

**The Cultural Politics of Proprietorship:
The Socio-historical Evolution of Japanese Swordsmanship
and its Correlation with Cultural Nationalism**

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Ph.D. Dissertation

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Alexander Bennett

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Abstract

The Cultural Politics of Proprietorship: The Socio-historical Evolution of Japanese Swordsmanship and its Correlation with Cultural Nationalism

This thesis provides a detailed socio-historical analysis of the evolutionary process of traditional Japanese swordsmanship (*kenjutsu*) from the inception of distinct martial schools (*bugei-ryūha*) in the fourteenth century, to its gradual progression into a modern competitive sport (*kendō*), and a subject of study in the current Japanese education system. The following questions with regards to the development of Japanese swordsmanship were analysed: 1) How did schools dedicated to the study of martial arts (*bugei-ryūha*) evolve, and why was the sword so important to the early traditions? 2) What was the process in which *kenjutsu* become “civilised”, and how did it relate to class identity in the Tokugawa period (1600–1868)? 3) In what way did *kenjutsu* transmute when class distinctions and national isolationist policies (*sakoku*) were abolished in the Meiji period (1868–1912)? 4) What were the cultural and political influences in the rise of “state” and “popular” nationalism, and how did they affect the “re-invention” and manipulation of *kendō* in the first half of the twentieth century? 5) How did post-war private and national cultural policy affect the reinstatement of *kendō* and its usefulness in inculcating a sense of “Japaneseness”? 6) What are the nationalistic motivations, and perceived dangers of the international propagation of *kendō* with regards to cultural proprietorship?

Through applying socio-historical concepts such as Norbert Elias’s “civilising process” and Eric Hobsbawm’s “invention of tradition”, as well as various descriptions of nationalism to the evolution of *kendō*, this thesis demonstrates how the martial art has continued to maintain a connection with the past, while simultaneously developing into a symbolic and discursive form of traditional culture representing a “cultural ethos” considered to be a manifestation of “Japaneseness”. Ultimately, *kendō* can be described as a kind of participatory based mind-body Nihonjinron. Japan’s current reaction as it ponders the repercussions if it were to somehow lose its status as the suzerain nation of *kendō*, i.e. as exclusive owners of *kendō* – a martial art perceived as one of the most representative forms of traditional Japanese culture – is also assessed in this thesis.

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Conventions

Japanese words and expressions have been divided into their most logical semantic components to assist reading and correct pronunciation. Japanese terms have been Romanised according to the Hepburn system, and italicised. Long Japanese vowel sounds have been approximated using macrons. Macrons are used in most Japanese terms, except for common place names and organizations which have official English titles without macrons. For example, although “*kendō*” is written with italics and a macron over the ‘o’, the governing body is written as the All Japan Kendo Federation.

Although traditional Japanese swordsmanship is generally referred to as ‘*kenjutsu*’, other terms were also widely used. ‘*Gekiken*’ or ‘*gekken*’ was coined in the mid-Tokugawa period and mainly referred to fencing with *shinai* and protective armour. Depending on the context, *kenjutsu* also had that meaning, but encompassed the *kata* methodology as well. The term *kendō*, although not unheard of in the Tokugawa period, did not come into common usage until the twentieth century. Thus, the documents quoted in this chapter jump from one appellation to another depending on the historical period in question.

Organizations such as the Nippon Budokan and the Dai-Nippon Butokukai are commonly referred to as “Budokan” and “Butokukai”, and are sometimes shortened as such in the text. Also, the Japanese Ministry of Education (MOE) changed its name to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) in 2001. Both acronyms are used in the text depending on the period in question.

All era dates in this thesis, such as the Tokugawa period (1600–1868), are quoted in accordance with conventions used in the *Kodansha Encyclopaedia of Japan*. Many of the historical figures mentioned in the text changed their names a number of times throughout their lives, but I have used the most familiar names. The birth and death dates for a number of the historical figures who are mentioned in the text are impossible to verify, but I have used the generally accepted dates, and ages when given are calculated according to the inclusive Japanese method known as *kazoedoshi*.

All of the translations of documents and quotations from Japanese were done by me except when otherwise stated. The book titles of Japanese literary works appear in the original form with English translations offered in parentheses after first mention in the text. The English term “school” or “tradition” is sometimes used to refer to formal organizations known as “*ryūha*” or “*ryū*” which taught martial art systems.

Abbreviations

HBP

“Hans H. Baerwald Papers” (BAE 1–205), stored in the National Diet Library of Japan

KBKS

Watanabe Ichirō (ed.), *Kindai Budō-shi Kenkyū Shiryō* Vols. 1–9, Tsukuba Daigaku Taiiku Kagaku-kei, 1981–1988

KK

Katana to Kendō Vols. 1–15, Yuzankaku Shuppan, (1939–1942)

KKS

Nakamura Tamio (ed.), *Kindai Kendō-sho Senshū* Vols.1–11, Tokyo: Hon-no-Tomosha, 2003

SKK

Nakamura Tamio (ed.), *Shiryō: Kindai Kendō-shi*, Tokyo: Shimazu Shobō, 1985

KKMT

Imamura Yoshio (ed.), *Kindai Kendō Meichō Taikei* Vols. 1–14, Kyoto: Dōhō Shuppan, 1985–1986

SCCS

Dunning, Eric; Malcolm, Dominic, (ed.), *Sport: Critical Concepts in Sociology* Vols. 1–4, London: Routledge, 2003

List of Author's Publications

(Related to this Thesis)

Authored:

- *The Bushi Ethos and its Evolution: A Sociological Investigation of Bushido* (in Japanese), Shibunkaku, April, 2009

Co-Authored:

- Uozumi Takashi (ed.) *Gurōbaru Jidai no Budō* (Budō in Globalisation), IBU Budo and Sports Science Research Institute, 2012
- Nakamura Tetsu (ed.) *Dentō ya Bunka ni Kansuru Kyōiku no Jūjitsu*, Kyōiku Kaihatsu Kenkyūjo
- Thomas A. Green and Joseph R. Svinth, (eds.), *Martial Arts of the World [2 volumes]: An Encyclopedia of History and Innovation*, 2 volumes, Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2010 (“History of Kendo”, “History of Naginata”)
- Uozumi Takashi (ed.) *Budō no Rekishi to Sono Seishin* (The History and Spirit of Budō), IBU Budo and Sports Science Research Institute, 2008

Edited & Translated Books:

- (Trans.) *The Official Guide for Kendo Instruction*, AJKF, 2011
- (Trans.) *Japanese-English Dictionary of Kendo*, AJKF, 2011
- (Trans.) *A Bilingual Guide to the History of Kendo*, Ski Journal Co., 2010 (Sakai Toshinobu)
- (Ed. & trans.) *The History and Spirit of Budo*, IBU Budo and Sports Science Research Institute, 2010
- (Ed. & trans.) *Budō: The Martial Ways of Japan*, Nippon Budokan Foundation, October, 2009
- (Ed. & trans.) *Jigoro Kano and the Kodokan: An Innovative Response to Modernisation*, Kodokan, April, 2009
- (Ed.) *Kendo World Journal* Vol. 3, Bunkasha International, 2007
- (Ed.) *Kendo World Journal* Vol. 4, Bunkasha International, 2009
- (Ed.) *Kendo World Journal* Vol. 5, Bunkasha International, 2011

