joseon government merged the existing five central military camps into two and established a new Special Arms Force (Byeolgigun) based on modern military systems. The establishment of modernised military forces was not well-received by existing soldiers, who became unemployed and subsequently suffered hardship. In 1882, former army soldiers who did not receive a salary for 13 months were given rice that was inedible. An uprising soon followed. The situation was resolved by resurrecting the old army and abolishing all the modernisation measures that were then underway. The Special Arms Force was also abolished.

Subsequently, the Joseon government pursued a policy of enhancing national prosperity and defence by adopting modern science and technology from advanced countries. These efforts lead to the dispatching of envoys to Japan and China (under Qing rule) to study strategies to modernise Korea. In 1897, the Korean Empire was established with the desire to be an independent nation, free from the influence of foreign powers. Land reform, industry, and commerce were promoted, leading to the establishment of modern factories and



(a) Comprehensive diagram

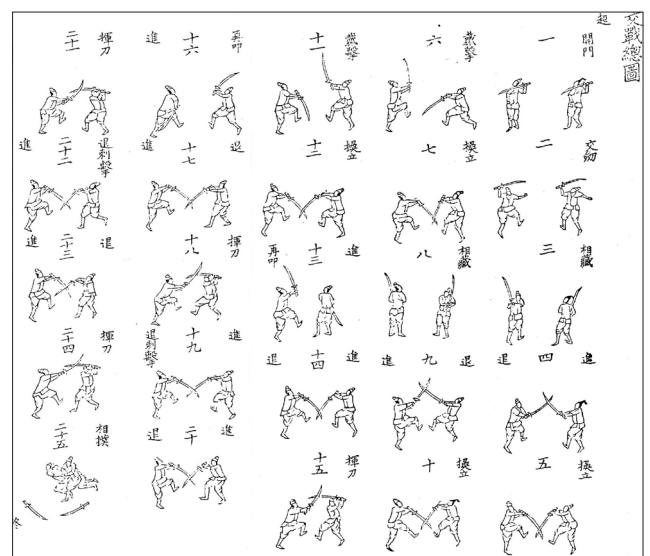


Figure 14: Combat from *Muyedobotongji*

(b) Comprehensive chart

companies. In addition, banks created the foundation for a capitalist system while nurturing talented people by establishing various technical, normal, and public schools.

Despite their efforts to achieve modernisation, the Korean Empire found their international diplomatic rights suppressed when they signed, under considerable duress, the Protectorate Treaty between Korea and Japan in 1905. In 1907, the military was forcibly dissolved by Japan. Subsequently, Korea lost its ability to defend itself and in doing so became a colony. In 1910, the sovereignty of the Korean Empire was eliminated. Japan would go on to rule Korea for the next 35 years. The dissolution of the Korean armies was an event that signified the official death of Korean military traditions, including the martial arts.

It was in the late 19th century that Japanese fencing was once again introduced to Joseon. At that time, Japanese fencing had already been modernised and was called *gyeokgeom* (gekiken in Japanese). Japanese martial arts, which flourished until the Edo period (1603-1867), began to decline by the early Meiji era (1868-1912). The Meiji government abolished the samurai class as part of its social and military reforms, denying the samurai those special privileges which they had long been accorded. As a result, they had to make a living by teaching martial arts to the public or going out on the streets and demonstrating martial arts. In this process, a safer method of fencing using bogu (body protectors) and shinai (bamboo practice sword) was developed based on jikishin kage-ryu and hokushin itto-ryu. The gekiken, the prototype of sports kendo today, was developed as a spectator sport for paying audiences and achieved considerable popularity [Ok and Kim 2009].

