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**EDITORS**  
Paul Bowman  
Benjamin N. Judkins

**MICHAEL MOLASKY, GUEST EDITOR**

**NEW RESEARCH ON JAPANESE MARTIAL ARTS**



# MARTIAL ARTS STUDIES

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### ABSTRACT

This editorial introduces this guest-edited special themed issue, which focuses on new research on the Japanese martial arts. This collection has been assembled by Michael Molasky from Waseda University, Tokyo, who convened a research group of innovative Japanese scholars to investigate questions of the global spread of Japanese martial arts. In this editorial, we limit ourselves to saying a few words about each contribution, considering some of their connections, and concluding with a reflection on what this special issue suggests to us about the current and future development of martial arts studies in Japan.

### KEYWORDS

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# NEW RESEARCH ON JAPANESE MARTIAL ARTS

## PAUL BOWMAN AND BENJAMIN N. JUDKINS

Welcome to the first guest-edited issue of *Martial Arts Studies*, entitled 'New Research on Japanese Martial Arts'. This collection has been assembled by Michael Molasky from Waseda University, Tokyo, who convened a research group of innovative Japanese scholars to investigate questions of the global spread of Japanese martial arts.

Works by key members of this research group are published here, along with an editorial introduction by Professor Molasky, which discusses the project and the aims of its intervention. These selected essays have also been supplemented by two articles that were submitted independently to the journal. They accompany the research project articles because of their appropriateness to the specific focus of this themed issue.

We refer you to Professor Molasky's introductory essay for more information about the research project and this collection as a whole. Here, we will limit ourselves to saying a few words about each contribution, considering some of their connections, and concluding with a reflection on what this special issue suggests to us about the current and future development of martial arts studies in Japan.

The first article, Yasuhiro Sakaue's 'The Historical Creation of Kendo's Self-Image from 1895 to 1942: A Critical Analysis of an Invented Tradition', argues that the self-image of kendo (Japanese swordsmanship) in modern times is a complicated historical fabrication and an 'invented tradition' involving 'ethno-symbolism' relating to images and ideas of history, heritage, and cultural identity in modern Japan. Such an argument may sound familiar today, especially given the growing attention to 'invented traditions' within and around martial arts studies; but Sakaue's research draws attention to the ways in which the often-contradictory construction of kendo's self-image actually works as a limiting force on the form, content, orientation, and activities of official or sanctioned Japanese swordsmanship styles. (This is a crucial matter that we will return to below.)

As Sakaue shows, kendo has come to be bound by strictures that have arisen because of narratives, rationales, imageries, and arguments of its own invention. His article illuminates this by focusing on how the tradition was reconstructed, the fabrication of historical facts around methods for swordsmanship competition, and the recasting of 'levels of mastery' in supposedly traditional styles of teaching and learning swordsmanship. In conclusion, the article reflects on the possibility of freedom from such constraints in the future and it explores the question of possible further changes in the future of kendo. It also discusses the 'shu-ha-ri' theory of teaching and learning, which also returns as a theme in the final article in this collection.

In 'The Dissemination of Japanese Swordsmanship to Korea', Bok-kyu Choi explores the spread of Japanese swordsmanship by analysing a series of manuals (aka fight books) compiled in Korea (the *Muyejebo* [1598], *Muyejebo Beonyeoksokjip* [1610], and *Muyedobotongji* [1790]) to illustrate the influence of Japanese fencing on Korean military training. He argues that Japanese *kage-ryu* was introduced to the Korean military as a form of kata and sword combat pattern training, which featured the 'Koreanisation' of Japanese fencing. During the 18th century, four different Japanese fencing methods were documented in the *Muyedobotongji* – *toyu-ryu*, *ungwang-ryu*, *cheonryu-ryu*, and *yupi-ryu*. Efforts to introduce Japanese fencing continued in modern times, he argues, 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 origins, *kendo* was transformed into a Korean-style sword art named 'kumdo'. In essence, he argues, if Japanese militarism gave birth to *kendo*, then Korean nationalism is what transformed it into *kumdo*.

Kotaro Yabu turns our attention to judo. In 'The Acculturation of Judo in the United States during the Russo-Japanese War', Yabu seeks to take our thinking about the dissemination of judo around the world beyond what he calls the 'match-based historical point of view'. This is because, he points out, the spread of judo was not simply a process based on judo's success in contests and competitions. Rather, it was underpinned by a series of complex cultural negotiations. Yabu offers this argument to counteract the dominant tendency of conceptualising the success of judo's spread in terms identical to those of victory or defeat in war, for what is drawn in such a victory/defeat paradigm is, he argues, nothing but the notion of cultural conflict without reconciliation. Rather than repeating such an approach, Yabu challenges the efficacy of the match-based point of view as a way to understand historical cultural migrations and transformations such as judo's establishment in the USA.

To do so, the article focuses on 'negotiations' between both Japanese judo pioneers in the USA and local practitioners rooted in American society. He looks at this in terms of acceptance and transmission and the variations of judo generated through these processes. The focus of the article is the United States around the time of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05), when judo began to be transmitted to foreign countries for the first time. It focuses on some key dimensions: First, the role expected of judo in modern Japan, paying attention to the ideal of 'kokushi' (patriots who dedicated themselves to national development). It argues that the practitioners of judo acted as evangelists, faithful

to the founder. Second, some of the meanings given to judo in the recipient society, which are shown to relate either to jujutsu (spelled in this way to evoke an older form of judo) or jiu-jitsu (spelled like this to evoke the variant of jujutsu created within US society via encounters with multiple approaches). In this way, the processes of cultural change within judo are shown in a more nuanced way than can be conveyed via match-based or victory/defeat approaches.

Turning to the field of the cultural discourses that surround practice, Andreas Niehaus gives us 'Narrating History in the Manga "Judo no rekishi – Kano Jigoro no shogai" (1987)'. As he argues, Kano Jigoro (1860-1938), the founder of Kodokan judo, is one of the most prominent representatives of modern Japanese martial arts, and numerous books and articles have been written about his life. In this article, Niehaus focuses on the biographical manga 'Judo no rekishi – Kano Jigoro no shogai' (1987). This graphic biography was published under the editorship of the Kodokan and, by analysing the techniques that are applied on the textual as well as the pictorial level to create authenticity and historical facticity, we arrive at a better understanding of the strategies by which collective ideas and norms within a specific historical and cultural context are created.

Niehaus emphasises that biography is a hybrid genre that unfolds its effect and its power in the space between fiction and non-fiction. Biographies tell a life story by applying literary techniques, i.e. creating a narrative and (pre)structuring and retrospectively giving meaning to life in and for a preconceived context. Accordingly, historians as well as sociologists have questioned the value of biographies for understanding the past, criticizing the genre for the artificial creation of meaning. However, Niehaus's article suggests that such texts play active roles in establishing the meaning of martial arts in particular/specific/etc. cultural contexts.

Next, in 'Japanese Martial Arts and the Sublimation of Violence: An Ethnographic Study of Shinkage-ryu', Tetsuya Nakajima offers an ethnographic study of the sword style shinkage-ryu. The value of this article relates primarily to its innovative and unconventional character when viewed in the context of Japanese scholarship. For, in Japan, the study of Japanese martial arts is strongly rooted in historiography. Other approaches, such as ethnography, are comparatively rare. Yet, Nakajima proposes, it can be especially valuable/meaningful to undertake fieldwork on the classical Japanese martial arts in Japan. Different approaches will also enable us to ask a broader range of questions than are currently represented within Japanese scholarly discourse. (This, too, is a crucial matter to which we will return.)

In the same spirit of innovation, Nakajima's study is interested in exploring the seldom-theorised issue of violence, and to approach it in a relatively novel way – by proposing that martial arts such as shinkage-ryu are orientated not towards violence but the sublimation of violence. Both dimensions of this article, therefore, seek to take the study of Japanese martial arts forward in new directions. Martial arts are perhaps too quickly understood by researchers simply as 'fighting techniques' (even if the aspects of martial arts that have attracted the attention of researchers in the past have been the psychology of fighting and the pedagogy of the martial arts). Yet, through an ethnographic examination of shinkage-ryu, this study explores how the sublimation

of violence is practiced in the dojo and elucidates the structure and practice of classical kata that have largely remained hidden.

Along with the methodological innovation (expanding Japanese academic study from being exclusively text-based historiography to include practice-based ethnography) and the argument about martial arts as sublimation, readers will also become aware of another approach waiting in the wings: that of historical sociology, as pioneered by Norbert Elias. Given the focus in this article on developing an argument about sublimation via an innovative ethnographic approach, Nakajima does not have space to fully elaborate the Eliasian ideas that supplement it. Fortunately, however, the following article places the work of Elias firmly front and centre. (Indeed, Yabu's article actually connects with both of the final two contributions to this special journal issue in surprisingly suggestive ways.)

Raúl Sánchez García's article is titled 'An Introduction to The Historical Sociology of Japanese Martial Arts'. This article is an extract from García's *The Historical Sociology of Japanese Martial Arts* (forthcoming in 2018 from Routledge). It approaches the study of Japanese martial arts using Eliasian historical-sociology. After a brief discussion of the relationship between terminology and social processes, the article introduces the main tenets of Norbert Elias's process sociology and introduces the research strategy underpinning the remainder of the book. This excerpt has been edited and reprinted here with kind permission of the publisher, with the aim of forwarding the research agenda of a historical-sociology approach to martial arts studies.

The final contribution in this issue is William Little's 'Putting the Harm Back into Harmony: Aikido, Violence, and "Truth in the Martial Arts"'. Again, this is an extremely innovative article that will put an entire new set of terms on the table and enrich the agenda of martial arts studies. It does so by addressing the theme of 'truth in the martial arts', a phrase taken from Mitsugi Saotome's recent reflection on his relationship as *uchi deshi* (or 'live-in disciple') to Morihei Ueshiba, the founder of aikido.

Little frames this theme sociologically, exploring it as an aspect of the martial arts that can be understood in terms of what Michel Foucault would term contemporary practices of the self. Little argues that what is distinct about the practice of the martial arts in this context is their sustained reflection on violence, not simply as violent contest but as a condition of irreducible insecurity *per se*. Little proposes that aikido (not unlike other martial arts) offers a response to violence by articulating a form-of-life – 'a life that can never be separated from its form' as explained by Giorgio Agamben – that is centred on the understanding that complete martial fluidity is immanent to life.

The martial arts are therefore perhaps uniquely suggestive contemporary practices of the self because their paths to knowledge address key biopolitical issues of life and power through a freeing relation to violence. Little proposes that the framework of transcendental empiricism, which Gilles Deleuze develops to describe the dynamics of affectual as opposed to representational (i.e., mediated) experience, is promising both in how it characterizes the experience of martial fluidity and how it expands the self-understanding martial artists themselves. Martial artists are uniquely positioned to decipher



Agamben's and Deleuze's theoretical texts because of the deep, embodied knowledge that emerges through practice.

Finally, there are two specially chosen book reviews to round out this collection. One comes as a review in memoriam of the late Denis Gainty's influential 2013 book, *Martial Arts and the Body Politic in Meiji Japan*. We hope readers will agree that this issue is a fitting context for such a review. The other review included here is Michael Molasky's translation of Hiromasa Fujita's review of Tetsuya Nakajima's book *Kindai Nihon no budoron – <budo no supotsuka> mondai no tanjo (Discourse on Budo in Modern Japan – The Origins of the 'Sportification of Budo' Problem)*, published by Kokusho kankokai in 2017.

We believe that this collection offers much that will not only enrich the study of Japanese martial arts but also that will offer fresh insights into certain conditions, structures, and disciplinary forces that are currently working to channel and (de)limit Japanese martial arts studies.

As Michael Molasky's introductory essay and Tetsuya Nakajima's ethnographic and theoretical article both make plain, the study of martial arts in the Japanese academic context appears to be overdetermined by career considerations and institutional rigidity. Stated bluntly, it appears that the academics who research Japanese martial arts in Japanese universities are very often those who have been hired to teach either judo or kendo. Therefore, they research only judo and kendo. Meanwhile, the vast majority of Japan's many anthropologists, sociologists, literary scholars, and film studies scholars seem to ignore the martial arts, perhaps because they are not 'approved' disciplinary subjects.

Represented like this, we may compose a cautionary tale in two parts. First, that of the scholar-practitioner who for personal or professional reasons only writes what they 'know'. And second, that of disciplinary monopolies that intentionally or unintentionally suck potential life out of a massive untapped research area. In other words, perhaps martial arts studies in Japan *tout court* shares many of the features and problems that Yasuhiro Sakaue identifies in the world of kendo – a situation in which (invented) tradition and instituted notions of propriety principally produce strictures that only enable the reproduction of what is, in effect, already known.

However, as we can see from this collection, the energies of exploration and innovation are making inroads into Japanese scholarship; and, as the contributions to this special issue suggest, perhaps the era of a vibrant interdisciplinary martial arts studies discourse – spanning and incorporating all kinds of approaches, questions, issues, and work in the arts, humanities, and social sciences – is upon us. For giving us this valuable insight into this burgeoning scene, we would like to thank Professor Molasky and all of the contributors to this important collection.

## CONTRIBUTOR

*Michael Molasky is Professor of Asian Cultural Studies in the School of International Liberal Studies, Waseda University (Tokyo). For the past dozen years, he has written primarily in Japanese and has published books about Japanese and Okinawan literature, the representation of jazz music in postwar Japanese culture, the social space of Japanese pubs (izakaya), and has published over one-hundred essays in Japanese newspapers and magazines. He is currently writing a book on the history of jazz piano.*

## INTRODUCTION

# ON MARTIAL ARTS STUDIES IN JAPAN: A PROVOCATION MICHAEL MOLASKY

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## ABSTRACT

This essay discusses the background of this current issue of *Martial Arts Studies*, followed by an overview and critique of the current state of Japanese-language research on martial arts. My critique is intended as a provocation and does not purport to be a balanced, dispassionate survey of the field. I argue that, while much of the research published in Japanese is of the highest quality, the nation's research on the martial arts has developed largely in isolation and, as a result, is exceedingly narrow in scope. After considering the reasons for this situation, I offer some thoughts about productive areas for future development.

This special issue of *Martial Arts Studies* has its origins in a research group that I organized in Tokyo beginning in Summer 2015. It was funded with a generous grant from the Suntory Foundation and met regularly for two years. The core group consisted of five Japanese scholars, four of whom are specialists in the history or anthropology of Japanese martial arts. The other member specializes in cultural theory and American literature, whereas I work primarily in modern Japanese literature and cultural history and am a relative newcomer to martial arts studies. Paul Bowman was invited by our group to participate in a workshop held in Tokyo in March 2016, and in May 2017 the group traveled to Bath, UK, for a symposium titled 'New Research on Japanese Martial Arts', largely organized by Professor Bowman.

The articles in the present volume by Yasuhiro Sakaue, Tetsuya Nakajima, and Kotaro Yabu emerged from research presented at our Tokyo meetings and at the Bath symposium; those by Bok-kyu Choi and Andreas Niehaus developed from papers that each presented at the Bath symposium. The remaining two articles, by William Little and Raúl Sánchez García, were submitted by the authors and were included in this special issue because they complement the other contributions while broadening the issue's overall scope.

As the only non-Japanese member of the Tokyo-based research group and as a comparative novice in the academic study of martial arts, it may seem curious that I ended up serving as the group's organizer and as co-editor of this special issue of *Martial Arts Studies*. While I make no claims of expertise in the field, I do believe that I am well positioned to facilitate an exchange of ideas between scholars whose martial arts research has been conducted almost exclusively in Japanese and those who read the emerging English-language literature but not Japanese.

I would also like use this forum to offer my impressions of the state of the field in Japan. If these views seem biased or uninformed to readers more familiar with Japanese scholarship, please take my comments as the provocations of a relative novice. Even ill-founded provocations can lead to productive dialogue – which is, after all, the primary aim of this special issue of *Martial Arts Studies*.

When I began reading the Japanese-language research on the martial arts, three characteristics immediately caught my eye because they differed so dramatically from what I had encountered in English-language scholarship. First, nearly all the books and articles were confined to Japanese arts; it was exceedingly rare to find Japanese scholars writing about Chinese, Korean, or other martial arts. Second, even within this relatively narrow purview, there appeared to be inordinate attention given to kendo and judo at the expense of other arts. Admittedly, there is a fair amount of research on swordsmanship and other classical weapons-based arts, and jujutsu has received some attention, but the degree to which research on kendo and judo

dominates the field is likely to surprise many readers of this journal. Third, research on the representation of martial arts in film and other mass media, which constitutes a significant portion of martial arts scholarship in English, is practically nowhere to be found in Japanese. It is my suspicion that any Japanese academic who attempted to address such a topic in relation to martial arts would be readily dismissed by mainstream scholars. Stated differently, film studies and cultural studies have remained notably absent from the Japanese-language research on the martial arts.

There is some data that substantiates my impressions about the inordinate emphasis on Japan-based martial arts in general, and on kendo and judo in particular. Most notably, the Japanese Academy of Budo (*Nihon budo gakkai*) has published data on the number of articles that appeared in the *Research Journal of Budo (Budogaku kenkyu)* from 1968 to the present, and this data further indicates the distribution of published articles by subject matter (kendo, judo, etc.). As of June 2018, a total of 4,202 articles had been published, and a search using the names of specific martial arts revealed the following statistics. The number of published articles on: kendo (1,464), judo (1,415), kenjutsu (swordfighting, 369), jujutsu (271), kyudo (archery, 226), karate (198), sumo (192), naginata (84), aikido (84), shorinji kenpo (Japanese-style shaolin, 38), wushu (19), taekwondo (13), kung fu (6), ninjitsu (5), escrima and other Filipino martial arts (0).<sup>1</sup>

In other words, during the past half century, over 99% of the published research in Japan's most influential journal of martial arts scholarship is confined to Japanese martial arts. Granted, one can surely find a small number of articles about non-Japanese arts published elsewhere, but the disparity between Japanese and non-Japanese arts is remarkable nonetheless, and the number of articles solely devoted to kendo or judo amounts to nearly 70% of the total published. When adding articles on kenjutsu and jujutsu, that percentage climbs to over 80%. Considering the worldwide prominence of karate as an iconic Japanese martial art – not to mention the relative popularity of aikido outside Japan compared to kendo, kenjutsu, kyudo, and sumo – I suspect that many readers will find these numbers to be as surprising as I did.

How should we interpret this disproportionate focus on Japanese martial arts? Before offering my own thoughts on the matter, I wish to note another salient characteristic of Japanese-language martial arts scholarship, namely its disciplinary and methodological emphasis on archival-based historical research. In recent years, a few Japanese anthropologists have become involved in martial arts research, but even they tend to rely more heavily on written documents than do most

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Yasuhiro Sakaue for drawing my attention to this data, which can be found at the link: <https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/browse/budo/-char/ja/>

anthropologists writing in English. Tetsuya Nakajima, whose massive historical study of budo discourse is reviewed in this issue, is such an example, although his focus on the history of budo *discourse* and his rejection of cultural essentialism appears to situate his research outside the mainstream of Japanese scholarship on budo. And although Japan's film industry has made invaluable contributions to the development of the martial arts film throughout the world, the nation's media scholars and specialists of cultural studies have shown scant interest in the cinematic representation of martial arts.

On the one hand, meticulous archival research by historians is the great strength and value of Japanese scholarship to date, in that it mines a body of archival materials that very few non-Japanese scholars are equipped to examine. When such scholarship is made available in English and other languages through translation, it can enrich the global academic discourse on martial arts. Even though it remains largely inaccessible to the outside world, the value of such scholarship should not be discounted. (I should note here that the articles in the present issue of *Martial Arts Studies* written by Yasuhiro Sakaue, Tetsuya Nakajima, and Kotaro Yabu – as well as the book review by Hiromasa Fujita – were translated from Japanese.) Yet, it must be added that the linguistic vacuum in which most Japanese martial arts research has been both conducted and presented can serve to perpetuate the isolation of Japanese scholars, thereby impoverishing the academic discourse inside as well as outside Japan.

At this stage, I am only able to speculate as to why Japanese martial arts scholarship has confined itself almost solely to domestic arts and to a limited disciplinary approach. The reasons are no doubt varied and complex. In fact, this topic itself would make for a valuable area of research. A few possible explanations come to mind, however, and I offer them below as tentative hypotheses (or provocations) in need of thorough investigation in the future.

I suspect that three main reasons account for the current state of mainstream Japanese-language martial arts scholarship: linguistic limitations, ideological conservatism, and institutional recalcitrance. Now that I've made some enemies, let me elaborate.

First, it must be clearly acknowledged that linguistic limitations plague both sides of the language divide: unfortunately, very few non-Japanese scholars of martial arts studies are able to read Japanese texts; conversely, while all Japanese academics are expected to possess reading ability in English, the reality is that few of those primarily engaged in martial arts scholarship possess the fluency to comfortably read entire books in English or to fully participate in international conferences. One need only peruse the list of references at the end of

books and articles on martial arts written in Japanese to confirm that the vast majority of these publications only cite research written in (or translated into) the Japanese language. This linguistic barrier is not easily overcome from either end of the divide, although a greater number of translations in both directions would help begin to bridge the gap. I would also hope that as the field of martial arts studies increasingly gains recognition as a dynamic and rigorous area of academic research, more bilingual scholars with an interest in martial arts will begin contributing to the field in various languages. In fact, there are some hopeful signs that this is already beginning to occur. For example, our 2017 symposium in Bath attracted both Japanese scholars in cultural studies and anthropology who are fluent in English as well as European scholars of Japanese studies who read the language and are conversant with the nation's cultural history.

As for ideological conservatism, which is sometimes manifested as unabashed cultural nationalism, there are ample historical examples from the Meiji era to the present day linking martial arts in Japan to nationalism, militarism, and imperialism. And while I do not consider the vast majority of Japanese martial arts scholars to be fervent nationalists, I do think traces of cultural nationalism and xenophobia can be detected in Japan's martial arts scholarship. This can be seen not only in the exclusion of non-Japanese arts as objects of study, but in the occasional reference to the Japanese arts as embodying some worthy aspect of 'the Japanese character' or even 'the Japanese spirit'.

On the other hand, we should recognize that there are more mundane reasons that, at least in part, explain the disproportionate attention given to Japanese arts in general and to judo and kendo in particular. First, the linguistic limitations noted above combined with the valorization of archival-based historical research as the preferred methodology lead scholars to limit their purview to martial arts in which there is ample documentation and research in Japanese. Because so little research is published on non-Japanese martial arts, the disparity gets perpetuated – not necessarily due to cultural nationalism or xenophobia but simply out of linguistic convenience and disciplinary preference.

Anthropologists as well as scholars working in film and cultural studies are less likely to be quite so constrained by the lack of written documentation, but as I have noted, they remain rare in the world of Japanese martial arts research. Currently, the role of popular media in the representation and diffusion of Asian martial arts (both inside and outside Japan) has largely been ignored in Japanese scholarship. However, as Kotaro Yabu's article attests, there do exist researchers in Japan willing to buck this trend.

Readers of this journal are well aware that media representations, however fanciful, can be just as 'real' in terms of their historical impact as a long-lost instruction manual from an esoteric school of swordsmanship. As Andreas Niehaus demonstrates in his article, Japan has its own rich tradition of popular representations of martial arts through *manga* as well as through film. I should add that many Japanese began their (real life) martial arts study after being inspired by the manga series 'Karate Maniac, First Generation' (*Karate baka ichidai*), which ran continuously from 1971 to 1977 and was subsequently made into a two-part movie. This enormously popular manga series was loosely based on the figure of Masutatsu 'Mas' Oyama and his establishment of the kyokushin style of karate. The field is wide open for those interested in pursuing a broader conception of Japanese martial arts history including popular cultural materials and addressing problems of representation.

As for the disproportionate emphasis on judo and kendo in Japanese-language scholarship, we must remember that, in contrast to karate, aikido, etc., both judo and kendo have long been part of the Japanese public-school curriculum. Scholars of Japanese education history, as well as sports history, are therefore naturally inclined to emphasize judo and kendo over other martial arts. Furthermore, during the Allied occupation of Japan (1945-1952), the American authorities who administered the occupied forces were especially sensitive to historical connections linking kendo and public education to Japanese militarism (see Sakaue's article in this issue), leading many martial arts scholars interested in the early postwar years to focus on kendo. And, of course, judo was the first Asian martial art to become an Olympic sport, so researchers especially interested in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics (or in Olympic history in general) understandably choose to focus on judo over other martial arts. Notwithstanding these qualifications, however, I still believe that contemporary martial arts research in Japan remains unnecessarily narrow and isolated – to the detriment of all researchers interested in martial arts studies, regardless of nationality.

Many worthwhile areas of research await the attention of Japanese martial arts scholars. As noted above, research on non-Japanese arts and on representations of the martial arts in Japanese mass media is sorely lacking. The history of karate has received far too little attention as well, particularly the process by which it was transformed from an Okinawan art to a Japanese one. When – and why – did naginata and kyudo become popular among young women? Gender issues in general have been largely overlooked. What is the historical relationship between particular martial arts and the yakuza gangster culture? What type of interaction or exchange took place between Japanese martial artists and local practitioners of 'native' arts in those Asian countries occupied by Japan during the first half of the twentieth century? And after the war, during America's postwar occupation of Japan's main islands (1945-

1952) and Okinawa (1945-1972), what type of instruction was offered to the occupied forces? Was it watered down 'kid stuff', modified for foreigners, or were they exposed to basically the same curriculum as local students? Instead of hundreds more articles on kendo and judo at the expense of other issues, it is surely time for Japanese martial arts scholars to acknowledge the wider world of martial arts histories and cultures.

Finally, there is the issue of entrenched institutional conservatism, which is by no means a problem that only plagues Japanese research institutions. One need simply recall the brief (still unfolding) history of film studies, cultural studies, gender studies, ethnic studies, etc., in universities throughout the world to appreciate the challenge of gaining 'legitimacy' in an academic institution (Paul Bowman has written extensively about this issue in relation to martial arts studies). Institutions tend to be inherently conservative, in the sense that they naturally want to perpetuate their existence and therefore tend to err on the side of preserving the status quo. I nonetheless remain hopeful that the institutional and ideological barriers in Japanese universities that contribute to the marginalization of Japanese martial arts scholarship can be reduced rather quickly.

I am hopeful because, as someone who began his career as a specialist in Japanese literature, I have witnessed the major transformation of that field over the course of the past twenty years or so. When I was a graduate student in the early 1990s, for example, Japanese literature as an object of research was typically labeled '*Kokubungaku*', or 'National Literature' in Japan. In many universities, these literature specialists were housed in a 'Department of National Literature' that consisted predominantly of scholars whose research – both reading and writing – was conducted almost solely in Japanese. Today, however, these largely monolingual, monocultural academic islands have become far more open to research (and researchers) from outside Japan, and the field of study is now known primarily as 'Japanese Literature'.

Furthermore, there is widespread support for expanding the 'internationalization' of Japan's universities. While I do not expect to see an explosion of new cosmopolitan Departments of Martial Arts Studies in Japan anytime soon, I do think it is reasonable to expect the field to become more open to scholarship and researchers from abroad. This will surely lead to a welcome expansion of domestic martial arts research while providing new opportunities for Japanese scholars to share their work abroad. Such an open exchange of ideas promises to enrich the field overall, and if the present issue of *Martial Arts Studies* contributes to this process in even the smallest way, then it will have been a worthwhile endeavor.

## CONTRIBUTOR

Yasuhiro Sakaue is a Professor in the Graduate School of Social Sciences at Hitotsubashi University in Tokyo. He has published widely on the history and sociology of sport in Japan. His most recent book is *Showa tenno to supotsu – gyokutai no kindaishi* [The Showa Emperor and Sports – A Modern History of the Imperial Presence, *Yoshikawa kobunkan*, 2016]. He has written extensively on the modern history of Japanese martial arts and is editor of the book *Umi o watatta jujutsu to judo – Nihon budo no dainamizumu* [Jujutsu and Judo Overseas – The Dynamism of Japanese Budo, *Seikyusha*, 2010].

# THE HISTORICAL CREATION OF KENDO'S SELF-IMAGE FROM 1895 TO 1942 A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF AN INVENTED TRADITION YASUHIRO SAKAUE

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## ABSTRACT

The self-image of kendo (Japanese swordsmanship) in modern times is a complicated historical fabrication and an 'invented tradition' [Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983] involving 'ethno-symbolism' [Smith 2009] relating to images and ideas of history, heritage, and cultural identity in modern Japan. This means that, despite the high current value and status of Japanese swordsmanship, its cultural identity is shot through with paradoxes and contradictions. This article aims to examine the formation of this self-image through the invention of traditions, and how swordsmanship came to be bound by these inventions. There are numerous components to the invented traditions of Japanese swordsmanship, but this article will focus on three key dimensions: (1) how the tradition was reconstructed, accompanied by the name change from *kenjutsu* or *gekiken/gekken* to *kendo*; (2) the fabrication of historical facts around methods for swordsmanship competition; and (3) the recasting of 'levels of mastery' in supposedly traditional styles of teaching and learning swordsmanship. In conclusion, the article reflects on the possibility of freedom from such constraints in the future and explores the question of possible further changes in the future of kendo.



## INTRODUCTION

Kendo literally means 'the way of the sword', but in the past, Japanese swordsmanship has been known as *kenpo* and *kenjutsu*.<sup>1</sup> Swordsmanship was a necessity for the samurai class in the Tokugawa period (1603-1867), and the approximately 250 clans nationwide practiced various schools of swordsmanship and established teachers to provide instruction as part of the Tokugawa shogunate's policies for encouraging literary and military arts. The number of swordsmanship schools grew to more than 600 by 1867 [Imamura 1967: 342].

Training methods in swordsmanship included two elements: *kata* (predetermined patterns of movement) using wooden swords and practice with *shinai* (bamboo swords) and other equipment. Towards the end of the Tokugawa period, this kind of equipment became mainstream and started to be known as *gekiken* or *gekken*. This growth in shared kinds of relatively safe training equipment helped to reduce the secretive and closed character of schools, and even made it possible for matches to take place among different schools.

With the abolition of the samurai class following the fall of the shogunate in 1868, swordsmanship inevitably underwent major changes, especially in relation to the attempt to establish a modern state based on the Western model. This resulted in some clan teachers losing their jobs. As the political and social environments witnessed reforms, some aspects of the swordsmanship tradition were discarded while others were adapted and continued. Crucially, some historical facts were even fabricated. This means that the self-image of swordsmanship in modern times is a complicated historical fabrication and an 'invented tradition' [Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983] involving 'ethno-symbolism' [Smith 2009] relating to images and ideas of history, heritage, and cultural identity in modern Japan. This means that, despite the high current value and status of Japanese swordsmanship, its cultural identity is rife with paradoxes and contradictions.

This article re-examines the ways that this self-image has been formulated in modern times. Its premise is that current understandings of martial arts histories may be coloured by 'invented traditions', and that 'mytho-histories', invented in modern times, should be subject to academic scrutiny [Bowman 2016: 926; Bowman and Judkins 2016: 1]. However, historical research into Japanese swordsmanship that challenges dominant myths can be 'taboo'. Examples are limited to studies such as those by Otsuka [1995], Sakaue [1998], Sogawa

[2015] and Bennett [2015].<sup>2</sup> This is because to claim that an ostensible tradition is actually more recently invented involves revealing that past 'memories' have been ideologically overwritten. Hence, this present study will at times be at odds with established 'authoritative' accounts of the history and culture of swordsmanship.

A key problem is that martial arts such as kendo have sometimes been regarded as at least partly 'responsible' for World War II. This claim was made from August 1947 to March 1948, for instance, by the authorities of the American occupation forces.<sup>3</sup> As a result of this claim, 1,219 executives of the Dai-Nippon Butokukai (Great Japan Martial Virtue Society) were removed from office because they were regarded as having been 'tools of militarism' during the Second World War. Around the same time period, in January 1946, 1,927 martial arts teachers were removed from their roles in secondary schools, 887 of whom had been swordsmanship teachers [Sakaue 2009: 244]. It is perhaps because of this humiliating experience, and of the laying of 'blame' for the War at the feet of these martial arts, that martial arts historians have tended to avoid such subjects.

There are numerous components to the invented traditions of Japanese swordsmanship, but this article will focus on three key dimensions. The first is the matter of how the facts of tradition were reconstructed, accompanied by the change of name from *kenjutsu* or *gekiken/gekken* to *kendo*. The second is the fabrication of historical facts around methods for swordsmanship competition. Finally, the third is the recasting of 'levels of mastery' in supposedly traditional styles of teaching and learning swordsmanship. There are two principal reasons for selecting these three areas. The first is that, unlike the reconstruction, fabrication, or recasting that can be seen in the creation of other traditions, they reveal patterns that help us further understand the dynamism and diversity of created traditions in modern Japan. Second, these matters continue to have a strong impact on kendo to this day.

Bennett's [2015] monograph provides the most detailed historical research on kendo to date. He attempts to push the understanding that kendo is an invented tradition into wider cultural and academic

1 When Romanizing Japanese words, a macron is sometimes used to indicate a long vowel sound: kendo is written as 'kendō', budo as 'budō', etc., but I have eschewed the use of diacritics in this paper since many of these words are already established in English usage. Note also that given names precede surnames, according to Western (rather than Japanese) convention.

2 Inoue [1998, 2004] gives examples of research that treats judo as an invented tradition. However, it was publicly acknowledged by Jigoro Kano (to his credit) that judo is an invented tradition. In the case of judo, unlike kendo, such issues as the connection with the jujutsu of the pre-modern era [Nakajima 2017] and jujutsu being first to spread overseas [Sakaue 2010] are issues in critical research.

3 Although the postwar occupation of Japan's main islands was officially conducted under the auspices of the Allied Powers, it was largely controlled by General Douglas MacArthur and his subordinates at General Headquarters (GHQ) in Tokyo. The occupation of Japan's main islands lasted until April 1952. The American occupation of the Ryukyu Islands (Okinawa) continued until May 1972 and was administered separately.

consciousness and discussion. However, Bennett's work approaches the evolution of kendo exclusively in terms of the evolution of its cultural and political meanings from a 'macro-level' standpoint; it does not provide a 'micro-level' treatment of the invented traditions in quite the ways that this article seeks to.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, this article will not examine the macro-level factors of nationalism and political ideology that determined the evolution of kendo; rather, it will focus on the 'internal world' of swordsmanship and enquire into the factors that determined its values and cultural content. In other words, this article aims to present an overview of how the world of swordsmanship was remade after the collapse of the Tokugawa shogunate, as well as to offer insight into its internal state of affairs (Section 1). Sections 2-4 then examine the formation of kendo's self-image through invented traditions and how swordsmanship came to be bound by them. The final section considers the possibility of future freedom from such constraints and explores possible further changes in kendo's future (Section 5).

The primary period dealt with in this paper begins with the establishment of the Dai-Nippon Butokukai in April 1895 and ends with the revamping of that organization as an auxiliary organization of the government in March 1942 in response to World War II.

## 1 REORGANIZATION OF THE WORLD OF SWORDSMANSHIP BY THE DAI-NIPPON BUTOKUKAI

### 1.1. *The Establishment of the Dai-Nippon Butokukai*

It is helpful to begin with an explanation of the reorganisation of the world of swordsmanship effected by the actions of the Dai-Nippon Butokukai (hereafter referred to as 'Butokukai').

The establishment of the Butokukai in 1895 was an attempt to formalise, institutionalise, and encourage the martial arts that were regarded as having been established 1,100 years ago by the emperor Kanmu. The source of the name 'Butokukai' derives from a sacred symbol in the name of a martial arts hall that was established in Heiankyō (ancient Kyoto), the Butokuden. The Butokukai rebuilt the Butokuden Hall and brought in a newly created ritual called the *Butokusai*. The purpose of this was to revere the virtues of the emperor Kanmu, to call to mind patriotism for the country, to demonstrate martial arts by gathering martial artists from across the country, and to preserve and encourage the martial arts.

4 For critical reviews of this book, see Molle [2016] and Bowman [2017].

This was not merely nostalgia. This was a historical context characterised by anxiety and complex emotions around Japan's relations to powerful western nations, none of which had been ameliorated by the country's wars with China and Russia (1894-1895 and 1904-1905). So, the Butokukai's efforts and activities undoubtedly had actual military and political significance. This can be seen clearly in the fact that the Butokukai at the time encouraged shooting, horsemanship, bayonet practice, swordsmanship, jujutsu, swimming, and rowing. It also categorized archery and use of the spear as martial arts worth preserving [Sakaue 1989: 89-92].

The establishment of the Butokukai and its rapid growth are symbolic of the dramatic changes that occurred in Japanese culture at the time. The revision of the treaty with the UK and the scrapping of extraterritoriality; the exhilaration following Japan's victory in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95); and the forced return of Chinese territory captured during the war due to Russian, German, and French pressure drove the extolling of Japanese identity [Pyle 1969: 163-187] and caused a reassessment of traditional Japanese culture such as the martial arts [Sakaue 2001: 95-100], which had earlier been abandoned due to rapid westernization after the Meiji restoration.

The Butokukai made imperial family member Akihito Komatsunomiya, the commander in chief of the Japanese army who led Japan to victory in the Russo-Japanese War, president of the organization, and also gave official cabinet roles to other well-known politicians. Moreover, governors throughout the country were appointed as heads of local branches while police were mobilized to collect 'membership fees', which were essentially treated as a local tax. All of this enabled the institution to capture and develop expansive social authority while vastly inflating its membership numbers. By May 1910, membership had grown to 1,651,736, although the vast majority of these members were not practitioners of the martial arts.

These facts cannot be understood outside their historical context. After reconstructing the Butokuden in Kyoto in 1899, the Butokukai built similar Butokuden halls in the branches of each prefecture [Sakaue 1989: 65-96].<sup>5</sup>

5 Denis Gainty [2013] approaches the Butokukai as an example of an embodied intersection of self and society and argues that the local bodies of Butokukai members from 1895 to 1912 were not only means to experience national identity and participate in the work of the state but also sources of great power in defining those experiences and shaping those collectives. He also emphasizes the role of martial arts as a traditional Japanese local body practice, claiming that it should not be considered an 'invented tradition' intended to create and shape a modern populace in the period [Gainty 2013]. Note, however, that, whereas Gainty is focused on the Meiji era, my argument is that kendo emerges as a powerful invented tradition during the 1920s and 1930s, and that the various titles (**shogo**) and ranking system (**dan'i seido**) must be understood in this context.



### 1.2. The System of Titles

From the perspective of the martial arts, this signified the emergence of a powerful support organization that was part of the 'story of the state'. The local Butokuden functioned as places for martial artists nationwide to show off the martial arts of the school to which they belonged. Among these, the Butokuden in Kyoto held a large demonstration tournament in May each year, attracting martial artists from throughout Japan. In 1910, the number of participants was as high as 1,620, of whom 979 (60%) were swordsmen [Otsuka 1994: 42].

This tournament was used not only to display kendo abilities; it was also a forum in which skill was judged. Starting in 1895, those recognised as having outstanding skills were awarded the title of *seirenscho* (changed to *renshi* in 1933). By May 1921, 800 titles had been given for kendo, 360 for jujutsu, 257 for archery, 43 for iai, 38 for sojutsu (spear), 30 for swimming, 12 for the naginata, and 43 for various other arts [Nakamura 1994: 32]. Subsequently, after 1903, the titles of *hanshi* and *kyoshi* were also awarded.

The number of titles awarded to swordsmen is shown in Table 1. Those receiving these three titles formed a pyramid in the world of swordsmen, first receiving the title of *seirenscho* in the strict three-level system followed by elevations to *kyoshi* and *hanshi*. The uppermost title of *hanshi* generally required practice in the martial arts for forty or more years after becoming an adult and was awarded to fewer than thirty practitioners. These title holders also received a pension. The pension was awarded because many martial artists at the time lived in financially 'miserable circumstances'. However, the pension was discontinued in July 1921 [Butokukai 1936a].