Academic Papers:

- “Compulsory Budō Education Planning in Junior High Schools and the Future Possibilities” *Budō Sports Science Research No. 15*, International Budo University, (Co-authored with Inoshita Kaori)
(pp. 87-92)

- “A Case Study of Budō Participation by People with Disabilities – Visual Impairment and Karatedō”
Budō Sports Science Research No. 15, International Budo University, (Co-authored with Matsui Kantarō) (pp. 81-86)
- “Various Problems in Modern Budō – The Internationalization of Budō III” *Budō Sports Science Research No. 15*, International Budo University (Co-authored with Kashiwazaki Katsuhiko) (pp. 1-27)
- “Japanese Martial Arts as Civilizing Process”, *The Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, Fourth Series, Volume 2, January 2009

Introduction

“Kendō is a Japanese martial sport in which protagonists dressed in the traditional attire of hakama (split skirt) and kendō-gi (training top), use shinai (bamboo swords) as they compete to strike four specific areas on the opponent’s bōgu (armour). The targets, each of which must be called out in a loud voice (kiai) as an accurate strike is made with a strong spirit, are men (head), kote (wrists), dō (torso), and tsuki, a thrust to the throat. Kendō is characterized by always showing respect to one’s opponents, the honouring of protocol and culture, and the importance placed on enriching one’s heart through training.”¹

1. Introduction

Before introducing the main arguments of this thesis, it is necessary to provide a general synopsis of what *kendō* is in terms of its historical development, and *modus operandi* as a modern combat sport. The rules and methods of *kendō* practice are complicated to the uninitiated, and there are many intangible aspects surrounding its technical and philosophical framework. Nevertheless, it is important to have a basic understanding of these aspects of *kendō* in order to contextualise the forthcoming discourse on its cultural significance. Accordingly, a general introduction to *kendō* will be the starting point of this thesis.

2. What is Kendō?

Budō (the Japanese martial ways) and *bushidō* (the ideals of the samurai) are still venerated by modern Japanese even 150 years after warrior rule in Japan came to an end. Sports heroes, Japanese businessmen, and those perceived to have endured hardship before finding success are affectionately referred to as “samurai”. Similarly, the martial arts are greatly admired as ways for instilling

¹ Definition of *kendō* prepared for pamphlet of the “1st SportAccord Combat Games” held in Beijing 2010. I was a member of the organising committee for the *kendō* tournament which was held concurrently with twelve other combat sports affiliated to SportAccord (formerly GAISF). I was tasked with preparing all of the English explanations introducing various aspects of *kendō* culture, this being the first.

discipline in the stoic samurai tradition, and facilitating “human education” (*ningen kyōiku*). They have become an integral part of the national curriculum in schools as a medium for personal growth.

The influence of the Japanese martial arts around the world is immense. Guttmann states that the “prevalence of French words in military terminology (lieutenant, reconnaissance), and Italian terms in music (*aria*, *allegro*) are the linguistic record of bygone political and artistic hegemony, and the language of sports provides a similar clue to social history. Throughout the world, the language of modern sports is English.”² The same observations can be made of Japanese *budō*. It offers us many clues to the political and artistic history of Japanese society; and throughout the world, the parlance of the martial arts as hugely popular combat sports, is Japanese. *Budō* can surely be regarded as Japan’s most successful cultural export, and is studied in earnest by literally tens of millions of enthusiasts in every country and region of the world.

In terms of actual numbers *karate* and *jūdō* are by far the most ubiquitous martial arts internationally. However, despite limited practical applicability, *kendō* is the most widely practised of the traditional martial arts in Japan. This is partly due to deeply entrenched notions that *kendō* is purest of the martial arts, and can be linked directly to the sword-wielding samurai heroes of centuries ago. What most people fail to realise is that the form of *kendō* practised today is in many ways a modern development. For example, the word “*kendō*” itself only came into popular use from around 1920 onwards. Preceding this, appellations such as *gekitō*, *gek(i)ken*, *tachi-uchi*, *kempō*, and *kenjutsu* were more customary designations for Japanese swordsmanship. In this thesis, pre-modern swordsmanship will be referred to as *kenjutsu*, or in some cases *gekken*.

Contrary to the prevalent image of the swashbuckling samurai, the famed single-edged Japanese

² Allen Guttmann, “The Diffusion of Sports and the Problem of Cultural Imperialism”, E. Dunning, J. Maguire, R. Pearton (eds.), *The Sports Process: A Comparative and Developmental Approach*, 1993, pp. 125-137, SCCS, Vol. 1, p. 343

sword brandished with both hands in front of the body (*nihontō* or *katana*) was only used as a subsidiary weapon by Japanese warriors of the ancient (*kodai*, c. 710–1185) and medieval (*chūsei*, c. 1200–1600) periods. The preferred battlefield weapon of early warriors was the bow and arrow – hence terms such as “*kyūba no michi*” (way of the bow and horse) used in reference to the lifestyle of Japan’s professional combatants. Although utilised to great effect in close-quarter skirmishes, and for self-protection in the course of everyday life, the sword on the battlefield was arguably employed mainly for the gruesome task of removing heads from fallen enemies (*kubi-tori*) as proof of accomplishments in battle.

Ironically, however, in spite of the secondary role played by the sword in warfare, a small number of prestigious martial schools (*ryūha*) which focused primarily on sword techniques had appeared by the fifteenth century, and were to have a profound effect on Japan’s subsequent martial culture. Progenitors of the early prototypical *ryūha*, such as the Kage-ryū (Shadow school), systemised techniques that were refined in actual combat, and conveyed them to disciples through the medium of *kata* (choreographed sequences of combat techniques), in a structure that was strongly influenced by Noh theatre.

Still, given the sword featured since time memorial in Japanese mythology, and was even included as one of the “three imperial regalia” along with a sacred mirror and beads (*magatama*), the religio-symbolic importance attached to the weapon cannot be denied. From the earliest days in Japan, the sword was a symbol of political legitimacy, strength, righteousness, and morality, and was seen as an object of intense spiritual significance and beauty. Considered in this light, the undeniable reverence afforded to the sword and the fetishlike adoration of its aesthetic exquisiteness *vis-à-vis* any other weapon, it is hardly surprising that it was perceived as representing spiritual purity and for “exorcising evil” through one swift stoke. The sword still continues to exemplify an unbroken line of elitist mawkishness seen as characterising the very “soul” of the samurai – and by

extension, the Japanese people.