However, there was another reason for the development of gekiken (kendo). The Japanese government appreciated kendo not only as a means of physical training but as a means to foster mental discipline as well. From the mid-19th century, Japan was under growing pressure from Western powers. In response, the Meiji government embarked on a concerted policy of modernisation that entailed adopting Western science, technology, culture, and institutions with the aim of strengthening its social institutions and military. Japan then imposed its modernization model on Taiwan and Korea as it began to establish its own empire in Asia. Japan won the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and occupied the Liaodong Peninsula, but quickly relinquished the territory under pressure from Germany, France, and Russia. This was followed by the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). As part of this process, Japan succeeded in forging a nationalist ideology centered on the Emperor and deploying the code of the bushido (the way of samurai) and butoku (martial virtues). Martial arts, especially kendo, played an important role in accomplishing this aim.

Founded in 1895, the Dai-Nippon Butokukai (DNBK – Greater Japan Martial Virtue Society) took the lead in modernising traditional Japanese archery and fencing. The DNBK established the standard kata of Japanese imperial kendo in 1912 based on the existing kata of Japanese Police kendo. These DNBK katas are called ‘the fundamentals of kendo’ and are widely practiced today. The standard curriculum of the DNBK includes iaijutsu and naginata in addition to kendo. In 1920, the change from kenjutsu to kendo was inspired by Kano Jigoro’s establishment of judo from jujutsu. The DNBK aimed not just to standardise martial arts techniques but to foster a stronger sense of nationalism. For example, the ‘Butoku’ in ‘Dai-Nippon Butokukai’ does not refer to the ethics or morality of the martial arts, but to ‘Yamato-damashii’, or ‘Japanese spirit’, a word often deployed to heighten nationalist fervour [Gainty 2015].

The introduction of Japanese gekiken to Korea occurred around 1895 as a method for training modern policemen and soldiers. For instance, the entry in the ‘Annals of the Joseon Dynasty’ from May 23rd, 1895, lists the expenditure for the purchase of new equipment devoted to gekiken training for Sungeom (police officers). The Sungeom was a new law enforcement organization established for the purpose of maintaining security during the Gabo Reform in 1894. It is not mentioned specifically what the gekiken equipment was, but it seems safe to assume that it refers to bogu and shinai. It is not known how long the police trained in kendo or what level of proficiency they reached; however, records do suggest that the level of Joseon policemen had improved to some extent. In November 1905, Iwai Ichiro, an advisor to the Maruyama police, taught kendo to a Korean police officer, and the first Korean-Japanese sword competition was held in 1908 [Korea Sport & Olympic committee 1965].

The Military Officer School (Mugwan Hakgyo), established in 1896 for the purpose of fostering the military officer subalterns, included gekiken as a part of the curriculum. Additionally, the Military Army School established in 1904 for the re-education of military officers also included gekiken in its curriculum [Han 2002].

Gekiken (kendo) began to spread in earnest during the Japanese colonial era. Its adoption by the dojos of police stations under the leadership of the Japanese Government General of Korea led to kendo’s rapid expansion. The practice also spread to the general public through instruction at private dojos. In 1913, Gyeonseong Middle School taught judo and kendo as part of the gymnasium curriculum. The Syllabus of School Gymnastics, distributed in 1914 and 1927, included kenjutsu (gekiken) as one of the budo education subjects [Gwak and Lee 1994]. By 1916, Japanese fencing was being taught to ordinary youths at a private Oseong School equipped with kendo training facilities, and it

was taught widely during the cultural rule period (1919-1931). It was during this time that kendo appeared at a private, Korean-established, dojo (1921) called the Joseon Martial Arts Dojo (Joseon Mudogwan). In 1922, kendo was adopted as an optional course in the Teacher Training School, and in 1927 it was adopted as a regular subject for middle schools [Kim 1999].