	Hanshi	Kyoshi	Seirenscho, Renshi
May 1921	16	101	524
Jan 1930	28	173	1,424
May 1934	19	307	2,594
Mar 1937	21	416	2,688
Mar 1941	25	777	4,776
Mar 1942	27	914	5,487

**Table 1:** The number of titles awarded to swordsmen. [Source: Murakami 1921: 1-120; Kunaisho 1930: 204-321; Kunaisho 1934: 737-793; Butokukai 1937, 1941a; Nakamura 1985: 324]

The judging to determine these titles was initially carried out by a three-person selection committee made up of Kunimichi Kitagaki (baron, former president of Butokukai, and *Muto* school swordsman), Nobori Watanabe (viscount, awarded the title of *hanshi* in May 1903, and *Shintomunen* school swordsman), and Jigoro Kano (principal of Tokyo Higher Normal School, and Kodokan director, awarded the title of *hanshi* in May 1905). These three were also members of the Butokukai's Conference Committee. However, this selection committee was expanded in September 1914, with selections made by each type of martial art. Actual selection was done by the Butokukai headquarters surveying, considering, and submitting conclusions in advance, with the selection committee using that information as a reference in making determinations upon viewing the skills displayed at the demonstration tournaments [Butokukai 1936a].

This system of titles began to function as a unified certification system on a nationwide level. The system of titles by Butokukai joined the traditional skills certification systems in place at each school, with demand for the new system growing in inverse proportion to the declining demand for the old. The authority of the new system also grew. Thus, the Butokukai was successful in organizing leading swordsmen from across the country (though only the swordsmen were overseen across the board by the Butokukai; other organizations existed for other martial arts, such as Kodokan for jujutsu and Dai-Nippon Kyudokai for archery, each with its own unique ranking system).

In this manner, those with the *hanshi* and *kyoshi* ranks sat at the top of the swordsmanship pyramid and attained hegemony.

### 1.3. The System of Ranks

The system of ranks, starting with 1<sup>st</sup> dan and going through to 10<sup>th</sup> dan, began in 1917. Ranks above 5<sup>th</sup> dan were recognized from June 1937. Its implementation was decided by *hanshi* and *kyoshi*. In letters to 102 *hanshi* and *kyoshi*, Butokukai headquarters asked about whether to institute a ranking system – 99 respondents were in favour and only three opposed. Based on this response, the Butokukai made the decision to implement the system [Nakamura 1985: 322]. In doing so, *hanshi* and *kyoshi* became the appointed judges of the skills of kendo practitioners. In May 1921, 10 out of 47 prefectures in the country had no *hanshi* or *kyoshi*; by March 1937, however, there were no prefectures without *hanshi* or *kyoshi* [Murakami 1921: 1-31; Butokukai 1937]. This enabled each prefecture to implement rank examinations.<sup>6</sup>

6 The rules of 1918 allowed for up to two out of three judges to be *seirenscho*, while the 1926 rules also allowed 4<sup>th</sup> dan or higher to be judges. In addition, there was a method of acquiring a rank by written judgement through application to the Butokukai headquarters with recommendation from judges [Nakamura 1985: 338, 347, 349-351].

As can be seen in Table 2 and Table 3, particularly after the 1930s, the number of swordsmen that had acquired ranks increased, and the base of the swordsmanship pyramid began to rapidly expand.<sup>7</sup> Hanshi and kyoshi had not only symbolic authority but the authority of rankings, through which it became possible for them to control the technical details of swordsmanship. In addition, it became a new source of funding via examination fees.

Rank examinations were not only tests of skill but also of writing. After 1917, 'proper knowledge' was clarified as part of rank examinations for swordsmanship, and all practitioners were required to communicate that knowledge. The correct answers required for the written examinations were on such subjects as the proper ideals and ideology for swordsmanship, compiled in the created traditions of the modern era. The three created traditions discussed in the following sections are typical of this knowledge and produced strong, unshakeable justifications for, in, and through the system of rank examinations.

#### 1.4. A Lack of Competitive Tournaments

The demonstration tournaments of the Butokukai were not competitive events intended to determine a champion. Opportunities for martial artists from across the country to demonstrate their skills only occurred once in the tournament and are estimated to have lasted no longer than ten minutes [Sakaue 1998: 167]. Demonstrations of swordsmanship were given in pairs using a three-point system, and the results did not in themselves necessarily determine titles. In other words, winning or losing at the tournament was not seen as emblematic of the true skills of swordsmen, though it is thought that they did conform with the notions of hanshi and kyoshi at the top of the world of swordsmanship. For example, the Butokukai headquarters decided to do away with competitive demonstration tournaments in 1908. That is, they undertook no judging and made no determinations of wins or losses. Indeed, when it was decided that matches between hanshi and kyoshi would be determined by the three-point system, passionate opposition arose, with participants deciding to boycott the tournament. Aside from showing their disdain for such a system, this can be understood as a sign that no competitive forum for swordsmen to show off their skills as yet existed [Sakaue 1998: 173-177].

Thus, in the absence of a new competitive forum to attract swordsmanship enthusiasts, the Butokukai strove to establish the view that 'swordsmanship is not a competitive sport'. Hence, this sword tradition became overwhelmingly influential. The Butokukai itself had never held a championship competition to determine a nationwide champion. Championship tournaments at the national level were held three times prior to World War II, though these were

<sup>7</sup> Starting in March 1934, attaining a rank of 5<sup>th</sup> dan or higher was made a new condition for becoming a kyoshi, which systematized the relationship between titles and ranks [Nakamura 1985: 351].

Year	Number
1926	2,352
1930	9,179
1933	19,755
1934	25,066
1935	31,135
1936	38,144
1937	47,961
1938	56,399
1939	70,020
1940	86,426
1941	108,866
1942	139,693

**Table 2 (left):**

*The number of swordsmanship rank holders.* [Source: Butokukai 1941b: 5; Nakamura 1985: 324]

**Table 3 (below):**

*The constitution of swordsmanship rank holders in 1932 and 1942.* [Source: Butokukai 1932: 6; Nakamura 1985: 324]

Rank	1932	1942
10	–	0
9	–	7
8	–	17
7	–	106
6	–	356
5	339	3,682
4	797	7,173
3	1,584	12,929
2	5,199	36,994
1	11,836	79,339

all national celebrations related to the imperial household and were held with Emperor Hirohito in attendance [Sakaue 1998: 184, 193; Sakaue 2016: 195-196, 205-207]. In swordsmanship, titles and ranks had more authority than tournament results, and the pyramids of titles and ranks were viewed as demonstrating the skill of practitioners of swordsmanship.

Thus, the Butokukai continued to take a negative view of competition-based swordsmanship, though at the same time it was swordsmen in universities and high schools who took the lead roles in sponsoring competitive tournaments [Otsuka 1995: 47-55, 60-64]. However, the Butokukai's youth demonstration tournaments started in 1899 for those below the age of 25, and team competitions began in 1920, with teams competing to win a flag in a tournament-style system.

### *1.5. Reorganization of Principles, Ideology, Martial Arts Schools, and Incorporation into School Curricula*

I wish to suggest that the above changes in fact constituted a reorganization of the principles and ideology of swordsmanship – within the Dai-Nippon Butokukai organization, among its individual swordsmen, and in particular among those swordsmen who fervently wished for the adoption of swordsmanship into the curricula of elementary and secondary schools. The main strategy adopted by the central figures was the submission of a bill to the Imperial Diet and to force the government to implement it. Already by 1879, the police were practicing swordsmanship as well as jujutsu and had hired swordsmen as instructors. By further incorporating swordsmanship into school curricula, they solidified the continuation of swordsmanship into the next generation and attempted to develop employment possibilities and prospects in the field. In the process, new principles and a new ideology for swordsmanship were created [Sakaue 1989: 103-107; Sakaue 2013: 26-43].

In addition, swordsmen wishing for the incorporation of swordsmanship into school curricula demanded that the Butokukai unify the kata and naming conventions to be used in order to establish a nationwide unified method of swordsmanship instruction as required by the Ministry of Education [Sakaue 1989: 104-105]. The Butokukai heard the demands of these swordsmen and, with the passage of the bill in the Imperial Diet, as well as the decision to adopt swordsmanship as an elective class in the curricula of secondary schools from 1911, an investigation committee of five hanshi and twenty kyoshi was created and the Dai Nippon Teikoku Kendo Kata (10 offensive patterns of movement using a wooden sword) were re-established [Nakamura 1994: 117-126; see also Butokukai 1936c].

The standardised kata enabled the unification of the schools of swordsmanship. They were created as a nationwide unified method of instruction, yet they meant neither the actual dissolution of schools nor their consolidation. Indeed, the standardisation provoked passionate reactions when imposed by the Butokukai. The same happened at a different time when unified kata were instituted in archery and naginata: the standardisation was viewed by some as a rejection of traditional techniques handed down by various schools. But the archery kata were revised and those opposed to the naginata kata were forced out of their positions and silenced [Irie 1976: 59-63; Nakamura 2004: 18-19]. However, in swordsmanship, the use of standardised bamboo swords in practice and in competitions was already commonplace and the importance of kata was comparatively minimal, which is perhaps why there was less resistance across swordsmanship schools than in archery and naginata schools.

In 1911, swordsmanship in secondary schools was legalised. By 1924, 720 schools (79%) taught swordsmanship in physical education classes and 102 schools (11%) taught it in extracurricular classes. There were only 88 schools (10%) that did not teach swordsmanship. In addition to advocating the adoption of swordsmanship in secondary school curricula, the Butokukai even stressed that it should be introduced in elementary schools [Butokukai 1924: 3-4]. As will be shown in the next section, it attempted to make this happen via the passing of a bill in the Imperial Diet.

## 2 THE INVENTION OF THE WORD 'KENDO'

### *2.1. A Tradition Restored: The Path to Bushido Training*

Like the term 'judo', the term 'kendo' is a modern Japanese invention [Inoue 1998, 2004]. The name-change from kenjutsu or gekiken/ gekken to kendo was enacted by the Butokukai in 1919, and the appellation was increasingly used in school curricula by 1926. Hiromichi Nishikubo (1863–1930) had been appointed vice president of the Butokukai and principal of the Martial Arts Vocational College in January 1919, and it was he who had led the name-change initiative. The primary reason for the change of name was to clarify that the objective of kendo was not just to learn skills but to train one's mind and body and to focus significantly on training one's spirit. Thus, physical training came to be regarded as merely supplementary [Nishikubo 1915: 4-9; 1926: 634].

That this thinking was endorsed by Nishikubo is vividly demonstrated by the bill submitted to the Minister of Education in September 1919 (resubmitted in June 1924), which emphasized not only name changes to 'kendo' and 'judo' but also that these two martial arts were 'spiritual education, and their use in physical education was inappropriate in the extreme; they should be made independent classes' [Butokukai 1924: 2; see also 1936b]. In addition, Nishikubo asserted that swordsmanship should be implemented as an independent subject or as a kind of moral education [Nishikubo 1926: 631].

Consequently, at this point, I would like to focus on Nishikubo's claim that swordsmanship had *already* been established as a training culture focused on developing character during the Tokugawa period:

During the Tokugawa period, kendo started to increasingly display its value as a way to train one's samurai personality through acquiring manners, etiquette and the general ways of a samurai, just as Confucianism and Buddhism influence the principle of acquiring both literary and military arts. Bushido (the way of the warrior) also had an influence ... Kendo started to emphasise training one's spirit and was connected with bushido ... The writings of each school stated the goal of kendo as follows: to clarify how to select life or death when facing justice, to clarify what bushido is, to train in honour the virtue of the spiritual sword and to be prepared to die for duty, and to train one's spirit neither to seek to kill another nor to prevent oneself from being killed ... In the past, a samurai trained his bones and muscles and studied the spirit of loyalty, manners, honor, shame, austerity, bravery, diligence and patience, among other virtues, so historical emotion will always refer to the bushido of ancestors and will be of great practical use for kendo trainees emulating the samurai way or spirit. [Nishikubo 1926: 615, 616, 631]

With the Tokugawa period, the role of literacy and battle were reversed, with military arts brought under the control of literary arts. As a result, a developed character became the ultimate goal and training the 'samurai personality' was given greater priority than acquiring the skills of swordsmanship. This is evident in the 1860 rules of the *Kobusho* (shogunate military academy), which state: 'What is extremely important while acting in thought of budo (martial arts) is to learn the skills of archery, swordsmanship, and spearmanship with *rei-gi-ren-chi* (important rules to be followed as humans) as the base' [Sogawa 2015: 39-40].

Accordingly, it is possible to argue that Nishikubo's claim that swordsmanship has changed to a form that aims to cultivate one's

samurai personality is not an individual or idiosyncratic affirmation or fabrication but rather was based on such historical facts as those previously discussed. The name change to kendo registers such historical change and should be regarded as a testament to this transition. Importantly, it also acted as a catalyst to boost kendo's status by reference to the samurai tradition.<sup>8</sup>

Nishikubo emphatically insisted that kendo training would not only lead to bushido but would also help cultivate the 'national virtue' desired by contemporary Japan: 'When one trains in kendo, handed down from our ancestors, one naturally fosters one's bushido spirit and its dignity, and it is natural that one realises our country's national virtues, such as ancestor worship, loyalty and patriotism, the spirit of martyrdom and sacrifice, and the like' [Nishikubo 1926: 631]. This type of claim may appear anachronistic at first glance, but what must be remembered is that bushido in this evocation is being used to try to 'fill the historical gap' so to speak between the Tokugawa period and the 1920s.

Bushido might be said to have existed as a code of conduct for samurai, but it was only *called* bushido from the Meiji period. Basil Hall Chamberlain (1850-1936), an Englishman who stayed in Japan during the Meiji period and introduced Japanese culture to the world, published a book called *Bushido or The Invention of a New Religion* in 1911. In it, he (correctly) notes that bushido was a recently-created religion that did not appear in any dictionary before 1900, while also providing a description of the concept of 'morality of the nation' on the basis of which the people are regarded as the Emperor's children who would sacrifice their lives willingly out of obligation, loyalty, and piety.

The existence of this newly-created bushido (also known as Meiji bushido) was the premise of kendo's creation. As a result, bushido training began to mean something more than learning the samurai code of conduct; it came to mean cultivating a national virtue necessary for a modern nation. Thus, the name change to kendo was inseparable from the creation of bushido in the Meiji period. The *butoku* (martial virtues) and bushido heralded by the Butokukai were effectively made one and the same [Sakaue 1988: 88].

Nishikubo's claim was therefore part of a strategy to introduce kendo and judo as academic subjects in their own right in secondary schools. The application for this was submitted to the House of Lords as a proposal by Nishikubo and others, including the Kodokan director Jigoro Kano (both of whom were also members of the House of Lords).

<sup>8</sup> However, it is undeniable that swordsmanship during the Tokugawa period focused on practical use: killing, protecting oneself, and the idea of *mu* (selflessness) borrowed from Buddhism and Zen to explain a state in swordsmanship that was used to kill successfully [Sogawa 2015: 54-58; 2017: 12, 20].

This was accepted in March 1925 [Sakaue 1990: 44-45]. The last part of the quotation above uses almost the exact same wording as that of the formal proposal itself. Undoubtedly, it was successful because the majority of the members in the House of Lords were of royal or noble lineage. Thus, they were highly likely to support Nishikubo and the Butokukai's claim that kendo was a discipline that cultivated a samurai personality in the Tokugawa period and had an important role in national education.<sup>9</sup>

## 2.2. Sanctification of Kendo

In 1919, the Butokukai also changed the name of *bujutsu* to *budo* as a general term for the martial arts. These name changes served multiple purposes, including reifying and venerating *budo*, differentiating it from sport, and preventing *budo* from changing by stabilising it institutionally.

The Butokukai insisted upon the difference between sport and *budo*. On the one hand, they argued, victory in sport is considered to be the main objective; discipline is only relevant in terms of notions of fair play, common-sense, and so on. On the other hand, victory in *budo* is not viewed as the objective; instead, training one's mind and body is considered the goal. In addition, because of its historical origin and its goal of training one's spirit, *budo* was represented as more sophisticated than either hobbies or sport [Butokukai 1925: 4].

For this reason, Nishikubo actually despised and strongly criticised kendo matches, even when performed as part of community events or village festivals, stating: 'To compete and perform with sport that originated as a hobby soils the sacred nature of *budo*, which has existed since ancient times' [Nishikubo 1926: 632].

Since Nishikubo believed that 'budo training must be sacred', he considered the current state of *budo* to be insulting and corrupted:

Training for *budo* must be sacred... However, in reality, there are people laughing and joking while practising and not being sincere... There are people who are laughing and joking and thus forgetting that training is something sacred. In serious cases, people view *budo* training as something akin to village theatricals or sumo performances. Many of the audience members also think they are watching some show. This is regrettable... To include *budo* training in gatherings such as a memorial service for the dead does not stand to reason and is outrageous... It is absolutely unacceptable to have the word *budo*

<sup>9</sup> Kendo and judo did not become a separate subject in middle school, but, by 1926, the name used in physical education in middle school was changed from *gekiken/ gekken* to *kendo* and from *jujutsu* to *judo*. By January 1931, both became compulsory in physical education in middle school.

written alongside the dances by geisha and other various shows... There is nothing as insulting to *budo*, and it is absolutely saddening and infuriating. I cannot but be outraged by seeing such things... Today's *kendo* has inherited bad characteristics and has been staged as public martial art shows in Asakusa. I often hear people watching *budo* training and saying that it may be the right way to do it but it is not interesting and such. In other words, the people practising and watching both want to add some fun. In outrageous cases, there are examples of those doing it with a referee as one sees with sumo in rural areas. To begin with, training should not be fun. This type of thinking is the exact opposite of what I have repeatedly been saying, that the *budo* hall is sacred and must not be desecrated. [Nishikubo 1915: 21-26]

From the outrage Nishikubo shows here, we can imagine people enjoying *budo* as a popular amusement. Such a scene – full of laughter, levity, cheering, and the heightened energy of holidays – was far removed from Nishikubo's argument for 'sacredness'.

Nishikubo was opposed to *budo* being a popular amusement or developing as a sport, and he only envisaged it as a means to train one's self and especially one's mind. Kendo's self-definition as 'the way to cultivate bushido' played a role in managing kendo's status as a 'way of being' that was explicitly and deliberately connected to a strong sense of tradition and national values, while also offering ways to protect this from mutating into any other kind of activity, from competitive sport to 'mere' hobby.

From 1919, the Butokukai formulated various regulations to meet *budo*'s 'original' objective, including the match rules, regulation of the weight of bamboo swords, prohibition of cheering and clapping, and prohibition of clothing that appeared distasteful both within and outside the *budo* hall. The *kendo* team match during the youth martial arts tournament hosted by the Butokukai used a special ten-point rule, with four points available for victory, three points for *kiai* (fighting spirit), and three points for posture and manner. At the same time, students of the Butokukai Martial Arts Vocational College were prohibited from participating in matches with others. Nishikubo also boycotted participation in the second Meiji Shrine National Athletic Festival's *kendo* division in 1925. As a result, the third tournament's name was changed to Meiji Shrine National Physical Education Festival and the entrance fee was abolished. This incident epitomised the kind of pressure that enforced the idea of the sacred nature of *budo* upon society [Sakaue 1998: 178-183].

Against this backdrop, in answer to the question 'What is *kendo*?' there can henceforth be only one 'correct' answer – like the model answer for the rank grading exam: 'kendo is the training of one's body and mind to create a samurai personality and is a physical education method and mental training method that is educational and virtuous' [Nemoto 1936: 198].



### 3 A FABRICATED TRADITION: HISTORY OF SANBON-SHOBU

Kendo's competition method involves two people facing each other with a bamboo sword and striking at one of the four regulated areas – *men* (head), *do* (trunk), *kote* (forearm) and *tsuki* (throat) – to win. In today's kendo, the principal rule is *sanbon-shobu* (three-point system). The winner is the first to score two out of three available points. If only one point has been scored in regulation time (the normal duration of the contest is 5 minutes), then the person who scored the point is the winner. If no point is scored, then extra time may be allowed to determine a victor.

One may wonder when the three-point system started. The model answers to the questions in a 1937 publication on kendo state the following:

There would not be any sanbon-shobu in a real fight ... In the past, all matches were ippon-shobu (first point wins). However, from the Meiji period, ippon-shobu was too short, so it was changed to three points. In other words, three ippon-shobu took place. Later, instead of performing three ippon-shobu, people started to compete according to the total number of strikes in a single match (you win with two out of three effective strikes).

[Ota 1937: 160]

Thus, according to this answer, kendo matches changed from ippon-shobu (one-point system) to sanbon-shobu (three-point system). Another (identical) answer in this set of model answers confirms this [Tanida 1939: 123]. This narrative remains dominant today, and most people involved in kendo believe it is true. However, history suggests otherwise.

To see this, we need only review the match records of a famous swordsman called Namishiro Matsuzaki (1833–1896) as given in his biography [Sonoda 1957]. There we can see, for instance, that in a March 1852 match the victor was decided by how many strikes landed out of five. Five strikes were evidently neither considered to be too many nor too complicated. Indeed, matches of over ten strikes were also recorded. In May 1854, Matsuzaki fought against famous swordsmen in Edo and the records of those matches are presented below:

***Jusanbon-shobu* (13-strikes match)**

**Namishiro Matsuzaki: 4 strikes vs. Eijiro Chiba:  
7 strikes 2 *aiuchi***

***Juppon-shobu* (10- strikes match)**

**Namishiro Matsuzaki: 6 strikes vs. Shunzo Momoi:  
3 strikes 1 *aiuchi***

Here, *aiuchi* (hitting each other simultaneously) was also counted, and there were 13 strikes in total for the 10-strikes match. In other words, around the end of the Tokugawa period, the best swordsmen fought each other in these types of matches. Swordsmanship matches were held across different schools and used point systems that differed from the official narrative.

We might therefore ask when today's three-point system started. Again, we can examine Matsuzaki's matches – this time, after the Meiji period. First, let us consider a match hosted by the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department in November 1884:

**Namishiro Matsuzaki ○ vs. Sekishiro Tokuno ○○**

**Namishiro Matsuzaki ○○ vs. Matanoshin Natsumi ○○○**

**Namishiro Matsuzaki vs. Tadatoku Shingai: Draw**

The method of judging in this case is uncertain. It is not clear, for instance, whether it was 'best out of five' or 'first to three', and so on. But matches evidently did not stop until five or three strikes were made. Available evidence suggests that judges checked the time and stopped the match in the middle to declare the winner. In the third match, neither competitor made a successful strike and it was judged a draw.

Meanwhile, during this period, there were three-point matches being held in a residence of a *daimyo* (feudal lord) in Tokyo, Saineikan of the Imperial Palace. Matsuzaki's records use phrases like 'I won all three strikes' and 'victory with all three strikes'; it thus appears that three one-point matches took place. For example, a match hosted in Saineikan in June 1885 was evidently a three-point match, whereas 15 special matches between greatly skilled swordsmen performed upon the wish of a former lord who attended involved five strikes without a judge. Matsuzaki regarded the five-strike match without a judge as a method that could better showcase the strengths of each participant, although he also conceded that the three-point with a judge was unavoidable because of the needs of 'unskilled people'. Nonetheless, he criticized it as an inconvenient method that encouraged competition and possibly led to cheating.

Despite such possible dissensus among swordsmen, the three-point system (in which two points are necessary to win) became mainstream in kendo matches. The first such match in Matsuzaki's records took place in November 1894, at a match in the Emperor's presence. This took place at the Imperial Headquarters in Hiroshima and was held as a part of the celebration of the victory in the Sino-Japanese war. There were 26 swordsmen selected from each prefecture in Western Japan. Matsuzaki's two recorded matches both ended in a one-point-each draw:

Namishiro Matsuzaki ○○ vs. Sakonta Okumura ○

Namishiro Matsuzaki ○○ vs. Kazuma Asano ○

The following year, in April 1895, the Dai-Nippon Butokukai was established, and in October of the same year, the first Daienbu Taikai match was held over the course of three days, involving 914 martial artists from across Japan. The kenjutsu division took place on the first day, with 320 competitors (including Matsuzaki) divided into 160 groups. This was not a tournament in which the winner would be selected, but rather entailed a single match with a chosen opponent scored according to sanbon-shobu. This three-point system became the 'rule' of the Butokukai demonstration competitions [Sakaue 1998: 167]. Meanwhile, judo matches also used a three-point system, called *nihon-shobu* (two-point match), until this changed to *ippon-shobu* (one-point match) in 1924 [Oimatsu 1976: 75-76].

As a result, by the Meiji period, the diversity of styles in swordsmanship matches disappeared and the three-point system became mainstream. This raises the question of why the Butokukai chose and enforced the three-point system. One reason could be that it was a simple expedient to enable the scheduling of 160 demonstration competitions in one day. Certainly, the Butokukai divided the martial arts hall into four sections and held matches concurrently, with judges in each section. Each of the four areas needed to complete 40 matches per day. Even in an eight-hour day – from, say, 9am to 5pm – to complete 40 matches would require an average match length of only 12 minutes. In the face of such a scheduling challenge, it would be impossible to have five- or ten-point matches (longer matches may have been possible with fewer competitors). It would seem then that the three-point system was adopted because of reasons of time and scale. Since 1904, the jujutsu division had limited match time to 10 minutes; kenjutsu also needed to impose similar limits [Sakaue 1998: 167].

In light of this, it is clear that pre-Meiji swordsmanship matches did not employ the ippon-shobu system, and to claim otherwise is a fabrication of history. Why this kind of fabrication took place and spread as common knowledge is worthy of reflection and further analysis.

My own hypothesis is that the techniques, strategies, and processes utilised in the establishment of kendo led, intentionally or unintentionally, to such fabrication. As already seen, an important aspect of the process was the emphasis on tradition, and thus traditions that were suitable were selected and valorized whereas those deemed unsuitable were removed and fabricated into a new and preferable tradition. This certainly seems to be the case with the claim that kendo matches used ippon-shobu before the Meiji period. The actual swordsmanship matches of the end of the Tokugawa period and early

Meiji period could by no stretch of the imagination be said to amount to 'real sword fights', as they were contested by accumulating as many points as possible. It seems more natural to say that such fabrication took place to create an image of real sword fights and to eradicate a tradition that was unwelcome.<sup>10</sup>

This kind of fabrication of history made it possible to say that kendo was the true successor to the 'real sword fight' era tradition. The problem is that this made it impossible to revive the five- or ten-point system actually employed in earlier matches. Hence, any reform or actual historical reconstruction of an earlier kendo match system became largely restricted by its own fabricated narrative: for, if a real fight using Japanese swords is to be established as the standard, then ippon-shobu can be the only acceptable system for matches.

Of course, reflection on this raises the question: why should the kendo match have three points rather than one? If we consult the 'model answer' collections quoted earlier, we find the following answer:

**If it is a one-point match, then the match may end before showing your actual strength due to your condition and such. However, if there are three points, then even if the opponent gets the first point, you can make a comeback by taking the next two points or you can use the first point to check the skills of your opponent and think of a strategy for the other two points. In addition, even if you get hit for the first point, you can attack with a strong mind set to not get hit again and foster a strong spirit for defeating your enemy even when you fall. Also, it is easier for the judge to see one's true ability if there are three points rather than one.**

[Ota 1937: 160-161]

In other words, the stated rationale for the three-point system is that it allows participants to show their true skill and is thus deemed preferable to a one-point system. The rationale, therefore, refers not to the tradition of a real sword fight (to the death) but to the ability to show skill within a reasonable set of parameters. In this regard, kendo's match system has been created by mixing references to a 'real sword fight tradition' with other criteria that are actually contradictory. The upshot is that, at the same time as dimensions of possible 'reality' are lost, so, too, has 'rationality' as a method of competition been greatly restricted by insisting on the reference to the supposedly real sword fight tradition. Here, we can see a glimpse of kendo's inherent dilemmas and paradoxes.

<sup>10</sup> Considering the swordsmanship boom since the 1920s in novels and movies, we can also propose that this was based on a phenomenon that involved the fantasising of swordsmanship in modern times by regular people [Otsuka and Sakaue 1990: 34-35].

As the wartime structure was built, the tradition of the real sword-fight overwhelmed rationality as a competition method, and the system changed to a one-point system in March 1939 during the Sino-Japanese War. Since then, kendo has further evolved as a combat skill [Bennett 2015: 140-154].

#### 4 AN ADAPTED TRADITION: SHU-HA-RI

Some of the Tokugawa period's swordsmanship tradition was superseded and later modified in modern times. For example, there is *shu-ha-ri*, a pedagogical method that divides swordsmanship into three stages. The first stage (*shu*) is to follow the teacher's instructions, perform the movements accurately, and learn it without error; the second stage (*ha*) is to break the restraint and expand your own method through creativity and learning other schools' methods; and the third stage (*ri*) is to go even further, whether (or both) into realms of inventiveness or the achievement of a state of '*mu*' ('empty mind' or 'nothingness').

This pedagogical approach is delineated in certain Meiji-era swordsmanship manuals and has been passed down through the generations [Takasaka 1971 [1884]: 40; Hirose 1971 [1884]: 61; Kumamoto 1971 [1895]: 187]. One such manual, for example, *Budo Kyohan* (Textbook of Budo), published in 1895, states: 'In my school, innocence<sup>11</sup> is the state we aim for, and the main objective is to devote oneself to developing one's natural character ... We follow certain rules but are not confined to them and put effort in enhancing one's natural character' [Kumamoto 1971 [1895]: 187]. This introduces a teaching method that comes together with *shu-ha-ri*.

However, by the 1930s, this approach to the *shu-ha-ri* pedagogy was transformed for the ranking exam as follows:

The first stage, *shu*, is to throw away one's self, learn from the teacher and to emulate his ways; the second stage, *ha*, is to think by yourself while carrying out comparative research into other schools; and the third stage, *ri*, is to achieve independence from your school through hard research and craft and establish your own approach. If one can follow the spirit of *shu-ha-ri* in practice, then the mind will become clear on its own and achieve a state of selflessness at a superior level. [Ota 1940: 203]

Here, the idea of breaking away from the teachings of your teacher and each school in the second stage is changed to 'comparative research into other schools' while the third stage's 'inventing one's own clever skill' and a state of 'selflessness' is changed to 'independence from your school'. Thus, *shu-ha-ri* is presented not as a practical method of learning and is instead transformed into a means for attaining the ultimate 'state of selflessness' while serving as a guide in terms of how famous swordsmen in the past started their own schools.

In regard to the third stage of the *shu-ha-ri*, one official 'model answer' explanation of it states that *ri* is 'a separation from the various schools and the invention of original or effective techniques sufficient to create a first-rate school' [Tanida 1937: 84; Tanida 1939: 156]. This explanation is largely consistent with the original teaching. However, in this case, again, the act of breaking the teachings of masters or schools in the second stage (*ha*) is removed.

One example of starting a school in terms of this 'model' approach is Tesshū Yamaoka's (1836-88) *Muto-ryu*, which was founded in 1880. However, this example is, in actual fact, an exception. This is because, since the Meiji period, rather than creating new schools, the world of kendo advocated integrating schools in order to make kendo into a stable part of physical education and school curriculum. Nishikubo refers to these achievements with pride in the following manner:

In the Tokugawa period, kendo's separation into different schools reached its peak, and there were over 200; but in the Taisho period today [i.e., 1912-1926], these schools are becoming integrated into one *Dai-Nippon Teikoku Kendo Kata*. Actually, current Hanshi and Kyoshi (the highest ranked teachers) each formerly had their own schools, but now they have all learned the kata formulated by the Butokukai and are all teaching this. Hardly any of them perform their school's kata, and the training institution for kendo teachers, Butokukai Martial Arts Vocational College, does not teach any other kata than that formulated by Butokukai, so that the training is the same across all schools. [Nishikubo 1926: 632]

What is to be emphasized here is that the most important part – breaking away from school and teacher – has been removed from *shu-ha-ri*. As a result, kendo since modern times has practically advocated upholding the teacher's (i.e., the Butokukai's) teachings as absolutes that students must follow with perfect fidelity. This means that, despite explicit statements to the contrary, practitioners of kendo are forced to stay at the first stage and cannot even move to the second stage, let alone the third stage – especially not to create their own version of kendo.

11 'Empty mind' or 'nothingness'.



Of course, in the past, teachers of kendo could have taught skills and practiced methods of different schools based on the various characteristics of each school. In 1930, there were 193 hanshi and kyoshi, and 160 of them had their own schools. However, as Nishikubo points out, 'training methods became completely uniform as well'. The standardisation of all elements of training is not surprising, of course, especially to the extent that kendo became part of a national curriculum. However, what is more surprising is the extent to which this standardisation spread out to kendo as a whole, so that the various and unique styles of kendo practiced in different schools disappeared.

The greatest reason for this homogenisation is the spread of the title (*shogo*) and rank (*dan*) system. This system certainly had a great positive effect in the promotion of kendo, but it also had a negative impact in the form of standardising kendo and ultimately erasing its variety and the unique characteristics of different schools. Regarding this point, the alumni of university kendo clubs met in 1940 in a gathering and made some telling observations. For instance, Saiki Tsuchida (alumnus of Waseda University) stated the following:

**Kendo practice by students today may differ a little, but is mostly the same. It is the same everywhere. It is the same in the same school, but even the same in different schools.<sup>12</sup> It is becoming very unified. Thus, the personality of the individual is becoming lost, so I feel that this scariness or strength has become very rare.**

[Tsuchida et al. 1940: 26]

On the same issue, Masao Miyata (alumnus of Keiō University) said: 'I have toured Kyoto before ... around 1919-1920 ... Since then, as Tsuchida said, things have changed towards becoming standardised'. Kojiro Watanabe (alumnus of Tokyo University) observed:

**This is not just true of student kendo but of kendo in general. I think that what is behind it is the Butokukai gradually prohibiting matches, and their pickiness about style and posture has also undoubtedly had some impact. Student competitors seem to be doing much better now, but on the other hand, I feel that individual character is being suppressed. However, everyone has personality, so I think it is necessary that guidance is provided to improve on that as well.**

[Tsuchida et al. 1940: 42]

Finally, Saiki Tsuchida observed:

**As for student kendo training, I feel that there are increasing numbers training solely for dan grades and shogo status. As a result, everyone's style becomes the same. If you have a unique style, you probably won't be able to get dan and shogo! [laughter] Thus, it is not just an issue of skills, but it is a matter of a certain 'mood' becoming widespread in various directions.** [Tsuchida et al. 1940: 42]

As I have argued, following the transition toward the integration of schools beginning in 1919 and the name change to 'kendo', the Butokukai began to exert control over kendo in various ways. Simultaneously, the spread of titles (*shogo*) and the ranking (*dan*) system led to increasing standardization and the suppression of individual expression. The teaching of *shu-ha-ri* could have served as a basis for resisting this trend and maintaining greater autonomy and variety, but this pedagogical approach was modified and, in the process, lost its power to resist such trends.

## 5 THE POSSIBILITY OF CHANGE

I have argued that the invented traditions of kendo in modern Japan have increased the value and authority of kendo by making it into a recognised part of 'traditional Japanese culture', but that they also sought to prevent it from becoming a part of popular culture or sport. These traditions also worked to prevent the creation of any new or unique styles of kendo, and hence led to its standardisation. Given the many paradoxes and contradictions at play in the institutional existence of modern kendo, one might wonder whether kendo can now possibly reinterpret its principles and undergo any progressive self-reform or transformation.

One answer to this difficult question came from Ukichi Sato (1895–1975), a kendo teacher of Tokyo Higher Normal School, who sought to 'establish a self that thinks' in order to promote kendo's self-reform:

**Kendo today needs to reflect on its roots and start again from scratch.**

**We must not just accept past meaning, objectives, values and the like of kendo as it is. We should not blindly believe ancient writings and legends. We need to have a strict as well as free mind to rethink this.**

12 NB: 'school' in this context is intended to refer to public middle schools and the like, not styles (*ryuha*).

To do this, we must establish a self that thinks ...

Our kendo must not be an echo of kendo of the past. The deepest elements of kendo should not be dictated to us by a third person. Instead, we should confront them directly; we should delve into kendo ourselves to find our own meanings, values and objectives. Unless we do this, we are following someone else's account of kendo, not our own ...

Those practising kendo should find their own kendo. One's own kendo should be created by oneself. That is right. It needs to be a creation ...

A kendo practitioner seriously pursuing the path must destroy the worship of an idol and face the practice itself. We must remove the obstructions in between and bathe in the light of the path directly ...

It is most important to establish a self that pursues the path.

We must establish our own kendo by listening to our pure soul lying deep within. We must seek our own goodwill that is together with god or, to be more direct, ask our inner god to do so.

[Sato 1928a: 26-27]

Sato's claim here is unique and powerful among the various kendo theories in modern Japan. Furthermore, he was also an outspoken critic of the Butokukai. For instance, if we recall the boycott on participation in the second Meiji Shrine National Athletic Festival's kendo division, imposed in 1925 by the vice president of the Butokukai, Nishikubo, that was discussed earlier: the Butokukai sent a statement outlining the reason for doing so to all hanshi, kyoshi, and seirenscho title holders, as well as to the principals of all secondary schools nationwide [Butokukai 1936b]. Sato directly criticized this in the *Asahi Sports* magazine, fundamentally criticizing Nishikubo's arguments.

First, he argues, 'sportsmanship that is the aim of sport is the same as the cultivation of the samurai spirit in the martial arts'; 'the cultivation of the samurai spirit should not be monopolized by martial artists'. Furthermore, he writes: 'There should not be this kind of discrimination in the festival, where we perform before the spirit of the Meiji Emperor'; 'If these are the values of the martial arts, then perhaps we should rather participate in a competitive tournament and demonstrate their true value as an example to other sports' [Sato 1925: 25].

Second, he states: 'martial arts are not contests to determine victory or defeat', though 'if the win-lose format is taken away from the martial arts, they will no longer exist as martial arts'. This is because it is not only competitions, but actually all martial arts practices that 'are done on the premise of win and lose' [Sato 1925: 25].

Ultimately, Sato directly criticizes the Butokukai, saying: 'the martial arts cannot be monopolized by the Butokukai'. Furthermore, he proposed: 'The things of Japan should be spread to the rest of the world'. And, 'these must be the property of ordinary citizens'. Finally, he called upon martial artists as follows:

The time for worshipping idols is past. Wake up to your own power! We cannot allow our martial arts to be fraudulently oppressed by anyone. We must not be used by them [the Butokukai]. If you truly love the martial arts, then throw off your virtuous old clothes, wake up, and take a stand! [Sato 1925: 25]

Seen from a broader perspective, the criticism by Sato might be connected with a radical ethos that is referred to as the 'Taisho era democracy' – a bold, democratic, liberal thinking movement (1912-26) unseen in Japanese history up to that era. Certainly, change was in the air: the Ordinary Election Law granting the right to vote to men 25 and older had just been promulgated five months prior to this, in May 1925.

In any event, Sato strongly criticized and rebuked the self-righteousness and conservatism in Nishikubo's thinking on martial arts. He also raised the larger question of to whom the martial arts belonged and denied the right to a monopoly by the Butokukai. Rather, he suggested that the right to determine a path for martial arts should be claimed by ordinary citizens. Sato's argument to 'establish a self that thinks' in order to promote kendo's self-reform, as we have seen, should be understood as an extension of this idea.

In response to the declaration of the boycott sent by the Butokukai to martial artists, it should be noted that many letters of support were received by the Butokukai headquarters [Butokukai 1936b]. Opposing arguments like those of Sato evidently reflected the views of only a minority of martial artists nationwide. However, that is not to say that Sato was alone and without support. Support for his position is evidenced by a preparation committee that was created by the representatives of other organizations besides the Butokukai, and which was successful in holding a kendo tournament at the Meiji Shrine National Athletic Festival [Naimushyo 1926: 134-142].