Ironically again, the warrior fetish for swords gained even more prominence when Japan enjoyed a period of prolonged peace. After centuries of war and instability extending throughout the medieval period, Japan entered an era of relative amity with the onset of the Tokugawa period (1600–1868). With no more wars to fight in, samurai were denied opportunities to prove their worth as gallant warriors. Society transformed into a rigidly structured hierarchy based on Confucian thought. Samurai occupied the top echelon, and farmers, artisans and merchants were positioned below them (*shi-nō-kō-shō*).

Because samurai were still expected to maintain military preparedness, martial *ryūha* thrived and actually multiplied during the seventeenth century. *Kenjutsu* was one of the arts that made up the so-called “*bugei-jūhappan*” – or “eighteen military skills” that warriors were required to master. These included archery (*kyūjutsu*), horsemanship (*bajutsu*), swimming (*suiei-jutsu*), grappling arts (*jūjutsu*), gunmanship (*hōjutsu*), sword-drawing and cutting (*battō-jutsu*), spearmanship (*sōjutsu*), dagger (*tantō-jutsu*), iron truncheon (*jitte-jutsu*), hand-thrown projectile weapons (*shuriken-jutsu*), and so on.

However, specialist *kenjutsu* schools far outnumbered the other styles of combat with as many as six or seven-hundred *ryūha* in existence by the nineteenth century. *Kenjutsu* flourished in the various domains (*han*) which employed their own designated instructors, and in Edo, which saw the creation of commercial martial art salons. Warriors were expected to corroborate their martial ability through procuring certificates of advancement or mastery in a given *ryūha*, and the *crème de la crème* could even hope for employment as professional instructors in feudal domains.

Nevertheless, the flamboyant *modus operandi* of the ever-proliferating schools of pax-Tokugawa *kenjutsu* were criticised as being highly impractical and worthless. By the eighteenth century, the state of *kenjutsu* was derisively referred to as “*kahō-kempō*” or “flowery swordsmanship” due to the

spread of untested *kata* forms underpinned by highly esoteric philosophical doctrines. Although impractical, many of the new schools of *kenjutsu* were designed to appeal to the spiritual sensibilities of warriors, and attract more students in what was becoming a saturated martial arts market.

As a way of addressing the decline in veracity and perceived value of pax-Tokugawa *kenjutsu*, a full-contact sparring method (*shinai-uchikomi-geiko*) using bamboo swords (*shinai*) and protective equipment was implemented during the Shōtoku era (1711–1716), primarily by Naganuma Shirazaemon Kunisato (1688–1767) of the Jikishin Kage-ryū, and later on by Nakanishi Chūzō Tsugutake (?–d.1801) of the Ittō-ryū. This meant that warriors could duel each other in a ‘realistic’ fashion without fear of injury, or injuring. This revolutionary style of *kenjutsu* training was the forerunner to the modern art of *kendō*, and the equipment developed then has, for the most part, remained unchanged. Whether this new style of swordsmanship was practical or not from a combat perspective, however, is a point of contention.

The first *shinai* consisted of finely split bamboo slats encased in a leather sheath. Today’s *shinai* are made from four slats of bamboo 120cm or less, which are secured together at three points with a leather cap at the point (*kissaki* or *kensen*), the *nakayui* (a leather fastening approximately a quarter of the way down from the *kissaki*), and the two-handed *tsuka* (grip). A *tsuru* (cord) that links all the pieces together runs up the back of the *shinai*, and represents the non-cutting edge of the blade. Thus, even though the *shinai* is cylindrical, strikes made with the back side are not considered valid. The *tsuba* (hand-guard) is usually round and is fashioned from leather, pigskin, or plastic. In recent years, the “Carbon Shinai” made from carbon graphite by Hasegawa Chemical Industry Co. has become popular among young practitioners for its durability, but more experienced practitioners tend to prefer the feel of bamboo.

The *kendō* armour (*bōgu*) consists of the *men* (mask), *dō* (plastron), *tare* (lower-body protector), and *kote* (protective gauntlets). The *dō* is crafted from lacquered bamboo or fiberglass, and the

men-gane (grill on the mask) is made from metal, although Hasegawa Chemical Industry Co. also produces a type of *men* with a clear Perspex protective shield.

The rest of the equipment is made from thick padded cotton or analogous synthetic material which is light and shock absorbent. The total weight of the equipment is approximately ten kilograms, and is worn over the blue or white cotton *keiko-gi* (top) and the pleated *hakama* (traditional split skirt) made from cotton or synthetic material. The name and affiliation of the practitioner (*zekken* or *nafuda*) is attached to the central front flap of the *tare*. Apart from a few cosmetic improvements for safety, and the use of modern materials, the contemporary kendosist's link with his or her samurai forebears is easily identifiable by the equipment used.

3. Kendō's Technical Framework

As was the case with Tokugawa swordsmanship, the study of modern *kendō* consists of the two components of *kata* and full-contact *shinai* training. The “Nippon Kendo Kata” entails ten prescribed forms, and was developed in 1912 for the purpose of national dissemination in schools (see Chapter 4). Elements from a number of classical schools of swordsmanship were borrowed and conjoined into hybrid forms for instruction in the modern education system. The *kata* are performed with *bokutō* (wooden swords) made in the same general shape and size as *nihontō*. The *kata* include the five *kamae* (stances) of *jōdan* (high left and right), *wakigamae* (blade at the side pointing back), *hassō-no-kamae* (blade held vertically at the side of the head) *gedan-no-kamae* (low stance), and *chūdan-no-kamae* (middle stance). Apart from *chūdan*, however, the rest are rarely seen in *kendō* bouts fought with *shinai*.

The *kata* is practised not so much for the purpose of acquiring *kendō* techniques, but more for learning the philosophy and the theory behind using a real sword (*tōhō*) as opposed to a straight,

cylindrical bamboo stick. The *kata* are traditionally performed by high-ranking instructors using steel swords with blunted-blades (*habiki*) as a ceremonial beginning to tournaments, and are also an integral part of promotion examinations for kendoists of all levels. However, it should be noted that many modern practitioners tend to take *kata* training for granted, and see it as mostly irrelevant in their quest for success in the competitive arena.

In *shinai* training, which constitutes the bulk of *keiko* (practice) time, practitioners usually face-off in the standard middle-fighting stance (*chūdan-no-kamae*), at a spatial interval of “one sword’s length” (*issoku-ittō-no-maai*). Some practitioners prefer to fight from the overhead *jōdan* position, and there is a small but growing number of people who use two-swords (*nitō*) following in the tradition of famed seventeenth century Japanese warrior, Miyamoto Musashi (1584–1645). The prevalent method of engagement is from the *chūdan* stance; and according to competition rules, it is only permissible to compete using *jōdan* from high school level and above, and *nitō* from university level. Thus, all beginners start their study of *kendō* by learning to fight from *chūdan*.