However, it seems that the Japanese were not impressed by the level of kendo in Korea, which they viewed as being only at a beginner's level. It was therefore argued that kendo training should not be limited to soldiers, police officers, and students, but should be extended to the general public. In his article 'In Celebration of the Launch of the Magazine *Joseon Budo: Kendo in the Korean Peninsula*', Nakano Sosuke (中野宗助, 1885-1963) extols the benefits of budo training, remarking that it fosters discipline of mind and body while cultivating butoku (martial virtues). Japanese commentators, including Nakano, felt that Koreans would benefit from cultivating such qualities. Such a view really reflected the ethnocentrism of Japanese martial arts leaders, as well as a policy of the 'Japanisation' of Korean society through the export of bushido.⁸

In 1928, the DNBK established its local branch in Joseon as part of Japan's colonial policy and endeavoured to promulgate Japanese martial arts. Various activities had been arranged by the DNBK Joseon branch, such as regular budo training, judging, competitions, promotion of school martial arts activities, and the establishment of the Hall of Martial Virtue (Butoku den) [Lee 2015]. Kendo had become a tool for assimilating Koreans into Japanese culture and society, and was believed to help foster the 'Japanese spirit' (Yamato damashii) by emphasising bushido and budo. In the 1930s, when militarism was widespread, kendo became a part of physical education to prepare students to join the military in anticipation of the invasion of mainland China.

⁸ Nakano held various posts, such as assistant of kendo in Dai-Nippon Butokukai, kendo master of Kyoto police station, professor of university of Dai-Nippon Butokukai, and kendo master of the Japanese Government General of Korea. He attained 10th dan in kendo and was one of the representative kendoka (kendo master) [note: technically, 'kendoka' doesn't necessarily connote mastery.] [Lee 2014].

THE EXTENT AND LIMITATIONS OF THE KOREANISATION OF KENDO

If militarism gave birth to Japanese kendo, nationalism led to the development of Korean kendo. After the liberation of Korea from Japan at the end of World War II, kendo was regarded as a remnant of Japanese imperialism and was excluded from the school curriculum [Kim, Hugh and Lee 1998]. However, the Korea Kendo (Kumdo) Association (KKA) was established in 1953 and became a regular member of the Korea Sports Council in the same year. Currently, the Republic of Korea is a vice-president of the International Kendo Federation, which has 57 member-countries all over the world.

Various factors account for the rapid development of Korean kendo, but the influence of the Japanese occupation should not be underestimated. Japanese kendo was introduced to Korea earlier than in other countries. It was taught in the military, police force, schools, and throughout society, thereby enabling Korean kendo to establish a solid foundation that continued even after liberation from Japanese colonial rule.

Even though Korean kendo was widely practiced, it still came under criticism for two main reasons. The first reason was ideological and emphasized the role of kendo in assimilating Koreans to Japanese colonial rule. The second stressed the technical deficiencies of Korean kendo.

In terms of the ideological aspect, Japanese kendo cannot be treated the same as other sports or physical exercise (such as soccer, baseball, tennis, basketball, etc.) that were also introduced in the modernization period because it is directly or indirectly connected to Japanese militarism. As pointed out earlier, in Japanese society, kendo was emphasized as a means of cultivating special values such as militarism, a specific view of martial arts, and ultimately 'Yamato damashii'. Both the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War were fought over ambitions by competing countries for power and influence in Korea. The indoctrination of Koreans into Japanese culture was in essence a means of ensuring Japan's dominance and control over Korea.

The Japanese occupation led to considerable anti-Japanese sentiment in the population. The Korean military government of the 1960s and 1970s used anti-Japanese sentiment to foster a stronger sense of nationalism and thereby strengthen its political authority. In this environment, kendo was criticized for being Japanese. As part of this increasing nationalism, Korean kendo tried to hide its true origins by fabricating its history. The KKA attempted to give legitimacy to Korean kendo by claiming that Japanese kendo was originally transmitted

from ancient Korea to Japan. Similar fabrications can often be found in other Korean martial arts histories, such as taekwondo and hapkido. However, all of these Korean martial arts originated in Japan [Yang 1986; Park 1995].