The preparation committee, which included Sato, issued a statement regarding the reason for participating on the day of the tournament, in

addition to publicizing criticism of the Butokukai. This demonstrated a liberal outlook on how sport and the martial arts could move forward while exerting equal influence on one another [Naimusho 1926: 134-142]. Moreover, the Minister of Education, in a radio broadcast, touched on the issue of the boycott by the Butokukai and refuted their position, saying that 'sport has originally not been for mere pleasure or comfort, and has not been just for show' [Monbdaijin-kanbo 1927: 20].

Based on the above events, the Butokukai's boycott of the National Athletic Festival appeared to end in a victory for Sato and his cohorts, both in argument and in the actual event itself. However, the incident did not end with the tournament. The Meiji Shrine National Athletic Festival changed its name in 1926 to the Meiji Shrine National Physical Education Festival, and this change allowed the Butokukai to decide to participate without appearing to change its mind or lose face. This is because, from the perspective of the Butokukai, the name change meant that the Butokukai's argument that the martial arts are not for competition had been accepted.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the other demands of the Butokukai had been met, and the Ministry of Education had changed the names of martial arts to kendo and judo in school curricula, also in 1926.

In fact, Sato continued to criticize the Butokukai, and argued that a win-lose format was *necessary* for martial arts just as it was for sports. However, Sato himself did not promote kendo, nor did he bring it into popular culture or make it into a sport. Rather, in later writings, Sato emphasized ideas such as the following: 'Japanese martial arts are the most valuable as a means of understanding the pure spirit of Japan, and most appropriate for promoting the awareness of a Japanese people'; 'in combination with Bushido, Japanese martial arts promote development, with a resulting demonstration of the desired virtues in the martial arts of the spirit of loyalty and patriotism'; and so on [Sato 1928b: 85-86].

This was the 'precious characteristic' of martial arts that was not found in sport. Moreover, the disparities between the martial arts and sport in 'ethnicity and national character' created several other differences: Sato discussed examples taken from competition rules in order to critique the immaturity of kendo competitions as 'the beauty of the martial arts spirit not bound by winning or losing'. In addition, Sato asserted that very burdensome and assiduous etiquette and unscientific and irrational practice methods, as well as the resulting 'suppression of expressing one's emotions', were unique to kendo as part of Japanese culture.

Contrary to our expectations, perhaps, Sato's theory of kendo was itself steeped in 'ethno-symbolism' [Smith 2009] and remained conservative in that it for the most part did not differ much in kind from the Butokukai's own arguments. Like the Butokukai, Sato was happy to accord himself the status and responsibility to make declarations about the value of kendo, how it would be taught in schools, and so on. So, Sato's statements can be said to have been part of, made within, and reflective of the same overarching system or structure. Indeed, the argument to 'establish a self that thinks' in order to promote kendo's self-reform as promulgated by Sato arguably remains blind to the complex problems involved in breaking through the constraints and self-regulation that even he was forced to embrace. Nonetheless, Sato firmly believed that kendo should 'belong' to ordinary citizens and he remained committed to the right of self-determination regarding kendo's values and culture – a belief aligned with a philosophy of universal human rights.

The force and value of such universalist, democratic, and egalitarian lines of thinking have not diminished in the ninety years that have passed since that time. Indeed, innovative, experimental, practitioner-led research and innovation have transformed many fields, not just the martial arts. So, whatever the future holds for kendo, it will inevitably have to deal (whether 'traditionally' or 'creatively') with the paradoxes involved in maintaining an identity and an institutional stability achieved via the production and manipulation of often internally-contradictory invented traditions. It will also have to negotiate the always potentially destabilizing effects of the *shu-ha-ri* philosophy that it explicitly claims to advocate and balance creative innovation against not only ongoing developments in historical knowledge but also its commitment to a self-constructed, and self-restricting, invented tradition.

13 Another reason for the Butokukai's change in attitude was the acceptance of the Butokukai's assertion that entrance fees should not be charged (i.e., that the martial arts were not a spectacle) [Butokukai 1936a].

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## CONTRIBUTOR

*Bok-kyu Choi studied physics, martial arts studies, classical Chinese and philosophy at Sogang University and Seoul National University. His doctoral thesis focuses on the historical background and compilation of Muyeobotongji, or Comprehensive Illustrated Manuals of Martial Arts. His research interests centre on the classical martial arts systems of Korea, China and Japan, and extend to European martial traditions. He currently lives in the Netherlands and chairs the Korean Institute for Martial Arts (KIMA). He has published numerous articles and monographs on martial arts related issues. In addition to being a scholar, he is among the highest ranked practitioners of sibpalki, a Korean classical martial art, and the president of the Dutch Sibpalki Association.*

# 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 (1<sup>st</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> century AD) through physical conflicts as well as the exchange of envoys and commerce. However, it is only in the latter half of the 16<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

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)<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

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*

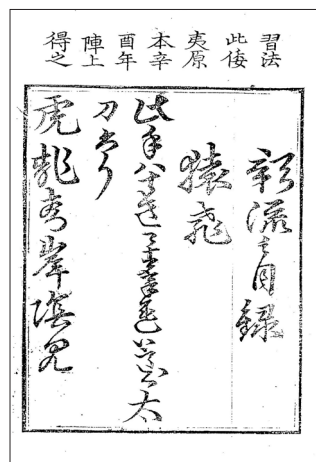


Figure 1:  
Kage-ryu Scroll from  
*Jixiaoxinshu*

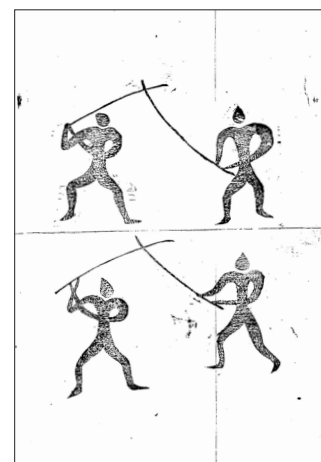


Figure 2:  
Kage-ryu from  
*Jixiao Xinshu*



Figure 3:  
Kage-ryu from  
*Wubeizhi*



Figure 4:  
Kage-ryu from  
*Wubeizhi*

<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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].<sup>7</sup>

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.

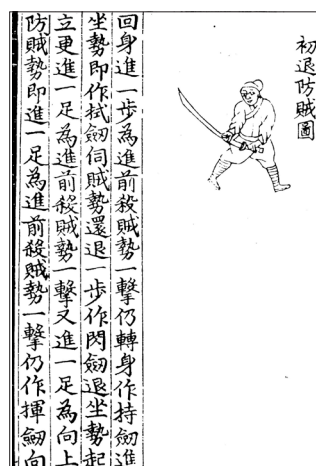


Figure 5:  
Jangdo  
from *Muyejebo*



Figure 6:  
Comprehensive chart of jangdo  
from *Muyejebo*



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

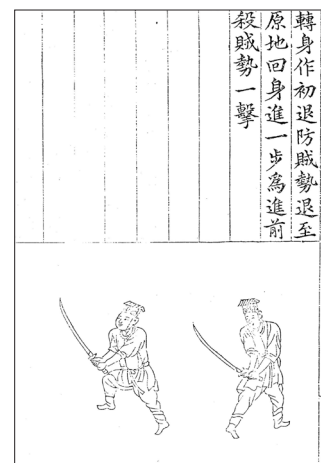


Figure 8:  
Ssangsudo  
from *Muyedobotongji*

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

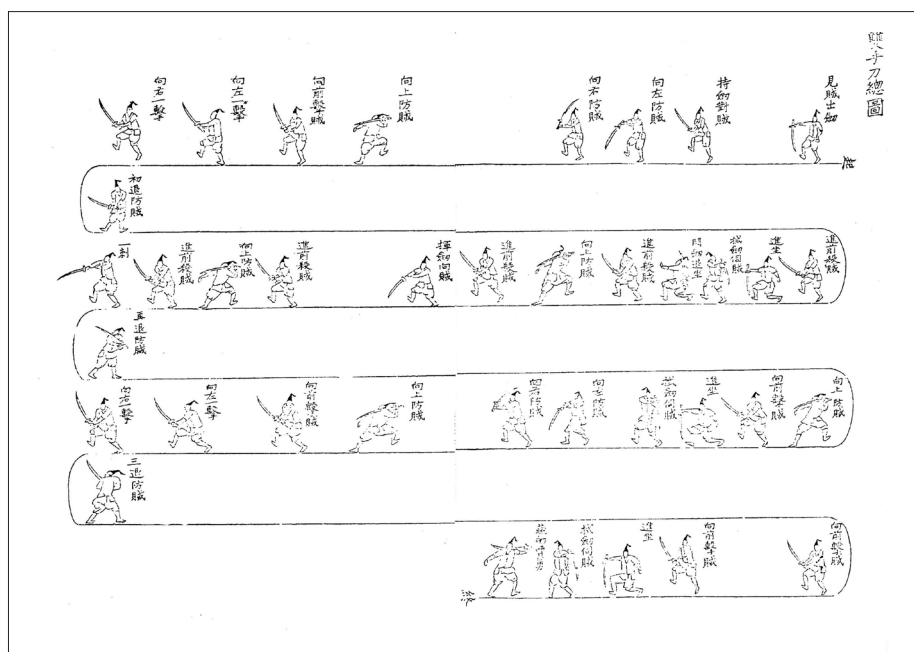
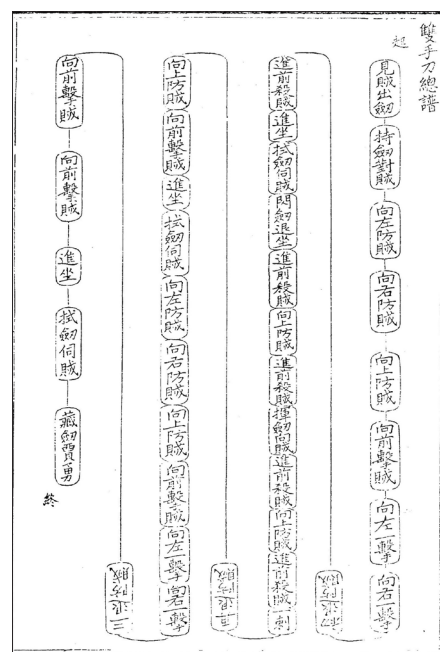


Figure 9: Ssangsudo from *Muyedobotongji*



(a) Comprehensive diagram

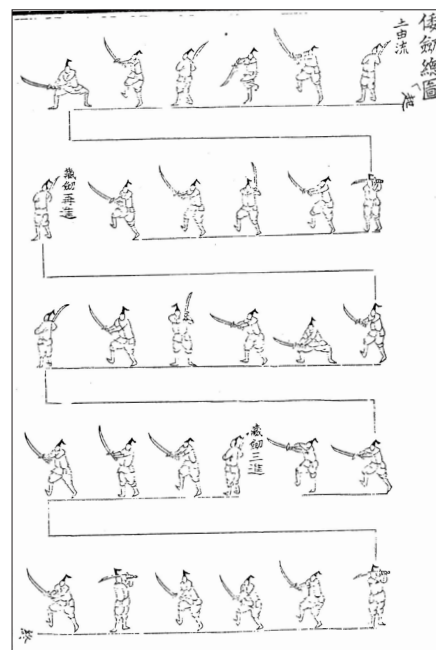
(b) Comprehensive chart



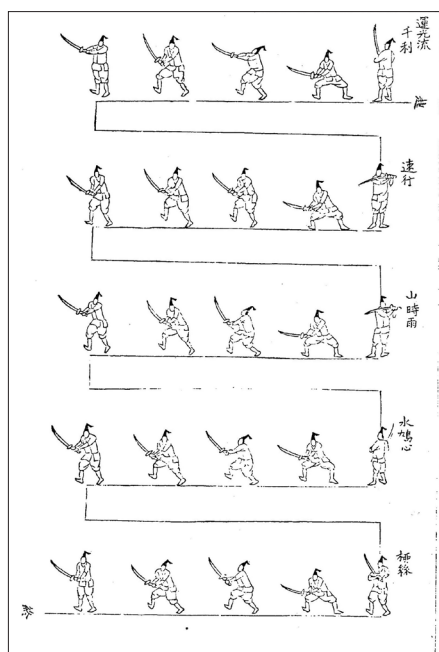
Japanese government held martial arts competitions in honour of the delegations from Joseon. Yagyu Munenori (柳生但馬守宗矩, 1571-1646), who was a swordsman of *Yagyu shinkage-ryu* and taught fencing for the Tokugawa (Shogun) family, directly contacted the Joseon delegation as general manager of reception. 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 *shinto-ryu* was founded by Minamoto no Yoshitsune (1159-June 15 1189), when it was really founded by Iizasa Ienao.

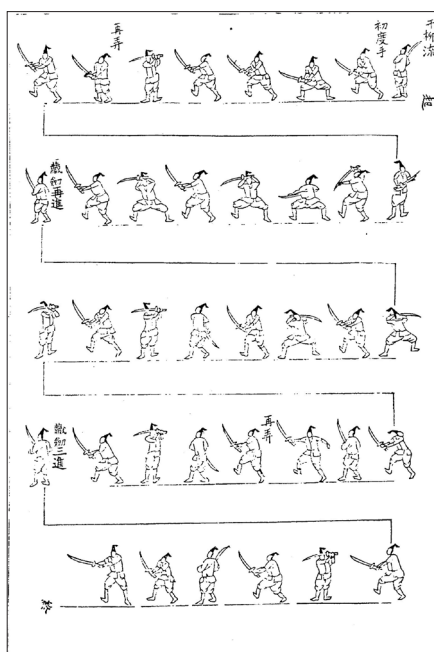
Figure 10:  
Waegeom from  
*Muyedobotongji*



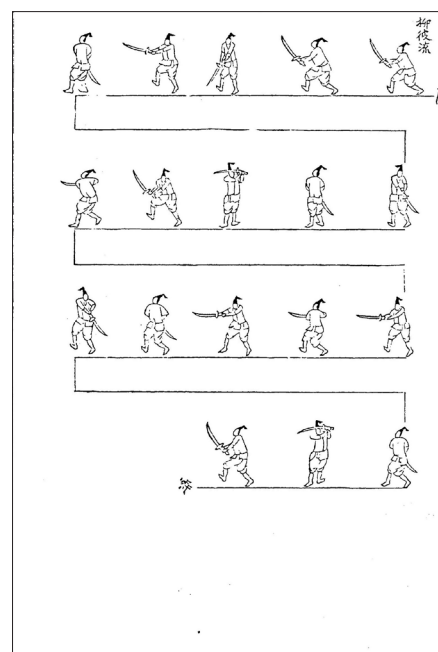
(a) *Toyu-ryu* 土由流



(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*

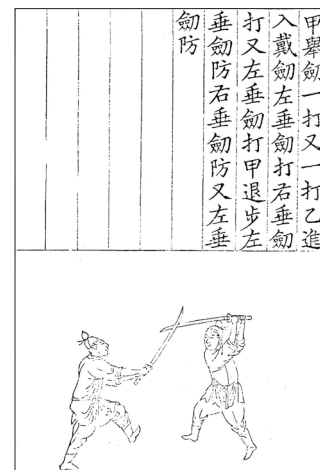
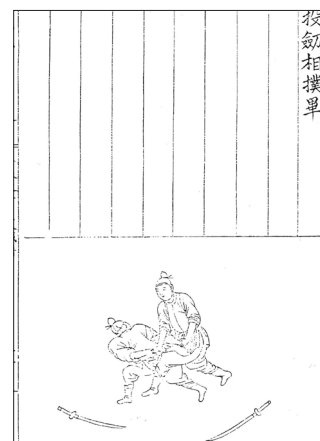


Figure 13:  
Sword Combat from the  
*Muyedobotongji*



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.

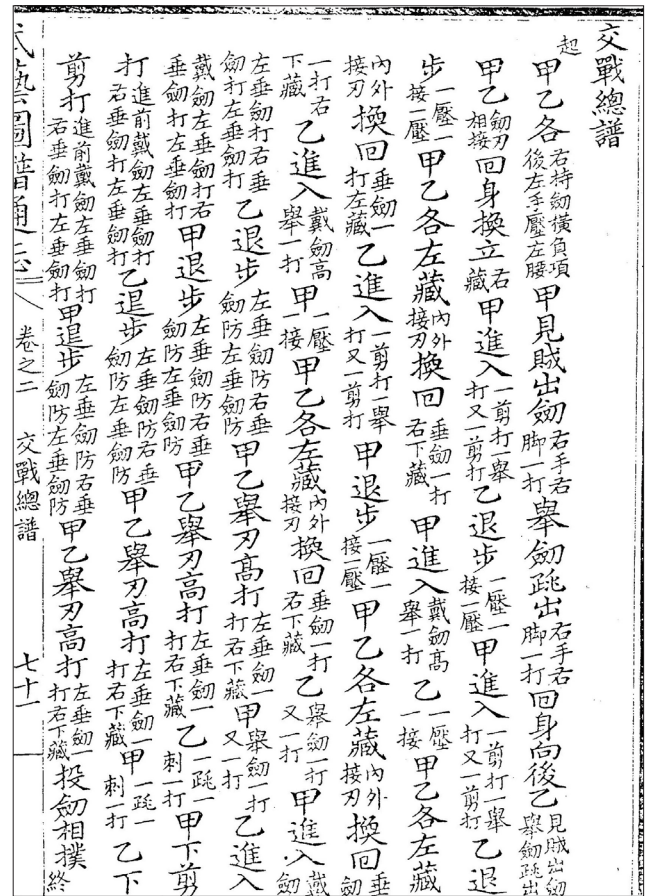
Another feature of the sword combat described in the *Muyedobotongji* is that the engagement ends in grappling. It was assumed that the sabre was lost/dropped in the melee. This tendency to end in wrestling can also be seen in the gwonbeop (Fist Methods) chapter of the *Muyedobotongji*.

### 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

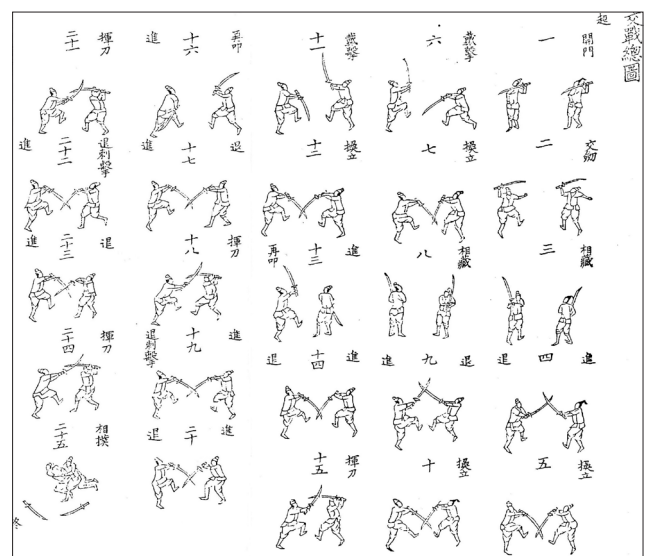


Figure 14: Combat from *Muyedobotongji*

(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 19<sup>th</sup> 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-19<sup>th</sup> 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 23<sup>rd</sup>, 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.<sup>8</sup>

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.

<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup>

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].

<sup>9</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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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## CONTRIBUTOR

*Kotaro Yabu is Associate Professor in the Faculty of Sports Science at Sendai University in Sendai. His research explores the process of the dissemination of budo overseas and its modernization within Japan in the early 20th century. He has two chapters on the overseas propagation of judo in Yasuhiro Sakaue's edited Umi o watatta jujutsu to judo – Nihon budo no dainamizumu [Jujutsu and Judo Overseas – The Dynamism of Japanese Budo], Seikyusha, 2010. His most recent publication is 'Ambivalence about the Location and Interpretation of Jujutsu Textbooks Published in the Meiji Period: Focusing on a Multilayered Structure Woven by Various Elements Surrounding Jujutsu' in the Bulletin of Sendai University [2017].*

# THE ACCULTURATION OF JUDO IN THE UNITED STATES DURING THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR BEYOND THE 'MATCH-BASED' HISTORICAL POINT OF VIEW KOTARO YABU

## DOI

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## ABSTRACT

In Japan, the history of the overseas diffusion of judo tends to be depicted ethnocentrically. In particular, the success of its spread has often been discussed the same way as victory or defeat in war, through the historical view that the origin and legitimacy of judo was prescribed essentially. What is drawn there is nothing but the history of cultural conflict without reconciliation. The purpose of this article is to re-examine such an ossified historical view from the viewpoint of cultural transformation. This article deals with 'negotiations' by both sides in terms of acceptance and transmission and the variations of judo generated through these processes. The focus is the United States and the time period is that of the Russo-Japanese War, which is when judo was transmitted to foreign countries for the first time. This article focuses on three key dimensions: 1) Discussing the role expected of judo in modern Japan by paying attention to the ideal of 'kokushi'. 2) Some meanings given to judo in the recipient society are shown in relation to jujutsu or jiu-jitsu, which were accepted ahead of judo. 3) Two opportunities for cultural change of judo are shown. One is jiu-do based on the needs of the recipient's society while the other is judo as devised by judo practitioners themselves.



## INTRODUCTION

This article treats Kodokan judo as a modern cultural practice that emerged together with the new Meiji nation-state. Established in 1882, Nihonden Kodokan Judo (hereafter 'judo' or 'Kodokan') posed a contrast with jujutsu: the latter encompassed hundreds of competing traditional schools (largely viewed as outdated) whereas the former was largely centralized and was soon accepted as a distinctly modern cultural practice [Guttman and Thompson 2001: 9-104; Inoue 2004].

Yamashita Yoshitsugu (1865–1935)<sup>1</sup> (along with other instructors in the United States) pioneered the spread of judo outside Japan. According to Murata Naoki, after a spectacular performance in the United States, Yamashita 'left such a profound mark in the history of Judo that it is no exaggeration to state that no one else played a greater role' [Murata 2011: 68].

Japanese accounts of the diffusion of judo overseas often focus on victory or defeat in matches to gauge Japan's effectiveness in spreading its culture beyond its borders. One example states:

**The first step towards spreading judo is to triumph over local fighters. It is an inevitable ordeal or destiny to gain a victory, as seen from the cultural characteristics of the martial arts, especially in spreading the arts throughout international society.**

[Murata 2011: 86-87]<sup>2</sup>

For descriptive purpose, this article will refer to this viewpoint as the 'match-based historical point of view'. Based on this historical view, Yamashita's efforts are described as follows:

**Yamashita Yoshitsugu, a pioneer in spreading judo outside Japan, relied on the skills he honed at the Kodokan to fight against martial artists (wrestlers and boxers) in the United States. Victory in battle was the only way to get red-haired and blue-eyed Westerners to recognise the power of judo. There was no choice but to win. Furthermore, Yamashita had to prove the superiority of judo techniques in the United States for all to see, just as he had proven the strengths of judo to the martial arts world with the complete victory of judo over traditional jujutsu [in Japan].**

[Murata 2011: 66]

The issue here is how the match-based historical view considers the diffusion of culture as a zero-sum game. Coupled with ethnocentricity, the spread of judo outside Japan becomes coloured by dichotomies such as enemy/ally, orthodoxy/heresy, and spreading/receiving. To overcome this tendency toward ethnocentricity in Japanese sports, the Japan Society of the History of Physical Education and Sport advocates 'combining how Japanese people view modern and traditional Japanese sports with how people from other cultures view Japanese sports' [Abe 2005: 40-41].

This points to the importance of understanding conditions on the receiving side as well when discussing cultural diffusion. Research on this abounds in the history of American judo<sup>3</sup>; when discussing the spread of judo outside Japan, meanwhile, it is essential to consider the history of jiu-jitsu as it developed in the United States. (I have written 'jiu-jitsu' here rather than 'jujutsu' for reasons on which I will elaborate below.) Although jiu-jitsu played a role in laying the groundwork for the acceptance of judo, this historical fact is mostly overlooked in the history of Japanese judo, because jiu-jitsu was viewed as an obstacle in the spread of 'legitimate' judo. However, this article will focus not on the degree to which the 'true nature' of judo was accurately transmitted but on the significance of cultural diffusion on a global scale.

This article has two objectives in response to the extant research discussed above. The first objective is to stand the match-based historical view on its head as I shift attention to the historical facts overlooked in such a view and to investigate the significance of this. Rather than focusing on whether the efforts at diffusion were successful, the second objective is to use historical records from both sides to investigate the spread of judo outside Japan, giving ample attention to the various ulterior motives on the part of those disseminating judo while considering how it took root in foreign soil.

The reasons for targeting the United States during the Russo-Japanese War are as follows. First, the overseas diffusion of judo and jujutsu started at the turn of the last century. The background was 'Japonism' in the latter half of the 19th century and Japanese migration abroad. Compared to judo, whose dissemination was organized and systematic, there are many cases of the spontaneous, 'unplanned'/'unmanaged' spread of jiu-jitsu by general immigrants.

1 Note: All Japanese names within this article are written with the surname first.

2 This assertion can be taken as representative of the general view, especially given Murata's status as a noted judo researcher and his positions as Head of Directors of the Japanese Academy of Budo and curator of the Kodokan Judo Museum and Library. Note that this article relies on the colophon included in this document for information on Murata's personal history.

3 For some especially compelling examples, see Joseph Svinth's study of Yamashita's activities while staying in the United States, which is supported by primary historical materials [Svinth 2003: 47-59]; Thomas Green's work on the activities of Tomita Tsunejiro (1865–1937) and Maeda Mitsuyo (1878–1941) in the United States, which covers the same time period as Yamashita's activities [Green 2003: 61-70]; and Brusse and Matsumoto's widely respected, and arguably definitive, work on the history of American judo [Brusse and Matsumoto 2005].



Second, the Russo-Japanese War was not just a bilateral war surrounding the imperialistic rule of Northeast Asia. Japan was supported by Britain while Russia was supported by France and Germany. The United States observed the situation with interest while maintaining neutrality. The eyes of the world focused on Japan and Russia, especially as the dominance of Japan was reported. The secrets of its strength were sought. In this context, special attention was paid to Japanese martial arts.

Third, the United States is the country where the overseas instruction of judo first took place. There were several reasons why judo pioneers like Yamashita Yoshitsugu were able to work smoothly in the United States. One is that American investors were seeking to forge ties with Japanese society, both domestically and internationally, especially given the wide interest in the Manchurian Railway. Another relates to the exchange of different kinds of students. For instance, the principal destination of elite Japanese students when studying abroad at that time was the United States. At the same time, there was also exchange between the US and Japanese Navies dating from the beginning of the Meiji era. Many students of the Kodokan ended up becoming international students or naval officers.

Finally – perhaps most importantly in relation to this article – judo was welcomed and accepted so easily because nothing (at least of Japanese origin) stood in its way. That is to say, jujutsu did not effectively play the role of judo's forerunner in the USA. Of course, jujutsu was introduced slightly earlier than judo. Judo was sometimes even considered to be one style of jujutsu. Yet Kano Jigoro, the founder of judo, actively militated against the idea that judo and jujutsu (or jiu-jitsu) were closely related. Indeed, it will be helpful at this point to turn to Kano's view on this matter.

## 1 JUDO'S IDENTITY

### *A Method for Cultivating Kokushi*

Kano Jigoro (1860-1938) trained in two schools of jujutsu during his student days, ultimately developing an approach that he believed went beyond the physical training methods and martial skills that they offered. After graduating from Imperial University (now the University of Tokyo), Kano pursued a career as an educator, seeking to instill educational value into jujutsu. He ultimately named his martial art judo. He sent his best disciples to institutions of higher education and to military academies in an attempt to spread judo throughout Japan.

Kano's goal was to cultivate '*kokushi*' – patriots who would dedicate themselves to national development. For example, during a lecture in 1889, Kano insisted that judo was a means to strengthen patriotism, that Japan could obtain power on a par with any country in the world through judo, and that Japan's progress and traditions would earn the admiration of the rest of the world [Kano 1889: 88-135].<sup>4</sup> For this reason, Kano worked hard to exhibit judo as a form of culture suited to these objectives inside and outside Japan. In other words, Kano needed to present judo as a form of culture that had both a certain nationality, that would make it suitable for study by kokushi, while also being impressive enough to be accepted, especially in the West.

The same might be said for the bushido, of course. In pre-modern times, bushido was the norm only for the samurai class, but in modern times, bushido came to be invoked and deployed as the morality of the nation. Bushido thus developed a double character. On the one hand, for the Japanese, it indicated the uniqueness of Japan. On the other hand, bushido was regarded as very similar to Western chivalry. A famous work by Nitobe Inazo, *Bushido: Samurai Ethics and the Soul of Japan*, was actually originally written in English, and was published in the United States in 1899. It was only after this book was widely accepted in the West that a Japanese translation was at last published in 1908.

### *Distance from Jujutsu*

Kano's naming of his martial art was a two-fold attempt to distance it from jujutsu as part of his cultural strategy. First, by positioning judo as an evolution of jujutsu, Kano gained the historical legitimacy appropriate for a martial art carrying the name '*Nihonden*' (that is,

4 This lecture was held in 1889 by the Dai Nippon Kyoiku Kai, Japan's first nationwide educational organisation.

'transmitted to Japan from ancient times') [Yabu 2011: 116-137]. In this, he referenced the Japanese origin of jujutsu. In pre-modern Japanese history, jujutsu was often considered to be derived from China, a view that registered Japan-China relations at that time. However, Kano overturned this point of view, repositioning jujutsu as very much a part of *Japanese* history. Kano also actively communicated this message to the Western world.

In other words, this approach was nothing other than the effort to enable judo to be recognized by the West as a practice based on Japanese culture and history. This was important because, arguably, in modern Japan, it was difficult at that time for Japanese agencies and authorities to value their own cultures without some kind of approval and acknowledgement from the West. (In this respect, Kano and Nitobe's attempts share similar features.)

After relating judo to a strategically deliberate understanding of jujutsu as essentially Japanese, Kano's second strategy was to *differentiate* the two. On many occasions, he stressed that he considered jujutsu to be an outdated practice that had failed to modernise. For example, in 1927, Kano described conditions during the early days of the Meiji era as follows:

When I began to teach judo, jujutsu was a dying form. The pride of old was no longer in evidence among the teachers of jujutsu ... People were appearing who did performances for money, just like in some kind of music-hall show. In the West, apparently there were many cases of [such teachers] giving lectures to the public for fees. Now, while I am sure that they did not face public contempt for working in this spirit, people may very well have [inwardly] looked down on them, because they were performing [jujutsu] for money as a public spectacle, making it into an amusement.  
[Kano 1927: 95]

When Kano founded the Kodokan, he aimed to establish judo as a means to cultivate a new generation of elites. Therefore, he criticised the contemporary state of jujutsu and made a decisive break from it.<sup>5</sup> In other words, he stereotyped jujutsu as culturally vulgar and disparaged the people who gathered in the spectacle in order to promote judo by contrast.

5 On the other hand, establishing judo as the **guardian** of jujutsu enabled Kano to strategically encompass jujutsu [See Yabu 2017: 1-15].

### *The Russo-Japanese War and the 'Victory' of Judo*

The superiority of judo was also shown by the depiction of judo's victory in actual competitions. One prominent example was the overwhelming victory of Kodokan practitioners over jujutsu schools during a martial arts tournament held by the Metropolitan Police Department in 1885 to select a martial art to teach police officers [Maruyama 1939: 142-143]. Although the details of this tournament are unclear even today, judo's victory became legendary and was cited as proof of its superiority over jujutsu.

This discourse of victory ultimately shifted from the arena of 'judo versus jujutsu' to 'judo practitioners versus foreigners'. One example is an anecdote involving Hirose Takeo, a naval officer who was a prominent judo player and who was ultimately deified as a 'military god' for sacrificing himself to protect his men during the war. While studying in Russia as a student, Hirose confronted a rude Russian-commissioned officer, subduing the man without injuring him [Maruyama 1939: 165-166].<sup>6</sup>

No historical records support these apocryphal stories, but that is beside the point. What is significant is that the opponents in these accounts are Russian and that these accounts were produced against the backdrop of the Russo-Japanese War. Also noteworthy is that these stories depict battles of character rather than mere skill. It was easy to connect these stories of situations where a small Japanese judo practitioner (who understands decorum and morality) is able to easily dispense with a large foreign man (who is arrogant and insolent) to the events of the day – and thereby provide implicit justification for the Russo-Japanese War.

This is not the place to parse such apocrypha. The point is that a discursive pattern was established suggesting that war and cultural struggle were the same. In other words, the overseas diffusion of judo became bound to ideas and discourses on Japan's status and fortunes.

6 Another anecdote claims that Kano, on returning to Japan from a visit to Europe, pinned down a Russian military officer. See Andreas Niehaus's article in this issue for more on Kano legends.

## 2 THE MISSION OF JUDO PRACTITIONERS

### *Judo Practitioners Travel to the United States and Engage in 'Matches'*

Judo first spread to the United States when Samuel Hill (1857–1931), an executive at Great Northern Railway, sought a judo teacher for his son.<sup>7</sup> At this time, Yamashita Yoshitsugu travelled to the United States thanks to the influence of an exchange student learning judo from him. Tomita Tsunejiro and Maeda Mitsuyo travelled to the United States the following year.

After beginning his efforts in the United States in December 1903, Yamashita obtained the support of Japanese Naval personnel, who were welcomed to the centre of politics in the United States. Among them was another fan of judo named Takeshita Isamu (1870–1946). Through March and April 1904, Yamashita went on to teach judo to other Americans, including President Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919). After winning promotion test matches held at the White House and the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, Yamashita began teaching judo at the academy in January 1905. He returned to Japan around the end of April 1906.

Tomita travelled to the United States with Maeda – a young and promising member of the Kodokan – as his assistant. After arriving in the United States in December 1904, Tomita's group attempted to emulate Yamashita's success in spreading judo to the United States Naval Academy. However, a test match held by Tomita ended in defeat, crushing their ambitions.

According to the match-based historical view, Yamashita (who achieved victory during his matches) was a success while Tomita (who was defeated) was a failure. Tomita's defeat is considered a 'regretful incident' [Murata 2011: 86] in the history of judo and has been explained away by the argument that Tomita was too old and nervous to win. However, this is unconvincing when considering that Yamashita achieved victory under largely the same conditions.

It is important to determine the causal relationship between victory and defeat in matches and success or failure in the spread of judo. Certainly, Tomita and Maeda failed to establish a solid foundation from which to spread judo. However, this does not mean that efforts to spread judo were derailed. Developments after this 'defeat' are discussed in the latter part of this article.

<sup>7</sup> This story may well be a (problematic) simplification. It is likely that Hill had a different intention in mind. Hill was looking for cheap railway labourers at the time, and was close to Furuya Masajiro, a prominent figure in Japanese-American society.

### *An 'Evangelist' for the Ideals of Judo*

While in the United States, Yamashita viewed his stay as a suitable opportunity to repay his debt of gratitude to Kano, which he had longed to do for some time [Mitajuyukai 1933: 22–23]. Tomita shared this sentiment. These sentiments indicate the Confucian relationship between teacher and pupil, of unquestioningly venerating one's master. These men equated judo with Kano, and both took it upon themselves to behave as evangelists for Kano's ideals. Their efforts to spread judo are thus akin to diffusion or proselytising.

Kano, for his part, expected this of them. Below is an excerpt from a letter Kano sent to Yamashita while the latter was in the United States:

Right now we are at the important stage of spreading judo to America, so please apply yourself fully in making sure that you [Yamashita] do all you can to create a permanent foundation [for judo]. You are now in another land as the public face of judo, so of course you will be much in the public eye there. This means, Yamashita, that everything you do will influence the future of judo. Thus, you must be sure to be on your absolutely best behavior in your dealings with others. You must think of the future and act with the greatest prudence at every turn. I [Kano] passionately want to present you to the American people, Yamashita, not merely as a teacher of the technical values of judo, but as a person whose nobility of character has been fostered through the practice of judo. [Yokoyama 1941: 313]

It is important to investigate how judo was interpreted by American society at the time. Many articles written when judo was first brought to the United States describe it as a martial art with a long history derived directly from jujutsu, which was perfected as a form of culture for gentlemen by an instructor named Kano Jigoro, who truly represented modern Japan.<sup>8</sup> Whether this was actually based on the discourse of Yamashita and others in this age – the heyday of 'yellow journalism' – is another matter. The description of judo, however, is largely accurate.

<sup>8</sup> The following is a selection of such articles: Boston Globe, Dec. 1904; Washington Times, Jan. 1905; New York Daily Tribune, Jan. 1905; Van Welt Daily Bulletin, Jan. 1905; Washington Times, Jan. 1905; Los Angeles Herald, Jan. 1905; Breckenridge News, Feb. 1905; San Francisco Call, Feb. 1905; Washington Post, Jun. 1905.

### *Jiu-Jitsu Fever*

At the same time, an investigation of the entire period of the Russo-Japanese War reveals an overwhelming number of articles that confuse jujutsu and judo, or that view judo as a subset of jujutsu [Yabu 2009: 13-26]. This is explained by the fact that the United States was embroiled in 'jujutsu fever' at this time. However, this form of jujutsu was similar to but different from Japanese jujutsu. This is why I refer to the jujutsu created and developed in the United States as 'jiu-jitsu' – a spelling that evokes the American spelling and hence the 'Americanised' practices. The fever that gripped society during this time should therefore be referred to as 'jiu-jitsu fever' [Brousse and Matsumoto 2005: 28-32; see also Yabu 2010: 12-60].

An American named John J. O'Brien (1867-?), who studied jujutsu in Nagasaki, had already planted the seeds for the acceptance of jiu-jitsu in 1900. Although unknown in Japan, he taught jujutsu to President Roosevelt at the end of 1902 (prior to Yamashita's instruction), and his efforts were often reported in the local media.<sup>9</sup>

With the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, the media constantly covered jiu-jitsu, which was commonly reported as the secret behind Japan's superiority on the battlefield. For example, an article covering Japan's advance on the Liaodong Peninsula reported: 'The Japanese are applying the principles of jiu-jitsu to the art of war, and have thrown the garrison of Niu-Chwang with all economy of force' [*New York Times*, 12 May 1904]. Similar articles are too numerous to mention.

Three men were especially important in providing exposure to jiu-jitsu at this time: Higashi Katsukuma (1881-?), Harrie Irving Hancock (1868-1922), and the enigmatic K. Saito (about whom I will have more to say in what follows). Higashi was a martial artist whose exploits were frequently reported from the end of 1904 onwards. Hancock, a novelist, published six jiu-jitsu texts over the course of the war which were eventually translated and published throughout Europe. Saito was given a page in the *National Police Gazette* (a sports journal popular among the public) to introduce jiu-jitsu over a period of at least one year.

Rather than being viewed merely as an impractical form of culture to be admired, jiu-jitsu was received together with the desire to improve one's body during the imperialist age. It gained particular attention as a popular, and commercial, means to reform physical culture at the time. In summary, the American public was already prepared for jiu-jitsu fever.

<sup>9</sup> For details of O'Brien's efforts in Nagasaki and the United States, see Yabu [2012: 43-56].

## 3 JIU-JITSU AND JIU-DO

### *Judo Lies Buried*

Although it was historically prior in the USA, judo was often described by comparing it to jiu-jitsu. For example, one article quotes Professor Yamashita: 'A man who only knows jiu-jitsu may unwillingly make cruel use of it and not know how to restore his victim ... [Conversely,] judo teaches a higher study of the body' (*New York Times*, 2 Jan. 1905). Another article quotes Tomita: 'Jiu-jitsu, he [Tomita] said, is an almost extinct art and a savage one that [should be] extinct. The real art of self-defense is ju-do ... "Ju-do" means "gentle art"' [*New York Times*, 6 Apr. 1905].