The valid targets are limited to strikes to the *men*, *dō*, and *kote*, and a thrust to the throat (*tsuki*); and there are a number of complicated criteria that need to be met for the strike to be counted as valid. The practitioner hones his or her skills and understanding of what constitutes a “valid strike” (*yūkō-datotsu*) through arduous and repetitious training. The typical training session consists of physically taxing repetitions of basic moves (*kihon-dōsa*) and applied techniques (*ōyō-waza*) so that the practitioner learns to embody the techniques, and execute them instantaneously when an opening appears.

For a point to be valid, the attacker must strike the target (*datotsu-bui*) accurately with the correct part of the *shinai* (*datotsu-bu*) with the blade edge (*jinbu*) about an eighth of the way down from the tip. If the strike is too shallow, deep, weak, or made with the side of the blade, a point cannot be awarded. The attack is made with upright posture in “full spirit”, which is indicated by means of

vocalisation (*kiai* or *hassei*) with the name of the intended target being vigorously bellowed out as it is struck.

Spirit, sword and body must be completely consolidated (*ki-ken-tai-itchi*) at the point of impact; and after the target is struck, the attacker must follow through and demonstrate continued physical and mental alertness (*zanshin*) ready to thwart a possible counter-attack. All of these criteria must be executed in a smooth sequence starting from the basic *kamae*.³

Technical Outline for Scoring a Point (Ippon or Yūkō-Datotsu) in Kendō		
Definition of <i>yūkō-datotsu</i> (valid strike): “ <i>Yūkō-datotsu</i> is defined as an accurate strike or thrust made onto the <i>datotsu-bui</i> of the opponent’s <i>kendō-gu</i> with <i>shinai</i> at its <i>datotsu-bu</i> in high spirits and correct posture and <i>hasuji</i> , being followed by <i>zanshin</i> .” Source: Article 12, <i>The Regulations of Kendo Shiai and Shinpan</i> , International Kendo Federation, 2006.		
Considerations	Requirements	
<i>Shisei</i> (posture) <i>Kiai</i> (vocalisation) <i>Maai</i> (interval) <i>Tai-sabaki</i> (footwork) <i>Kikai</i> (striking opportunities) <i>Tenouchi</i> (grip)	<i>Datotsu-bui</i> (accurately striking the target) <i>Datotsu-bu</i> (with correct part of the <i>shinai</i>) <i>Hasuji</i> (correct direction of the cutting edge) <i>Kyōdo</i> (adequate strength of the cut) <i>Sae</i> (crispness of the cut) <i>Ki-ken-tai-itchi</i> (unity of sword, body and spirit) <i>Zanshin</i> (continued physical and mental alertness)	
Striking Process		
On-guard stance (<i>kamae</i>) → Mutual probing and applying pressure (<i>seme-ai</i>) → Detection of opening (see “Striking Opportunities”) and selection of appropriate technique → Execution of a valid technique (<i>waza</i>) with <i>ki-ken-tai-itchi</i> → Physical and psychological alertness after the attack (<i>zanshin</i>).		
Striking Opportunities When opponent is stationary or unbalanced ↓ When opponent is on the verge of moving ↓ Just as the opponent moves ↓ As the opponent’s technique takes form ↓ In the middle of the opponent’s technique ↓ When the opponent’s technique is nearing completion ↓ After the opponent’s attack is completed	Technique Selection (<i>Men, kote, dō, tsuki</i>)	
	<i>Shikake-waza</i> (Attacking Techniques)	
	<i>Ippon-uchi-no-waza</i>	Single strikes to <i>men, kote, dō</i> , and thrusts to the throat (<i>tsuki</i>)
	<i>Harai-waza</i>	Deflecting opponent’s <i>shinai</i> then striking
	<i>Ni/sandan-no-waza</i>	Combination techniques
	<i>Hiki-waza</i>	Retreating techniques executed from close-quarters (<i>tsubazeriai</i>)
	<i>Katsugi-waza</i>	Shouldering the <i>shinai</i> before striking
	<i>Maki-waza</i>	Flicking opponent’s <i>shinai</i> away with a circular motion
	<i>Katate-waza</i>	One-handed techniques
	<i>Jōdan-waza</i>	Techniques executed from the overhead stance
	<i>Oji-waza</i> (Counter Techniques)	
	<i>Debana-waza</i>	Striking just as the opponent moves
	<i>Suriage-waza</i>	Parrying techniques
	<i>Kaeshi-waza</i>	Parrying then striking the reverse side
<i>Uchiotoshi-waza</i>	Knocking the opponent’s <i>shinai</i> down	
<i>Nuki-waza</i>	Dodging opponent’s strike then counterattacking	

³ For a pictorial representation of a strike in *kendō*, refer to the appendix at the end of this thesis.

There are two categories of matches (*shiai*): individual and team. Team matches usually entail bouts between five or seven fighters on each side, represented by the colours red and white. Three referees (*shinpan*) holding red and white flags move around the court to judge the validity of competitors' techniques, and identify any fouls (*hansoku*) that are committed, such as stepping out of bounds. Two fouls equal one point for the opponent. The first competitor to score two points (*sanbon-shōbu*) within the designated time is the victor. If only one point is scored, victory is awarded to whoever has the point. If there is a tie of 0-0 or 1-1 in a team match, that bout will end in a draw (*hikiwake*); but in an individual competition, match time is extended (*enchō*) and the bout continues until the first point is scored.

In team matches, the aggregate number of wins decides the outcome. If the number of wins is the same, then the total number of points scored is calculated to determine the winning team. If that score is also equal, a “representative match” between a player from each team is conducted as a one-point sudden-death match (*ippon-shōbu*). Match time depends on the tournament, but is typically between three and five minutes.

4. The “Spirit” and “Philosophy” of Modern Kendō

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (*kinsei* or early-modern period), the Tokugawa government demanded that samurai demonstrate self-control and avoid conflict. The role of the warrior was redefined, and in accordance with a Confucian based code of ethics now widely and spuriously referred to as “*bushidō*”, warriors were expected to lead a modest lifestyle, and serve as paragons of morality to the other classes. The warrior had no recourse to prove his valour in battle, but could assert his honour through keeping the peace, and dedication to dutiful service. With the

“taming”⁴ of the warrior class, the martial arts were also transformed through a kind of “civilising process”,⁵ and evolved into spiritual “Ways” (*michi*) for training the body and mind through ascetic training. Actually, ascetic practice had always been a feature of the early martial schools, but peace demanded a redefinition of pacifistic objectives for training in the martial arts as a means to perfect the self for the greater good.

As a vestige of this peacetime martial philosophy, the ideal of *ningen-keisei* (human-development) is still promoted as a key objective in modern *kendō*. However, ideals and ideologies are dictated by the times, and martial arts have been manipulated throughout history to meet certain ideological needs. In the Tokugawa period, *kenjutsu* served to cultivate elitist sentiment among samurai in the redefining of their peacetime *raison d'être*. Centuries later in the militaristic 1930s and 1940s, the culture of swordsmanship was exploited to meet the aspirations of the state as a medium for inculcating nationalistic fervour among Japanese youth.