The fact that Korean kendo originated in Japan was inconvenient in this era, which emphasised an ideology of cultural authenticity and 'purity of blood' to boost a sense of national pride. This was the dilemma faced by the KKA when it tried to claim kumdo (kumdo is the Korean pronunciation for the Japanese kanji used to write kendo) as an authentic Korean swordsmanship tradition while at the same time serving as a member and vice-president of the International Kendo Federation.

The second criticism focused on the Korean kendo system itself. In Korea, kendo developed differently than it did in Japan. Japanese kendo, which was standardised by the DNBK, consisted of three parts: training and competitive matches using the shinai, kata training, and cutting using a real sword. In Korea, however, there is a tendency to emphasise only training methods using the shinai. While the shinai is an important tool in modern kenjutsu training, it is not a substitute for the value of training and cutting using a real sword. The newly formulated Korean traditional swordsmanship that emerged in the 1980s criticised Korean kendo training in this regard.⁹

Korean kendo tried to resolve these issues by incorporating Korean classical martial arts into its curriculum. For example: reconstructed sword arts from the *Muyedobotongji* were incorporated, but these efforts seem to be inherently limited in terms of effectiveness. The different martial arts of the *Muyedobotongji* operate as a single coherent system. If they are separated without knowledge and understanding of the others, then it only weakens the individual art. The systematic theory of that approach, that it is necessary to learn gwonbeop (bare-handed techniques) first, then the staff, and then to extend it to the other martial arts such as sword, spear, Moon sabre, twin swords, and trident, is not reflected in the curriculum of kendo. Simply adding bongukgeom (Silla Sword) and Joseon sebeop (Joseon sword methods) to kendo as a means of establishing a national identity may be misguided, as other crucial aspects of practice have greater potential to be lost [Fan 2001].

⁹ The movement to restore traditional culture in Korea in the 1960s and 1970s also affected the reinvention of martial arts. At the end of the 1980s, the popularity of Korean traditional martial arts was an extension of this cultural movement. The various traditional martial arts (swordsmanship) that emerged at this time were the result of reflection and criticism of the colonial martial arts, such as judo and kendo. However, most of the reinvented traditional martial arts were not differentiated in terms of content or were not the result of the serious consideration [Choi 1995].

The logic underlying the development of the historical discourse on Korean kendo is similar to that found in taekwondo and hapkido. They have all claimed (or at least implied) that these arts originated in Korea by emphasizing ancient Korean cultural influences on Japan. In other cases, they insist that Japan exerted no influence whatsoever on Korea's martial arts.

It should be noted, however, that such examples reveal a double standard in Korean nationalism: namely, it is acceptable for Chinese culture to influence Korean culture, but it is not acceptable for Japanese culture to influence Korea. It is only acceptable for Korea to influence Japanese culture. Furthermore, Korean nationalism promoted anti-Japanese sentiment, yet, for its own part, followed similar ideologies. For example, hwarang-do (ancient Korean warrior spirit) is actually a Korean variant of the Japanese bushido and Yamato-damashii (Japanese spirit).

THE KOREANISATION OF JAPANESE FENCING: FORMALISING TURO/KATA AND IDEOLOGY

The schools of Japanese swordsmanship disseminated during the Joseon dynasty, whether transmitted through China or directly learned from Japan, did not retain their original form over time. This is a common phenomenon when foreign cultural practices are spread and localised. The question is how much of the Japanese fencing brought to Joseon was changed during assimilation and continual practice and refinement. We can attempt to answer this question by comparing the actual swordsmanship in Japan and the swordsmanship that remains to this day in Korea.

We must first consider the extent to which the Japanese fencing brought to Joseon changed, then assess how it developed. Such an assessment is complicated by the lack of objective standards to measure changes in fencing. It is an intangible cultural property.