Although Kano's authority enabled him to largely control the discourse about jujutsu in Japan, this was not the case in the United States. It was not just that commercial sporting amusement – which Kano rejected – had already gained popularity and acceptance in the United States; rather, jiu-jitsu was rapidly developing within American society as a form of 'internal foreign culture' which reflected the desires of the public. In other words, it was no longer just a matter of cultivating the right kind of 'external self-culture' from the perspective of the Japanese side. No Japanese person, including Kano, could control this newly emerging American discourse.

Judo, as a new foreign culture, was gradually incorporated as a part of jiu-jitsu. For example, on the subject of the cancellation of judo instruction in Annapolis, it was reported:

**One year ago the craze to acquire a thorough knowledge of the Japanese art of self-defense was paramount. The results of matches in the last six months, in which American wrestlers demonstrated that the native art was superior to the Japanese arm, leg and body twists, convinced the cadets that jiu-jitsu had been greatly overrated.**  
[*San Francisco Call*, 3 Apr. 1906]

Similarly, according to *The Boston Globe*:

**'I [Admiral Sands] expect to make an adverse report upon the Japanese method when I am called upon to act. A man is more apt to be injured or abused. I think it is a trick ... I do not think that intentional injury is the spirit of sport.**  
[*Boston Globe*, 7 Feb. 1906]

Numerous similar articles exist.<sup>10</sup> Of course, this does not represent the 'defeat' of judo. As jujutsu became jiu-jitsu, there was also the opportunity for judo to be transformed for local tastes as jiu-do. Ironically, perhaps, judo began transforming into jiu-do in the aftermath of jiu-jitsu fever.

### *Strawman Verification*

In the context of general consumption, jiu-jitsu was advertised as being superior to the local physical exercise culture that already existed. However, simple curiosity transformed into unease and wariness on the back of Japanese aggression during the initial stage of acceptance, and jiu-jitsu ultimately needed to be verified in public.

One such incident was a match between Higashi and a professional wrestler, which was described as a public test [*Evening World*, 6 Apr. 1905]. As expected, Higashi was defeated in front of several thousands of spectators during a match in April 1905 at Grand Central Palace in New York. That same month, O'Brien demonstrated jiu-jitsu during the 14th Annual National Convention of the American Physical Education Association, with analysis performed by an expert. The analysis indicated no significant difference between jiu-jitsu and Western wrestling and confirmed that current anatomical knowledge could explain how jiu-jitsu worked [*The New York Times*, 20 Apr. 1905].

The defeat of jiu-jitsu was a sign of public unease, and in extreme cases, the outcome was predetermined. In other words, this strawman verification represents putting those concerned with the 'ordering of culture' at ease. Doing so was the first step towards incorporating the internal foreign and local cultures. Beside these processes, judo gained attention as a new 'product' to replace jiu-jitsu, as the value of the latter had by then decreased. For example, in an article written immediately after Higashi's defeat, the enigmatic Saito raised an issue with the rules of the match, arguing (with reference to Yamashita) that jiu-jitsu would have defeated wrestling had there been no restrictions [*National Police Gazette*, 6 May 1905]. Borrowing arguments from Yamashita's fame, Saito presented jiu-do as a true culture superior even to jujutsu and concluded that the jiu-jitsu praised by Americans was merely a pale imitation.

The discourse that judo was superior to jujutsu was indeed the same as that of judo practitioners. But Saito's jiu-do was no longer the same as judo. In truth, Saito's real existence cannot be confirmed by any

historical materials. When the Russo-Japanese War began, this man suddenly appeared on the surface of the most popular sports newspaper in the United States, and when the war ended, he also disappeared as if he had done his job. After all, the debate between jiu-do and jiu-jitsu was created by Saito as a strawman.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps this was a play within a play.

### *Jiu-do within Jiu-jitsu*

After his defeat, Higashi collaborated with Hancock and gracefully transitioned from an adherent of jiu-jitsu to a practitioner of jiu-do. Together, they published *The Complete Kano Jiu-Jitsu (Judo)* in the autumn of 1905. As neither had any connection to the Kodokan, this volume must be regarded as apocryphal.

However, we should pay attention to the role played by this apocryphal volume in terms of cultural acceptance. It was widely translated and published throughout the West, and it continued to be reprinted after World War II. The volume had a certain influence all over the Western world as a textbook on jiu-do for quite some time. For example, Erwin von Bälz (1849-1913) – a major figure in the development of modern Japanese medicine and physical education – wrote the foreword for the German translation [Yabu 2011]. At the very least, the influence of this book should not be underestimated. By comparison, it should be noted that it was only in 1906 that the first official judo textbook written in a foreign language was published, and its publisher did not have much in the way of an international sales network.

Incidentally, this volume states that, in contemporary Japan, Kano-style techniques had attained supremacy in the martial arts world as the modern and perfected forms of jiu-jitsu, arguing that these methods were superior to existing jiu-jitsu. In other words, the authors regarded popular jiu-jitsu as inferior. It also insisted that Hancock truly understood Kano's style.

It is worth noting that, while the volume attempts to develop an image of jiu-do as superior to jiu-jitsu, like Saito, the opposite is true. For example, Higashi ends his endorsement as follows:

**To make the matter clear I [Higashi] will state that *jiudo* is the term selected by Professor Kano as describing his system more accurately than *jiu-jitsu* does. Professor Kano is one of the leading educators of Japan, and it is natural that he should**

10 In the period of time most relevant to this article, the point had already been reached where judo was not even mentioned by name (e.g. see: *Salt Lake Herald*, Feb. 1906; *New York Daily Tribune*, Feb. 1906; *New York Tribune*, Mar. 1906; *New York Daily Tribune*, Apr. 1906; *Los Angeles Times*, Apr. 1906; *New York Daily Tribune*, Dec. 1906.

11 The representative of such strawmen would be Hashimura Togo. This virtual 'Japanese' character, created in 1907 by Wallace Irwin, maintained popularity in the United States for over 30 years. Regarding this point, the research by Uzawa is the most detailed [Uzawa 2008].



cast about for the technical word that would most accurately describe his system. But the Japanese people generally still cling to the more popular nomenclature and call it *jiu-jitsu*.

*Jiu-jitsu*, or *jiudo*, is in Japan the art of the gentleman. It is not surprising, therefore, that the highest evolution of our ancient Japanese style of combat should come about in these days through the efforts of Professor Jigoro Kano. To him we owe much, and also to Messrs. Hoshino and Tsutsumi, who, by their toil, have rounded out the Kano system to its present perfection and supremacy.

[Higashi in Hancock and Higashi 1905: vi]

Here, the issue of jujutsu versus judo is handled as a difference in terminology, and Higashi grants them the same cultural identity as 'the art of the gentleman'. In this context, Kano is merely a man who developed a superior form of jujutsu. Furthermore, by concluding that Kano's invention was further modified by other jujutsu practitioners (Hoshino and Tsutsumi), Higashi depicts an image of jiu-jitsu that is ultimately superior to jiu-do.

#### 4 MAEDA-STYLE JUDO

##### *Maeda Mitsuyo, the Kokushi*

While all the judo evangelists adhered to judo to repay their gratitude to Kano, there were also opportunities to transform their own practices. Some individuals, including Maeda Mitsuyo, reformed judo through their interactions with foreign cultures. Maeda's statements support the idea that he was a kokushi:

If [I] were to lose, I would dishonour not only judo, but Japan as well. I absolutely have to win [matches]. Furthermore, Japan's reputation is so great since the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War that I need to increasingly inspire myself.

[Maeda in Susukida 1912: 444-445]

There have been occasions where I have shown the certificate I received from the Japanese consul in New York [to my opponent]. You will not find the name 'Maeda Mitsuyo' written there. I have another name. Maeda Yamato. When I am granted a certificate, I call myself Nihon Maeda, so that I can fight matches with foreigners without damaging the reputation of judo in my role representing Japanese judo practitioners living overseas.

[Maeda Susukida 1912: 402-403]<sup>12</sup>

12 'Yamato' is one of Japan's names or aliases. It is often used in the context emphasizing the ethnic homogeneity of Japanese and spirituality inherent in Japan, like 'Yamato Minzoku' and 'Yamato Damashii'. Japan is 'Nihon' or 'Nippon' in Japanese.

However, Maeda did not represent Japan out of pride as a judo practitioner. He lost his official position after Tomita's defeat and had no stable means of earning a living. He was able to get by thanks to the support of the local Japanese immigrant community. Maeda eventually found new life in a judo vs. wrestling match. However, his real reason for fighting as an anonymous judo practitioner was both because he thought that defeat would besmirch the reputation of judo and because he 'consequently felt ashamed among his fellow countrymen' [Susukida 1912: 249-250].

Jiu-jitsu fever was considered problematic within the Japanese community, because 'Americans mistakenly believed that the many fraudulent judo practitioners were representative of the true nature and spirit of judo, and blindly accepted it as something dangerous' [Mizutani 1921: 494]. This presented an opportunity for increased anti-Japanese sentiment, directly impacting the livelihood of members of the community in local society. Therefore, Maeda's opinion was consistent with those of local Japanese immigrants.

In deliberate contrast to the match-based historical view, Maeda began spreading judo with the 'defeat' of Tomita. In other words, defeat meant the beginning rather than the end of the spreading activity; only its object and method had changed. With the initial plan of spreading judo to the US elite having come to a standstill, Maeda directly appealed to American mass society, placing himself within the Japanese community.

Certainly, in terms of the diffusion of judo, Kano did not have masses or immigrants in mind, yet this new focus is why Maeda was able to expand the range of his activities. This does not mean Maeda stopped acting as a kokushi. Rather, the kokushi nature exhibited by both men complimented one another insofar as Kano had focused on 'top-down' nationalism to cultivate the elite while Maeda supplemented this with a 'bottom up' campaign.

Nonetheless, even if we consider his economic hardship and righteous indignation as a kokushi, Maeda chose to disobey Kano's ideals. This is because these matches were generally held as entertainment, which Kano regarded with aversion. For example, Maeda's first match with other martial arts was held in July 1905 against a professional wrestler on Coney Island (New York's greatest amusement area at the time). In this respect, Maeda departed from Kano's vision of judo, even though he acted as Kano's ideal kokushi.

##### *Maeda-style judo*

There are other reasons why Maeda was able to challenge this style of match. He was a second-generation member of the Kodokan, and not as keen at repaying his gratitude to Kano as members of the first generation might have been. Maeda did not first encounter judo at the



Kodokan, and his relationship with Kano only lasted around four years after he joined in 1897. Although Kano regarded Maeda highly, he chose Maeda to accompany Tomita, to whom Kano had entrusted the duty of explaining the ideals of judo.

With several matches in the United States under his belt, Maeda travelled to Europe, where he took part in many matches. He then travelled to Central America, ultimately arriving in Brazil after fighting many bouts. If his accounts are true, then he enjoyed a series of victories all over the world. However, the focus of this article is not on victory, but on how this kind of match functioned as a form of cultural exchange. Maeda, who arrived as an evangelist of Kano's judo, was ultimately baptised in a foreign culture and went on gradually to create Maeda-style judo. We can see this in the following:

**I am now proposing the use of fingerless rubber boxing gloves ... I truly believe that judo practitioners need to practice these [striking and locking techniques under special conditions] ... I too would like to think about another form of judo, adding boxing and French kickboxing to Japanese judo. I wanted to put up signs for Conde Koma style Judo around Hibiya town, but...**  
[Maeda in Susukida 1912: 262-263]<sup>13</sup>

This article criticises the match-based historical view from the perspective that, in spreading judo, victory or defeat in matches is not directly connected to success or failure in the larger mission. However, this is not a denial of competition as a means to prove superiority. Maeda chose to popularise the superiority of judo among the masses through fighting for their entertainment and he discovered that he could do so by fighting his opponents on their own turf – and winning. Maeda put emphasis on throwing techniques [Susukida 1912: 256] because Kano felt that judo's speciality was throwing.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, Maeda did not abandon Kano's judo. Some research suggests that Maeda served as a 'living guinea pig' [Nagaki 2008: 77] whose efforts allowed Kano to discover judo's value as a practical martial art. Unfortunately, this interpretation is reductionist. Kano was the founder of judo, but even his vision of the art was not all-encompassing. Maeda was able to transform judo by presenting it within a mass cultural context and by situating himself within the Japanese immigrant community in the United States.

<sup>13</sup> Conde Koma was Maeda's ring name. It means the Earl of Koryo and it was used when he fought in Mexico.

<sup>14</sup> Kano 'realised after studying Kitoryu [a school of jujutsu] and realising the skill of its throwing techniques that [he] would need to focus on such techniques during judo training' [Kano 1926: 22].

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is clear that in Japan judo was regarded as a practice for cultivating a kokushi. On the one hand, Kano has historically connected judo and jiu-jitsu, while, on the other hand, he claimed that judo was superior to jiu-jitsu, so that Judo stood as a practice suitable for a modern state. The judo practitioners who went to the United States acted as faithful evangelists of Kano, and their activities brought about certain results. But judo was often confused with jujutsu. Indeed, judo practitioners faced unexpected situations abroad. They had to fight jujutsu in places where Kano's influence and ability to control the social discourse was not available.

Moreover, this 'jujutsu' was 'jiu-jitsu': an 'internal foreign culture' and/or 'external self-culture'. This culture, created in a different society, was able to freely change its appearance in response to local needs. At the same time, negative images became attached to jiu-jitsu because of discussions surrounding the Russo-Japanese War. All of this influenced the fate of judo in the West.

Within this context, one judo practitioner explicitly tried to modify judo. This was Maeda, whose initial approach gradually began to change as he explored alternative possibilities within judo. This could occur because of the different environments within which Maeda was operating.

As we examine the historical record it becomes clear that the 'match-based' theory of diffusion misses many of the most interesting aspects of the story. Was Yamashita winning a match really a 'success'? Was jiu-do a form in which the 'essence' of judo was lost? Or was it the other way around?

What is clear is that, in discussing the diffusion of Japanese martial arts, including judo and jujutsu, we have two points of view. One might be called 'generation', according to which a practice is regarded as having an indigenous nature based on its place of origin. From such a perspective, dynamism is lost through change. But here we fall into a trap of essentialism or ethnocentrism. The other point of view might be called 'negotiation', according to which evaluating the success or failure of dissemination is not to be approached the same way that one understands the outcomes of a war (even if the seriousness of martial arts may superficially resemble war). Culture is not the property of specially chosen people, and dissemination, incorporation, and modification do not take place in one fell swoop. Culture is always generated and negotiated in unexpected ways, and often via the works of unexpected people in overlooked places.

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## CONTRIBUTOR

Andreas Niehaus is Professor of Japanese Studies at Ghent University. Currently, he acts as Head of the Department of Languages and Cultures and Head of the International Office at the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy. He is also adjunct professor for Japanese at the University of Eastern Finland and collaborative professor at Kanazawa University. His research focuses on Japanese body culture, especially Japanese sport history, martial arts, and ideas of the body in early modern and modern Japan. Publications include *Leben und Werk Kanō Jigorōs, Ein Beitrag zur Leibeserziehung und zum Sport in Japan [Ergon 2010]* and (together with Christian Tagsold) the edited volume *Sport, Memory, and Nationhood in Japan: Remembering the Glory Days [Routledge 2012]*. He has acted as guest editor for *Sport in Society* and the *International Journal of Olympic History* and is currently on the advisory board of the *Journal of Martial Arts Research (JOMAR)* and the *European Network of Japanese Philosophy*.

# NARRATING HISTORY IN THE MANGA 'JUDO NO REKISHI-KANO JIGORO NO SHOGAI' (1987) ANDREAS NIEHAUS

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## ABSTRACT

Kano Jigoro (1860-1938), the founder of Kodokan Judo, is one of the most prominent representatives of modern Japanese martial arts. In this article, I will focus on the biographical manga 'Judo no rekishi – Kano Jigoro no shogai' ('The History of Judo – The Life of Kano Jigoro') (1987). By analysing the techniques that are applied on the textual as well as pictorial level to create authenticity and historical facticity, we will get a better understanding of the strategies by which collective ideas and norms within a specific historical and cultural context are created in judo. Biography is a hybrid genre that unfolds its effect and its power in the space between fiction and non-fiction, telling a life story by applying literary techniques. Accordingly, historians as well as sociologists have questioned the value of biographies for understanding the past, criticizing the genre for its 'artificial creation of meaning' [Bourdieu 1986] and reducing the biographer to a fiction writer. With biographies becoming a success in popular culture, the genre finally seems to have comfortably settled in the land of fiction, far beyond the reach and – maybe more importantly – the interest of historians. I argue, however, that it is premature for historians to discard or disregard biographies in popular media.





Figure 1

## INTRODUCTION

January 1891. On a steamer in the Indian Ocean. A young, small Japanese man demonstrates the art of judo to fellow travellers and is challenged to a fight by a huge Russian officer who questions the effectiveness of the demonstrated techniques. Although his Western fellow travellers fear the worst, he succeeds in throwing his Russian opponent on the ground and even protects the officer's head when he hits the planks [see Figure 1]. The audience is duly impressed; the young man explains that he used Japanese judo. Asked for his name by the defeated Russian, he answers: 'Kano Jigoro'. Accompanied by the bystanders' applause, both shake hands in friendship. When arriving in Yokohama, news about the incident had by then been published in the newspapers. Kano's disciples await him at the pier. Kano (dressed in a suit), followed by his determined followers (dressed in 'traditional clothes'), leave the harbour to spread Kodokan judo throughout the world [see Figure 2].<sup>1</sup>

This 'mini-narrative' introduces Kano Jigoro (1860-1938) in the manga 'Judo no rekishi - Kano Jigoro no shogai' ('The History of Judo - The Life of Kano Jigoro') [1987, 6 volumes],<sup>2</sup> a manga which, the wrapper claims, is a work of history: 'The main objective of these volumes under the general editorship of the Kodokan Judo World Headquarters is to draw the history of judo based on historical facts (*shijitsu*)'. Although controversial in European educational environments [see Dong 2012], using graphic novels as educational material for history classes in schools or public awareness campaigns is rather common in Japan. They have been used in food education (*shokuiku*), public manners (*Edo shigusa*), and most recently as manuals to inform citizens of what to do in the case of a missile attack by North Korea (Hokkaido Prefecture).

Historical manga are generally produced with the help of historians and are often based on solid historical research. Graphic novels, through their entertaining character, certainly make history accessible to a broad(er) public and, by inspiring imagination, increase the understanding of a historical period or figure.<sup>3</sup> The manga analyzed in this article certainly aims to educate and entertain equally. As the



Figure 2

1 The story is told again, but in more detail and according to the chronology of narrated time, in Volume 3 of **Judo no rekishi - Kano Jigoro no shogai**. See Kodokan [1987: 140-169].

2 The drawings were made by Sakuma Masaaki, who is also known for his art in the **Horror Comics** series and more prominently for his adult manga in the **Manga special** series as well as the manga **Kyabakura Uranikki**. The text was written by Hashimoto Ichiro (1936-) who joined Asahi Sonorama Publishing and started the **Sankomikkusu** series. Later, he worked for Shonen Mangasha and was responsible for the **Yangu komikkusu** series.

3 For theoretical approaches to comics/graphic novels, see e.g. Varnum, Robin, and Gibbons [2002]; MacWilliams [2008]; Perper and Cornog [2011]; and Dong [2012].

banderol states: 'While enjoying one can learn about the history of judo (*Tanoshimi nagara judo no rekishi ga manaberu*)'. However, approaching institutional history via the biography of its founder – especially when under the editorship of that institution – raises questions concerning modes of historical (re)presentation and objectivity.

What do we expect from a biography? To quote Hermione Lee: 'Whether we think of biography as more like history or more like fiction, what we want from it is a vivid sense of the person' [Lee 2005: 1-2]. Manga use multiple pictorial and textual techniques that can be applied to increase an emotive and empathic sentiment. They are, I argue, an ideal medium to create this 'vivid sense of a person' – to create an image of a person and the historical setting in which the person lived. In this sense, they are an extension or expansion of a purely textual biography.

Biography in general constitutes a hybrid genre, one that unfolds its effects and its power in the space between fiction and non-fiction. A biography tells a life story by applying literary techniques, i.e. by creating a narrative, (pre)structuring and – retrospectively – giving meaning to life in and for a preconceived context. Historians as well as sociologists have therefore questioned the value of biographies for understanding the past, criticizing the genre for its 'artificial creation of meaning' [Bourdieu 1986/2004: 300].

With biographies becoming a success in popular culture (e.g. in films, TV series, manga, etc.), the genre finally seems to have comfortably settled in the category of fiction. Yet, fiction and history share common characteristics, and postmodern literary theory has focused on their proximity vis-à-vis verisimilitude, linguistic constructs, and intertextuality [Hutcheon 1988: 105]. Though important to acknowledge, I will go no further in this direction of how to define or demarcate fictional and non-fictional texts; rather, for this article, I will explore questions of whether the text is intended to be factual. This question is closely connected to the issue of functionality: In what ways and how far is the text used to construct and contribute to a collective identity,<sup>4</sup> be it on the level of an institution or the nation? Furthermore, we have to look at the narrative techniques (the signals) that are used on the textual and pictorial levels, designed to make the recipient read the text as fictional or factual, plausible or implausible. In this regard, the cultural and historical contexts in which certain conventions signal facticity or fictionality must also be considered.

By focusing on the biographical manga 'Judo no rekishi – Kano Jigoro no shogai' [1987], I will show how this manga-biography is

functionalized in order to contribute to an institutional identity by creating a grand narrative. I will do so by analysing the strategies applied on the textual as well as pictorial levels to create plausibility, authenticity, and facticity.

## FUNCTIONALIZING BIOGRAPHY AND INSTITUTIONAL IDENTITY

'Judo no rekishi – Kano Jigoro no shogai' is designed as an all-ages manga aimed at a broad (male) readership. The 'word from the publisher' (*kanko kotoba*) on the inside of the wrapper attests: 'These authentic volumes have a high educational value and we hope that they will be widely read by primary school children as well as grownups'.<sup>5</sup> The aesthetics of the drawings in general conform to those in the popular genre of boys' manga (*shonen manga*) and especially sport manga. However, a characteristic of Japanese manga is that, although they may be aimed at a certain age group, they are also read by older readers. As the educational level of the intended readership is extremely diverse, reading aids (*furigana*) are attached to basically all *kanji* appearing in the text in order to make the text comprehensible both for a younger readership and for readers not acquainted with specialist language within judo circles.

As the title 'Judo no rekishi – Kano Jigoro no shogai' already suggests, the manga is more than a biography of the founder of judo. It equally transmits an official history of the Kodokan – its philosophy, its ideology, and its technical repertoire. In this sense, it is what social historians often see in biographies: a manifestation of collective entities [Depkat 2014: 42]. It is, to rephrase, a form of social communication through which the Kodokan educates and transmits knowledge, as well as an official version of what the essence of their organization is in a specific historical situation. However, as Foucault argued, knowledge is established through control and exclusion. So, the manga discussed in this article also mirror and (re)produce mechanisms of power [Foucault 1969/1981: 74].

For a life to be remembered, there must be a reason for remembering; it must be significant to a group, a community, a nation, etc. In this sense, biography is not only an instrument for observing the world but also an instrument for or act of social self-description through which knowledge and identity are constructed [Depkat 2014: 47]. Furthermore, manifestations of identities are expressed at special

4 On collective identity, narrator and experience, see Benjamin [1977: 438-465].

5 The wrapper also mentions a readership not familiar with the biography of Kano Jigoro and the history of judo: 'nowadays, especially young people – unexpectedly – probably don't know this judo history'.



moments in institutional histories, whether episodes of crisis and transition or commemoration. Commemorations are moments in which a group's identity is reconfirmed, strengthened, and publicly communicated through ceremonies, speeches, and publications. The biographical Kano manga was put on the market by the publisher Hon no tomosha in 1987, just one year before the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Kano Jigoro.<sup>6</sup> In 1988, the Kodokan also made Kano Jigoro's writings accessible to a broader readership with the 14-volume *Kano Jigoro Taiki*, a collection of his writings published by the same publisher.<sup>7</sup> The Kodokan used this commemorative moment to readjust its own image as guardian of a legacy and to actively (re)write its own history via several other publications, thus communicating with the public as well as with itself.

The 1980s also mark a period in which Japanese Kodokan judo was increasingly criticized for its sportification and for overemphasizing competition, i.e. for allegedly losing its link to Japanese history and tradition. Competition as well as the conflict between the West and Japan, perceived as 'modernity' vs. 'tradition', are crucial narratives in the volumes of 'Judo no rekishi - Kano Jigoro no shogai'. Competition is placed firmly within the educational orientation of Kano's judo and established as a tool and a means for the development of the individual, of society, and of nation. This link is already established in the initial narrative on the steamer: The European bystanders, watching Kano's victory, shout in admiration: 'This is Japanese judo'. And one traveller remarks: 'I heard about it. It is the spirit of the way of the samurai!' [Kodokan 1987, vol. 1: 11; see also vol. 3: 167]. Judo is here, first of all, linked to 'the spirit of the way of the samurai' (*bushido no seishin*) and therefore to the ideals of the premodern Japanese warrior class, which in the modern discourse – inside and outside Japan – serves as discursive point of reference for understanding the characteristics of the Japanese nation as well as reference to ideas of a pure and 'original' Japaneseness.<sup>8</sup>

Secondly, however, judo as 'traditional' martial art proves also to be of value for modern times. A Japanese reader with a basic knowledge of their own history will also make a link to the forced opening of Japanese harbours and the unequal treaties with foreign nations during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, all of which was experienced as national humiliation and resulted in national 'inferiority' trauma. The

fact that Kano's opponent was a Russian officer even strengthens the narrative, as all of this can be linked also to the Japanese-Russo War of 1904/05, which was won by the Japanese Navy.

This episode is also a core narrative in other Kano biographies and appears in the autobiographical writings of Kano himself. In his autobiographical text, published in the journal *Sakk(y)o* [8.7] in 1927, Kano also plays with the East-West dichotomy. He stresses that he earned the respect and admiration of his Western fellow travellers not only because of his superior technique but because he protected his opponent, thereby displaying his virtue and superior morality, all of which is – as he also underlines – the result of his judo training. Judo, in autobiography, biography, and manga, is thus presented as a way to not only strengthen the individual but also the body and the spirit of the nation. The last panel in the initial steamer episode places Kano in front of his followers with sun rays to their back (thereby making links to the Japanese wartime flag), moving towards the reader with determination and a mission – very much in the (super) hero style of the Power Rangers or Kamen Riders – ready to spread judo throughout the world and strengthen the Japanese nation [see Figure 2].

The blueprint of Kano's life is thus narratively functionalized to offer a way to regain pride and respect on a national level through the 'Japanese art of judo'. This mission to serve the development of the nation is already implanted into the young Kano Jigoro by Katsu Kaishu (1823-1899), a well-known statesman of the Meiji period (1868-1912) and representative of modern Japan. He is introduced in the manga on page 20 with explanatory notes concerning his life and achievements. It is Katsu who not only recognizes the young Kano as special but who implants a mission into the child: 'Boy, in the future world learning will be important. Study hard. Become an outstanding person, that is useful for the nation (*kokka yuyo*)'<sup>9</sup> [Kodokan 1987, vol. 1: 29].

This episode is actually the first time Kano is introduced into the main storyline. He is still a small child, named Shinosuke, and he is drawn *kodomomuke*-style (intended for children). The scene is situated in the private residence of the Kano family. The child is standing outside in the garden facing Kano's father and his guest Katsu Kaishu sitting on the inside with open sliding doors. The reader/viewer thus takes the perspective of the two grownups and an aureole places the child in the centre of attention. The round egg-like shape of the child's head, in

6 The series is, since 2013, also available as Kindle edition and downloadable files.

7 The Kodokan to this day controls access to Kano Jigoro's diaries, and researchers are often denied access. Kodokan thus has the power to control the discourse.

8 For the samurai and bushido as a modern 'invented tradition', see Friday [1994].

9 This quote very much resembles the famous line by William S. Clark, an American educator in Meiji Japan: 'Boys be ambitious'. Also, in later episodes, Katsu Kaishu will be shown as a mentor who is following the development of Kano and judo closely. For example, in volume 4, 87, Katsu attends the opening ceremony for the new Kodokan and Kano juku buildings in the district Koishikawa Shimotomisaka-cho in January 1893. The same episode also mentions a calligraphy by Katsu given to Kano as present [Kodokan 1987, vol. 4: 89].

contrast to the other characters, is like a plain surface onto which life still has to be written. Stressing his closeness to, or encounters with, important historical figures (including US president Ulysses Grant; Shibusawa Eiichi, an influential Japanese industrialist; Togo Heihachiro, the admiral who defeated the Russian fleet in 1905; and then-prime minister Wakatsuki Reijiro) has the effect of giving authority and meaning both to Kano as an individual and also to his institution.

### BIOGRAPHY AS HISTORICAL WRITING?

Biography unfolds its effects and power on the thin border between fiction and non-fiction. Yet, like Michael Benton, I argue that: 'Neither history nor literature [offer] a ready-made foundational theory even though biography's "literariness" – what Hayden White calls the "consciously fashioned verbal performance" of historical discourse – is self-evident in every "Life" one reads' [Benton 2005: 2]. As mentioned, a biography tells a 'life story' by applying literary techniques; this is why historians as well as sociologists have questioned the value of biographies for understanding the past and have even 'reduced' the biographer to the category of a purely fiction writer. This is exemplified by Paul Ricoeur, who states: 'By narrating a life of which I am not the author as to existence, I make myself its coauthor as to its meaning' [Ricoeur 1995: 162].

But the question of how far 'structural models from literature are responsible for the interpretations' [Benton 2005: 119] nevertheless remains. Moreover, is it always the case that the interpretations made and the narratives told by biographers do not – *cannot* – correspond to the real and actually lived lives of their subjects? Are they *only* the fictional constructions of biographers in the interest of what White would refer to as 'emplotment'?

For the sake of better understanding the nature of biography, it is necessary to understand the central concept of 'narrative'.<sup>10</sup> Analysing narratives as both cultural techniques of memory and the presentation of identity before addressing questions of a biography's functionality

10 As Hayden White has argued: 'We might say, then, that a narrative is any literary form in which the voice of the narrator rises against a background of ignorance, incomprehension, or forgetfulness to direct our attention, purposefully, to a segment of experience organized in a particular way. In realistic narrative representation – as against mythic or legendary representations – the narrator is both present and absent: present as a means of communication, absent as a means of communication that is transparent and does not block access to the segment of experience whose organization it is his purpose to reveal to us. It is the presence of an identifiable narrative voice that permits us to credit such "realistic" representations as a history and a certain kind of novel as "objective" accounts' [White 2010 [1972]: 119-120].

in memory and identity politics will enable a better understanding of collective ideas and norms within a specific historical and cultural context. I will argue that narratives in biographies are not simply about true or false and in that they are actually like historiography, which 'asks us to consider questions of knowledge, ethics and power' [Gelenn 2010].

In order to make a life story plausible, and also to justify the institution, there has to be a 'narrative unity of human life' [MacIntyre 1985: 186-187]. This must be realized on ontological, normative, and historical social dimensions; choices must be made as to which episodes in a life to tell of and of how to structure a life to create a coherent narrative. The biographer thus selects what might be called mini-narratives – or 'the cells that give evidence of the subject's lived existence' [Benton 2005: 17]; to become a life-story, 'they need to be fashioned into the "whole body", to become parts of a coherently organised narrative imposed upon them' [Benton 2005: 17].

Biography, therefore, is not 'unearthing': it is constructing, based on the known facts of a life and according to historical context. Biography is, furthermore, establishing plausibility with regard to the pursued narratives and discourses as well as the intended functionalization and on the basis of the structural, formal, and aesthetic means of narration. The following sections will exemplify which narrative techniques are used in our case study to reach this level of plausibility.



Figure 3

## NARRATIVES OF VIRTUE AND HEROISM

The initial episodes we have already discussed established the central narrative: Kano Jigoro, through his training in jujutsu, has become a superior individual in terms body, spirit, and intellect, and his life is ultimately spent in service to the Japanese nation. This creates a semantic field in which Kano, Kodokan judo, and nation become one.

Stories of the virtue and heroism of founding figures and their followers are crucial for underlining the validity of a school's ideology, as well as its body techniques, as they help to strengthen institutional identity. Kano's physical as well as intellectual and moral virtues (as embodiments of his educational conception of judo) are established through our opening story: Kano protects his opponent's head, even during the fight. This is then continued in the first chapter. Yet, despite (or maybe *because of*) this narrative of excellence, the main character has to struggle in order to become what he is meant to be. He has to go on a journey or a quest. There can be no heroism without hardship.

Kano's struggle is embedded in a *yowamushi*-narrative (weaking-narrative), expressed in the first volume of the manga series by the young Kano being repeatedly bullied at school. This bullying creates Kano's wish to learn martial arts. This special episode is, in the story, presented by a personified narrator: the journalist and critic Miyake Setsurei. He is introduced as a journalist, both in the text and in a more detailed explanatory footnote, who went to the Kaisei Gakko (Kaisei Academy, founded 1871 in Tokyo) together with Kano [Kodokan 1987, vol. 1: 42].

Miyake tells the story of Kano being bullied at school, the setting of which is an interview. The reader takes part in an interview in which a contemporary eye-witness (with a high level of credibility), dressed formally and seated in a chair, retrospectively remembers the young Kano. On the double-page in which a new storyline is introduced, only the face of the young Kano is drawn. The face and body of the interviewing journalist is black, as are the faces and bodies of the bullies [see Figure 3]. Blacking out faces in manga is a common technique, and is applied to serve different aims, such as creating anonymity, censorship, or the effect of flashback. The blacking out of Miyake can be categorized as a visual voice-over, in order to emphasize the documentary style and historical authenticity of this passage.<sup>11</sup> The Miyake narrator comes back about 15 pages later, concluding Chapter One. By then, Kano is no longer drawn as a young boy, without distinct physicality, but rather as a boy with an athletic and muscular body. This

11 The same technique is applied in Volume 5, when the well-known journalist Sugimura Sojinkan (1872-1945) is 'reporting' on his impression concerning Kano's kata [Kodokan (ed.) 1987, vol. 5: 149-152].

transformation from a weak and bullied boy to a strong, determined, and self-confident young man, is ascribed by Miyake solely to his training of jujutsu. The body of Kano becomes a metaphor for the Japanese nation.

This narrative of the weak becoming strong is typical of martial arts biographies and – via the example of a founder or prominent members – serves to underline the authority of a school and its teachings. It also functions as a promise to potential disciples. The basic argument or logic is similar to that of modern health gurus, who aim to prove the effectiveness of their recipes or body techniques by reference to their own bodies. But the Kano manga-biography actually goes a step further and links the individual *yowamushi*-narrative to the grand narrative of the weak Japanese nation that finally becomes able to overcome its trauma and become a strong nation.

As the manga deals with a life lived in the service of a martial art, it comes as no surprise that fighting scenes in the narrative are established as key moments in which life, or concepts of life, are repeatedly put to the test. Fights on the narrative level serve to validate or falsify a person's life as well as to trigger change and development. The fights in Kano's biography are, however, competitive: training situations on the mat, with no life threatening or 'real fight' situations. (This is different from such biographical manga as that of Ueshiba Morihei.)<sup>12</sup>

The manga uses blank backgrounds, speed lines, zooming in on faces and body parts, as well as onomatopoeia, to underline and increase the sense of the speed, vigour, and realism of the scene. It succeeds, in sport manga style, in creating 'directness' and an almost palpable physicality, which makes it easy to imagine the dojo and hard training, but also the fun that the fighters have in testing their skills.

Along with Kano Jigoro, the heroism, virtue, and moral superiority of other judo practitioners is given attention. Figures include the famous 'Four Heavenly Kings' (*shi tenno*): Saigo Shiro, Tomita Tsunejiro, Yamashita Yoshiaki, and Yokoyama Sakujiro. This, too, contributes to the central narrative. Most prominently featured in the manga is Hirose Takeo (1868-1904), a deified 'war hero' (*gunshin, gunjin*), who died during the Russo-Japanese War in the battle of Port Arthur. Hirose is first introduced in Volume 4 on page 14, within the context of the Kodokan, as a strong and devoted judo fighter.

When Hirose is sent to Russia, where he stayed as military attaché, the manga adapts a drawing style inspired by *Berusaiyu no bara* ('Rose of

12 See Ueshiba [2000]. The episode on the steamer is always portrayed as a 'real' fight. Yet, it is questionable whether an officer on a commercial cruise ship could actually harm a paying customer.

Versailles', *shojo* manga series of 10 volumes, published from 1972-1973 [Kodokan, vol. 4: 50-51]). This is used to enhance the description of the romantic involvement of Hirose with a young Russian woman. This passage uses the technique of quoting from a letter to increase historical authenticity. The letter was taken from Shimada Kinji's 'Roshia ni okeru Hirose Takeo' (published by Asahi Shinbunsha), which the bibliography lists as a source in Volume 6. Yet, contrasting the romanticized setting, the 'scrim diffuser'-style drawings, and the farewell due to an official military order, the next page surprises with a stylistic break by the inclusion of contemporary war-photographs [see Figure 4]. The explosion in the first photo is then, on a textual level, accompanied by the onomatopoeic expression 'Zudodo...n', which together with the photo create a strong empathic effect, as if throwing the reader into the reality of war. The Hirose character (drawn in manga style) is placed onto the representation of the sound of an explosion (depicted in a photo-realistic style).



Figure 4

## CREATING HISTORICAL REALISM AND AUTHENTICITY

Choosing a graphic novel as medium for the representation of institutional history and of a historical personality offers opportunities that extend traditional means of historiography as well as literary narration. This is because narration in manga also takes place at the level of the images. Thus, narratives and narration cannot properly be understood without the visual or formal elements, and certainly not without a dissection of the visual aspects of the *mise en scène*, which heavily borrow from cinematic narratology.<sup>13</sup>

Including photographs and pasted pictures is a technique of 'intervisuality', which increases a sense of 'actuality' and creates a sense of an actual real-life character as a historical fact. As Susan Sontag put it, photographs have the 'extraordinary power to determine our demands upon reality' [Sontag 1978: 153] – 'they enlarge a reality that is felt to be shrunk, hollowed out, perishable, remote' [163]. The reality that has to be brought back in the manga is, on the one hand, the historical and social context, and, on the other hand, the character him- or herself. A person that must be brought back to life has to be imagined as a historical fact/reality.

13 Pascal Lefèvre defines this aspect with reference to the film scholar David Bordwell by saying that 'the form of a comic consists of materials – subject matter, themes – shaped and transformed by the overall composition (plot structure) and stylistic patterning. The same *fabula*/story (the chronological sequence of events as they are supposed to have occurred in the time-space universe of the narrative being interpreted) or even the same *sjuzet*/plot (the actual composition or emplotment of events in the work) can attain a completely different atmosphere and look by a particular use of stylistic elements such as graphic style, *mise en scène*, and framing. It is via the *sjuzet* the reader/spectator constructs the *fabula* or story' [Lefèvre 2012: 71].

When the main story starts in Volume 1, it first introduces the geographical and familial context in which Kano grew up, zooming in from the present-day harbour of Kobe to the location of the former sake brewery of the Kano family. A map locates the places visited. It is then followed by a map of the Hanshin train line to the station of Uozaki, along the Sumiyoshi river to the Nada High School. Here the reader is guided through the main gate onto an artificial hill, where the reader finds a commemorative sign conveying that this site is related to the life of Kano Jigoro, the founder of judo. The pictures in this introduction are drawn in a realistic style and the first panel that shows Kano as a young boy is in fact based on a photograph [see Figures 5a and 5b]. The accompanying text is in voice-over style: neutral in tone and purely informative. The accuracy of the information and the given map could even serve as a guide for readers who wish to visit the actual location.