Consequently, the Allied Occupation authorities banned the martial arts during the immediate post-war period. *Kendō* was finally reinstated in 1952 as a sport befitting a new democratic society. Match and refereeing procedures were rewritten, and the number of practitioners grew steadily after *kendō* was reintroduced back into schools. Tournaments became widespread and highly competitive just as in other modern sports, and practitioners focused on learning tricks to win matches.

Traditionalists deplored this trend as detrimental to the true spirit of *kendō*. In 1975, the All Japan Kendo Federation formulated the official “Concept of Kendo” and “Purpose of Practicing Kendo” to reassert traditional values. In 2007, the federation published the “Mindset of Kendo Instruction” to emphasise the philosophical characteristics of *kendō* as a “Way” to “mould the mind and body”, and become a useful member of society through the study of *kendō*.

In the *dōjō* (training hall), the *kendō* practitioner is taught traditional concepts and ideals that can

⁴ See Ikegami Eiko, *Taming of the Samurai*

⁵ See Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*

be traced back to samurai culture. The student of *kendō* is encouraged to confront psychological weaknesses such as fear, surprise, confusion, and hesitation, and always strive to maintain a “placid state of mind” (*heijōshin*) allowing him or her to confidently engage with any opponent with respect (*rei*), pride (*kigurai*), total sacrificial commitment (*sutemi*), and continued alertness (*zanshin*). After many years of training, the kendoist is expected to develop psychological strength which facilitates good deportment, and the capacity to resolve any difficulties faced in the course of everyday living.

Underlying this humanistic discourse of personal and social betterment is the notion that *kendō* also represents all that is considered virtuous in Japanese culture and society. *Kendō* is commonly assumed by Japanese practitioners and non-practitioners alike to epitomise the so-called “Japanese spirit”. The evolutionary trends and the role of *kendō* in instilling and facilitating an understanding of “Japaneseness” in the modern era is a topic that will be scrutinised at length in the proceeding chapters of this thesis.

5. Questions Addressed in this Thesis

As Japan opened its doors to the West from the mid-nineteenth century, and began to assert its “uniqueness” (*koyūsei*), a new nationalistic education regime popularised the idea that the Japanese people were the inheritors of samurai culture, even though samurai only made up 5-6% of Japan’s total population before class distinctions were abolished in 1869. As Befu points out, “Japan’s modernization coincided with the samuraization process – the spread of the ideology of the ruling warrior class.”⁶ This was accomplished by introducing a modified “warrior ideology” in the Civil Code and the school curricula in which celebrated warrior customs “permeated the common people.”⁷

Newly created notions of *bushidō*, and ideas of a glorious warrior past were propagated vigorously

⁶ H. Befu, *An Anthropological Introduction*, pp. 50-52

⁷ *Ibid.*

from the 1890s onwards, and many of the national myths created during this epoch became so strongly entrenched in the Japanese psyche, that they still remain largely unquestioned to this day.

Basil Hall Chamberlain (1850–1936), the renowned English Japanologist, made the following cynical but astute observations about the burgeoning Japanese nationalism of the latter Meiji period (1868–1912).

But the twentieth-century Japanese religion of loyalty and patriotism is quite new, for in it pre-existing ideas have been sifted, altered, freshly compounded, turned to new uses, and have found a new centre of gravity. Not only is it new, it is not yet completed; it is still in process of being consciously or semi-consciously put together by the official class, in order to serve the interests of that class, and, incidentally, the interests of the nation at large.⁸

To apply Eric Hobsbawm's term, *kendō* is in fact a fine example of “invented tradition”⁹ which was incorporated into Japanese political machinations during the period of modernisation to cultivate patriotism. To be sure, *kendō*'s lineage can be traced directly back to the warriors of the medieval period; however, teaching and training methodology, match rules, philosophical concepts and so on were for the most part developed or reformulated in the twentieth century. From the late Meiji period (1868–1912) until Japan's Second World War defeat, *kendō* was increasingly utilised as an effective educational tool to infuse nationalistic doctrines of self-sacrifice, and bolster ideas of the Japanese as a powerful warrior race embodied with a courageous spirit that was unique in the world.

Kendō's technical evolution continues into the twenty-first century, as does the strong official insistence that practitioners follow the same righteous path that samurai tread before them to rectify the societal and ethical ills of the present (often blamed on overt Westernisation), for a better future. This is indicative of what Levinger and Lytle describe as “nostalgic nationalism”. In other words, a “triadic structure of nationalistic rhetoric” is evident in which *kendō* connects the “glorious past”,

⁸ Basil Hall Chamberlain, *The Invention of a New Religion*, p. 6

⁹ Eric Hobsbawm, Terrence Ranger (ed.), *The Invention of Tradition*, p. 1

with the “degraded present” and ultimately the “utopian future”.¹⁰

Actually, it is the cultural link with samurai culture that provides significant appeal for non-Japanese practitioners as well, but there is a common supposition among the Japanese *kendō* fraternity that non-Japanese are unlikely to ever understand the “true” essence of *kendō*. Such views are usually motivated by “ethnocultural pride rather than xenophobic sentiments.”¹¹ McVeigh also contends that the difficulty in ‘internationalising’ Japanese culture “is attributed, sometimes with a measure of pride, to how inscrutable Japanese culture is, to insiders as well as outsiders.”¹² Nevertheless, this patronising attitude does not inhibit the paternalistic labours made by Japanese kendoists at all levels, and the government, to propagate the culture of *kendō* on an international scale as their “gift” to the world – one that can even contribute to “world peace”, as the rhetoric goes.¹³

Nevertheless, misunderstandings abound in Japan and elsewhere regarding the evolutionary process of *kendō* and the other martial arts, and the cultural and political forces that shaped them, especially the period from when the class system was abolished extending until to the present day. It is taken for granted that *kendō* is “traditional culture” when in fact much of it was “re-invented” in the modern period, and continues to evolve. As McVeigh maintains, culture acts as a kind of “semantic magnet” which is able to “link ethnicity, art, citizenship, economic progress, renovationism, and racialist definitions of identity, encouraging resonances between state attempts at defining nation-ness and popular conceptions about cultural life.”¹⁴ As will be demonstrated in this thesis, the long story of *kendō*’s historical development as a representative example of Japanese culture verifies this statement on many levels.