Although there were classical schools of Japanese swordsmanship transmitted to Korea, it is difficult to secure enough historical information to compare classical Japanese fencing with classical Korean fencing of the same period. If we are then to examine classical fencing that may exist within Japan today, provided it is from the same original style, it is likely that it, too, has changed over time. This phenomenon cannot help but be found equally in Korean fencing. There are several difficulties in examining how ancient schools of Japanese swordsmanship were introduced to Korea and their relationship to what we see being practiced today.

From what has already been examined, one can safely say that all schools of Japanese swordsmanship that were disseminated to Joseon showed a tendency to be stylised as *turo* (kata) when they did not exist as such in Japan. All of the martial arts in the Joseon dynasty, including swordsmanship, were formalised as a series of forms regardless of whether they were *turo* and *daeryeon* (sparring), or partner training (pre-arranged sparring form). The four schools of Japanese swordsmanship also became formalised as *turo*. This is a characteristic of classical Korean martial arts that differs from the general characteristics of traditional Japanese swordsmanship.

Turo is, strictly speaking, an inheritance of Chinese martial arts. However, it was strengthened and emphasised in Korea. This can be seen in the propensity to record *turos* in the military training manuals such as the *Muyedobotongji*, which generally were not found in China or Japan to the same extent.

It has been claimed that it is hard to envision the influence of *katas* from Japanese schools of swordsmanship in the *waegeom* as depicted in the *Muyedobotongji*. The Japanese swordsmanship in the *Muyedobotongji* seems to be a disassembled representation of the body movements of *iaido* or *battojutsu* [Kato 2002]. Perhaps this interpretation by Kato reflects the Koreanisation of Japanese swordsmanship.

It has also been questioned whether stylised martial arts that use *turo* (*hyung/kata*) can be effective in real combat. In Korea, historical swordsmanship did not form different schools. Due to the circumstances of the Joseon dynasty in which warrior castes did not exist and martial arts were instead confined to and centralised in the military, it was hard to produce independent schools (*ryuha*). In this respect, the situation was unlike the one in Japan. Rather, swordsmanship has always been developed as part of military training rather than as part of a duelling society. An important characteristic of military training is in standardisation, including within the martial arts. All historical military training manuals in Korea were compiled for standardisation. For continuous training and fair evaluation, martial arts have to be standardised. *Turo* provides a standard for training and evaluation, which does have positive aspects on the one hand and negatives on the other. In any case, martial arts-based educational systems may have been able to provide incentives for soldiers to continue to practice.

CONCLUSION

This paper has briefly summarised the characteristics of Japanese swordsmanship and the process of Koreanisation that they underwent. In the future, such analyses must be expanded to include a comparison of extant classical Japanese swordsmanship with Koreanised Japanese swordsmanship. It would be interesting, for example, to compare the *toyu-ryu* and *ungwang-ryu* of the *Muyedobotongji* with the *toda-ryu* and *unko-ryu* of current Japanese swordsmanship.

Although not addressed in this article, it is important to note that Japanese martial arts in the 16th century were primarily military arts; consequently, the goal of their introduction was to improve the military preparedness of Joseon. In marked contradistinction, the introduction of Japanese martial arts in the 20th century was a part of physical education/sports activities, not military training. Nationalism and anti-Japanese sentiment became widespread after WWII and the end of Japanese colonial rule. Japanese martial arts, in addition to many other aspects of Japanese culture, became objects of derision and negativity. This has been an important driver of the development of modern Korean martial arts, a topic that should also be addressed in future research.

Finally, Japanese *kendo*, which was introduced in the modern era, also deserves reconsideration from the perspective of *kata* training. In Korea, classical Korean fencing was reintroduced in an attempt to improve *kendo*'s Korean authenticity. However, *kendo* competition using the *shinai* is not directly related to Korean classical sword techniques. This discrepancy causes problems when Korean classical sword arts, such as *bongukgeom* (Silla sword) and Joseon *sebeop* (Joseon sword methods), are adopted as part of the *kumdo* curriculum. *Kendo* is thus an ideal example of how ideology has influenced the development of Korean martial arts.

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