In order to underline the validity of the educational message and the significance of the life beyond fiction, the manga creates authenticity and authority by placing markers not only on the pictorial level, but on the textual level, as well, including 'peritextual' signals [Penney 2015: 156]. These signals include a table of contents, bibliography (with 12 references), explanatory footnotes, and off-text explanations of a narrator situated outside the story (very much like a voice-over).

One example of this technique can be found in Volume 1, Chapter 2, which deals with the history of the Tenjin shinyo-ryu and the Kito-ryu – two of the jujutsu-styles that critically influenced Kano Jigoro. The setting for the main story is situated in contemporary Japan and drawn in realistic style. Different time frames exist side-by-side: 'story time' and 'narrative time'. These frames are not meant to separate the two times, but to blur the boundaries between past and present, to bring the





Figures 5a and 5b



Figure 6

past into the present and make it relevant for a better understanding of the present, as well as to offer a way to integrate the past into one's own life and identity as a judoka. In this sense, we might also categorize the manga as what Linda Hutcheon calls 'historiographic metafiction', i.e. works that address the past in order 'to open it up to the present' [Hutcheon 1988: 110].

The chapter introduces three boys from the countryside, dressed in school uniforms, visiting the Kodokan Headquarters during a school trip to Tokyo. The Kodokan and the interior of the building are drawn in a realistic style, based on photographs, contrasting the comic-style figures of the boys. Impressed and intrigued by a chair and a (drawn) photograph (as representation of the real), which shows the founder of judo, whom they identify by a set of postcards they had bought at the Kodokan, the group decides to visit the library in the building and borrow books on the history of judo.<sup>14</sup> The boys function as proxies that answer the questions of the reader, and the audience follows their journey of knowledge acquisition. The female librarian hands over three books and as she also gives the titles, the reader can easily identify the sources: Kodokan (ed.): *Judo hyakunen no rekishi*. 1970; Oimatsu Shinichi: *Judo hyakunen*. 1966; and Kato, Nihei: *Kano Jigoro*. 1980 (see Figure 6). The three boys now take the books to the reading room and begin browsing through the pages and the history of judo. The dive into the history of judo is then based on photos, historical drawings, and paintings taken from these three sources, creating a strong non-fictional field based on academic references.<sup>15</sup> References to an extra-textual reality, to factual knowledge, is evoked by including historical documents, photos, letters, and certificates.

Azuma Hiroki has been very pessimistic when stating that 'a type of simulacrum has replaced the historical past' and that 'consumers lack the context to recognize historical referents' [Penney 2015: 148]. Although this manga is, as already established, conceptualized as an all-age manga

14 The same technique is applied again in Volume 3 [92] and Volume 4, Chapter 3 [116ff]. In the last passage, a foreign judoka visits the Kodokan to see the library and read books on the theory and philosophy of judo. As he is able to speak Japanese, but not read it, a Japanese girl that will read the books accompanies him. This episode is also educative, not only in transmitting historical information, but also in explaining to interested readers where they could find books for further studies. The same is true of the episode in Volume 4 in which three judoka read a book by Ishiguro Keishichi, *Judo Senjojiki* [1952], and the reader actually takes a look in the opened book over the shoulder of the reading character.

15 Yet, when approaching these sources, read by the three boys, as historians, their scholarly objectivity is questionable. The first two of the books mentioned have been published from within the circles of the Kodokan. Oimatsu (1912-1995) was not only a judoka, who had received his 9<sup>th</sup> dan in 1984, he was also a graduate of the Tokyo Koto Shihan Gakko, a school that Kano headed as director for most of his career. Kato Nihei was a specialist of education and also a graduate of the Koto Shihan Gakko. These sources thus approach the life of Kano Jigoro from the perspective of his disciples (*sensei*-perspective). The Kodokan also possesses the power of defining the discourse on Kano Jigoro by its exclusive access to primary sources (e.g. Kano's diaries), as previously mentioned.



and can thus be perfectly understood without realizing the different layers of intertextual references on the pictorial or textual levels (where fiction and history meet), it can be expected that there has always been a significant number of experienced readers that approach the text with prior knowledge. This group will read the text as an invitation and a challenge to control, to further explore, deepen, or simply to verify their knowledge, adjusting to and/or (re)aligning their own knowledge with an authorized and established discourse, thereby authorizing oneself. On an emotional level, the recognition of historical figures, places, photos, intertextual references, etc., is undoubtedly intended to enhance the joy of the reading process and give a sense of gratification.

## CONCLUSION

The manga 'Judo no rekishi – Kano Jigoro no shogai' edited by the Kodokan is biography as well as institutional history. Manga were already mass media in the late 1970s and 1980s, and the assumption on the side of the Kodokan was that a manga biography of the founder would both address a broader audience than the traditional readership of their publications, which was limited mainly to judoka, as well as attract readers who would generally not be interested in reading a book either on the life of Kano Jigoro or on the history of the Kodokan. The manga is accessible not only for different age groups but also for both judoka and the 'uninitiated', for whom reading aids are included to assist with the pronunciation (if not necessarily the understanding) of specialist terms.

Text and pictures hover between fact and fiction. Yet, certain markers that refer to a reality outside the 'textual' or fictional world of the manga give a certain historicity to the text and create authenticity. This is seen, for example, in pasting photographs and paintings, quoting from primary sources, and including autobiographical quotes, newspaper articles, or drawings of places in realistic style, etc. These markers or 'cues' enable the reader to identify real places and connect them to the narrative. Yet, the effects these markers have on readers, whether they will be recognized as such, depends to a large extent on their prior knowledge of, and initiation into, Kodokan teachings. The manga therefore succeeds in creating a feeling of belonging, of being part of an exclusive community with shared bodily experiences and shared (expert) knowledge.

By analysing this biographical manga, it can be seen that the Kodokan wants to educate, to transmit knowledge to a broader public, and thereby to establish (discursive) legitimacy and power. The biographical manga will moreover tell us how the Kodokan defines itself within a

certain historical and cultural context. It constitutes an act of 'self-narration' as it establishes its own identity as institution through narrating the life of its founding *überfather*.

It has not been the intention of this article to analyse the manga in terms of truth and falsity, but to ask how the life of Kano Jigoro is narrated and how far the established narratives give a better understanding about the ideology and self-image of the Kodokan during the 1980s. A recurring topic and point of reference within the narrative of Kano Jigoro's life is the Japanese nation. Kano's life, judo, the deeds of early judoka, as well as the Kodokan, are on the textual as well as pictorial levels linked to the history, fate, and wellbeing of the Japanese nation. Stories of individual heroism, determination, fighting spirit, moral superiority, and personal sacrifice resultant from physical, mental, and intellectual training in judo serve as examples of the potential that judo has for strengthening not only the individual but also the Japanese people and the nation at large.

This link has significance for the identity of the Kodokan in a period in which the institution tried to recover from the blow received during the Tokyo Olympics of 1964. Memory is a funny thing: although Japanese judoka actually only lost in the open category, yet won gold medals in all other categories, what remained in cultural memory (in Japan but also globally) was Kaminaga's loss to the Dutch athlete Anton Geesink. This defeat was discursively linked to a perceived loss of traditional values in Japan in general and in Kodokan judo in particular. The 100-year anniversary of Kano's birth thus posed an opportunity to reframe the Kodokan within 'tradition'.

In this sense, the manga can be seen as an attempt to 're-Japanize' judo and to establish the Kodokan as the heir to a legacy of a Japanese tradition which has proven its effectiveness and usefulness for the nation. It should not be forgotten that the manga (in an environment in which outside-Kodokan research on the history of the institution is scarce and access to primary sources limited) also serves as a means to control the reading of Kodokan history and to strengthen the institution's authority to narrate its own history. With the publication of 'Judo no rekishi – Kano Jigoro no shogai' as a Kindle eBook, and its distribution via the Japanese Amazon online bookshop, the Kodokan works to ensure that its own reading and interpretation of history remains dominant, hegemonic, and unlikely to be challenged.

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## CONTRIBUTOR

*Tetsuya Nakajima is an Associate Professor in the College of Education at Ibaraki University in Ibaraki prefecture. His research focuses on sport anthropology and Japanese martial arts history. He has published on the history of martial arts in Japan. His most recent book is Kindai Nihon no budo-ron [Discourse on Budo in Modern Japan – The Origins of the ‘Sportification of Budo’ Problem] (Kokushokankokai, 2017).*

# JAPANESE MARTIAL ARTS AND THE SUBLIMATION OF VIOLENCE

## AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF SHINKAGE-RYU

# TETSUYA NAKAJIMA

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## ABSTRACT

In Japan, the study of Japanese martial arts is rooted in historiography. Other approaches are comparatively rare. Yet, it would be extremely enlightening to undertake fieldwork on the classical Japanese martial arts, and to ask a broader range of questions. In this spirit, this study is interested in exploring the issue of violence. The martial arts are understood by researchers to fundamentally be fighting techniques, but the aspects of martial arts that have attracted the attention of researchers in the past have been the psychology of fighting and the pedagogy of the martial arts. I wish to argue that one of the objectives of the classical Japanese martial arts was to learn, through the practice of the martial arts, the wisdom that could be used to overcome violence. This study, then, proposes that martial arts are motivated by the 'sublimation of violence'. Through an ethnographic study of shinkage-ryu, this study explores how the sublimation of violence is practiced in the dojo and elucidates the structure and practice of classical kata that have largely remained hidden.

## INTRODUCTION

In Japan, the study of Japanese martial arts as a social science is rooted in historiography. There are two major reasons why historical methodologies came to dominate the field. The first is the fact that there is an abundance of reference materials on the subject of Japanese martial arts. This is because in the pre-modern era (until 1868) those who practiced traditional Japanese martial arts tended to be wealthy, whether they were statesmen from the educated *bushi* (warrior) class, farmers, or merchants. They left to posterity an abundance of materials related to the Japanese martial arts. Such materials are still being discovered throughout Japan, and it is no exaggeration to say that there is an almost endless stream of new documents.

In the modern era (beginning in 1868), there were so many materials related to the Japanese martial arts that it was almost impossible to organize them all. Since Japanese martial arts were incorporated into governmental administrative bodies in Japan (education, police, and the military), the various ministries and agencies in charge of these functions created numerous documents on the topic. In addition to newsletters published by organizations such as Kodokan Judo (founded in 1882) and Dai-Nippon Butokukai (founded in 1895), which were the largest pre-WWII Japanese martial arts organizations, there are also numerous books as well as newspaper and magazine articles on the topic of Japanese martial arts. This has recently been augmented by data made available on the Internet.

The second reason for the prominence of historiographical approaches is that the major topic taken up by Japanese martial arts studies has been the long road to modernization (or 'sportification'). Japanese martial arts researchers have expended a great deal of energy elucidating the various phases in the changes that took place in the culture of the Japanese martial arts between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In particular, much of their discourse focuses on the changes that took place in pedagogical methods, and the form and content of classes; they discussed the course around the sportification of Japanese martial arts from the establishment of kata, or forms, in the various martial arts schools in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the advent of matches in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and finally the various developmental phases of competitive matches that occurred in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. These studies have typically focused on judo and kendo. Since judo, in particular, is an Olympic event, studies have emphasized the fact that it underwent more intense sportification than kendo.

There is another reason that research into the modernization or sportification of the Japanese martial arts has been so prevalent: Traditionally, most research into the history of the Japanese martial

arts has been conducted by experts in judo and kendo. During the occupation of Japan immediately after World War II, teaching Japanese martial arts in schools was prohibited. However, the ban on judo was lifted in 1950, in the latter part of the Occupation Period. This was followed by the lifting of the bans on kendo in 1952 and sumo in 1958. All of these were then included as elective activities in physical education classes. Consequently, there was also the need for people able to teach these Japanese martial arts in schools and other facilities of education (physical or otherwise).<sup>1</sup>

In 2012, Japanese martial arts became compulsory in school physical education curricula. These arts include judo, kendo, kyudo (Japanese archery), sumo, karate, aikido, shorinji-kempo (modern Japanese-style Chinese martial arts), naginata ('pole sword'), and jukendo (modern martial art using the bayonet). However, according to survey statistics gathered immediately before their inclusion as compulsory subjects, judo (67.3%) and kendo (26.3%) accounted for a total of 93.6% of all Japanese martial arts taught at schools [Kitamura 2010]. This trend remains unchanged at present. The specific Japanese martial arts taught by instructors at Japanese universities are believed to mirror those taught at the compulsory education (public school) level. The high percentage of researchers at university level who are involved in these particular martial arts (judo and kendo) is believed to have a major effect on the content of social science research conducted into the Japanese martial arts.

This polarization in research has led to two problems. First, research into martial arts other than judo and kendo have largely been neglected. Research into classical Japanese martial arts, which have been practiced continuously since the Edo period (1603-1868), has been particularly neglected. Since the classical martial arts have not been adopted for use in physical education classes in secondary schools, it is difficult for academics who are specialists in the study of classical martial arts to obtain posts at universities. Within Japan, there are two organizations that supervise classical martial arts. Several times a year, they hold *enbukai* (public demonstrations of martial arts kata) and release videos of their various styles.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the classical martial arts schools operate dojos around the world. Yet, the almost exclusive focus on judo and kendo in Japanese martial arts research has led to a wide variety of data in the field being overlooked.

1 For more in-depth discussion and analysis of these issues, see Yasuhiro Sakae's article in this issue.

2 These are the Societies for the Promotion of Japanese Classical Martial Arts (founded in 1935) and the Nihon Kobudo Association (founded in 1979).

Naturally, there is some research on classical Japanese martial arts. Documents and papers written by martial artists in the Edo period have been used in Eastern philosophical thought, and a large number of studies of documents and materials related to the classical Japanese martial arts have been conducted in Japan as part of that field of research [e.g. Yuasa 1987; Minamoto 1989; Uozumi 2002; Kato 2003; Maebayashi 2006; Sogawa 2014]. Nevertheless, since the materials associated with the classical Japanese martial arts were usually transmitted within specific martial arts schools, they were originally intended to be read only by people associated with those particular schools. As a result, many nuances of the texts associated with specific classical martial arts could be lost on other readers.

The second problem is the fact that, since so much research into the Japanese martial arts has utilized historical methods (involving different kinds and degrees of bias), other research methods have been largely ignored. Although anthropologists and sociologists have previously studied the Japanese martial arts, most of this research has been dominated by historical studies that rely on reference documents from the past [Inoue 2004; Sogawa 2014]. Fieldwork in particular has almost never been employed in the study of Japanese martial arts in Japan.

However, fieldwork on classical Japanese martial arts is much needed and would be extremely informative. Even when a specific school of martial arts has inherited its own body of documentation and authoritative textual materials, in many cases, the actual martial art that is practiced differs from what is recorded in these materials. Moreover, specific differences can emerge in and across different dojos. Fieldwork offers perhaps the most effective way to explore and examine the current features of traditions in ways that exceed historical focus on records and written archives.

Participant observation studies are thriving in the field of martial arts studies overseas [e.g. Zarrilli 1998, Downey 2005, and Wacquant 2006]. These studies share with ethnography the methodology in which the researchers themselves are practitioners of the martial art under discussion, as is the case with the present study. This study is an ethnographic study in which the researcher participated in the practice of the martial art. The following section provides a description of the objectives of this ethnographic study.

## LOCATING THE PROBLEM

As discussed in the Introduction above, due to the failure of researchers to address the classical Japanese martial arts as practiced in the present day, classical Japanese martial arts remain something of a conundrum. This study reports on part of the results of fieldwork conducted at a dojo of the *shinkage-ryu*, one of the schools of classical Japanese martial arts, over a 12-year period.

This study is focused on the issue of violence. When one hears the word 'violence', one may think of one person punching (or stabbing, or shooting, etc.) another person/other people. However, the term 'violence' as used in this study has two meanings. One is the broad meaning that includes any attack intended to kill another person; the other is a narrower meaning that refers to sword-fighting techniques. This particular issue is not generally taken up in most research on the Japanese martial arts. The martial arts are understood by researchers to be, fundamentally, fighting techniques; but the aspects of martial arts that have attracted the attention of researchers in the past have included the psychology of fighting and the pedagogy of the martial arts [Minamoto 1982; Yuasa 1987; Chan 2000].

Regarding the psychological aspects of the Japanese martial arts, Sogawa's *Japanese Martial Arts and Eastern Thought* [2014] is a work that is representative of recent research. Sogawa argues that the reason martial artists in the Tokugawa period utilized ideas from Buddhism and Taoism was because they needed to construct a theoretical system – one designed to psychologically prepare them to kill their enemies – that could be used in training. Shinkage-ryu is a classic example of the use of such ideas in its training. Of course, since there is social resistance to characterizing the martial arts as merely being for and about *killing*, martial artists also utilized the virtues of Confucianism to sugarcoat the techniques. Hence, today, discussions that claim some kind of moral or educational value in martial arts practice have been colored by Confucianism. Indeed, Confucianism has exerted an increasing influence over such discourse since the start of the modern age. The strategy of Kano Jigoro, the founder of judo, exemplifies this attempt to offset the violence of martial arts by referring to notions of Confucian virtue. Sogawa's analysis of such references to different philosophies has helped to pave the way for martial arts researchers in this direction.

However, Sogawa conducted his research exclusively using written materials and he conducted no fieldwork at actual classical martial arts dojos. Previous researchers (not only Sogawa) tacitly assume that the classical martial arts were learned only or exclusively as a technique for killing (battle). However, such a tacit assumption may have worked to conceal the actual status of the classical martial arts in all previous



research on the topic. If we focus on the world of actual practice, then it could challenge the premise that these martial arts are (or were) practiced solely for the purpose of training in the techniques of battle. In addition, as mentioned above, if the actual conditions of practice are known, then the significance of the statements recorded in written materials on the classic Japanese martial arts might become clearer.

I wish to propose that one of the objectives of the classic Japanese martial arts was to learn through the practice of the arts the wisdom that could be used to overcome violence. This study, then, is anchored by the concept of 'the sublimation of violence', or the utilization of an opponent's attack to positively cancel out violence. In this study, the hypothesis is that kata is what leads to the sublimation of violence in the classical martial arts.

The concept of kata has been described as follows:

**This Japanese concept identifies a prearranged, or choreographed, activity in which the basic techniques of a certain fighting style are acted out by one or up to hundreds of participants.**  
[Jones 2002: xi]

In Japanese martial arts, kata refers to the practice of technical patterns of movement that, as a general rule, are performed by one or two people. In this study, the proposition is that the structure of kata itself may be a contrivance designed to induce the sublimation of violence. The overarching objective of this study was to ascertain how the sublimation of violence is practiced at one dojo and to elucidate the structure and practice of classical kata that have largely remained hidden. In carrying out the field research, although I utilized the statements of people at the fieldwork site, I handled these statements as resources that would help us understand the circumstances of their practices.

## OVERVIEW OF THE SURVEY LOCATION

### *A Description of Shinkage-ryu*

Let me begin with an overview of the fieldwork site, which is a shinkage-ryu dojo near Tokyo. Shinkage-ryu is a school of swordsmanship founded by Kamiizumi Ise-no-Kami Nobutsuna (1508-1573). Yagyu Munetoshi (1529-1606), one of Kamiizumi's students, added his own unique aspects to the style of shinkage-ryu, which he learned from his teacher. He founded one of the best-known styles of shinkage-ryu, known as 'Yagyu shinkage-ryu'. After receiving the formal protection of Tokugawa Ieyasu, the shinkage-ryu of the Yagyu clan was thereafter passed down through the generations of the Tokugawa family as part of the education of the Shogun. In addition to the Tokugawa family, who produced the Shoguns of Tokugawa Shogunate during the Edo period, Yagyu-shinkage-ryu was also passed down in the Owari Domain, which was headed by relatives of the Tokugawa family. The Tokugawa style is known as Edo-Yagyu and the style practiced in the Owari Domain is known as Owari-Yagyu.

Kodama (a pseudonym), the head of the dojo surveyed in this study, traces his lineage back to the Owari clan. He explains that his ancestors assisted in the passing down of the Owari-Yagyu style through the generations. Kodama's shinkage-ryu was passed down from father to son, starting with an ancestor in the Owari clan who was a student of shinkage-ryu.

I began visiting Kodama's dojo on October 30, 2005, attending practice twice a month, on the second and last Sunday of each month. Practice sessions were from 2pm until 6pm and were held in Kodama's personal dojo. Normally, the senior pupils serve as practice partners, and the practitioners participating on a given day have the pupils take turns practicing with them. In other words, rather than practicing in the same groups of two, since there are around five participants in each practice session, each pupil practices in turn with all of the others. On some occasions, Kodama himself served as the practice partner when a participant practiced kata but, in most cases, he only provided guidance by offering advice during practice and by demonstrating kata to senior pupils. There was also time set aside for reading old shinkage-ryu documents. However, this study did not include that component of the practice sessions. The following – except for the sections quoted from reference works – is a description of the basic fieldwork conducted.

*Etiquette, Equipment, and the Dojo*

The etiquette practiced at Kodama's dojo differs from the etiquette practiced at judo and iaido dojos, which consists of the students forming straight rows and bowing their heads. At Kodama's dojo, first the students face the teacher, sit down, and bow without forming straight rows. This is because the practice of forming straight rows entered Japan in the modern era and was modeled after the practice followed in the French military. The style of seated bowing practiced at Kodama's dojo is also unique. It consists of sitting in the *seiza* position (with the lower legs folded under the thighs and the knees facing forward), placing the tips of the thumbs and forefingers against the sides of the knees. When bowing, the head is lowered only slightly and the gaze remains on the person seated opposite [Figure 1]. As mentioned above, the modern practice of martial arts has been influenced by Confucianism and thus places special importance on etiquette. However, at Kodama's dojo, etiquette deemed superfluous is avoided. The focus remains firmly on practicing the martial art itself.

In shinkage-ryu, a bamboo sword approximately 39 inches in length, known as a *fukuro-shinai*, is used [Figure 2]. It is constructed by splitting a bamboo vertically into eighths or sixteenths and covering these in leather. The leather is sewn together to form a sheath, and the stitching along the length of the sheath represents the blade of the sword. However, since the sword itself is round, no matter which part of the sword makes contact, the effect is the same. Actual Japanese swords, of course, are not round, therefore the position of the blade is

unmistakable. Thus, the line of stitching is used to represent the blade in order to ensure that the student learns how to manipulate an actual bladed sword.

Since the kata learned during practice sessions are intended to be swordsmanship techniques for use with actual Japanese swords, the *fukuro-shinai* is normally referred to as a 'sword'. However, naturally, even a full-power blow from a bamboo sword would not result in the death of one's practice partner. In shinkage-ryu, blows are exchanged with the bamboo swords, using the utmost care to ensure the safety of one's partner. Thus, in the following description, I will follow the practice of referring to the *fukuro-shinai* as a 'sword' or 'bamboo sword'.

'Actual battles are not fought in prepared spaces such as a dojo', Kodama told me. 'However, since I would like to ensure that the traditional dojo is passed down to future generations, I intentionally had a dojo of this type constructed'. The floor of Kodama's dojo is flat and made of wooden boards. The geometric environment created by this type of dojo is designed to ensure that what the teacher wants to pass on to his students is passed on in an easily understandable way. If there were unevenness on the ground, issues such as tripping or stumbling could affect the success or failure of a technique. In such an environment, it would be difficult to determine the skill level of the practitioners. A detailed reason for this will be given below, but it is important first to understand all of this in terms of the aim of creating stable environmental conditions that will result in the sublimation of violence.



Figure 1: seiza position



Figure 2: fukuro-shinai

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE KATA: PARADIGMS AND FUNDAMENTALS

This section provides a description of the structure of the kata used in shinkage-ryu. The practice of kata in shinkage-ryu can be compared to learning grammar through the use of example sentences in a language class. In shinkage-ryu, practice is known as *kumitachi* and, therefore, *kumitachi* is synonymous with kata. For the sake of simplicity and clarity, hereafter in this paper the term *kumitachi* will be referred to as kata.

In shinkage-ryu, the objective is to learn ‘the art of the sword’ (*toho*) that has been passed down from one generation to the next. Swordsmanship refers to the fundamentals behind the method of using the sword according to the teachings of shinkage-ryu, and the kata represent the paradigm of that method. Hereafter in this paper I will refer to ‘fundamentals’ rather than the technical term ‘the art of the sword’.

There are two main fundamentals. These are *tachisuji*, which is ‘swordsmanship’, and ‘moving in under the opponent’s sword’. First, *tachisuji* refers to the trajectory of the sword; in other words, the direction in which the sword moves and the amount of power behind it. In shinkage-ryu, the ideal movement is to move straight toward the center of one’s opponent. However, in actual practice, the movements that can be performed when both practitioners are in battle stances are limited; as a result, one must adjust one’s body movements in order to obtain the proper trajectory for a successful attack. Thus, the movements of the kata do not necessarily encourage a perpendicular attack. Here, it is important to mention that the fundamentals do not consist solely of learning how to strike one’s opponent. The art of swordsmanship (*kenjutsu*) is the fundamental behind sword skills such as when and where to brandish the sword in response to the movements of one’s opponent. According to Kodama, the most important aspect of this is moving in before the tip of the opponent’s sword is dropped into an attack position. This is the second of the two main fundamentals. Taking advantage of this move, the attack is performed in a single motion. Of course, when one is close enough to attack one’s opponent, one is simultaneously close enough to be vulnerable to the opponent’s attack. Thus, one must take the initiative to move in before the opponent has a chance to attack. If this is delayed, the opponent will launch an attack.

Many of the kata in shinkage-ryu consist of movements designed to strike the opponent’s hands (*ken*, i.e. the fists gripping the sword) or forearm. This is because there is an equal distance between the hands of the two practitioners when both are brandishing their swords in front of their bodies [Figure 3]. In addition, since both practitioners

use swords of the same length, if one aims for the hands, the distance is the same regardless of the individual practitioner’s battle stance. Even if the two practitioners are of different body types and heights, it is completely fair to aim for the hands. In other words, as long as one is able to ascertain a sense of the distance between the swords when one moves in toward the opponent, the only aspect that one needs to pay attention to is the trajectory of his sword. As the practitioners become more skillful, they become able to focus solely on the position of their opponent’s hands, which is how they ascertain the trajectory of the sword. As they further increase in skill, they become able to predict where their opponent’s sword tip will drop simply by observing their stance.

Through the kata performed at every session, instruction is provided in *tachisuji* and ‘moving in under your opponent’s sword’, which is a critical aspect of shinkage-ryu. Kodama explains that his dojo is constructed to create a geometric space that facilitates understanding of these two fundamental concepts. However, he also cautions that one must make sure to avoid the opponent’s sword.

When I first began taking lessons at the dojo, I was hesitant to strike Kodama and the senior pupils at full power. Instead, I struck blows on locations that did not make direct contact with their bodies. This led to me being told: ‘That will never work. Let’s see a real attack!’ My problem was that I was not moving in accordance with the fundamentals of shinkage-ryu. When my movements did not correspond to those of my opponent, I was given instruction in the various sword trajectories. Since there were differences in the body types and physical senses of the practitioners, it was necessary for me to adjust to each individual opponent.

What follows is a description of what takes place during actual practice sessions.



Figure 3: an equivalent amount of distance between the hands of the two practitioners



## ACTUAL PRACTICE SESSIONS

### *Practice in Receiving Counterattacks*

(1) Figures 4-5 show a sidelong stance with the left shoulder facing the opponent. It is known as the *wakigamae*, with one's own sword tip pointed toward the rear on one side (hilt toward the opponent).

(2) Figures 6-7 show one practitioner judging the distance to his opponent, shifting his stance so that he is facing his opponent squarely, and moving his sword upward.

(3) Figures 8-9 show the practitioner advancing one step toward his opponent, sword raised above his head, and striking directly in front. The opponent also swings down his sword, but it is parried by the sword of the practitioner.

(4) Figures 10-11 show that the opponent has retreated diagonally to the right and has assumed the *hasso* stance (brandishing the sword diagonally as if it is being supported by his right shoulder).

(5) Figures 12-15 show the practitioner once again facing off squarely toward his opponent and raising the sword above his head. He steps toward his opponent with the left then right foot and strikes his opponent's left forearm with his sword. The move shown in (3) and (4) is known as *ni-no-tachi*, the 'second attack'.

This section describes actual practice sessions using *itto-ryodan* ('cleaving an opponent in two with a single sword blow'). This is the first technique taught to beginners.

### *Figures 5-16: Itto-Ryodan*



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15

In shinkage-ryu, the beginner is taught the ideals of the school from the master in the first lesson. It is reflected in an itto-ryodan that strikes straight. After practice with Kodama and receiving the description provided in (1) - (4) above, I practiced itto-ryodan. At first, this consisted of learning by watching Kodama practice itto-ryodan. The senior student who played the role of opponent ensured the success of the practice with his superb skill. Then, after practicing several times, the senior student said, 'Let us test your skill'. With that, I began practicing with him. The first time I attempted the 'second attack', the senior student landed a blow on my hands.

In shinkage-ryu, when one's moves appear to be ineffective, the opponent can launch a counterattack. Although I am an instructor of judo, the kata in judo are intended to be performed by both practitioners according to set procedures, and thus unexpected counterattacks by one's opponent do not occur. The only time an opponent in judo will make an attack that is not according to a set procedure is when sparring or during a match. So, for the author – who took it for granted that practice of kata consists of both practitioners repeating a set procedure – the notion that the opponent would launch a counterattack was very surprising indeed.

According to the senior student, when I brandished my sword, he could clearly see my hands gripping the handle of the sword [Figure 16-17].

When utilizing the 'second attack' in order to prevent your opponent from striking, after moving toward your opponent with the right foot, as shown in (1), you must position your body side-on to the opponent and raise the sword above your head, stepping out with the left foot into a wider stance, as shown in (2) [Figures 14-15]. This action hides the hands holding the sword, positioning the sword at an angle and creating a blind spot. If you are able to adjust the trajectory of your sword in this way, your opponent is unable to see your hands in your counterattack due to the angle formed by the two swords, thereby preventing your opponent from blocking your sword. Once I started practicing with these points in mind, I was able to avoid getting hit by the senior pupil after only a few attempts.

Thus, the practice of kata in shinkage-ryu is not simply a performance. Naturally, beginners are not subject to counterattacks at first, but after repeating the kata two or three times and committing the actions to memory, practice in handling counterattacks begins. Through this style of practice, the student learns the physical movements that are appropriate to the fundamentals of this art.

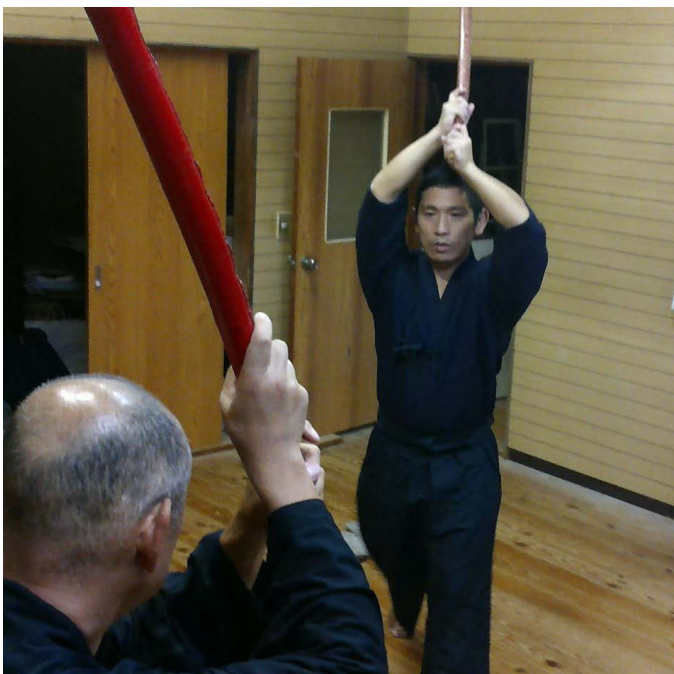


Figure 16



Figure 17

Figures 16-17:  
Counterattack by  
the opponent



Figures 18-26:  
An example of itto-ryodan  
during kudaki practice



Figure 18



Figure 19



Figure 20



Figure 21



Figure 22



Figure 23



Figure 24



Figure 25



Figure 26

### *Kata without Set Actions*

In shinkage-ryu, there is a practice known as *kudaki* (literally 'breaking-down') that one engages in after a certain amount of practice. *Kudaki* is a form of practice in which the student attempts their own moves without regard for the movements they learned during kata practice. For example, in the abovementioned itto-ryodan, practitioners start at the wakigamae stance then raise their swords above their heads. However, during *kudaki*, your opponent does not raise their sword above their head and, instead, delivers direct blows aimed at your left shoulder from directly in front. In response, you take a step forward from the wakigamae stance and, with your sword held diagonally above your right shoulder, you aim for a strike on your opponent's hands [Figures 18-26]. Once again, using the above metaphor, this type of practice is akin to learning how to engage in a conversation, or write a composition, using the grammar previously learned.

As long as one follows the fundamentals, one can modify the movements made after the opening stance in a variety of ways, and one's opponent does the same. Thus, sometimes one loses to one's opponent. Through a process of winning and losing, one trains in how to move, according to the fundamentals, in any situation. Generally, in Japan, it is thought that practice of classical martial arts is only

iterating the formalized kata [Futaki, Irie, and Kato 1994: 216]. In fact, the movement of the kata may change within the range controlled by fundamentals.

Of course, there are limits to the changes that can be made to the kata by changing one's stance in the ways mentioned above. In the dojo, we are taught several variations for each stance we learn. The following is recorded in one of the old shinkage-ryu documents: 'For each kata there are three *kudaki*. If you become skilled at *kudaki*, they become limitless' [Yagyū 1637]. In other words, if we understand the sword a practitioner brandishes to be the 'centerline', then one can either attack from the right, the left, or from directly in front. If one maintains the space between oneself and the opponent and remains constantly aware of that space, then one is able to deal with all situations, even those in which it is unclear if your opponent will attack.

In shinkage-ryu, the practice of kata that have no set actions is intended to give the student knowledge of practical fundamentals. Although kenjutsu matches were first established in modern dojos in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, shinkage-ryu – which was founded prior to that time – teaches students to master the fundamentals through practices that blend kata and matches.

*The Innermost Secret of Shinkage-ryu: Marobashi*

Kodama explains that the fundamentals of Shinkage-ryu are techniques designed to manifest *marobashi*. Marobashi is a word that refers to the innermost secret of shinkage-ryu and to actions that respond to the opponent's sword trajectories. For example, when using the itto-ryodan technique, the practitioners face each other, then step toward each other to attack perpendicularly. However, if one attacks a little later than one's opponent, then one's sword will parry one's opponent's sword. A formal description of this phenomenon would be that the trajectories of one's sword and one's opponent's sword combine into one, which results in one's opponent's sword missing one's body. In order to ensure this result, you need to advance in such a way that your own centerline overlaps the point located between yourself and your opponent.

This is what is taught at the dojo. Of course, even in patterns such as kudaki, in which the attack is from an angle, the main point of advancing is the same as the *pattern* mentioned immediately above. In this case, one's left shoulder rotates behind, caused by the way in which one swings the sword, and the trajectory of the opponent's sword aiming at one's left shoulder is dodged [Figures 19-22]. After that, one is hitting the opponent's fists.

Shinkage-ryu kata are organized to hit the opponent's body after responding to the opponent's attack. It happens in one action, but if you disassemble the move, then it is in that order. In other words, shinkage-ryu kata are designed to produce marobashi. Marobashi, 'the innermost secret', is implied in everything from the first itto-ryodan learned until the very last kata that a student learns.

However, marobashi is not a prescribed movement. In other words, since the opponent's stance and movements change how one must respond, marobashi is ultimately amorphous. It can only be ascertained through one's intuition; no one can teach a student beforehand the exact location where marobashi will manifest. As a result, the issue of how to move so that the point between oneself and one's opponent overlaps the centerlines, and therefore when and where to move in under the opponent, has to be tested by individual practitioners every time they face an opponent. This requires each practitioner to adjust the way they use their body to ensure that their sword manages to get under their opponent's sword. Kodama states:

**While only receiving instructions to 'move in there' or 'go there' when an opponent makes a move, we students learn through repeated practice. This type of 'contradiction' is provided by the dojo; which is to say, it is the thesis, or 'challenge', that they issue to their students. In time, your opponent adjusts their attack to your movements and this, in turn, causes you to further develop your own marobashi.**

The fundamentals that actualize marobashi, which are latent in the kata, reveal an aspect of the dojo's 'thesis', as described by Kodama. The 'thesis' might be reworded as 'subject' or 'problem'. The movements of the kata that manifest in an instant are the solution to this problem; that is, they are the practical form of the art. Practitioners practice repeatedly, in a trial-and-error fashion, in order to find a suitable solution to this problem. As a result, rather than 'practicing' kata, it is more correct to say that they are 'experimenting' within the kata. Through repetition of these experimental practice sessions, one refines the intuition required to ascertain the timing of one's marobashi.

This concludes our discussion of the practice of shinkage-ryu. Although there are many other detailed issues related to the movements, the above represents a summary of the basics. Next, I wish to discuss the issue of how violence is sublimated through these practices.

## THE SUBLIMATION OF VIOLENCE

*The Searcher 'Under the Sword'*

In this section, I wish to argue that the sublimation of violence in shinkage-ryu is marobashi itself. It is, I realize, difficult to understand how marobashi manifests as the sublimation of violence, because marobashi has traditionally been viewed as a sword technique used to strike one's opponent. To understand how this relates to the sublimation of violence, it is useful to consider the circumstances under which the concept of marobashi was established, which will reveal how marobashi leads to the sublimation of violence.

In practice, the students must be close enough to strike each other with their swords. When looked at simply, this seems like a strange movement to make. This is because, normally in battle, the more rational course would be to attack your opponent from a position where they cannot attack you. Above, Kodama mentioned the apparent 'contradiction' in the fact that one moves in under his opponent's sword. He also said: 'One doesn't become strong by practicing Shinkage-ryu. Most of the kata are designed so that, if one's opponent attacks with full force, you will lose'. Such a claim may seem extreme, but Kodama seems to view an 'actual battle' as a *secondary* objective of training. This provides a clue that will lead us to the sublimation of violence. However, first I would like to take a detour to consider the meaning of 'moving in under the opponent's sword'.

As stated above, the action of moving in under the opponent's sword is puzzling. This is because it is dangerous to move into a position that leaves one vulnerable to attack. Since they use a bamboo sword as a representation of an actual sword, any strike by the bamboo sword is

tantamount to death. Also, although they do pay the utmost attention to safety, a strike with a bamboo sword certainly hurts. So why practice in this way?

Bamboo swords are instruments designed for engaging in a sword fight. That is, the fact that they ensure one's safety means that they are instruments designed to place oneself into a violent space, rather than being instruments designed to avoid violence. As an example, we can compare bamboo swords to the oxygen tanks used for scuba diving. We can only stay underwater for very short periods when just wearing swimsuits. However, if we have oxygen tanks, we can stay underwater for longer periods of time.

If we used actual Japanese swords in shinkage-ryu, sword fights would result in death; since we use bamboo swords, we can engage in sword fighting under conditions that ensure our survival. The fukuro-shinai is a piece of equipment that was invented by Kamiizumi, the founder of shinkage-ryu, and it constituted a technological innovation in the martial arts. As a result of this innovation, we are able to enter into the extraordinary space of the sword fight.

The invention of the oxygen tank allowed humans to be active under the sea for longer periods of time. The result was a wealth of academic data that we were able to discover in the sea. In the same way, the bamboo sword is an instrument designed to help the user to comprehend marobashi in the space of a sword fight. In the art of sword fighting, if one maintains enough distance from one's opponent to ensure that one is not attacked, then the opponent's attack does not represent 'violence' to the sword fighter. Thus, it is difficult to say that violence has been sublimated, unless the practitioners are close enough to ensure that their attacks could result in a hit. So, given this context, how is it that marobashi sublimates violence?