¹⁰ M. Levinger, P. Lytle, “Myth and Mobilisation: The Triadic Structure of Nationalistic Rhetoric”, *Nations and Nationalism* 7 (2), pp. 175-94

¹¹ Brian J. McVeigh, *Nationalisms of Japan: Managing and Mystifying Identity*, p. 195

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 201

¹³ For example, see “The Philosophy of Budō” established by the Japanese Budō Association in 2008. A. Bennett (ed./trans.) *Budō: The Martial Ways of Japan*, p. 16

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 181

To date, however, there are few works in English that plot in any detail the evolution of systemised Japanese martial arts from the medieval period into combat sports in the modern day. Perhaps the most extensive studies in terms of the periods covered include Hurst's *The Armed Martial Arts of Japan*, Donn Draeger's *Classical Bujutsu* (1973), *Classical Budo* (1973), and *Modern Bujutsu and Budo* (1974). Draeger's books have long been considered among Western martial artists as required reading for understanding the progression of Japanese martial arts and swordsmanship; but they lack scholarly rigour and adequate social analysis, and rely too much on one-dimensional ideas such as how the martial arts transformed from techniques for killing (*bujutsu*) to arts (*bugei*), and then to martial ways for self-perfection (*budō*) with little scrutiny of the multitude of complicated social forces underpinning the historical transformations. Hurst's book is superior in terms of scholastic analysis, but only skips over the nationalisation of the martial arts in the post-Meiji era, as most Japanese studies do also.

Karl Friday's excellent book *Legacies of the Sword: The Kashima-Shinryu and Samurai Martial Culture* (1997) explores the "historical, philosophical and pedagogical dynamics" of the traditional system of *kenjutsu*, the Kashima Shin-ryū, as a case study of a classical school of swordsmanship. He sums up the limitations of the current literature regarding martial arts in English. "The English-language literature on the traditional *bugei* includes how-to manuals, biographies of master swordsmen, translations and commentaries on classic texts, and broadly synthesizing historical or analytical studies. Much of this work suffers from historical naïveté, flawed by errors of fact or conception..."¹⁵ Although he is referring to work available about the pre-modern martial arts, his observations are also applicable to modern *budō*, an area that Friday's book does not cover. Again, the same criticisms could also be made of the majority of Japanese books on the subject.

Although there are abundant works in Japanese that explain the historical development of

¹⁵ K. Friday, *Legacies of the Sword: The Kashima-Shinryu and Samurai Martial Culture*, p. 9

swordsmanship, not many analyse the role it played in generating samurai attitudes of cultural superiority *vis-à-vis* the other echelons of Japanese society in the Tokugawa period, and how this transmuted into a source for nationalism in the modern era. In fact, the correlation between martial arts and nationalism is a virtually untouched area in Japanese and Western academia.

In his unpublished Ph.D. thesis *The Development of the Military Profession in Tokugawa Japan* (Harvard University, 1998), John Rogers evaluates the role of the martial arts in the lifestyle of Tokugawa samurai, and how it was used to legitimise their rule in peacetime and allowed them to see themselves as “accomplished warriors” even though they were essentially bureaucrats. He contends that by the end of the eighteenth century, the warrior profession had been “rendered impotent by corruption, complacency, and incompetence.”¹⁶ His analysis is thorough, and offers interesting insights into the warrior’s self-perception and maintenance of identity through the martial arts, but stops short of analysing *bushi* elitism in the martial arts (mainly *kenjutsu*) as a forerunner to prototypical forms of nationalism that would flourish from the Meiji period.

Denis Gainty starts his discourse from the Meiji period until 1946 in his Ph.D. thesis titled *Martialing the National Body: Structure, Agency, and the Dainippon Butokukai in Modern Japan*. (University of Pennsylvania, 2007). This study is a long overdue (in the West) examination of how the Dai-Nippon Butokukai (Greater Japan Martial Virtue Association), an authoritative citizen’s group that was formed in 1895 to protect and promote the martial arts, inspired the ascendance of *budō* in Japanese society until the end of the Second World War.

He employs anthropological and other social theory in order to “unpack the work of the Butokukai and the creative and powerful (bodied) agency wielded by its members.” He argues how the concept and practice of martial arts “conferred meaningful, embodied agency for citizens on national as well as local levels.” (p. 10). Although an important contribution to Western analysis of

¹⁶ J. Rogers, *The Development of the Military Profession in Tokugawa Japan*, (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1998), p. 211

the socio-political significance of *budō* in Japan, the purview of his inquiry is limited to one stage in the protracted scheme of the nationalisation of the martial arts. In contrast to this, I opted to take a macro approach to fully contextualise the meaning of the *kendō* to the Japanese on a national and international level.

Furthermore, there is little in the way of serious research cogitating nationalistic sentiment as a significant driving force behind Japan's rigorous efforts to diffuse *kendō* domestically and then internationally in the modern era. The late Ōtsuka Tadayoshi was known for taking a highly critical stance of the nationalistic and irrational way in which *kendō* has been promoted in the post-war period, and the various contradictions inherent in the way it has been nationalised and internationalised.¹⁷ However, much of his work seems to be centred on criticising the AJKF, and his suggestions for overcoming the contradictions he identifies in modern *kendō*, especially “double standards” regarding its official concepts and match rules, are considered to be quite radical.

He and Sakaue Yasuhiro co-wrote a couple of papers outlining about the comprehensive analysis of the “national militarisation” of *kendō*.¹⁸ Based on prominent sports historian Irie Katsumi's framework for fascist PE in pre-war Japan, their argument concluded that the wartime experience of *kendō* demonstrates the dangers to cultural integrity and objectivity when the state enters into the supervision of *kendō*.¹⁹

In 1965, Kinoshita Hideaki published a paper directly linking the martial arts with nationalism where he asserts that without a high degree of vigilance, *budō* arts such as *kendō* could easily be used to stir up nationalist sentiment again. The underlying connotation in his thesis is that the *budō* arts in themselves are not evil, but they are open for exploitation for evil purposes depending on who is

¹⁷ See his books *Nihon Kendō no Shisō* (Madosha, 1995) and *Nihon Kendō no Rekishi* (Madosha, 1995).

¹⁸ Sakaue Yasuhiro, Ōtsuka Tadayoshi, “Senjika ni okeru kendō no henyō katei no kenkyū (sono 1) – shiai no kitei to gijutsu no henka no bunseki” (Research into the process of change in wartime *kendō* part 1: Analysis of changes in match rules and techniques), *Budōgaku Kenkyū* 21 (2) (Research Journal of Budo), 1988, p. 160

¹⁹ Ibid.

in power.²⁰

Nakamura Tamio is one of the foremost historians of the martial arts with a focus on *kendō* and authored a standard text on its history and culture, *Kendō Jiten* (*Kendō* dictionary, Shimazu Shobō, 1994). In this, and in his numerous other publications, he meticulously records how Japanese bureaucracy, especially the Ministry of Education (Mombushō), and the Ministry of Home Affairs (Kōseishō) essentially adulterated *kendō* and the other martial arts to further statist objectives. Similar opinions are commonplace among the few Japanese scholars of *kendō* who dare to write about the relationship between the martial arts and nationalism. While acknowledging the connection, they also take great pains to preserve the reputation of the martial arts – inadvertently, one could argue, demonstrating a certain degree of pride and protectionism of the intrinsically “wholesome” nature of *kendō* from a populist nationalistic stance.

On the other hand, Irie Katsumi, wrote of the “fascist” nature of early Shōwa period (1926–1988) Japanese sports, and how pre-war martial arts and PE in general was designed to further the cause of the imperial government.²¹ Although his seminal work on sports and fascism in Japan was not focused only on the martial arts, what is notable here is that he does not try to salvage *budō*’s tarnished image.

To the majority of scholars in Japan, however, underscoring the relationship between *kendō* and nationalism in any form has been treated as either taboo, or not worthy of scholastic investigation. This is probably because many of the martial arts researchers in Japan are actually practitioners as well, and their views are tinted by a sense of obligation to the arts they practise, and the organisations they belong to.

In any case, the body of literature in English and Japanese that investigates the obvious links

²⁰ Kinoshita Hideaki, “Dainippon Butokukai: Sono senkindaisei to kindaisei” (The Dai-Nippon Butokukai: its pre-modern and modern characteristics) in *Taiiku no Kagaku* (The science of physical education) Vol. 15, No. 11, pp. 149-157

²¹ See Irie Katsumi, *Nihon Fashizumu-ka no Taiiku Shisō* (Ideals of physical education under Japanese fascism).

between *kendō* and nationalism is surprisingly limited. As Sakai Toshinobu points out, “the problematic history of kendo and its association with militarism in the early Shōwa period is an awkward subject for kendo enthusiasts.”²² He claims that many people developed an “allergy’ regarding kendo’s recent past, and it is true that some historical occurrences are ignored as if they never happened”, and that more research needs to be made of this era “to ascertain the positive facets of kendo that have gone unnoticed, or have been forgotten today.”²³

The tendency to overlook this undeniably important chapter in *kendō*’s gradual transformation into a “post-war democratic sport” has left huge gaps and contradictions in our understanding of *kendō*’s social, cultural, and political relevance today, both domestically and internationally. With these points in mind, the broader questions that will be addressed in this thesis are as follows:

1. How did schools dedicated to the study of martial arts (*bugei-ryūha*) evolve, and why was the sword so important to the early traditions?
2. What was the process in which *kenjutsu* become “civilised”, and how did it relate to class identity in the Tokugawa period (1600–1868)?
3. In what way did *kenjutsu* transmute when class distinctions and national isolationist policies (*sakoku*) were abolished in the Meiji period (1868–1912)?
4. What were the cultural and political influences in the rise of “state” and “popular” nationalism, and how did they affect the “re-invention” and manipulation of *kendō* in the first half of the twentieth century?
5. How did post-war private and national cultural policy affect the post-war reinstatement of *kendō* and its usefulness in inculcating a sense of “Japaneseness”?
6. What are the nationalistic motivations, and perceived dangers of the international propagation of

²² Sakai Toshinobu (trans. Alexander Bennett), *A Bilingual Guide to the History of Kendo*, p. 228

²³ Ibid.

kendō with regards to cultural proprietership?

Broadly speaking the goal of this research project is two-fold. First, it will provide the first in-depth historical analysis in English of the development of the culture of Japanese swordsmanship from medieval times to the present day. Second, after showing how swordsmanship endured as a mainstay of *bushi* elitism during the Tokugawa period, it will be demonstrated how these were easily transferred into forms of statist nationalism (*kokka-shugi*) and popular nationalism (*minzoku-shugi*) extending from the Meiji period through the Fascist 1930s and 1940s. Finally, this thesis will demonstrate how *kendō* became a medium in the upsurge of post-war cultural nationalism, both “symbolic” and “discursive”.²⁴

As Yoshino Kōsaku states with regards to Nihonjinron, “culture is seen as infrastructural, and social, political, and economic phenomena are viewed as manifestations of a cultural ethos considered unique to the Japanese.”²⁵ In this sense, an attempt will be made to show how *kendō* was used as a tool of nationalism, and to elucidate how nationalism has been a major factor in the way in which *kendō* has been developed and represents a “cultural ethos” considered to be a manifestation of “Japaneseness”, especially over the last century. Japan’s current reaction as it faces the possibility of losing its status as the suzerain nation of *kendō*, i.e. exclusive owners of *kendō* – a martial art perceived as one of the most representative forms of traditional Japanese culture will also be assessed.

6. Methodology

To determine the setting and forces that resulted in the creation of schools of swordsmanship in Japan, Chapter 1 will outline the historical process which saw the appearance of professional

²⁴ Harumi Befu (ed.), *Cultural Nationalism in East Asia: Representation and Identity*, p. 2

²⁵ “Culturalism, Racialism, and Internationalism in the Discourse on Japanese Identity”, Dru C. Gladney (ed.), *Making Majorities: Constituting the Nation in Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Fiji, Turkey, and the United States*, p. 16

warriors in Japan, and the traditional characteristics of Japanese warfare, early warrior training methodology, and the role of the sword in medieval warfare. This will entail an explanation of how *ryūha* (distinct martial traditions) evolved, and also the rise of the “sword cult” and its symbolic importance.

Chapter 2 will plot the three-dimensional crystallisation of *kenjutsu* from a form of “*bujutsu*” (purely combat techniques) to “*bugei*” (artistic reinterpretation), and finally to “*budō*” (martial arts as a “sport” and “way of life”). The notion of “ideal of non-lethality” that emerged through the “civilising process” that tamed the martial arts into sophisticated cultural pursuits will be examined. Furthermore, this chapter will show how the invention of safety training equipment occasioned the “sportification” of *kenjutsu*, a turn of events which actually made it desirable to the samurai’s social inferiors who increasingly sought to emulate their culture. The Tokugawa period was the first step in the modernisation of the martial arts, and its intellectualisation and “spiritual” refinement filled a vacuum in the warrior’s self-identity, and bolstered sentiments of cultural elitism – a sentiment that was to reveal itself again in the Meiji period.

The third chapter will look at the temporary demise of *kenjutsu*, and the eventual “re-invention” that took place in the Meiji period following the abolition of class distinctions and modernisation of social systems. In particular, an assessment will be made of the contribution of former samurai Sakakibara Kenkichi and the *gekken-kōgyō* (public martial arts shows) that he instigated to revive public interest, and provide his destitute counterparts with a source of income. Also considered will be the role that the Popular Rights Movement (*jiyū minken undō*) in the Meiji period played in popularising *kenjutsu* at political meetings, and the legendary “Battōtai” (a police unit that only used swords) which proved the value of swords on the modern battlefield, leading to governmental reconsideration of the usefulness of swordsmanship.

Of particular significance in the modernisation of swordsmanship in this period was the

formation of the Dai-Nippon Butokukai (Greater Japan Society of Martial Virtue) which acted as the self-appointed “gatekeeper” of Japan’s martial arts. I will focus my attention on the conflicting ambitions for *bujutsu* (*kenjutsu* and *jūjutsu*) held by populists and statist as the martial arts became integral to modern nationalistic aspirations, eventually being introduced into the school curriculum for an unprecedented scale of national dissemination.