#### *Ending Immediately Prior to a Sword Strike*

Above, I discussed how marobashi is manifest when one abides by the fundamentals of sword use. Thus, it is a phenomenon that appears when the trajectory of the opponent's sword misses your body. At that moment, you are in an overwhelmingly advantageous position. But you still have not struck your opponent with your sword [Figure 9, Figure 22]. You are winning, but you haven't yet struck a blow, and your opponent is losing, but has yet to suffer a blow. Shinkage-ryu places great importance on marobashi as the way to create this condition.

In modern Japanese martial arts like kendo and judo, how to attack a specific body part of the opponent is measured – for example, what kind of posture and how much momentum you put the bamboo sword in the face of the opponent, or how the opponent's back was attached

to the tatami.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the movement just before attacking the opponent's body is evaluated in shinkage-ryu.

Of course, even if you move into a position in which marobashi is manifest, if you don't take action, then your opponent will attack. Ultimately, you must strike your opponent. It is difficult to talk about the movements required to achieve this as facilitating the sublimation of violence. However, marobashi is directing that the opponent seems to have lost, and the possibility of finishing the fight without striking the opponent's body. If you think that violence is an evil and you suppress your violence, then you will be unilaterally attacked by the opponent; taking overwhelming initiative while letting the opponent attack, however, creates a moment and choices that can be peaceful or ethical. Kodama explains that the moment in the heat of the sword fight, in which the violence disappears and the winner is determined, is the moment of marobashi: 'You often refer to kata as an action, but our actions are nothing more than emancipation from sword fighting'.

Through repeated experimental attempts at performing all the techniques of sword fighting, finally one finds a way to determine the outcome of the contest before one strikes one's opponent's body. The shinkage-ryu kata are a collection of marobashi for the purpose of guiding the practitioner in the devices before cutting the opponent's body.

## CONCLUSION

Why is it that the practitioners of shinkage-ryu attempt to sublimate violence? This question cannot be answered merely through the study of one dojo. Rather, despite this article's initial critique of exclusively historical approaches, we must in fact remain aware of complex historical matters and processes as well. History is a valuable supplement to research.

For instance, it seems relevant to note that the latter half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when shinkage-ryu was founded, was a time of war in Japan. The first firearms entered Japan in 1543 and, thereafter, gun battles

<sup>3</sup> In judo, it is regarded as the principle of skill to break the balance while adapting to the movement of the opponent. Kano got inspiration from modern science, especially physics, and conceptualized it as 'kuzushi (break the balance)'. The phenomenon that the opponent's balance was broke should have occurred, but kuzushi was not clearly conceptualized in Japanese jiu-jitsu before judo was founded in 1882. This is a technique to make the opponent immovable just before throwing, and the concept resembles marobashi in this point. However, in current judo competition, the aspect of kuzushi is not taken into consideration in judging the performance of throwing techniques.

became the major method of waging war. The *bushi* (samurai warriors), who were experts at warfare, found themselves in an age in which even lowly foot soldiers could now easily kill them *en masse* using firearms. Under these conditions, it became impossible for experts in warfare to maintain their former identities. In such an age, experts in the art of swordsmanship realized that, as *bushi*, their expertise in swordsmanship would have to be deployed in a different way for it to maintain social value.

Kamiizumi, the founder of shinkage-ryu, was a member of a prestigious family of *bushi*. The problem of how to maintain the distinctive status of the *bushi* class would have been of particular concern for Kamiizumi and his Yagyu clan if they wished to stay relevant and pass on their teachings. Thus, it is likely that shinkage-ryu was consciously intended not as technical training for warfare, but rather as a way to cultivate the idea of *noblesse oblige* among the *bushi*. As Kamiizumi said: 'If it is not a great man, why will I pass down my school for him? Doesn't the old saying run that the sword that punishes the dragon does not swing to the serpent?' [Kamiizumi [1566] in Yagyu 1957: 249-255].

Of specific interest here is the fact that this school of swordsmanship emphasizes that *bushi* are to be prepared to face an opponent's attack head-on, not run from it, and actually maintains that this is what distinguishes *bushi* from all other social classes. In this specific cultural sense, the *marobashi* of shinkage-ryu becomes elevated as an ethos through which the *bushi* could maintain peace without losing their identity as warriors, in a way that did not demand a kind of non-violence that would force them to renounce their weapons. As Yagyu Toshitoshi, the founder of Owari-Yagyu, stated: 'If people practice shinkage-ryu, their behaviors will cultivate moral excellence, and, if the lord practices it, the country will be at peace' [Yagyu [1649] in Yagyu 1996: 166].

Ikegami Eiko [1997] adds further historical factors that seem relevant here. Immediately after the formation of the Tokugawa shogunate, there was great political instability, which resulted in two civil wars in the early 17th century [Ikegami 1997]. Furthermore, outlaws also became a social problem in the early 17th century; it was only in the second half of the 17th century that the Tokugawa shogunate stabilized. Shinkage-ryu was established in the first half of the 17th century, in a socially and politically unstable context – one in which there was a pressing need to find ways to reduce violence. It is against this backdrop that injunctions such as Toshitoshi's and the formation of shinkage-ryu are to be understood.

Finally, I would like to consider some areas for further research. First, more investigations could be carried out to establish whether the practices used at Kodama's dojo are also practiced at other dojos. In a book written by Yagyu Toshinaga, who taught shinkage-ryu to Kodama's father, *marobashi* is described only as follows: 'It is the origin of all movements ... One moves freely in accordance with the movements of one's enemy' [Yagyu 1957: 256-257]. Toshinaga also passed down the aforementioned words of Toshitoshi, but the relationship between *marobashi* and the sublimation of violence remains unclear.

Second, ethnographic studies can be used to test arguments about history and historical assertions, such as those of Norbert Elias, for instance. Elias is a key figure in terms of the way his work captured the complex relationships between civilization and sports [Elias and Dunning 2008], in which (among other things) the practice of sports itself is intimately connected with controlling violence and 'managing' civilization. The practice of shinkage-ryu is in precisely this sense to be considered a way of civilization.

However, shinkage-ryu is not an 'enclave-like' sport, designed purely to release violence. As Kamiizumi said: 'As the basket that catches fish, we can forget the basket after catching fish. Just like that, you can forget kata if you learn key points of shinkage-ryu' [Kamiizumi [1566] in Yagyu 1957: 13]. I have argued that shinkage-ryu practice is a method to promote the *qualitative change* of violence. Sports may be an Eliasian way of quantitatively managing violence, but shinkage-ryu is a way to *bend the existence* of violence.

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## CONTRIBUTOR

*Raúl Sánchez García is lecturer of sociology of sport at the Universidad Europea in Madrid (Spain) and President of the Sociology of Sport working group within the Spanish Federation of Sociology (FES). His PhD research was based on a four-year ethnographic study of boxing and aikido. He is a research member of the International Society of Eastern Sports and Physical Education, contributing editor of the Electronic Journal of Martial Arts and member of the scientific committee of the Journal of Asian Martial Arts (Spanish edition). His main areas of research are the following: sport and social theory (Elias, Bourdieu, Garfinkel), martial arts/combat sports and violence, ethnographic studies of sport subcultures.*

# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY OF JAPANESE MARTIAL ARTS RAÚL SÁNCHEZ GARCÍA

## DOI

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## ABSTRACT

This article is an extract from the forthcoming book *The Historical Sociology of Japanese Martial Arts* by Raúl Sánchez García [forthcoming in 2018, Routledge, ISBN: 978-1-138-57169-3]. It presents Japanese martial arts from a historical-sociology approach. After a brief discussion on the relationship between terminology and social processes, the chapter introduces the main tenets of Norbert Elias's process sociology and introduces the research strategy of the book. It has been edited and reprinted here with kind permission of the publisher with the aim of forwarding the research agenda of a historical-sociology approach to martial arts studies.

## INTRODUCTION

The group of activities collectively known as ‘martial arts’ has become a relevant and distinguishable family of physical culture all around the world. Within the Japanese martial arts, the Nippon Budokan counts over 50 million practitioners outside Japan [Matsunaga 2009: 6] and 3 million inside [Usui 2009: 7]. However, martial arts are relevant not only in terms of numbers of participants and governing bodies: they also constitute a relevant research topic within academia. Recent collective volumes on the matter [Farrer and Whalen-Bridge 2011; Sánchez García and Spencer 2013] and international conferences (such as those organized by the International Martial Arts and Combat Sports Scientific Society) have established a new field of academic research called ‘martial arts studies’ [Bowman 2015, 2017].

## THE SOCIAL BEHIND THE TERMS

For some of these scholars, the most pressing issue has been to establish a precise definition of the term ‘martial arts’.<sup>1</sup> However, trying to produce a strict universal definition for a set of variegated activities that developed as part of different collective socio-historical processes risks oversimplification. For the moment – albeit still assuming the risk of oversimplification – it suffices to say that the activities nowadays internationally considered to be martial arts represent the latest phase in a long-term process of development in which chiefly Asian techniques or methods of war have been transformed/evolved into ways of self-perfection, self-defence, and/or sport while being opened to any social group regardless of class, gender, age, ethnicity or nationality.

Recognizable sets of physical practices spread during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century within what Maguire [1999] defines as the ‘global sportification phase’. This phase can be connected in a broader sense with what Nederveen Pieterse [2009] considers the stage of ‘Contemporary globalization’, beginning in 1950, in which Japan, the USA and Europe emerged as the central nodes of cultural hybridization. In the spread of popular (especially Western) imagery of martial arts, the Japan-West axis was crucial, as was the Hong Kong/Hollywood axis, especially as it had such a great impact via the movies produced during the 1970s. In these movies, the ‘Bruce Lee phenomenon’ became key for

1 See for instance the recent proposals made by Channon and Jennings [2014], Wetzler [2015], Judkins [2016], and Martínková and Parry [2016].

the spread of this set of recognizable Asian disciplines.<sup>2</sup> In fact, Bruce Lee should take some credit for the popularization of the term ‘martial arts’ [Clements 2017] – as it is a different term from those often used in Asian countries for naming such practices.

This argument does not claim that martial arts ‘started in Japan’, as if martial arts were an exclusively Japanese set of practices that progressively spread all over the world.<sup>3</sup> Other Asian countries – most famously China, Korea and Thailand – had indigenous martial traditions analogous or equivalent to the Japanese since ancient times [Draeger and Smith 1980]. Rather, the Japanese pattern was the most relevant in shaping, systematising and influencing the understanding of martial arts on a global scale.

The key issue is that Japan was instrumental in giving the martial arts a recognizable form/shape as they were transformed from a local set of practices to a global aspect of physical culture. Still today, the most iconic image within the public imagination is the black belt, which first appeared in judo during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In many ways, Japanese martial arts produced the blueprint for the organization and systematisation of martial arts in subsequent global governing bodies and international competitions. Certainly, judo was the first martial arts discipline to be widely acknowledged on the international stage, being accepted as an official Olympic event in Tokyo 1964. By contrast, Korean taekwondo only became a full medal sport in 2000 (after being a demonstration sport in the Olympic Games of Seoul 1988). Chinese wushu has not yet been included in the Olympic programme. Besides, whereas Japanese disciplines such as judo and karate (and probably

2 Even though Bruce Lee could be claimed to be a representative of Chinese martial arts, at that time, Lee was received within a context of counterculture America as a generic Asian other, or as Bowman [2011: 73] states, a ‘generic ethnicity’ that facilitated the identification of urban U.S. Blacks and Hispanics. Lee was not especially interested in preserving or passing on unchanged the Chinese traditions. He elaborated his own system (jeet kune do) from a blend of Chinese arts (mainly wing chun), other Asian arts, and Western influences such as boxing, French savate and fencing. See Bowman [2011] for an analysis of Bruce Lee’s impact on global popular culture and Judkins and Nielson [2015] for the importance of Bruce Lee on the global expansion of wing chun.

3 This misleading idea expresses what I call ‘The Holy Grail Theory’: Cultural practices are seen as a concrete object that were passed from country to country in an unbroken chain. This notion can be observed, for instance, in the explanation of the origins of sports, trying to identify the unbroken chain of transmission in which the Maya ball game gets connected, unproblematically, to modern football. One of ‘The Holy Grail Theories’ in popular discourse is that martial arts started in Babylon and then moved to India and from there Bodhidharma passed them towards China and from there they spread to Japan. Historical research on the influence of different cultural traditions suggests a much more complex situation. See Payne [1981] and Reid and Croucher [1983] for examples of these simplistic models of transmission.

also kendo and aikido) are distinguishable to a reasonable degree, the situation is not the same in other Asian disciplines. For example, apart from some easily discernible activities such as tai chi/taijiquan, Chinese martial arts are still widely known in the West under the generic term 'kung fu' or, more recently, 'wushu' [see Judkins 2014 for the historical controversy on the uses of both terms].<sup>4</sup>

## MARTIAL ARTS AND THE SPORTS MOVEMENT

Asian countries such as Japan, China or Korea do not use the English term 'martial arts' in their native languages. In Japan, three cognate terms are commonly used to convey meanings equivalent to what we understand today by 'martial arts' [Green 2010: xv]: martial arts/methods or bugei (武芸); martial techniques or bujutsu (武術); and martial ways or budo (武道). Nonetheless, the most internationally recognized term for designating all such Asian disciplines is not an Asian term, but, rather, the term 'martial arts'.<sup>5</sup>

In most countries of the world, the term 'sport' can be understood independently from martial arts, yet 'martial arts' cannot often be separated entirely from the notion of 'sport'. This situation illuminates something not only about the relationship between these two phenomena, but also about the complex geopolitical processes of expansion, integration, reinterpretation and accommodation of (physical) culture around the world. Broadly speaking, sports (originally an expression of Western countries) spread to other parts of the world more pervasively, and to a greater extent, than other aspects of physical culture. This is not to say that sport was uncritically accepted and unchanged in every region of the world. The variation of American baseball by the Japanese – stressing the qualities of budo, even calling this activity *yakyudo* (the way of baseball) – is a good example of the diverse cultural blends produced in such transnational journeys of (physical) cultures.

4 Thanks to Paul Bowman, Ben Judkins and Mike Molasky for making useful comments on the terminological discussion of Chinese martial arts.

5 For instance, we find a mention of 'martial arts' in an anonymous book called *Pallas Armata* from 1639, with a reference of Jo Sotheby to the 'famous Martiall art of fencing' [Figueiredo 2009: 23]. According to John Clements, the term appeared even earlier. It came: 'From the phrase "arts of mars" and was used in English as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century for self-defense disciplines but then the term becomes associated with military science and is not applied again to fighting methods until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, where it becomes synonymous with Asian styles after 1945' [Clements 2017]. Only in recent times has the term martial arts started to be used again to refer to Medieval and Renaissance European fighting arts. For instance, the work of Sydney Anglo in *The Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe* [Anglo 2000] marked a milestone in the scholarly research of this field.

Comparing the equivalent terms in widely used dictionaries from Western countries and Japan is also revealing: a common denominator from all the definitions of 'martial arts' found in English, French, US, German, and Spanish widely used dictionaries is reference to 'sport'.<sup>6</sup> However, the Japanese definitions of bujutsu, bugei and budo do not include any direct reference to sport.<sup>7</sup> The definitions of budo, bugei and bujutsu highlight those features considered essential to Japanese identity, contrasting with modern hybrids encompassing foreign notions such as sport.

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that Japanese martial arts were affected by the influence of the sports movement, especially after the Second World War. During the 1950s, the Ministry of Education replaced the term 'budo' with the term 'combative sport' (*kakugi* 格技) in order to gain some distance from prior militaristic connotations and as a way to get closer to more democratic formats, such as Western sports [Bennett 2015: 180]. In 1989, the Ministry of Education officially resumed the use of the term budo to refer to martial disciplines instead of *kakugi*. Nowadays, the Japanese term '*kakutogi*' (格闘技)<sup>8</sup> would be the rough equivalent of 'combat sport' and is often used to refer to disciplines such as boxing, wrestling, kickboxing, or MMA (mixed martial arts).

6 Self-defence and educational components are also included, but not consensually in every definition. For instance, in the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* [2011: 877], martial arts include the self-defence notion: 'various sports or skills, mainly of Japanese origin, which originated as forms of self-defence or attack, such as judo, karate, and kendo'. *Encyclopédie Larousse* [2018] does not include self-defence and includes instead a moral code related to education: 'group of combat sports of Japanese (or more generally Asian) origin such as judo, karate, aikido, kendo, taekwondo, vietvodao etc. founded upon a moral code (which included that of the samurai) and that must respect the opponents'. The relation between martial arts and sport is so close that in some languages such as German the most frequently used term to refer to disciplines such as judo or karate is 'Kampfsport' [Wetzler 2015: 23], merging in the same category of disciplines that which could be considered 'combat sport' and 'martial art'.

7 Definitions in a widely used Japanese dictionary [Yamaguchi, Ryoji and Kazuyoshi 2013] do not include any explicit reference to sport in any of the cognate terms equivalent to the term 'martial arts': 'Budo: 武道: 1) the norms Samurai have to observe, follow'; 'Bushido: Japanese chivalry, the spirit of Samurai; 2) Military arts such as Japanese art of fencing, Judo and Japanese art of archery' [1305]. Bujutsu: '武術 Arts/Skills of Budo. For example, Kenjutsu (the art of fencing), Kyujutsu (the art of archery) [1296]. Bugei: '武芸 Artistic Skills in relation with Budo. Bujutsu. Bugi [1293].

8 According to a standard definition of *kakutogi*: 'Combat Sports on a man-to-man basis which determines victory/defeat by struggling with each other or striking each other with hands and feet. For instance, Boxing, Wrestling, Judo and Sumo'. [Yamaguchi, Ryoji & Kazuyoshi, 2013: 251]. *Kakugi*'s meaning is the same as *kakutogi*. During the period in which the Ministry of Education used the term *kakugi* instead of budo, the particle 'To (闘)' (which means fighting) was not used in order to prevent fostering fighting values in children [Nakajima 2017].

Nonetheless, 'budo' and 'kakatogi' were (and still are) commonly used to refer to the same activity. Such is the case of judo, a discipline commonly associated with budo (if we take into account its educational side) despite its having undergone a strong process of 'sportification'. By contrast, despite its long tradition as a professional competition, sumo is not considered as kakutogi and is defined as 'national sport'. The 'reinvention' of sumo as an essential part of Japanese identity during the Meiji period involved using the notion of foreign Western sport as a perfect contrast, exemplifying what the Japanese were not.

To sum up, even though the influence of Western sports varied depending on the disciplines under analysis, the most widespread Japanese martial arts – judo and karate – were severely affected, becoming part of the global sports figuration either in the amateur and/or professional versions.

Before ending this section, a word of caution is required about the anachronistic use of the term 'sport' when talking about Japanese martial arts. Despite the fact that some of the Japanese martial arts that expanded did globally hybridise with sport formats, it would be an anachronism to talk about sports in pre-modern Japan. For instance, it is anachronistic to refer to archery or sumo as a kind of sport during ancient and medieval times (as Hurst [1998] or Cuyler [1979] sometimes do) just because those activities implied some kind of entertainment for the players and spectators. The characterization of these activities is improved, but not completely solved, by differentiating between 'traditional' (indigenous Japanese contest-like activities) and 'modern' sports (those developed after the contact with the Western sports movement), as proposed by Guttman and Thompson [2001].

The shift from ceremonial contests to 'sports-like' disciplines as a recognizable, distinctive activity took a long time and was embedded in broader social patterns. Thus, it is not helpful to speak about 'sport' in ancient Japan but more accurate to speak about 'ceremonial contests' (not necessarily with a religious function, although often political) that later placed more emphasis on the competitive side once the activity spread during the Tokugawa period. Moreover, despite the existence of common features between sumo of the mid-to-late Tokugawa and Meiji period and some 19<sup>th</sup> century sports in Britain, we should talk about 'sports-like activities' in the Japanese case. Historically, 'sport' is bound to a British/Western development. It was harshly contested after the forced opening of Japan in the Meiji period by important organizations of martial arts such as the Dai-Nippon Butokukai. It was especially virulent in this respect in the years immediately before/proceeding, and during, the Second World War.

Due to the influential work of Kano Jigoro, the Western sports movement fused with martial arts traditions during the Meiji period, but this relationship only took root after the Second World War. This is not to deny that Kano built the sports connection upon ploughed ground. Competitive sumo of the mid-to-late Tokugawa period, gekikken (swordsmanship competitions), and the jujutsu of early the Meiji period had already laid a solid competitive professional sports-like basis.

We should also not lose sight of the fact that Kano's judo made a big impact after success in contests against other jujutsu styles of the era. Thus, the 'sports-like' orientation attached to martial arts was not something that appeared in the Meiji period only with Kano; rather, a blend of Japanese martial arts and the Western sports movement were key elements in Kano's judo. The counter-current of the rejection of sports and the explicit attachment to bushido as a clear mark of Japanese martial traditions (deliberately contrasted with Western sport) could also be traced to the Meiji period, especially (although not exclusively) in the rise of the Dai-Nippon Butokukai.<sup>9</sup>

## AN OVERVIEW OF ELIAS'S PROCESS-SOCIOLOGY

My approach to this entails an analysis derived from Norbert Elias's figurational sociology (also called process-sociology), one that is centred on long-term developments. Broadly known as a branch of historical sociology, Eliasian process-sociology shares with the discipline of history an interest in past eras. However, it is not merely for the sake of identifying a succession of unique and unrepeated sequences of events. Rather, in a profound discussion on the relationship between history and sociology, Elias [1983] made clear that the main focus of process-sociology was to search for structured patterns in processes of social development, not the biographical accounts of individual figures.

For instance, Elias needed to study the biography of Louis XIV to empirically test and construct 'elaborate sociological models of connections' that included the social position of the king in the figuration of the 'court society'. In this sense, unique and unrepeated sequences of events (the details of Louis XIV's biography) were embedded within patterned, repeatable sequences of events (the royal position) on another level.

9 A similar pattern could be found in the explanation of the German 'turnen', articulated in a contrasting dialogue with foreign sport. In Germany, 'sports' was regarded as something low coming from England, contrasting with turnen which was regarded as something high in value [Reicher 2017].

Using this approach, Elias aimed to bring forth some identifiable dynamic patterns that would help us to advance towards more ‘reality congruent knowledge’ with a higher level of synthesis. In order to do this, Elias made use of diverse data coming from variegated sources and levels of analyses: from what is normally considered the ‘macro level’ of laws, economic relations or power balances between nations to the ‘micro’ data of everyday behaviour (as illustrated by chronicles, biographies, literature, or ‘manners books’ and so on).

Elias’s theoretical concepts were developed and tested within this rich soil of empirical data and became further iteratively refined in subsequent studies. These empirically based studies about dynamic processes helped Elias to avoid the pitfalls of classical evolutionary models based on a succession of phases, and which were criticized for being teleological, Eurocentric and/or lacking testability [Goudsblom 1996: 21].

The following sections briefly introduce Eliasian concepts that are key to my approach to the sociology of Japanese martial arts. Further discussion of each is conducted at the points they are applied to Japanese cases. This strategy enables the empirical testing of concepts, their refinement, and even the formulation of new concepts if needed.

## CHAINS OF INTERDEPENDENCE, FUNCTIONS AND POWER BALANCES

For Elias, sociology is the study of the long-term development (processes) of people forming chains of interdependence together (figurations). The notion of interdependence implies at the same time the notion of function and power relations. People depend on each other; they are bound together by functional relationships. For instance, I depend on the people who plant and grow the vegetables I eat. At the same time, they depend on me for their income. I also depend on the legal functions performed by judges to carry on with my life with certain basic rights, and I depend on my friends, family or partner for the emotional functions they provide for me.

Thus, Elias talks of functional interdependency, whether in terms of economic, legal, emotional, security or other areas. As functional interdependence implies asymmetrical relationships between people,

these interdependencies always include power relations.<sup>10</sup> Hence, Elias conceptualizes power balances between people – a further elaboration of concepts such as power ratio or gradient – to avoid the reified, static notion of power as a thing that somebody owns and the others do not.

Power relations are enmeshed in the functional interdependence of people. When interdependence changes, power relations change as well. Elias and Scotson [2008] developed the theory of ‘established-outsiders’ as a way to understand asymmetrical shifting power relations between social groups, be it in terms of class, race/ethnicity, gender, or so on. When power balances were very unequal, Elias [1987] spoke of ‘monopolies’ over certain social needs or requirements. He differentiated monopolies of means of production, of capital accumulation, of taxation, of means of orientation, of physical violence, etc., over which certain groups in society gained control and thus gained a stronger leverage to influence the organization of this society. However, the result of the complex web of people bound to other people in functional interdependencies with different power balances remains, to a degree, a ‘blind social process’.

## THE THEORY OF THE ‘CIVILISING PROCESS’

A long-term ‘blind but structured’ civilising process was identified by Elias [2000] in the development of European societies from the Middle Ages to Modernity. The European case presented no unique pattern but rather different patterns of development. In fact, within his wide research, Elias refined the specificities of different European variants, making fruitful comparisons between the different patterns of the English, French and German cases. Moreover, as we can observe in the following passage, Elias was also interested in the Japanese civilising pattern, although he did not analyse it specifically or in any depth.<sup>11</sup>

10 This is precisely why Elias’s use of ‘function’ differs greatly from classical structuralist/functionalist sociological approaches. For Elias, functions are not ethereal components of society. The classical notion of function or functional imperative for the society à la Talcott Parsons implied a static, process-reduction idea of function, based on the foundational binomial of individual/society. For Elias, people are bound together by functional interdependence; people fulfil some function for some other people and this functional interdependence always implies power relations [Elias 1970: 74].

11 Elias [1995; 2001; Elias and Scotson 2008] discussed the Japanese case in scattered remarks. Even though the theory of the civilising process has been fruitfully applied to the Japanese case [Ohira 2014; 2017], so far only brief, mainly exploratory, research has been conducted on the long-term development of the Japanese civilising process from a figurational perspective [Mennell 1996].



Ralph Bonwit offers many examples that point to the strong similarities between those forces of social interweaving that led to Japanese feudal relations and institutions and those structures and forces discussed above in relation to Western Feudalism. A comparative structural analysis of this kind would prove a more useful way of explaining the particularities by which the feudal institutions of Japan and the historical changes they underwent differ from those of the West [Elias 2000: 578].

Nonetheless, despite variations, the civilising pattern followed by European societies featured: 1) a specific process of 'state formation' for which the acquisition of the twin monopoly of taxation and violence was of utmost importance. The state formation process involved the development of more complex figurations; longer and denser chains of interdependence between individuals on a sociogenetic level; 2) the development of a more rounded, encompassing and even self-controlled 'habitus' – including shared economies of affects, personality structures, and so on – at a psychogenetic level.

Furthermore, Elias added a third interrelated layer to sociogenesis and psychogenesis: 'technogenesis' [Elias 1983; 1995; 2000; 2001]. These three dynamic processes constituted what he called a 'triad of controls' [Elias 1970:156]: the control of people over each other (sociogenesis); the control of each person over him or herself (psychogenesis); the control of humans over non-human events (technogenesis).

In the civilising process, a greater control over non-human events also took place in terms of 'reality congruent' knowledge that afforded useful applications of technology. In fact, Elias's [2007] theory of knowledge is clearly related to these basic 'triad of controls'. In a typical 'double bind process' between emotional involvement and knowledge, the more congruent knowledge of reality that we have (whether that be of non-human nature, our relationship with others, or with ourselves), the more control we have over this reality. The feedback cycle also works the other way around: more fantasy-laden knowledge implies less control, which fosters more fear and fantasy solutions.

According to Elias's civilising process theory, the development of longer chains of interdependence was related to growing social differentiation, specialization of activities, and the integration of these activities at a sociogenetic level. Such phenomena brought forward what Elias dubbed a 'functional democratisation' [Elias 1970: 68-69] – a thrust towards a more even power balance between social groups of different kinds. The lengthening of the chains of interdependence also produced a shift of the 'survival units' to which individuals' identities were attuned. The shift within the civilising process followed a general integration pattern, from smaller units (family, tribe, clan) towards bigger ones (nation-

states and unions of states),<sup>12</sup> although de-integration into smaller units could also happen during decivilising patterns [Mennell 2001].

However, even in the case of greater integration, Elias also acknowledged unavoidable problems [2001: 213], generating processes of disintegration. It is quite common during the levelling of power imbalances that some people suffer a certain loss of power-potential and a reduction in the scope of their functions. Such shifts can even result in the complete loss of social groups [Elias 1970: 67; 1997: 373]. Moreover, it is quite common that the integration at the sociogenetic level occurs faster than the psychogenetic adjustments people must undergo to emotionally tune-in to the new survival unit [Elias 2001: 227]. Those suffering a certain reduction in their functions or undergoing integration into larger survival units may resist the new situation. Their personality structure (habitus) clings to their old image and the identity provided by their social group or social unit of reference. This identity reaction was identified by Elias with the concept of 'drag effect' [2001: 211].

## CIVILISING-DECIVILISING AND INFORMALISING-FORMALISING BALANCES

Elias was acutely aware of opposing forces acting at the same time upon complex social processes. For Elias, any social process unfolds within a shifting balance between civilising and decivilising trends. Elias's magnum opus, *The Civilizing Process* [Elias 2000], identified a prevailing long-term civilising trend occurring in Europe from the Middle Ages to Modernity. Nonetheless, other lesser-known works of Elias's, such as *The Germans* [Elias 1996], deal with the prevailing decivilising trend that gave way to the rise of the Nazi regime.

12 As a general pattern, the integration into greater survival units brings forward a changing in the weighting of the I-We balance [Elias 2001: 184] towards the I pole in what could be conceived as a socio-historical process of individualization. Nonetheless, the picture is more complex, and Elias considers the situation in a democratic and a dictatorial state in the building of what is normally known as 'national character' [Elias 2001: 181]. Besides, Elias wrote specifically about the Japanese case, stating: 'So far, the shift of the we-I balance in favour of the I-identity is less pronounced there [in Japan] than in western countries' [2001: 178]. The fact that still nowadays in Japan the last name precedes the first name when referring to a person bespeaks the importance of the we-pole in relation to the I-pole. Elias also commented that despite a general tendency of greater impermanence in we-relationships of marriage or professional binds: 'In Japan, however, the worker-employer relationship seems so far to have kept its lifelong character' [Elias 2001: 235, note 10]. The individual's identity always implies different weightings of the we-I poles, containing also an interweaving of layers depending on the different we-groups to which each individual is emotionally bound [Elias 2001: 183, 202].

As well as a 'tension balance' [Elias and Dunning 2008] between civilising and decivilising patterns, another balance must also be taken into account: that between formalising and informalising trends. Cas Wouters [1986; 2004; 2007; 2011] identified this formalising-informalising balance as what he dubbed 'informalisation'. Wouters's theory of informalisation came from his direct observation of a more flexible application of rules and manners during the 1960s and 1970s which entailed a wider variety of behaviours expressed in more moderate, flexible and controlled forms. According to Wouters, this pattern represented a complex form of civilising process.

Wouters observed that what Elias had identified as the 'whole' civilising process was just the formalising tendency of the civilising process predominant between the Middle Ages and the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the pattern changed to an informalising tendency in the civilising process, gaining predominance from then on. Such a tendency was not unilinear, as informalisation proceeded in a spiralling fashion, involving phases of informalisation and reformalisation. During reformalisation phases, many earlier informalised social codes were integrated into the prevailing code and became formalised. The main waves or spurts of informalisation within the European civilising process occurred at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the roaring twenties and the permissive society of the 1960s and 1970s.

If the formalising-informalising balance that Wouters identified within the civilising patterns is also applied to the decivilising patterns, a classification of four possible compound trends emerge [Sánchez García 2018]:<sup>13</sup> 1) civilising-formalising, the main line of development that Elias [2000] identified in the European civilising process from late medieval times to modernity; 2) decivilising-formalising, a decivilising trend that Elias [1996] identified with the rise of the Nazis and which

13 These are trends, not static categories. Each illustrates patterns, not a fixed state of things. They describe historical tendencies and dynamics, which implies that there are at least two epochs to compare. Thus, the focus is not on the 'is' or 'is not' but on the 'more' or 'less', following the developmental approach defended by Elias. From a figurational, processual point of view, it is of no use trying to establish universal categories for civilising and decivilising trends with such and such characteristics; we always face dynamic processes that need the comparison of different periods in a sequence of social development. From a non-processual point of view, a modern dictatorial state could be seen as a figuration sharing common features with the generation of European kingdoms, with their own almighty rulers: both cases present a state monopoly of violence and taxes. However, from a processual point of view they represent a very different pattern. The pacification obtained in the change from a figuration conformed by fighting tribes to a centralized elite of rulers-warriors would lead to an increase of chains of interdependence and constitute a civilising-formalising trend. On the contrary, the change from a figuration such as the Weimar Republic to the barbaric Nazi State represents a decivilising-formalising trend in which the elite class always fostered an intense polarization between those adepts to the regime and the outsiders, considered as direct enemies, scapegoats or heretics.

De Swaan [2001] dubbed 'dyscivilization'; 3) civilising-informalising, a pattern that Wouters [2007] called informalisation; and 4) decivilising-informalising, a classical decivilising trend that Elias [2000] identified with the fall of the Roman Empire and the feudalization pattern in Europe.<sup>14</sup>

## PROCESS-SOCIOLOGY AND THE SPORTICIZATION PROCESS

Applying the previous relational axis of civilising-decivilising and formalising-informalising trends to the development of modern sport we could differentiate an initial sporticization pattern, characterized by a predominant civilising formalising trend; and a later sporticization pattern, characterized by a predominant civilising informalising trend.

### *The Initial Sporticization Waves*

According to Elias [2008a; 2008b], modern sports developed within the specific British (English, to a great extent) civilising process. Sports became distinguishable from their folk antecedents in two consecutive 'civilising spurts' in what could be generally characterized as a process of 'sporticization'.<sup>15</sup>

The first wave of sporticization occurred during the 18<sup>th</sup> century and was characterized by a period of peace in which simultaneous and parallel processes of parliamentarisation (resolution of political conflicts through verbal confrontations instead of armed conflicts) and sporticization (detachment from direct use of violence in leisure activities) led by the landed classes (aristocracy and gentry) took place. This first wave affected the so called 'country sports' such as horse racing, fox hunting, cricket and boxing.

The second wave of sporticization occurred during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in which the bourgeoisie (industrial middle classes) joined the landed classes in taking the lead through the public-school sports phenomenon, developing ball games (e.g., football and rugby), hockey, tennis or athletics. Both sporticization waves implied the use of more precise and

14 In a discussion about informalisation, Elias loosely refers to the decivilising-informalising trend with the term 'formlessness': 'I have the feeling that this type of informalisation requires a higher degree of self-restraint. The "stays" of formality, of the easy-to-be-learned formal phrases have gone and yet there is a need for shades, for "nuances". I think one has to distinguish this kind of informalisation (which seems to have gone less far in France than in either Germany or Holland) from-shall we call it "formlessness"? - from behaviour dictated by a stronger dose of overt affects' [Elias in Wouters 2007: 234-35].

15 Maguire [1999] analysed three more stages of sporticization, in which the sports movement became a global phenomenon.

explicit rules that were written down and more formally and strictly enforced by the incipient governing bodies surrounding the activities.

Because rules invariably restricted the means by which individuals could achieve sporting success, sportification necessarily entailed the development of stricter self-control and self-discipline within the personality structure (*habitus*) of the participants. Some psychogenetic features of this development included a greater sensitivity towards violent actions and verbal abuse in the sports game. It basically represented the development of a more civilised 'sportsman *habitus*', connected to the ethos of fair play (made explicit during the 19<sup>th</sup> century wave) and the detachment from getting too emotionally involved in victory or loss as a sign of good upbringing.

In summary, due to the sportification process in which pastimes became codified, standardised and increasingly regulated, a decrease of the level of violence and a greater demand for participants' self-control unfolded over time. The relatively simple figuration at the time encompassed high-class people, playing by and for themselves; the role of audiences/spectators was not really influential in determining the format of the games.

These high-class players iteratively honed a 'sociotechnical' invention called sport that afforded them an enjoyable tension/excitement within the safety limits of a rule-bound activity. Thus, these activities featured an adequate tension balance between danger and safety, between emotional decontrolling and emotional restraint. However, as the sports phenomenon expanded towards other social groups, the influence of spectators within the sports figuration increased, affecting the formats and rules of sports in order to gain an adequate tension balance not only for them, but also for the players. This occurred in the following informalisation turn.

### *The Informalisation Turn*

The spread of modern sport in England during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, from the reserved setting of the public schools to the whole society, was led by a 'competition and intertwining mechanism' among individuals and social groups [Wouters 2016: 13]. Teams representing clubs, neighbourhoods, and cities were progressively immersed in competitive leagues that further helped to standardise a certain set of rules and governing bodies for the organization of the matches and seasons. Sport became more 'seriously' played by players who were expected to produce 'sports-performance', not only for themselves, but for those they represented.

Thus, the chains of interdependence in the sports figuration became longer and more encompassing. It is precisely around the first wave of

informalisation of the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century [Wouters 2007] when the professionalization of the game represented a serious threat to the amateur organization of the game. That is why, during the 1880s and 1890s, there arose an explicit emphasis on the 'amateur ethos' [Dunning and Sheard 2005: 126] as a reaction from the established public-school elite (the amateur players) to the intrusion of working class players (the professional players) and organizations that became dominant in some modalities of the game. For instance, the integration conflicts that surged in the game of rugby ended up splitting the game in 1895 into two variants led by different organizations: Rugby Union (professionals) and Rugby League (amateurs).

As different sports became played internationally during what Maguire [1999] defines as 'the third global sportification phase' (1870 to the early 1920s), chains of interdependence grew even longer, led by competition and intertwinement mechanisms. 'Achievement striving' values [Dunning 2008] became more ingrained, progressively displacing the amateur values as the balance among different individuals and social groups equalized.

This by no means implied a sudden change. In 1896, the rebirth of the modern Olympic Games by the Baron de Coubertin was led by a group of aristocratic, high class amateurs that controlled the organization and its values well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Olympic movement was able to maintain tighter control than other organizations, such as the governing bodies surrounding football. The latter embracing from the very beginning a much more professionalized model. Nonetheless, as the 20<sup>th</sup> century unfolded, the 'achievement striving' orientation became the main set of values, both in the Olympic and the professional organizations. The difference was not just a matter of nuance. As Maguire remarks, during the 'fourth global sportification phase' (1920s-1960s), it was the American version of the achievement sport ethos that had gained ascendancy [1999: 84-86], displacing the amateur ethos of the English gentlemen as the sports movement flowed into different parts of the globe.

Along this pattern of development, modern sports featured not only more controlled forms of violence but also strong social pressure to use rational/instrumental violence in order to comply with the 'achievement striving' orientation of professionalism [Dunning 2008]. The increase of instrumental violence in modern sport should not be interpreted simply as a decivilising trend in sport – or as a desportifying trend – but as an informalising trend. Precisely, the use of instrumental physical violence contained in 'dirty play' or 'tactical fouls' to destroy the opponent's game or instrumental (symbolic) violence in match fixing, cheating and doping cases do not imply an immediate gratification of an impulsive outburst of anger but the long-term calculation of effects and gain/risk ratio.

## PROCESS-SOCIOLOGY AND RESEARCH ON JAPANESE MARTIAL ARTS

Some studies have been conducted on martial arts from the process-sociological approach [Kiku 2004; Van Bottenburg and Heilbron 2006; 2011; Yokoyama 2009; Sánchez García and Malcolm 2010; Sánchez García 2016; 2018]. However, the most extensive treatment of the long-term Japanese civilising pattern in relation to martial traditions comes from the work of a non-Eliasian sociologist: Ikegami Eiko [1995; 2005]. Her work resonates clearly with Eliasian approaches even though she claims Charles Tilly to be her main academic influence.

In her book *The Taming of the Samurai. Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan* [1995], Ikegami traces the changes occurring in the samurai culture during the transition from rampant warfare towards the pacified Tokugawa shogunate (1600-1868). Her argument resonates with what Elias described as the ‘courtization of the warriors’ in the European case, even though Ikegami pointed out the specificities of the Japanese case. Based fully on Ikegami’s argument, Kiku [2004] sought to apply the theory of the civilising process to Japanese martial arts, but only in a modestly exploratory way.

Another fruitful application of Elias’s approach to the development of Japanese martial arts comes from Bennett [2015]. Even though Bennett does not use the civilising theory in a systematic way, he successfully applies it to explain specific moments during the long-term development of Japanese swordsmanship. Bennett even introduces the topic of decivilising patterns in the militarization of the country before the Second World War.

My book, *The Historical Sociology of Japanese Martial Arts*, continues to explore the question in a comprehensive and systematic way from a figurational/process-sociology approach. Instead of creating some kind of ‘theoretical monster’, adding pieces of different authors to fit the frame of the analysis, the book uses Eliasian conceptual tools to show the full potential and explanatory power of process-sociology. The reasons for this boil down to methodological soundness: it allows better control of the preconceptions involved in the theory. It also helps to avoid the temptation to feed common-sensical ideas into ad hoc concepts from different theoretical traditions whenever they fit in the arguments.

## A LONG-TERM APPROACH: FOLLOWING THE PATH OF TERMS

A common – though misguided – research strategy for analysing martial arts involves trying to establish a very exact definition of the current term and then looking for the antecedents of the activities that fit such a definition. The search for some kind of ‘original essence waiting to unfold through history’ is based on a naive teleological view. A more advisable research strategy would involve looking for the emergence of distinctive terms for combat activities within the social processes in which they were embedded.

According to Friday [1997: 6-7], around the 8<sup>th</sup> century, terms such as *bugei* and *hyoho* were used mainly to refer to the martial traditions of military aristocrats.<sup>16</sup> During the Kamakura and Muromachi periods, the notion of martial traditions attached to professional warriors was expressed in the terms *budo* and *bujutsu*, used interchangeably with *bugei* until the Meiji restoration. Despite early attempts to systematize martial traditions in Kamakura archery, it was during the Muromachi period when the first examples of distinguishable martial traditions were expressed in the notion of *ryu* (current, flow),<sup>17</sup> and possible ramifications of the *ryu* in different *ha* (branches).

During the Tokugawa period, martial *ryu* became stabilised and *budo* became progressively attached in a more specific fashion to the code of conduct or morals of samurai (even though *bugei* and *bujutsu* at that time also transmitted this meaning). *Budo* became clearly distinguishable from *bujutsu* or *bugei* in the Meiji period, with the creation of modern *budo* (*gendai buido*). The relationship between *budo* and morals grew stronger during the Meiji period and became definitive during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century through WWII – involving strong militaristic undertones before to the Second World War. Currently, *budo* denotes ‘the process by which the study of *bujutsu* becomes a means to self-development and self-realization’ [Friday 1997: 7]. *Bujutsu* focuses on the fighting capacity of the martial disciplines, while *bugei* is a more comprehensive term, including both *budo* and *bujutsu*.

16 Bugei and *hyoho* evolved through time and became attached to different meanings already well distinguished in the Tokugawa period: *bugei* became the generic term for samurai fighting arts and *hyoho* as a synonym for swordsmanship.

17 Prior to *ryu* were certain family martial traditions called *kaden* [Mol 2010: 74], based on the accumulated experience of former generations in the battlefield. *Kaden* could fit also the definition of martial arts as they already presented some kind of format and systematization. Nonetheless, as they were orally transmitted it is hard to trace their origins and development, it is safer to rely on the use of *ryu* as they are present in written texts. Many of these *Kaden* were introduced later as part of the *ryu*.

### *Terminological Controversies*

Donn Draeger's well-known [2007a; 2007b] model attempted to explain the evolution from classical bujutsu of pre-Tokugawa times to the classical budo of Tokugawa times via a clear-cut demarcation between fighting practices and mere ways of self-perfection. Notwithstanding the importance of Draeger's analyses for the understanding of Japanese martial traditions,<sup>18</sup> more recent research has shown that Draeger's evolutionary model from bujutsu to budo is flawed, not least terminologically. Rare exceptions notwithstanding – such as the change in terminology from *Jikishin ryu jujutsu* to *Jikishin ryu judo* in 1724 – the differentiation between 'do' and 'jutsu' never took place during the Tokugawa era.<sup>19</sup> Such differentiation only occurred at the earliest during the later Meiji period [Hurst 1993: 42], possibly even later. The complete change in terminology came only during the Taisho period, thanks to a great extent to the work of the Dai-Nippon Butokukai.<sup>20</sup>

Terminological controversies cannot be understood in a vacuum. Changes in terminology are always embedded within broader social processes. That is why authors such as Friday [2005] actually criticise Draeger's entire interpretation of the transformation of martial arts. For instance, Draeger considered that koryu bujutsu aimed at the development of effective skills for battlefield combat, whereas Friday [2005] considers it more appropriate to understand koryu bujutsu as activities not primarily intended for training in combat but for self-perfection and cultivation. Indeed, Friday's approach denies that a radical clear-cut demarcation in the martial culture of the warriors occurred during the Tokugawa period – from martial techniques (bujutsu) to martial ways (budo), as argued by Draeger [2007b], or from heiho (combat systems) to bugei (martial arts) as argued by Hurst [1993: 42]. Such changes had started during the Warring States period and were ongoing thereafter.

18 Draeger's model continues to be the default assumption of the hopological school. See for example Skoss [2005], Hall [2012: 280-82].

19 Terada Kanemon Masashige (1616-74), grandmaster of one of the branches of Kito ryu, the Kito Midare ryu, had founded the Jikishin ryu around 1640s. By 1724, the Jikishin ryu would become Jikishin ryu judo (predating Kano Jigoro's use of the term by more than 150 years) and bare-handed techniques occupied a significant part of the curriculum. However, the greater predominance of bare-handed techniques did not mean a complete specialization. As written documents of the era showed, the ryu also contained subsections on the use of grappling armed with short weapons as well as sword techniques [Mol 2001:130].

20 For more on the Dai-Nippon Butokukai, see Yasuhiro Sakae's article in this issue.

### *The Development of Martial Arts within Broader Social Processes*

Currently, features such as martial efficacy, etiquette, aesthetics, self-perfection and sport are all present in the martial arts discourses. These are the results of progressive sedimentations of the practices and values of different social actors at different stages in time. The exclusive identification of martial arts with the warrior group emerged only during the unification of the country and became definitively set during the Tokugawa period. Until then, the warrior group did not hold a monopolistic use of warfare and fighting techniques; it was something that was shared with other social groups such as religious institutions and peasants.

During this long period, martial arts have evolved far from techniques focused exclusively on combat efficacy on the battlefield. The initial content of martial arts was evidently about fighting-related techniques but, progressively, the main concern shifted from combat effectiveness in war towards questions of etiquette, self-perfection, or even entertainment. In this manner, the term 'martial arts' is tightly bound to the civilising process theory: a progressive degree of detachment from mere violence and combat has been at play in what we consider today 'martial arts' – even though some predominant decivilizing phases have occurred as well.<sup>21</sup>

Obviously, this transformation occurred over a long period of time. The differentiation between mere military training and the 'something else' that was included in the notion of martial arts during the Kamakura period is hard to pinpoint. 'Military archery' and 'ceremonial archery' were the same, except in terms of the time and occasion of the use, whether on the battlefield or in court ceremony respectively. During the Kamakura and Muromachi periods, fighting proficiency, etiquette, aesthetics and self-perfection were well-balanced elements of a warrior's martial traditions and were furthermore all embedded within a religious facet.

It is anachronistic to talk about art, religion and martial arts in ancient times as we do today – as clearly discernible and separate social spheres. The degree of social development during premodern Japan does not permit the making of such clear-cut distinctions as those between the religious/spiritual sphere from politics, war, art or everyday life. Japanese people of these times lived their lives permeated by religious

21 Explanatory models such as Armstrong [1986] and Donohue [1993] applied to the Japanese case also support Elias's 'civilising theory' (see Donohue and Taylor [1994] for a critical assessment of different models). Nonetheless, these theoretical models cannot grasp fully the complexity of the Japanese case (e.g. account for the decivilising influences and recurrences) in the way that the Eliasian model can.



beliefs. That is why notions of etiquette in martial arts during the Kamakura period were always connected to ceremonial and religious rituals.

In the Muromachi period, martial arts started to be thought of as paths of self-perfection, containing esoteric religious undertones, strongly connected with the notion of performing arts. The same goes for the relation of martial arts and warfare. At times when warfare was a regular part of daily lives – at least up until the *pax* Tokugawa of the 17<sup>th</sup> century – martial arts were inextricably bound to the shifting dynamics of warfare. In this sense, a clear-cut demarcation of warriors as a separate group of war-specialists did not exist either, until the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century when the category of warrior became more strictly delimited.

Furthermore, even though men may have played the main role in warfare and in the development of martial traditions, women participated and had some influence in the development of martial arts as well. Warfare, as well as the development of martial traditions, was just part of a broader social pattern of state formation. Thus, changes in the monopoly of violence and taxes must be taken into account to understand the specific development of warfare and martial arts.

Elias's process-sociology has the advantage of preventing any tendency to disconnect martial arts from broader social patterns. Such disconnections can end up producing a type of 'martial arts hagiography', as can often be seen in standard 'commonsensical' historical approaches, which trace milestones and coordinates as if they are ever disconnected from broader social patterns.

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## CONTRIBUTOR

William Little is an Assistant Teaching Professor of Sociology at the University of Victoria and an Open Learning Faculty Member at Thomson Rivers University in Canada. He practices aikido at Sanshukan Dojo in Victoria. His research interests include social theory, the sociology of violence, healing practices, and media and popular culture. His work on the theme of violence has been published in *New German Critique*, *the Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory*, and in several edited collections.

# PUTTING THE HARM BACK INTO HARMONY AIKIDO, VIOLENCE AND 'TRUTH IN THE MARTIAL ARTS' WILLIAM LITTLE

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## ABSTRACT

This paper will address the theme of 'truth in the martial arts', a phrase from Mitsugi Saotome's recent reflection on his relationship as uchi deshi (live-in student) to Morihei Ueshiba, the founder of aikido. I will frame this theme sociologically, exploring it as an aspect of the martial arts as contemporary practices of the self. What is distinct about the practice of the martial arts in this context is their sustained reflection on violence, not simply as violent contest but as a condition of irreducible insecurity per se. I propose that aikido (not unlike other martial arts) offers a response to violence by articulating a form-of-life – 'a life that can never be separated from its form' (Giorgio Agamben) – that is anchored by the understanding of complete martial fluidity as immanent to life. The martial arts are therefore very interesting contemporary practices of the self because their paths to knowledge address key biopolitical issues of life and power through a freeing relation to violence. I would also like to propose that the framework of transcendental empiricism, which Gilles Deleuze develops to describe the dynamics of affectual as opposed to representational (i.e. mediated) experience, is both promising to characterize the experience of martial fluidity and to expand martial artists' own self-understanding.



'What is the meaning of the martial arts in the contemporary conduct of life?' – This is how I imagine the sociologist Max Weber would have posed the question of the sociology of the martial arts. If politics is a vocation and science is a vocation [Weber 1919a/1946, 1919b/1946], what is the meaning of the martial arts as a vocation, or 'calling'? This is an interesting question, because while the martial arts in their different aspects certainly figure into contemporary societies as spectacles, sports, job skills, fitness regimens, hobbies, bearers of ethno-cultural identity, or even objects of desire or fantasy, these external characteristics do not get at what might be called the truth of the martial arts as practices of the self.

Following Ben Spatz's insights into performance studies in *What a Body Can Do* [2015], we are well positioned to inquire into this truth. One primary avenue of exploration in martial arts training is precisely the Spinozian and Deleuzian question: What can a body do? This is a question concerning the variable powers of action that can be learned through the body. As elaborated in Mitsugi Saotome's account of aikido, *A Light on Transmission* [2014], examined below, learning what a body can do in the martial arts entails three particular orientations to truth: a knowledge accessed through the transformation of the body, a knowledge specifically oriented to the problem of violence, and a knowledge that is primarily affectual rather than cognitive in content. As the basis for a specific conduct of life, Saotome's examination of his martial art parallels what Giorgio Agamben has called a 'form-of-life', suggesting that, within the dense configuration of life, politics, and violence that constitutes the contemporary conduct of life as a whole, the martial arts prefigure a kind of counter-politics. The thesis presented here is that Agamben's concept of a form-of-life provides a way to think about the nature of the martial arts and vice-versa. Arguably, this nature is profoundly political, though in ways that are not immediately apparent.

In an early essay on the theme of life and politics – a theme with which he has since been frequently associated – Agamben [1993/2000] introduced the concept form-of-life to describe the conditions under which a way out from the relationship between political power, life, and violence could be found. In his analysis, contemporary political power is founded on a division projected into the nature of life itself, between *bare life* (*zoē*) – the basic fact of mere living which humans share with animals – and the properly human *ways of life* (*bios*) – 'the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group' [1998: 1]. The capacity of 'the sovereign' to isolate naked or bare life from a way of life structures both the sovereign power of the state ('the power to *take* life or *let* live', as Michel Foucault put it [1978: 136]) and the biopowers, or disciplinary, life administrating powers, exercised in a variety of institutional sites in society from health care to the prison (the power to '*foster* life or *disallow* it to the point of death' [Foucault 1978: 138]).

Contemporary political power therefore bears an intrinsic relationship to this original violence. Its distinguishing quality is its capacity to expose bare life to violence without limit, to separate and hold life in what Agamben calls the sovereign 'ban'; by contrast, he explains how, 'by the term *form-of-life* ... I mean a life that can never be separated from its form, a life in which it is never possible to isolate something such as naked life' [1993/2000: 2-3]. Only through 'the emancipation from such a division, with the irrevocable exodus from any sovereignty' can a cohesive, reintegrated life be reconstituted.

This concept of an integrated or non-alienated life in Agamben's analysis has always seemed very promising, as it derives in a logically satisfying way from his compelling critique of the forms of contemporary power. It provides the basis for an analysis which, starting from an affirmation of life and its potentials, might reveal and begin to unravel the mechanisms of power that seize upon life as their anchor. But it is also puzzling when it comes to deciphering what the term *form-of-life* actually means. Is there a sociological referent to this concept? Is it possible to reconfigure a post-sovereign way of living that can disengage from the violent effects of sovereign politics, if not directly challenge or overcome them?

His clarification unfortunately is equally mystifying:

**A life that cannot be separated from its form is a life for which what is at stake in its way of living is living itself. What does this formulation mean? It defines a life – human life – in which the single ways, acts, and processes of living are never simply facts but always and above all possibilities of life, always and above all power [potenza as opposed to *potere*] [Agamben 1993/2000: 4].**

At play is a critical distinction between two conceptions of 'living itself' that parallel the distinction between *zoē* and *bios*. One might be characterized by 'simple facts' of life while the other only by 'possibilities of life'. The relationship between 'living itself' and 'the ways, acts, and processes of living' in which life is lived is framed within the same critical distinction. One appears emblematic of separation, the other of an integration of life's power of potential. But the terms of reference of this distinction and the 'stakes' referred to are difficult to draw out. Agamben's notion of a post-sovereign 'coming community' [1993] devolves precisely into this question of whether humans can live a life that affirms their quality as beings of 'pure potentiality'.

In casting about for examples of such a form-of-life, it becomes evident that this might be a question amenable to a reflection on the type of training practiced in the martial arts. The notion of a form-of-life

or life of pure potentiality bears a resemblance to the concern in the martial arts to develop martial fluidity or free movement. In the 'skilled practices designed to induce spontaneous martial Innovation', as D.S. Farrer puts it, 'true skill is not reducible to the slavish [or disciplinary] reproduction of forms' but emerges in a *becoming-other* [2013: 147]. In this focus of the martial arts, it seems plausible to state, along with Agamben, that 'what is at stake in its way of living is living itself'. A more general sociological query within martial arts studies on the meaning of the martial arts in our contemporary conduct of life might be refined therefore to focus on the embodied nature and transmission of these arts as forms-of-life. In Foucault's analysis, biopolitical or disciplinary power 'disassociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an "aptitude", a "capacity" which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection' [1977: 138]. The reverse of this would be a situation in which power was not disassociated from the body. This would seem consonant with many martial traditions aligned with the Japanese notions of *budo* or the Chinese notions of *wude*, for example.

It therefore seems profitable to follow in the footsteps of Ben Spatz's project, *What A Body Can Do* [2015], and ask, can a body 'do' political ontology? Can a body provide access to the foundations and first principles of political life? Can a body learn to alter these foundations? For martial artists in particular, can the transformation of the body through the practice of the martial arts provide insight into the nature of contemporary power relations and violence? Is this one of its truths? Can it fundamentally reorient the living of life in a manner such that life is no longer being separated from its form? More simply, can the embodied knowledge of the martial arts offer a model of a form-of-life that is politically salient today?

## TRUTH IN THE MARTIAL ARTS

In this regard, this essay takes up the theme of 'truth in the martial arts', a phrase from the opening pages of Mitsugi Saotome's [2014] recent reflection on his relationship as uchi deshi – live-in student – to Morihei Ueshiba (referred to by aikidokas as O' Sensei), the founder of aikido. What is the nature of this truth? It becomes immediately apparent that Saotome's concern in the book is not to teach the secrets of aikido technique, nor to determine the most effective fighting method, nor to decide which of the many styles of aikido that emerged from Ueshiba's teaching is best or most true to his intentions. Rather, he argues that the truth of aikido lies in its essentially *ethical* dimension, that is, in its practice of self-cultivation; as he puts it: 'Aikido is the way of coming to understand natural law in all its complexity within the

context of one's own life, and of making this understanding part of one's flesh and blood' [2014: 9]. Quoting Ueshiba, Saotome adds that 'training of the ordinary mind and body is the path to spiritual truth' [2014: 57]; in other words, truth in the martial arts for Saotome involves the principles by which the training of the body and mind in martial technique gives access to a transformation of 'spirit'. The ultimate goal of transforming the spirit, through the bodily alignment of 'one's own life' with 'natural law', is a state of *complete martial fluidity*. This quality is not attained at a purely physical or purely tactical level but at the level of an embodied knowledge – as 'part of one's flesh and blood' – which, in order to be more than a descriptive term, must be understood to express the quality of pure potentiality key to Agamben's form-of-life.

From the point of view of sociology, this idea marks aikido and other dedicated martial arts practices as particular *ways of living* or 'forms of life' (no hyphens yet) rather than simply sports, hobbies, fighting methods, or military training practices. They are in this sense *ethics*, or forms of what Foucault [1994a] has called 'practices of the self'. That is, while the martial arts certainly have historical ties to military training, competitive sport, and even nation building projects, etc., on their own they are relatively autonomous ways in which people freely act upon themselves to transform themselves. Through the ethical work of a practice of the self, a particular state of being, a particular power of action, or a particular embodied knowledge can be attained. In this sense, they are much like the ancient Greek and Roman ethics of *care of the self* in which, as Foucault says, 'ethics as the conscious practice of freedom ... revolved around [the] fundamental imperative: "Take care of yourself"' [1994b: 285].

This provides one important departure point for their analysis as forms of political life because Foucault is at pains to distinguish an ethics of 'care of the self' from the dominant biopolitical paradigm of the 'truth of the self'. If contemporary biopolitics is a project that seeks to order or 'normalize' the life of the population by extracting the truth of the living self in various sites of social control – medicine, psychiatry, education, work, criminality, sport performance, etc. – then the care of the self is a reverse of this relationship. The truth of the self is not the source but the consequence of the autonomous practices of care of the self [Foucault 1994a]. In this respect, the care of the self seems in sync with Foucault's interest in modern practices of the self as techniques of ongoing experimentation: an ethos centered on the 'historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them' [Foucault 1984: 50].

Of course, many types of practice of the self are available today. It has become common in sociology to note that citizens of late modernity – detraditionalized, globally integrated, technologically mediated,

culturally hybrid, risk averse, freedom oriented, socially fluid, and self-actualizing [Giddens 1991; Bauman 2000] – are confronted with an array of competing options for engaging in practices of the self. The various forms of counseling and therapy, meditation practices, yogas, martial arts, dieting, fitness regimes, and different systems of health management, as well as the numerous spiritual practices adopted in ‘do-it-yourself’ fashion from the world religions, are all examples of the contemporary care of the self. What is not clear from the sociological literature on this pluralization of practices of the self, however, is a sense of their political effect. At what point do these voluntary practices of self-transformation come into contact with the involuntary structures of sovereignty and biopolitics, and why should the martial arts stand out in this regard? In terms of the political dynamics that govern human action today, with so many possibilities for practices of the self, why should the truth of the martial arts, or the conceptualization of a martial art like aikido as a practice of the self, be particularly significant? What type of practice of the self are the martial arts and what bearing does it have on the political theme of a form-of-life?

We might begin by observing that the martial arts are practices of the self which are uniquely positioned between the twin poles of biopolitics and sovereign violence. In fact, as discussed in the next two sections, it is the *combination* of two central qualities of the martial arts that distinguish them from other practices of the self: their formulation as *spiritual practices* and their *freeing relation to violence*. Both aspects revolve around the question of what enables access to the truth of the martial arts. On one hand, it is the manner in which these truths are disclosed through intensive bodily training – only after years of training can some of the truths of the art be grasped – and, on the other hand, the way in which these truths bear in obvious and not-so-obvious ways on a relationship to violence. If the implication is that the underlying element of our political situation today – the ‘secret tie uniting power with bare life’ [Agamben 1998: 6] – can be researched, resisted, or even transformed through the body, then this clearly requires an expansion of the terrain that is traditionally drawn in to the study of martial arts practice. Nevertheless, the thread that has tied the truth of martial technique to the truth of the martial ‘dos’, or ways, has always implied this relation.

## THE MARTIAL ARTS AS SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Foucault [2005] seems to go out of his way in the first lecture from his 1981-1982 course on the ancient ‘care of the self’ to demarcate a certain set of self-practices as ‘spiritual’. On the surface, this is consonant with Saotome and others’ efforts to show the place of Shinto and Buddhist concepts in Morihei Ueshiba’s discourses on aikido [Saotome 1993, 2015; Gleason 1995], or the connection of Taoism and Shamanism with taiji or gongfu, etc. [Shahar 2008; Boretz 2011]. There are some grounds for caution here as the intrinsic relationship between the martial arts and particular spiritual practices like those of Zen Buddhism have been contested by recent scholarship [Benesch 2016]. But Foucault means ‘spiritual’ in a much more specific sense. Spiritual arts refer to a particular relationship to truth; unlike scientific practice, where anyone can (in principle) observe and manipulate the elements of reality and therefore come to know the truth, a spiritual practice of the self is one that requires a fundamental self-transformation in the subject before access to knowledge is attained.

Thus, Foucault defines a spiritual practice of the self as ‘the search, practice, and experience through which the subject carries out the necessary transformations on himself in order to have access to the truth’ [2005: 14]. He adds that ‘we will call “spirituality” then the set of these researches, practices, and experiences, which may be purifications, ascetic exercises, renunciations, conversions of looking, modifications of existence, etc., which are, not for knowledge but for the subject, for the subject’s very being, the price to be paid for access to the truth’ [2005: 14]. If a martial art requires years of training and a fundamental shift in the practitioners’ relations to ‘being’ to access the truth of the techniques, then the martial art is a spiritual practice in this specific sense.

Foucault goes on to elaborate three premises that set spiritual traditions of knowledge apart from modern Cartesian philosophy and science:

**Spirituality postulates that the subject as such does not have right of access to the truth and is not capable of having access to the truth ... It postulates that for the subject to have right of access to the truth he *[sic]* must be changed, transformed, shifted, and become, to some extent and up to a certain point, other than himself *[sic]*.**

**There can be no truth without a conversion or a transformation of the subject’, which is typically accomplished through either the transforming movement of eros (love) or askesis (work on the self).**

Once access to the truth has really been opened up, it produces effects [of]... 'rebound' ('de retour'), effects of the truth on the subject ... The truth enlightens the subject; the truth gives beatitude to the subject; the truth gives the subject tranquility of the soul. In short, in the truth and in access to the truth, there is something that fulfills the subject himself, which fulfills or transfigures his [*sic*] very being'.  
[2005: 15-16].

The key point from these definitions is that the martial arts are 'spiritual practices' in the sense that they require a fundamental transformation in the subject to access truth. Training in the martial arts is ultimately not a Cartesian science. It has to be conceptualized otherwise. It is not about how an already constituted subject – a subject with a 'right of access to the truth' – obtains objective skills and capacities, which themselves can be categorized by objective measures of their efficacy. Rather, if we are able to speak of attaining martial fluidity or free movement as the truth of the martial arts, then it is a truth that is obtained through the arduous back and forth between training or *askesis* and a *becoming-other* of the subject.

This notion of a spiritual dimension and transformation of existence, learned through the relationship to the body, is in fact a defining feature of many types of martial arts practice. It informs, for example, the distinction between *gong* (skill) and *fa* (technique) in taiji [Nulty 2017], the experiential 'bodying forth' in *taolu* [Mroz 2017], and the 'somatic conundrums' of *kime* (decision) in karate [Bar-On Cohen 2006]. The nature of this transformation is not conceptualized as simply physical or technical, as might be understood in the practice of a sport or in efforts to objectively define the most effective martial technique. For example, Saotome describes the three levels of learning in the martial arts as *shu* – learning the established techniques and kata (*waza* or basic technique); *ha* – breaking apart the established forms to discover their limits or to adapt to unexpected variations an opponent introduces (*kaeshi-waza* or reversals); and *ri* – departure from the *waza*, 'the ability to freely adapt and apply *waza* to different situations ... To respond flexibly and intuitively to a wide range of attacks' [2014: 80]. In order to open up access to this ideal of martial arts fluidity, one has to be transformed through repeated practice of the first two levels, which might take years. One has to be transformed, not only physically or mentally in terms of mastering technical skills, but also transformed in terms of one's basic being-in-the-world, in 'one's flesh and blood'. This is a process that, through the body, breaks down the ontological coordinates of the Cartesian subject to effect a fundamental transformation in first principles, or, in essence, 'life'.

Here I am struck by a video of Seigo Yamaguchi (who, along with Morihei Ueshiba's son, Kisshomaru, taught Saotome prior to him

joining Hombu Dojo to study with Ueshiba). In an aikido seminar, Yamaguchi explains the need to study flowing movement so that the line of an attack from an opponent will be unimpeded and the corresponding defensive response effective [*Aikido Journal* 2014]. He describes this in terms of the fluid sword work in the stories of the old budo practitioners:

Fluid, yet heavy. Gentle, yet fierce. Budo is full of such opposite concepts. Movement in stillness, stillness in movement. In motion, yet immovable. They sound like Zen koans, but with our bodies, we can gain clear understanding of such ideas. We forge such a body, and such a mind, rather than simply trying to learn techniques. We do this through 'right practice' and training. Then it no longer matters where or how you are attacked. Grabbing and being grabbed, attacking and receiving, are one and the same.

In pointing to a practice in which 'we forge such a body', Yamaguchi points to the spiritual nature of martial arts training as Foucault has described it. He expresses the strange nature of the practice of the martial arts in which truths that can only be contradictory, paradoxical, or mystical when expressed in the language of empirical concepts can be accessed, perceived, and lived through the body. This speaks to the different nature of the truths that are attained through 'right practice and training'. It is through a thorough transformation of the experience of the body that this different truth becomes possible.

There is therefore a crucial difference here between the medical knowledges and disciplinary powers that break down the body to extract its aptitudes, capacities, and 'objective' truth, and the spiritual practices of care of the self that build up self-mastery [Foucault 1977: 137]. In Foucault's analysis, disciplinary power 'disassociates power from the body' [1977: 138], whereas martial arts work in the opposite direction: to reintegrate the body and its powers through practices that transform the life of the subject. In Foucault's formulation of the spiritual practices of the self, we can therefore see perhaps one of the sources for Agamben's criterion of the form-of-life: 'A life that cannot be separated from its form is a life for which what is at stake in its way of living is living itself. Compare Foucault: 'The truth is only given to the subject at a price that brings the subject's being into play. For as he [*sic*] is, the subject is not capable of truth' [1977: 15]. The truth of the martial arts is tied to bringing the subject's being 'into play', which in turn is 'what is at stake' in the truth of his or her martial art practice. A spiritual practice of the self is one that requires a fundamental self-transformation in the 'living' of the subject before access to truth – the variable powers of action that can be learned through the body – is granted.

## MARTIAL ARTS AS VIOLENCE

The second distinct feature of martial arts as a practice of the self is their sustained orientation to the problem of violence. In Saotome's account, the classical Japanese martial disciplines, or budo, originated in a practical orientation to the fact of violence, not as practices of the self *per se*. The fighting arts and battle skills developed during the Warring States period after 1477 and were then formalized into schools following 1600 during the Tokugawa Shogunate (1603-1867). It was after 1600 that they gradually began to focus on the practice of the self as much as the practice of battle skills. Some of the particulars of this account might be disputed by modern scholarship, especially when it comes to determining whether the Samurai class had a unique 'code' of their own [Benesch 2014], but clearly from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onward the idea of the martial arts as an ethic of self-cultivation has been central. In its origins, therefore, Japanese martial arts training was about learning the technical skills (jutsu) to conduct various types of violent or martial contest (bu-jutsu), after which the narrow framework of bujutsu is modified by the ethical concerns of self, community, and spiritual truth that define bu-do as a martial way.

Saotome offers the following, perhaps provocative, elaboration on the difference between bujutsu and budo: 'The goal of bujutsu [martial (bu); technical skills (jutsu)] has always been survival ... How to effectively control and kill an opponent ... True bujutsu is mikiri, or living on the edge – *the paper thin edge that separates life from death*' [2014: 51, my emphasis]. To distinguish the ethical project of budo from bujutsu, he suggests that budo 'embodies and makes practical the conversion of the energies of conflict into the energies of coexistence' [2014: 52]. Moreover, for Saotome, budo offers a way or do of *misogi*, or self-purification, a way of preserving 'a sense of calm at all times – even in the thick of battle' [2014: 45]. In other words, as opposed to bujutsu, in which one trains for violence, Saotome wishes to present budo as offering a *freeing relation to violence*. Nevertheless, both have a commitment to responding to 'the paper-thin edge that separates life from death'. What is at stake in both is 'living itself', as Agamben puts it, but the valence of the stake differs in a consequential way.

To various degrees, martial arts training is understood as a practical orientation to this edge, and many of the problems that one seeks to work out in training have to do with maintaining proximity to this edge. If formal martial arts training in the dojo is always several steps removed from actual violence, as Rory Miller [2008] has argued, then the question 'How can martial arts training practices be real?' is another way of pointing to this edge as another *truth* martial artists seek to 'know'. In Miller's view, 'the insular tradition and history of each *dojo* has morphed a primal understanding of violence into the modern ritual

of martial arts' [2008: xii]. He argues persuasively that there is a stark difference between the techniques one learns repetitively in practice under the artificial conditions of the dojo and the responses to an actual violent confrontation in 'the street' under the influence of the chemical cocktail of adrenalin and in the 'totality of circumstances' of the martial encounter [2008: 31-32]. In the midst of 'all of the infinite details of the moment', dojo technique tends to fail. As my own Sensei lectures when he gets testy about students trying to get fancy, or mimicking master's techniques before they have put in the time to develop the skills of a master, 'That is not martial, that is dancing!' If there is no direct orientation to or understanding of the edge – no orientation to 'the street' – then there is no martial art. In this sense, the truth of the martial arts is about what makes techniques 'work' in practical applications when survival is at stake. If it is the orientation to harm that gives meaning to the practice of harmony in a martial art, then the question of the truth of the martial arts practice becomes: *How can the harm be put back into harmony?*

However, implicit in Saotome's analysis of the edge is the question: Is it possible to develop a freeing relation to violence or must one train to become fully violent? To examine this question in light of Agamben's theme of the form-of-life, it is necessary to step back to examine 'the truth' of this edge itself. What is the 'primal' experience of violence or 'survival' this edge refers to? This is another point where a broader political context intrudes. It is a way of characterizing the grounding of the martial arts in an *ontology of violence* – an orientation to the world that emerges in situations of crisis, when norms of civility are suspended and lethal violence exists as a constant threat. As an ontology or reflection on first principles, it reconfigures what can be done and what can be known in any contest of powers. The martial arts are not simply training in the skills and strategies necessary for violent contest – they define an orientation to the conditions under which violent contests arise *per se*, to the idea of *unlimited and irreducible insecurity* as an always immanent, ever present condition of life.

To evoke the situation of irreducible insecurity is to evoke a situation maximally saturated by politics. The emphasis on *survival* under conditions of violence refers immediately back again to the various ways forms of life are constituted as bare life – the 'hidden foundation of sovereignty' or 'ultimate and opaque bearer of sovereignty' as Agamben says [1993/2000: 6]. Bare life is life viewed from the perspective of violence; it is life reduced to a quality of mere survival under conditions of uncertainty. By extension, it presents a view of the world from the situation of political exception, emergency, or war: the situation of life's unmediated exposure to the threat of death that emerges when regular laws or norms do not apply or are suspended. As a sovereign is 'he who decides the exception', in Carl Schmitt's famous formula [1922/1985],



the act of a sovereign to declare an emergency and suspend the law (and thereby the normal situation) is an act which, at whatever scale it occurs, is properly *political*. It is the unique quality of the political decision to grant the power that strips life of the protections afforded by law, customs, status, rules, and morality. To follow Agamben, the paper-thin edge that defines survival is most usefully characterized in terms of a *political* truth: it is only under conditions of the politics of exception that bare life, and an orientation to it, emerges.

Violence is therefore not so much a specific act of physical, emotional, or structural, etc., aggression, but the emergence or declaration of a situation of exception – a situation in which one’s life is exposed to violence or irreducible risk. The idea of ‘the street’ in martial arts discussions is a microcosm of the Hobbesian ‘war of all against all’, a situation of exception that emerges when no sovereign has the power to ‘overawe them all’ and anything becomes possible. This world of violent encounters is at once fundamentally uncertain, insecure, and lethal. The truth of the martial arts is therefore framed by a fundamental orientation to the problems that emerge from this condition. In the martial arts, this condition might be described as the totally fluid martial situation, a situation of pure lethal, unpredictable contingency, or ‘unconfinable combat’. ‘Combat “as is” is total ... Lacking boundaries, combat is always fresh, alive, and constantly changing’ [Lee 1971: 27].

One response to the problem is Hobbes’ own appeal to a natural right of self-preservation, as implied in Saotome’s account of bujutsu. This would define a way of inscribing the martial arts into the existing structures of law and sovereign politics. Every person claims sovereignty to the limited degree that they take it upon themselves to suspend the law in a situation of exception and regard anyone who threatens their right to self-preservation as an enemy. This decision to authorize the use of lethal force against an enemy is a decision of ‘utmost intensity’, as Schmitt puts it [1932/1996]; even at the individual level, it goes beyond ‘taking the law into one’s own hands’ to an act of foundational *law-making*, which decides on an ad hoc basis what the law itself – i.e. the entire political framework of ethical life – actually *is*. For Schmitt, this existential act of decision defines the political dimension; it steps outside the normative conditions of social life, which remain bound to predictable social, moral, legal, and psychological facts and regularities to establish new norms. The implication is that the everyday ways of living in which normal life is conducted are contingent on the existential or primary reality of violence. They are, in Miller’s analysis, illusory, not ‘real’, not oriented to the edge. In the name of survival, the decision to separate naked life from a social form or way of life is always immanent, always present behind the scenes. Violence itself is the truth; the certainties and regularities of normal life are merely contingent. In this context, martial arts are called upon in the guise of lethal responses

to the problem of the exception; one’s attitude towards training and the truth of the martial arts is configured accordingly.

On the other hand, when martial arts are considered as practices of the self or budo, they begin to prefigure a way out of this structure of sovereign power. Here we can say that aikido (like other martial arts) offers a response to violence by articulating a form-of-life – ‘a life that can never be separated from its form’ – in a very particular sense: a life practice in which violence *cannot* emerge and bare life *cannot* be isolated. It is in this sense that Morihei Ueshiba famously reconstituted the martial situation of violence as a situation of non-violence, non-fighting, or non-contest: ‘In fact, your opponent is not your opponent because you and your opponent *become one*. This is the beauty of the Art of Peace’ [Ueshiba 2002: 79, my emphasis]. As Saotome puts it, ‘there is no such thing as life in isolation, either physically or spiritually’ [2014: 23]. Here, he invokes the principle of ai-ki (harmonious energy), the embeddedness of life in the totality of the universe: ‘Consciously and unconsciously, we are always living in sync with the activity of the universe’ [2014: 23]. Against the notion of violence as a *crisis* ready to emerge anywhere at any time, the countervailing response is to pass through the cycle of norm and crisis by continually ‘becoming one’. The irony of the martial arts from this perspective is that as one practices the skills of violence (bujutsu) one actually learns to prevent a situation of violence from emerging (budo).<sup>1</sup> In this ‘becoming one’ of the practice of the self, one trains to allow no gap in the living situation from which an act of violence or rupture can emerge. One learns ‘how to harmonize with any attack’ [Ueshiba 2007: 123].

In one sense, therefore, the martial arts might simply be characterized as one type of bios or sociological ‘form of life’ (no hyphens) alongside others, defined by a practice of the self that trains in the skills of violence. They can be practiced in a limited way and slotted into the existing structures of power in the same manner as a pastime, hobby, sport, or trade. It is possible to think about them and practice them

1 Saotome subscribes to the popular, albeit etymologically questionable, interpretation of the term budo as literally ‘the way of stopping the spear’. His interpretation is nevertheless informative vis-à-vis his wish to establish the project of modern budo. He discusses how the Chinese character for **bu** ‘is composed of radicals meaning “to stop” and “spear”; thus the original purpose of the martial disciplines, as reflected in the character with which the word martial is written, was to subdue conflict and maintain the peace’ [2014: 37]. He finds a similar equivocation in the Japanese word **ikusa** as both ‘battle’ and ‘wellbeing of the people’. At the collective level, ‘the purpose of the martial arts since ancient times has been the quelling of violence, the securing of the peace, and the betterment of society’; at the individual level, ‘the essence of martial discipline is ... no more or less than what we bring to bear in order to reconcile and overcome ... [the] contradictions and difficult choices in our daily lives’ [2014: 37].

in this way. But it seems more significant to see how they also work towards becoming a *form-of-life* – ‘a life that can never be separated from its form’. This vocation implies a different relationship between life and power: an affirmation of unrestricted martial fluidity as both the telos of a spiritual transformation and the freeing relation by which violence, or separation itself, is deactivated. In Saotome’s terms, this martial fluidity is not defined by specific proficiencies in martial technique as much as it is by seeking a certain power of vitality through the training of the body. In this turn, he expresses the idea of a life of potential – a practice oriented to the *formlessness* of pure potential – that resembles very closely Agamben’s own solution to the problem of sovereign power and biopolitics.

## ON POISE

To learn what a body can do through martial training is to come to experience it not primarily as this or that ability, but in its potential for abilities, or what Agamben refers to as the ‘potential character of life’ [Agamben 1993/2000: 9]. The numerous paths that constitute the martial arts seek to liberate the body’s potentials through the practice of training. They act upon a truth of the body: the idea that complete martial fluidity is a quality immanent to life or vitality itself. Following Agamben’s analysis, this relation to life is key to deactivating the forms of separation that underlie both the sovereign power of exception and the biopolitical manipulation of life. Martial arts embody one instance of this relation. To the degree that this is also necessarily a collective endeavor, this reorientation to the life of the living body is political in a fundamental manner. Yet it is rarely understood, articulated, or theorized as such. It seems entirely feasible to ‘touch’ this possibility in a theoretical description, while not ‘knowing’ it or living it as an experiential reality.

This presents a particular problem of truth that martial arts training seeks to resolve. With respect to the embodied nature and transmission of these arts as forms of life, a third criterion might be adduced to characterize them: *the martial arts are a social form with affective content*. The crypto-mysticism of which discourses concerning the martial arts are sometimes accused – we saw above the series ‘fluid, yet heavy’, ‘movement in stillness’, ‘in motion, yet immovable’, etc., in Yamaguchi’s account of forging the martial body, for instance – might be better understood to originate in the difficulty of translating the invention of affective states into words or proscriptions. Their truths are learned through ways of *feeling* the body’s dispositions, what gives power, where balance lies, etc. To refine this problem further, as the philosopher Gilles Deleuze [1998] puts it, specific affects – a joy, a love, a hope, a pain, etc. – are non-representational modes of thought. They

are transferred by means of *affectio* (affection, or a responsive state of the body) and *affectus* (affect, or an increase or decrease of a power of acting). In contrast to the communication of ideas, which represent things, affects are a mode of thought that do not represent anything. For the numerous martial arts that seek to liberate the body’s potentials through the practice of training, the truth of the body is affectual: the experience of complete martial fluidity as a quality immanent to life or vitality itself is an affectual state.

One figure by which this affectual state is accessed is through the study of what might be called ‘poise’ in the martial arts. What is poise? There is a common and deceptively simple difference martial arts students encounter in training between learning a ‘stance’ and learning ‘poise’. This difference parallels the distinction drawn between learning technique and developing the capacity for free movement. Where the former involves the practice of fixed forms, the latter evokes the idea of formlessness. Saotome describes *takemuso aiki*, for example, as the ‘movement of truth’ or ‘a spontaneous and creative application that allows the dynamics and structure of the universal laws to be expressed in the human body’ [1993: 2]. He distinguishes it from the study of ‘correct’ technique as the attempt to repeat forms exactly as an instructor has demonstrated [1993: 179-180]. From this we might gather that stance or posture is to poise as the fixed disciplinary forms of technique are to the potentiality of form-of-life. One is the basis of training in technique, the other a way of freedom of movement. Following Saotome’s account of the three levels of learning in the martial arts – shu (technique), ha (reversals), ri (free adaptation) – the martial artist paradoxically practices forms and technique to learn the truth of formlessness. How this ‘truth’ actually impinges upon practice, powers of action, and what can be learned through the body is the unique challenge of the martial arts as a social form-of-life.

There is some confusion on this issue, not least because the political elements are submerged. In the John Stevens translation of *Budo* [Ueshiba 1991], a pre-WWII technical manual written by Morihei Ueshiba for Prince Tsunenori Kaya, there is a discussion of the stance or posture that came to be the basis of techniques in aikido: the *hanmi* stance or half-posture (i.e. exposing only half the body as a target). The difference between the literal translation and the Stevens translation is interesting because where Stevens gives a very practical description of foot positioning he omits the elements that transform a technical *stance* into the potential fluidity of *poise*. Stevens translates:

(1) Stance: Fill yourself with ki, assume a hanmi stance with your feet apart opened at a sixty-degree angle, and face your opponent with a flexible aiki posture.  
[cited in Li 2012]

Christopher Li suggests a more literal translation:

(1) Kamae: Fill yourself with Ki power, open your legs in six directions and face the enemy in the hanmi irimi posture of Aiki.  
[Li 2012]

What is the problem here? Both descriptions offer instruction on how the practitioner should orient themselves to an opponent. There is an attitude of readiness, of filling oneself with energy, and a concern with positioning oneself along a line with respect to an opponent/enemy. The first is very practical in that it defines foot positioning geometrically to the orientations of a compass – a universal knowledge open to anyone – whereas the second is esoteric – a *spiritual truth* as we have described above – evoking a knowledge of the internal and external six directions to which, without further explanation, one's legs open. One describes a *stance*, a standard of martial training manuals, which can be repeated according to a fixed form that corresponds to an illustration provided. It is described in representational terms as a means of making the body conform to a template, an *idea*. The other describes an openness, a formlessness or *affectual state*, which implies both a stance *and* the devolution of the stance into six directions. Between the two translations is in fact a political element: one indicates a mode of embodiment that remains bound to the idea, which in turn binds life to a plane of established organization; the other indicates a mode of embodiment that is affectual, which in turn implies the passage to an affective state of openness and expresses life as a power of action. Again, this is a way of speaking about 'a life for which what is at stake in its way of living is living itself' [Agamben 2000 [1993]: 4].

Saotome gives us a concrete image of formlessness and martial fluidity in his description of the study and practice of circular movement in aikido:

Circular movement, where end meets up with beginning, is the basis of aiki waza (martial techniques). These techniques and their movements are infused in the physical body as the circle's soul (center). The circle describes emptiness, and what is born of emptiness is kokoro, 'mind' (the character for kokoro also means center). *Emptiness is completely free and without restriction*. As soon as a center is formed in the middle of emptiness, ki is produced. So the center of emptiness, that which fills the entire infinite universe with energy and life, is the essence of soul. Soul is the immortal, life-giving parent responsible for all creation. When the circle is infused into the physical body, waza are the result: the essence responsible for the workings of waza is brought into existence. *This process of birth is limitless*. [2014: 63, my emphasis]

Leaving aside for a moment some of the language here – 'soul', 'mind' – Saotome uses the image of the circle to describe both the form of aikido technique and the nature of a field of martial encounter. The circle is of course a form, but, in this case, a form that indexes a state of formlessness: it is built on an emptiness 'completely free and without restriction' in which the generation of waza is limitless. Saotome clearly means emptiness in the Buddhist sense of void – that is, not as a representation or symbol at all but as an emptiness unconstrained by the limits of representation, or of being and non-being. Just like in the overly technical translation of hanmi as a fixed stance, the circle is often used to 'represent' or 'symbolize' emptiness, but this is understood in a more immediate, embodied, *affective* way in Saotome's account.

How does this work? Saotome describes how, in a martial encounter, as soon as a center is formed in the middle of emptiness a circular field of immanent form and action is produced. He refers to this as a field of ki or formless energy, or what might be called a *metastable state*. As Ronald Bogue puts it, a metastable state is one possessing 'potential energy, or unevenly distributed energy, which is capable of effecting a transformation' [Bogue 1989: 61]. Once the metastable field is created, it is 'empty' and yet full in the manner described in Shinto creation stories. It is tense, or rather, as a metastable field, both tense and slack, heavy and light, vertical and horizontal, smooth and sharp, etc. It is a field rife with thresholds of this nature. In a martial encounter, movements of bodies create openings for attack while closing down others. The field of the martial encounter shifts as the center shifts and meets other centers. Bodies move together and continually re-center one another. There are open doors and blocked passages, intense zones of engagement and voids, force majeure and vacuums, straight lines and spiraling eddies, exposed spaces and safe retreats, stable alignments of weight and gravity and destabilizing misalignments. Center – or the kamae of connecting center to center – defines the ever-shifting parameters, focus, feeling, and efficacy of technique.

In this context, the study of circular technical forms in the martial arts becomes a means of learning or transmitting how to center the physical body in this emptiness – to affect a *becoming-empty* that enables the generation of waza 'completely free and without restriction'. The inertia and resistance of the body empties out as the body becomes light. The metastable field thus corresponds to the sword work Yamaguchi described. Training is oriented to the possibility of learning through the body to attain the fluidity of an unrestricted emptiness. The circular techniques do not *represent* emptiness as an idea but enable the martial artist to *move into* a space of emptiness, or, more accurately, for the space of emptiness to move into the martial artist. 'The human body and the universe are one and the same; the universe is the body that we inhabit. Aiki can only be understood as the expression of universal movement' [Ueshiba in Saotome 2014: 2].

The passage into emptiness is a shift in affectual states that registers as an increase in a power of action. Deleuze describes this passage as the formation of a 'plane of consistency', or, in a martial context, the smooth space of the war machine in which there are 'only relations of movement and rest, of speed and slowness, between unformed, or relatively unformed, elements, molecules or particles borne away by fluxes' [2007: 68]. This provides another vantage point to understand Ueshiba's description of the martial situation of violence as a situation of non-violence, non-fighting, or non-contest. Self and other do not define the field of encounter as violent opposition but are themselves elements in a field that precedes them, a field which is metastable but indivisible. There is no separation within the field, yet there are thresholds, barriers, and conduits of greater or lesser intensity.

If there is a politics in this study of what the body can become, it is connected to the nature of *life* that is implied in the practice of budo. In Saotome's account, the words *life* and *ki* appear synonymous. We do not have to regard Saotome as an unproblematic interpreter of Ueshiba and the tradition of budo to recognize that he is often stretching the use of terms to address the basic problem of how to characterize the truths of the body learned through martial practice. In this concept of budo, both *life* and Saotome's *ki* are extra-individual, infusing the body rather than products of the body. Where *life* reduced to *zoe* is the anchoring point of our submission to both sovereign and biopolitical forms of power, the martial arts build on another concept of *life* captured in the phrase *takemusu aiki*, the 'movement of truth'. In one of his final essays on transcendental empiricism, Deleuze described the concept of *life* as *itself* a metastable field phenomenon. *Life*, he argued, is *impersonal*, it partakes in a transcendental field that precedes the experience of subjects: 'a pure stream of a-subjective consciousness, a pre-reflexive impersonal consciousness, a qualitative duration of consciousness without a self' [2001: 25]. Where there is 'a life', he says, there is the 'immanence of immanence' [2001: 27]. Saotome refers to this quality of immanence as the metastable plenitude of 'emptiness'. Political acts that isolate naked *life* enable all the divisions that underscore the subjection of *life* to power and the biopolitical ordering of the world – subject/object, doer/deed, flesh/mind, animal/human, abnormal/normal, exception/order, enemy/friend. The attunement to immanent *life*, on the other hand, as Agamben himself notes, 'marks the radical impossibility of establishing hierarchies and separations' [1999: 233]. Two *political* definitions of *life* thus emerge in relationship to the situation of martial violence: one is the naked *life*, in the last instance *life* reduced to biological survival; the other is unblocked immanence, *life* as pure potential. Where the first captures bare *life* in a violent appropriation, the latter opens onto forms-of-*life* that free *life* from violent appropriation.

In the martial arts practice described by Saotome, therefore, *life* – Deleuze's immanence of immanence – is infused into the physical body through the becoming-circular of techniques and movements. As in Deleuze's conception, *life* or *ki* for Saotome is in essence *impersonal*. His use of the words 'soul' and 'mind' is thus quite focused: 'the physical body as the circle's soul'; 'what is born of emptiness is kokoro, "mind"'. They refer to the *indefinite, impersonal* qualities of consciousness or awareness. 'Soul' and 'mind' are qualities that inhere in the creation of a circle and a center; they do not refer to the attributes of unique individuals or to the metaphysical souls or minds of gods or spirits. As Deleuze puts it, 'the *life* of the individual gives way to an impersonal and yet singular *life* that releases a pure event freed from the accidents of internal and external *life*, that is, from the subjectivity and objectivity of what happens' [2001: 28]. The pure event in the martial encounter is the coincidence of a center and the fluidity in a free and unrestricted emptiness which the martial arts seek to attain.

One figure of this relationship to formlessness in the martial arts is something like what we mean by the word 'poise' – being centred but unrestricted in movement, 'legs open in six directions'. Poise – 'a gathering unto a moment of novelty' [Appelbaum 1995: 64] – is the affectual form of a particular freeing relation to violence. It is not the same as a stance or posture but is rather a fluid 'relation of movement and rest', however stationary any particular poise might appear. Saotome recounts:

**During the years I studied under Morihei Ueshiba as an uchi deshi [live-in student], O-Sensei never once gave us specific, technical instructions – for example, where to place our feet or what to do with our hands ... This, we understood, was because, in the world of life or death encounter, the enemy attacks without words and without advance warning. In this world there are no second chances and if one is to survive one must act quickly and intuitively to take control of frantic and confusing circumstances. Martial encounter is not subject to logical analysis. [2014: 130]**

The cultivation through the ritual practice of martial arts training of the power to spontaneously generate technique is the cultivation of poise. As Ueshiba describes it, poise is not contained in a particular stance or posture but in the manner or ethic in which one opens oneself to emptiness in a freeing relation to violence. 'In the face of every challenge, remain calm, centered, and optimistic. Keep on the path. Do this, and you can immediately discern any move your opponents make' [2007: 123-124].

## FINAL THOUGHTS ON THEORETICAL RESEARCH IN THE MARTIAL ARTS

In the formal practice of the martial arts, one gives up one's individual sovereignty in a voluntary way in order to follow a path or 'do' – to follow the teaching of a Sensei and ultimately to align oneself with the unfolding or immanent principles of a greater life and/or of the universe itself. Practice is a 'profound inquiry into the workings of both physical and spiritual existence' [Saotome 2014: 24]. This is a process with political implications that are rarely perceived. As many of the principles of daily practice dictate – albeit often with the mystifying proviso that this is something practitioners will only understand later – the path to truth in the martial arts is arguably *inaccessible* to those who do not give up the understanding of themselves as sovereigns, as the isolated rights-bearing agents of their actions, as ones who assume the power to suspend the law in situations of exception. The goal is not the natural right to self-preservation, but – in Saotome's formulation at least – the state of formlessness and 'no-self', or Deleuze's 'impersonal life', through which the reintegration of ai-ki can be achieved. As Saotome puts it, 'part of the process of learning aikido is learning to compose and execute waza, or techniques, while also noticing how it is that these waza are products, not of individual will, but of the life force behind one's actions' [2014: 23]. One trains to insert oneself into the unfolding or immanent process of the impersonal life force rather than to grant oneself a right of power over it: to isolate oneself from it, break with it, suspend it, or step outside of it in the manner of a sovereign.

In this regard, to pursue the truth of the martial arts in Saotome's sense is a way of constituting life as a form-of-life – 'a life which can never be separated from its form'. As I have argued, this can be understood as a practice of the self with three dimensions: as a spiritual practice in which life and the way of living life are transformed in order to attain the truth of spontaneous martial fluidity; as a freeing relation to violence in which the cycle of norm and crisis is deactivated to attain the truth of non-separation or 'becoming-one'; and as a social form with affective content in which the mode of knowledge transmission passes through states of the body that are best characterized as affects – powers of action with primarily non-cognitive content. This is politics at a fundamental level of re-imagination. Agamben's response to the apparatuses of a sovereign power that reduce life to mere survival, and to the biopolitics that discipline life to produce useful subjects, is to disassemble these apparatuses to affirm the life of the human as 'pure potentiality'. To the degree that the martial arts affirm a form-of-life in this way, they center the practitioner in the new horizon of political action that emerges when the apparatuses of sovereignty and biopolitics are neutralized.

Theoretical analysis in martial arts studies provides an opportunity to bridge the gap between practice and politics and opens a new direction or horizon in which to rethink and expand the practice beyond the dojo. In his form-of-life essay, Agamben can be read to suggest that *thought* is the crucial element in opening a passage from the often-narrow concerns of martial arts training to an open experimentation with what collective life could be. To be sure, he does not mean thought as a purely cognitive phenomenon, or a set of formal theories about the truth of the body. 'I call thought the nexus that constitutes the forms of life in an inseparable context as form-of-life. I do not mean by this the individual exercise of an organ or a psychic faculty, but rather an experience, an experimentum that has as its object the potential character of life and human intelligence' [Agamben 1993/2000: 9]. In this sense, thought imbues the forms, postures, techniques, katas, sparrings, and images of the martial arts with an experiment concerning the potential character of life. They become experiments in 'experience' that form the basis of an evolving common power: 'the necessarily potential character of any community' [Agamben 1993/2000: 10]. Despite the secrecy that has characterized martial arts traditions, they would seem increasingly to be a kind of global commons – a 'common power' [Agamben 1993/2000: 9] – in which the life of potential opens up a practice that allows practitioners to explore the collective outcomes of a freeing relation to violence.



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# BOOK REVIEW

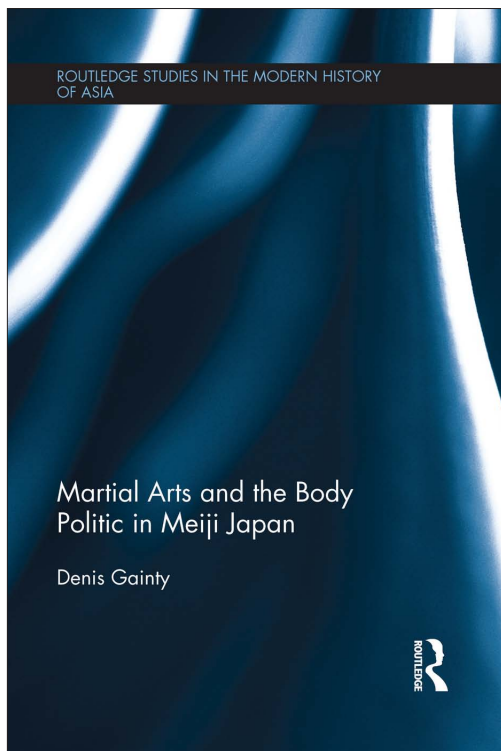
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## Martial Arts and the Body Politic in Meiji Japan

*in memory of Denis Gainty*

Routledge, 2013

208 pages



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## REVIEWER

*Benjamin N. Judkins, Cornell University  
Co-Editor of Martial Arts Studies.*

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The passing of Denis Gainty in 2017 robbed the martial arts studies community of a promising voice. The earlier death of G. Cameron Hurst, Gainty's dissertation advisor, in 2016 had already been a blow to students of Japanese martial arts history. Hurst's seminal monograph, *Armed Martial Arts of Japan: Swordsmanship and Archery* [Hurst 1998], established a scholarly discussion of these subjects that transcended the early efforts of Donn Draeger and other, more popular, writers of the postwar era. Hurst helped to lay the foundations for the current flowering of martial arts studies. It is tragic that the field would lose both a critical pioneer and one of his most promising students in such a short period of time.

Gainty's most enduring academic legacy will surely be his work *Martial Arts and the Body Politic in Meiji Japan* [Gainty 2013]. Whereas Hurst produced a broad study, examining the evolution of swordsmanship and archery throughout Japanese history, Gainty cogently argued for more tightly-focused studies. Rejecting standard historical approaches and the sociological variables that characterized much of the previous work in this area, Gainty instead sought to craft his own 'historio-ethnographic' method which, while accounting for the basic structure of a situation, privileged the auto-biographical writings of Japan's martial artists [5]. In this way, individuals who cultivated these bodily disciplines were allowed to describe and interpret their own experiences.

From the start, Gainty lays out an ambitious project designed to complicate much of the 'received wisdom' shaping discussions of the modern Japanese martial arts. *The Dai-Nippon Butokukai* (Japan Martial Virtue Association) was a critical institution responsible for much of the popularization and standardization of the martial arts (particularly kendo) in the Meiji and Showa periods. Still, the English-language literature has largely neglected this critical institution. Hurst dedicated only a few pages to exploring its contributions, and most of that discussion revolved around elite government figures and their competing political agendas [Hurst 1998: 158-165].

In contrast, Gainty focused his entire volume on a finely-grained social and institutional history of the group. His carefully constructed case study results in two major findings. First, Gainty argues quite convincingly that the standard view of the Meiji period as an era in which the martial arts stagnated and nearly vanished is profoundly mistaken. This view is actually the product of romanticized notions equating the Japanese martial arts with the Samurai class. In reality, Japanese civilians had practiced (and taught) many of these systems for quite some time. Far from imperiling the martial arts, the disappearance of the Samurai as a visible social class actually opened a space where these arts could be appropriated by new cultural, economic, and governmental forces. When we set aside misty visions of the vanishing

Samurai, what we actually find is a period of rapid growth and dynamic change within the Japanese martial arts. Much of Chapter One is dedicated to articulating Gainty's historical arguments on this point.

In Chapter Two, Gainty lays out his other, more theoretically significant, argument. After presenting a careful reconstruction of the various personalities that directed the creation of the Butokukai, he goes on to examine the group's relationship with the Japanese state. In prior discussions, the Butokukai had been portrayed as an institution used by the Japanese government to promote the martial arts as a means of militarizing Japan's population for its own imperialist ends. In essence, practices like kendo, taught in every school in the country, became a means by which the state's understanding of what it meant to be a member of a modern Japanese society was imposed on the population.

Through careful process tracing, Gainty demonstrates that this conventional understanding is essentially mistaken. It was prominent martial artists who spearheaded the creation of the Butokukai and then lobbied the state in an effort to have their social values and views of what constituted Japanese modernity accepted and validated. The success of the Butokukai illustrates the ways in which individuals who held a certain type of (previously marginal) social capital were able to use the Meiji system's democratic features to form a complex partnership with elements of the state for the promotion of their values on a scale that would have been unthinkable otherwise. Some parts of the Japanese state (including its law enforcement structures) were quickly won over by these arguments and became critical early backers. Other ministries (most notably those dealing with education) relented in their opposition only after decades of lobbying.

The question of agency rests at the heart not just of Chapter Two but of Gainty's entire project. He quickly concludes that concepts such as 'state cooptation' or Hobsbawm and Ranger's 'invented tradition' are unable to accurately describe the Meiji revival of the Japanese martial arts [149 n.12, n.25]. Gainty then challenged the approaches (or at least the popular application) of authors such as Foucault, Bourdieu, and Mauss, who tend to see power as a force that the state enacts upon bodies. In their place, Gainty takes up theories of embodiment and argues that the physical practice and experience of the martial arts became a way for practitioners to construct their own (multiple and sometimes contradictory) visions of what it meant to be a member of modern Japanese society. In some cases, martial artists were able to capture aspects of the state (through educational reform), while in others the explicit endorsement of their values and practices provided them with an empowering means of enacting their place in the *kokutai* ('body politic').

The possibility of multiple modernities is taken up in the volume's third chapter. Chapters Three and Four present the reader with some of Gainty's best executed historical research. The first of these examines various accounts of the opening of local Butokukai training centers. It uses these spectacles to argue that, far from imposing a single unifying national identity on its membership, the Japanese martial arts remained a mechanism for the development of both local identity and the 'localization' of national identity throughout this period. Rather than the monolithic organization that is often imagined, the institutional structure and publications of the Butokukai itself became sites of contestation as various sets of identities and norms sought legitimacy.

Gainty's attention shifts back to the state in Chapter Four. Yet, once again, the emphasis remains on the complex interplay between the state and those martial artists who sought engagement with it. Most of this takes the form of a discussion of the physical education curriculum reform process which brought the martial arts into middle and high schools across Japan. This eventually happened despite the initial opposition of the Ministry of Education.

In Chapter Five, 'Giving the state its legs: rethinking agency and the body through the Butokukai', Gainty directly addresses (and seeks to problematize) the easy dichotomy separating the individual and the state. He also explores the work of Mark Johnson [1987] and Lakoff and Johnson [1980, 1999] as it applies to the primacy of embodied experience. Their arguments provide a theoretical framework capable of supplanting more generally accepted critical theorists such as Foucault and Bourdieu. All of these points are summarized and contextualized in a brief concluding discussion.

While slim (Gainty's volume has only 146 pages of actual text), readers would do well not to underestimate this text's ambition. It seeks to make both critical contributions to our historical understanding of the Japanese martial arts while at the same time advancing an ambitious theoretical agenda which has clear implications for the broader martial arts studies literature. While relatively sophisticated, individual chapters from this volume would make a valuable contribution to undergraduate reading lists. Gainty's historical overview of the Japanese martial arts in the late Tokugawa and Meiji periods would be particularly valuable as introductory readings.

Still, I suspect that this book will be most at home in graduate seminars. In such a setting, students can be encouraged to engage with the theoretical critiques that Gainty advances throughout the book. And any scholar writing on the relationship between the martial arts and the modern state will want to have Gainty in their literature review. This last recommendation is not limited only to students of Japanese history.

I find myself drawn to Gainty's core insight that the creation of martial arts communities can be understood as a powerful act by which individuals seek to advance their own notions of how a modern society should function vis-à-vis the state. I suspect that this argument would actually be much easier to make when looking at the development of martial arts traditions in other places, such as Republican China in the 1920s and 1930s.

The relatively strong and centralized nature of the Japanese developmental state means that Gainty sometimes struggles to illustrate his points. In truth, readers who lack faith in his central arguments are likely to find a fair amount of support for a more statist interpretation of events in many of his examples. By focusing on the Butokukai, an institution that appears wholly enmeshed with the state, Gainty has tested his theory against a 'hard case'. In large part, his basic insights about the role of agency survive. As such, students of martial arts studies may wish to consider in what other cases his theoretical framework might find purchase.

Perhaps the greatest weaknesses of this work, however, arise from its silences. In his conclusion, Gainty notes that the embodied experiences of certain types of Japanese citizens received little validation or exploration within the annals of the Butokukai. While women trained in the martial arts, their voices have been notably absent from his historico-ethnographic study. One also wonders about the perspective of children. After all, by the end of this volume we have gained substantial insight about the goals and identities of a small group of relatively elite martial artists who were able to petition the government to include martial arts instruction in school curricula, yet there is no discussion of the embodied experiences and understandings of the students who were subjected to these (sometimes brutal) practices in the 1930s and 1940s. One wonders whether they experienced the same 'agency' that Gainty so enthusiastically discovers in the late Meiji.

Notions of agency must also be tied to an acknowledgment of culpability, particularly when we consider the uses that many of these martial skills would be put to on battlefields in China and across the Pacific. Gainty argues convincingly that Japanese martial arts reformers succeeded in their efforts to sway the state and to place their values (and social capital) at the center of Japanese identity. Many of the specific texts he discusses involve members of the Butokukai promoting nationalism, militarism, and imperialism. Indeed, the normalization of such values was precisely what gave the Butokukai its institutional authority.



Yet, Gainty refuses to engage in a sustained discussion of what responsibility the Butokukai, or other martial arts institutions, must bear for the ideas that they either accepted or in some cases worked diligently to promote. Questions of culpability are easily elided if one accepts that these ideologies were an alien imposition by the state onto society. When that myth has been exploded, however, difficult questions emerge which must be addressed in a sustained and thoughtful way. Gainty's theoretical insistence on the multiplicity of embodied experience seems to offer no answers in that realm. One wonders what guidance the critical theorists, dismissed in the opening pages of this volume, might have offered on the normative dimensions of Meiji martial arts history.

Still, Gainty's volume provides English-language readers with the best account of the development and significance of the Meiji era martial arts to date. It is a work of great ambition which, when read in conjunction with the earlier contributions of Hurst, suggests how far the field has come. By carefully addressing basic questions, Gainty has given us a work that transcends the narrow confines of Japanese history. His insights about the development of martial arts and the modernizing state will be of interest to all students of martial arts studies.

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# BOOK REVIEW

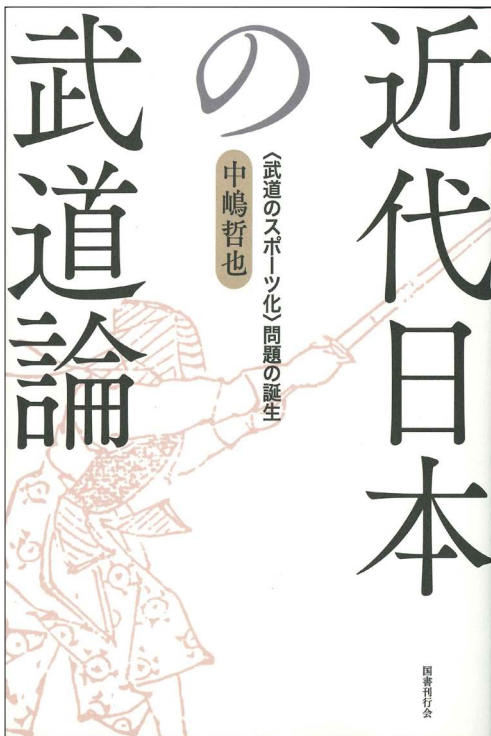
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**Kindai Nihon no budoron - <budo no supotsuka>  
mondai no tanjo** [*Discourse on Budo in Modern Japan -  
The Origins of the 'Sportification of Budo' Problem*]

Tetsuya Nakajima

Kokusho kankokai, 2017

608 +xi pages



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## REVIEWER

Hiromasa Fujita (Kokugakuin University), translated by Michael  
Molasky (Waseda University)

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If one were to translate the Japanese word 'budo' into English, a simple rendering might be 'Japanese martial arts', or 'the martial ways of Japan', or perhaps even 'the martial arts and ways of Japan'. But for most Japanese people today, the concept 'budo' is too profound to be reduced to a mere Japanese version of what Tomlinson refers to as a 'sub-category of combat sports' [Tomlinson in Abe et al. 2012 [2011]: 72].

In other words, while the conceptual categories of 'budo' and 'martial arts' are very close in meaning, they are not perfectly interchangeable. Of course, strictly speaking, few concepts are amenable to perfectly equivalent translations into another language. But the concept of budo, which signifies a particular historical formation that emerged in modern Japan, must be clearly distinguished from universal concepts, such as 'sports', that Japan imported from the West.

In contemporary Japan, the question of what constitutes 'the original budo' is not confined to practitioners alone; it has been the subject of lively debate in the broader realm of social critique. As someone who has practiced both karate and kendo, I have engaged in my own share of heated battles over the nature of budo. And at my university, where I teach courses such as 'Traditional Japanese Culture' and 'The History of Sports', I have occasion to lecture about the historical development of budo, which has given me a sense of the different views of budo among today's students.

One issue that invariably generates debate is the 'sportification of budo'. For example, judo and karate are recognized as competitive sports on an international scale, as evidenced most clearly by their inclusion in the Olympics. People are divided into two seemingly irreconcilable camps in response to this situation. On one side are those fiercely critical of such internationalization and sportification and who argue that this trend trivializes budo's traditions, including its distinctive spiritual, martial, and cultural facets, which they insist should be a source of pride to the Japanese. On the other side are those who accept this trend, which they approvingly view as part of an increasingly globalized world.

Yet, according to Nakajima Tetsuya's<sup>1</sup> *Discourse on Budo in Modern Japan*, the debate around the 'sportification of budo' is hardly new: he argues that it can be traced back to well before World War II and has its roots in the 1920s (the late Taisho and early Showa eras). Nakajima eschews the essentialist inquiry that seeks to identify 'the original budo' and instead aims to provide a foundation for generating a richer discursive field for considering the history of debates surrounding the

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1 Translator's note: Throughout the body of review, names appear in Japanese order, with surname first.

sportification of budo. I should note that (unlike many books on budo) *Discourse on Budo in Modern Japan* is a rigorous academic work, based on the author's doctoral dissertation at Waseda University's Graduate School of Sports Science, and it meticulously examines a vast trove of historical documents.

Nakajima is a judo practitioner who is currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Education at Ibaraki University, where he specializes in the anthropology of sports and in discourses on budo. He begins his book by describing budo as follows: 'A form of physical culture that originated in Japan, budo today has two identities – as a sport and as a tradition' [1]. He then discusses the discourse of key figures in modern Japan who sought to identify the essence of budo and offers a detailed account of the emergence of this discourse. Specifically, he focuses on two issues: first, the process by which the 'sportification of budo' emerged as a discourse in its own right; second, how those involved in budo participated in, and responded to, this discourse [15]. *Discourse on Budo in Modern Japan* exceeds 600 pages in length and is divided into five parts consisting of sixteen chapters, as well as an introduction and a conclusion. Below, I offer an overview and an assessment of the book.

Parts One through Three focus on the concept of budo and the emergence of 'the sportification problem' in the years between 1868 (the first year of the Meiji era) and 1937. These sections are entitled (1) 'From *jutsu* to *do* – Kano Jigoro and the Formation of Kodokan Judo', (2) 'The Emergence of the Concept of Budo – The Formation of the Dai-Nippon Butokukai and Nishikubo Hiromichi's Theory of Budo', and (3) 'The Emergence of the Problem of the "Sportification of Budo" – The Popularization of Budo (1918-1937)'. Nakajima does not adhere to the common postwar 'modernization narrative' that posits a transformation from *bujutsu* in the early modern era (*kinsei*) to budo in the modern era (*kindai*). Instead, he notes that Kano Jigoro, founder of Kodokan judo, and Nishikubo Hiromichi, of the Dai-Nippon Butokukai, played a central role in establishing the modern concepts 'judo' and 'budo' from the words 'jūjutsu' and 'bujutsu' [521-523]. Both men viewed the popular *gekken* swordsmanship performances of the Meiji era as fostering an impression of *bujutsu* as antiquated and base, and they used the slogan 'from *jutsu* (skill/technique) to *do* (a way)' in an effort to overcome such negative images.

In 1925, when the second Meiji Jingu National Sports Festival was held, the question of whether the Dai-Nippon Butokukai should be included suddenly emerged as the subject of debate. This, in turn, drew attention to the relationship between budo and sports in terms of their respective 'spiritual qualities' (*seishinsei*) and 'suitability to competition' (*kyogisei*) or lack thereof. Nakajima refers to these developments and argues that, between 1918 and 1937, sports in Japan increasingly emerged as objects of popular consumption as they underwent greater popularization, internationalization, and became more oriented toward competition.

It was at this time, he notes, that those advocating the 'sportification of budo' began to gain prominence, and he identifies this as a key moment in the formation of a discourse about budo's sportification [238-239]. Significant historical research has emerged in recent years that sheds light on the process behind the founding of Meiji Jingu as well as on the role of the Meiji Jingu National Sports Festival in advocating physical education on a national scale. Unfortunately, Nakajima does not engage with this research [Takashima 2012, Fujita 2013, Fujita et al. 2015]; notwithstanding this weakness, Nakajima offers extremely valuable insights on budo-related discourses.

Parts One through Three of the book basically reexamine well-known issues that have been addressed extensively in historical research on budo, Japanese sports, and physical education. From this perspective, I would argue that Parts Four and Five, which feature detailed analyses of the varied responses to the sportification of budo, showcase the book's true value.

Part Four, titled 'Responses to "the Sportification of Budo" Problem (1) – Fujio Yasutaro and the Making of Budo as National Policy', focuses on Fujio, a member of the House of Representatives from Saga Prefecture, who proposed that a national policy on budo be established. Fujio was critical of the internationalization of judo and the sportification of budo; he subscribed to a view of 'Kokutai'<sup>2</sup> that saw 'the Japanese spirit' (*Nippon seishin*), 'Shin' (*kami*, referring to Shinto), and 'bu' (budo) as inseparable. Nakajima argues that this perspective on 'Kokutai' informed Fujio's legislative efforts in the Imperial Diet in February 1938, which aimed to establish a national policy on budo [413, 417-418]. I happen to have in my possession Fujio's major book, *Sumo as Budo and National Policy (Budo toshite no sumo to kokusaku)*, published by Dai-Nippon Seifukai. My copy is the sixteenth edition and was published in November 1939 – only one year after the first edition, which attests to the book's best-selling status and to the persuasiveness of Nakajima's arguments with respect to the importance of Fujio's work.

Nakajima documents how budo was steadily incorporated into the wartime system through the establishment of the Budo Shinko Iinkai (the Budo Promotion Committee, established in December 1939) and the Ministry of Health and Welfare Population Division's Section for Budo Administration (*Jinkokyoku Renbuka*, November 1941). Additionally, in March 1942, the Dai-Nippon Butokukai was reorganized and newly established as a comprehensive budo organization under the joint auspices of the Ministry of the Army, Ministry of the Navy, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Welfare, and the Home Ministry. Nakajima argues that, while these agencies largely shared the goal of adapting budo for combat use, they differed in terms of their respective conceptions of budo and were unable to establish a centralized administrative structure for budo. Ultimately, this multifaceted administrative approach was clearly far removed from Fujio's ideal solution, which entailed the establishment of the Jinmuin under the direct control of the Home Ministry and dedicated to overseeing budo. This was to be merged with the Jingiin (an external bureau of the Home Ministry established in November 1940 in charge of administering jinja (Shinto shrines) [417].

Part Five, titled 'Responses to "the Sportification of Budo" Problem (2) – The Birth of Kobudo', offers a detailed account of the thought of Matsumoto Manabu, who was active in the House of Peers and who served as Chief of the Bureau of Jinja (Shinto Shrines) Affairs and as Chief of the Police Bureau in the Home Ministry. Matsumoto was influenced by Yasuoka Masahiro's ideas of 'the Japanese Spirit' (*Nippon seishin*) and '*shinkenmi*', a concept that Yasuoka maintained he discovered through his kata practice with a real sword (*shinken*) and that entails a willingness to face death. Matsumoto was also an advocate of the legitimacy of kata practice and criticized the growing sportification of budo as embodied in match-based competitions. This led him, in February 1935, to form the Japan Kobudo (Traditional Budo) Promotion Society (*Nippon Kobudo Shinkokai*), in which the term 'kobudo' (literally 'old budo') was coined in opposition to the new, sportified budo, such as judo and kendo [526-527]. He claimed that bujutsu (disparate traditional styles of budo) could still be found in regions throughout Japan. The concept of 'kobudo' posed a contrast with 'shin budo' (new budo), which emerged in 1941 under the auspices of national defense (*kokubo kokka*) and its goal of orienting budo and physical education toward wartime use. Nakajima argues that some of these styles of bujutsu have survived to the present day due to the Japan Kobudo Promotion Society [527-528].

Nakajima acknowledges the valuable contributions of other scholars who have written about the history of the Japanese concept of budo. He refers to the research on the Dai-Nippon Butokukai and Kodokan judo by Kinoshita Hideaki (1970), Sakaue Yasuhiro (1998), and Inoue Shun (2004), as well as the work of Sogawa

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2 Translator's note: 'Kokutai' is written with the characters for 'nation' and 'body'. It encompasses various meanings that often overlap. For example, the word can be rendered as 'national character', 'national polity', 'national principle', 'national constitution', 'national form', etc.

Tsuneo (2014), who has examined the concept of budo from the 12<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. While building on this body of research, Nakajima focuses on the history of budo during the 'interwar period' (1918-1937), which has received less attention in extant scholarship [24-25]. As a comprehensive study of the major developments shaping budo's modern history, *Discourse on Budo in Modern Japan* is at the forefront of research on this topic. It offers a unique contribution by virtue of its attention to the history of the relationship between the concept of 'sports' and specific physical cultures related to martial arts in other countries. In this regard, *Discourse on Budo in Modern Japan* is a valuable comparative cultural study with an international scope.

Although it is not a central issue in this book, the Showa Imperial Inspection Match (*Showa tenran jiai*) is referred to many times, and we can discern from the fact of the Emperor (*tenno*)'s presence that this event considerably elevated the social status of budo in general [Fujita 2017]. The relationship between the Dai-Nippon Butokukai and both Heian Jingu in Kyoto and Meiji Jingu in Tokyo, and the fact that the many of the Japan Kobudo Promotion Society's demonstration matches took place on the premises of jinja (Shinto shrines), attest to the historical connection between budo and jinja. Meticulous research in this area from the perspective of bridging the histories of Shinto and budo will be required in the coming years.

The historical conflict between the concepts of 'budo' and 'sports' as illuminated in this book further serves as a powerful reminder of the complex historical relationship between the concepts of 'Shinto' and 'religion' in modern Japanese society [Fujita 2018]. Both pairs combine a particularistic Japanese concept and a foreign one. Of course, these pairs are not perfectly analogous, but, in the temporal space of modern Japan, both budo and Shinto have been identified as important elements in discourses on 'Nippon seishin' and the 'Kokutai' during times of national crisis. While budo and Shinto have occasionally been theorized in relation to each other, a careful comparative study of the history of each concept promises to broaden our understanding of Japanese cultural history in general.

*Note: This review is an expanded and revised version of a book review published in Jinja shinpo [No. 3375, 23 Oct. 2017].*



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