Following on from this formative period of the inclusion of martial arts in modern nationalistic agendas, chapter 4 will map the political exploitation of *kendō* in the militaristic 1930s and 1940s. *Kendō* became a compulsory subject in the nation’s schools, and underwent what could be described as a process of “de-civilisation” as the techniques, rules, and methods of training became increasingly violent and combat-like to nurture a “fighting spirit” among youth, and prepare them for the rigours of war. It was during this period that control of *kendō* was wrested away from popular control when the Butokukai was commandeered by the government. Total state control of the martial arts resulted in *kendō*’s temporary prohibition in the post-war period due to its potential for invoking “undemocratic” behaviour. To be reinstated, it had to be separated from state control and any hint of militarism, and be reinvented as a modern “democratic sport” – the topic covered in Chapter 5.

The main theme of Chapter 5 is the “re-civilising” process of *kendō* into a democratic sport in the post-war period. First, the invention of *shinai-kyōgi* (a hybrid Westernised version of *kendō*) will be analysed. Then, the formation of the All Japan Kendo Federation (AJKF) as the new “gatekeeper” of *kendō* culture will be examined with a focus on impetuses behind *kendō*’s restoration in the national school curriculum, and the implications of its official interpretation as a “sport”.

Although *kendō* saw a boom in popularity in the 1960s as a competitive sport, the traditional ideals of *kendō* as a medium for personal development deteriorated, prompting a resurgence of reasserting *kendō*’s distinctiveness from other sports, and notions of cultural and spiritual superiority.

The methodical reinstatement of *kendō* in schools and the community in line with official government cultural policy makes *kendō* a kind of physical “Nihonjinron” which contributes to the accentuation of “Japaneseness”.

The final chapter will investigate the early international propagation of *kendō* in Europe, the Americas, and also in Japan’s former colony, Korea. Each region has well-established *kendō* communities, but for different reasons, each has assorted views on the cultural ownership of *kendō*. In this age of globalisation, the international dissemination of *kendō* is seen as a “double-edged sword”. On the one hand, it is considered by the AJKF and the Japanese government as a valid way of making a contribution to world culture and affirming Japanese “soft power” at an individual and organisational level. It also facilitates a kind of “self-affirmation” of what it is to be Japanese in the international community, and begets a considerable amount of pride to those directly involved.

On the other hand, the inevitable clash of cultural values and helplessness to completely control the destiny of *kendō* as it becomes increasingly widespread throughout the world is a cause of cultural anxiety with the imposing question of “who owns the culture?” These are the issues examined in Chapter 6. Collectively, each of these chapters will demonstrate the culture politics of proprietorship, and illustrate the socio-historical evolution of Japanese swordsmanship and its correlation with cultural nationalism.

Chapter 1

A Reassessment of Schools of Swordsmanship in Medieval Japan

1. Introduction
2. Early Bushi Culture
3. The Customs of Medieval Japanese Warfare
4. Aspirations for 'Bun' and the Aestheticisation of 'Bu'
5. The Genesis of Martial Art Schools
6. The Age of the Sword Master
7. Conclusion

1. Introduction

Who were the *bushi*, and what were the social conditions that led to their eventual ascendance to the ruling class of Japan in a hegemonic regime that lasted for eight centuries? As professional warriors, what were the characteristics of their methods of waging war, and what processes led to the evolution of military 'art forms' with unique technical *modus operandi* underpinned by highly philosophical and spiritual qualities. What were the early schools (*ryū* or *ryūha*) that stood at the forefront of the gradual proliferation of martial art systems (*ryūha-bugei*)? These are the questions that will be addressed in the first chapter of this thesis.

Three main themes will be investigated in this chapter. First, a synopsis will be provided of the emergence and advancement of Japan's professional men-at-arms from the Heian period (794–1185) through to the late Muromachi period (1333–1568). Second, the development of medieval Japanese methods and customs of warfare will be analysed. I will focus on the technological innovations introduced particularly in the Sengoku period (1467–1568), and the ensuing transformation in tactical style and military hardware. The third theme examined will be the enigmatic and symbolic reverence attached to the sword (*katana*), and the genesis of schools

dedicated to the study and refinement of its techniques.

Many take it for granted that the *katana* was the primary weapon of *bushi* in spite of research that shows that the sword served as an auxiliary weapon to the bow for much of the medieval period. Nevertheless, the rise of specialist martial art schools in which the sword became the predominant weapon of study from the fifteenth century onwards, despite the introduction of more devastating weapons such as firearms, is noteworthy. This trend seems to be at stark odds with the reality of the era, when warlords (*daimyō*) vied to gain suzerainty over the country, and begs the fundamental question: Why did schools focussing on swordsmanship emerge?

Training in systemised composite martial arts served an important practical function. Specialist martial art schools which evolved in the late medieval period (circa 1400–1600) undeniably provided an important route for combat proficiency, and hence career opportunities for the professional warrior. Even so, it is difficult to reconcile the mind-set of progenitors of martial schools in practical terms when the sword was often the central weapon studied.

By investigating these broad themes, the intention is to corroborate the following three postulations. First, given the period in which identifiable *ryūha-bugei* emerged, it is clear that the systems were created as a culmination of combat experience, but were refined through the adoption of precepts from art forms such as Noh theatre that served to ‘aestheticise’ martial technique. This fusion of combat procedure and art was catalysed in part by warriors’ infatuation with sophisticated court culture.

Second, while practical battle application was still the primary concern for warriors, martial art *ryūha* became, in essence, pseudo-religious organisations through the incorporation of a rigid hierarchical teacher-disciple framework in addition to mystical mind-body tenets that aided the sanctification of the progenitor and his teachings, and addressed the fear of combat mortality.

Third, successive generations of disciples continued to refine *ryūha* training methodologies and

their underpinning philosophies as they created their own branches stemming from the source schools. As such, the ensuing extensions and modifications to the original *ryūha* provide a vivid example of the process of ‘invention of tradition’, and the reinforcement of elitist group consciousness. First though, it is necessary to establish how this subculture of professional warriors emerged.

2. Early Bushi Culture

To the *bushi*, martial ability was an expression of individual strength and valour, and symbolic of their distinctive subculture as specialist combatants. From as early as the ninth century (or arguably, perhaps, even earlier), Japanese warriors developed and cultivated an idiosyncratic culture based largely on the ability to utilise violence. Warrior ideals evolved over many centuries, and were imbued with idioms of honour such as bonds of loyalty forged between the retainer and lord, for whom – the classic war tales (*gunki monogatari*) frequently inform us – the warrior would gladly forfeit his life. This section will outline the various theories regarding the rise of the warriors in Japan and their distinctive subculture. The role of the *bushi* in early medieval society will also be considered.

2a. Emergence Theories for Professional Warriors in Japan

What facilitated the rise of Japan’s warrior culture? For much of the twentieth century, the standard interpretation in the West of the so-called “emergence” of the *bushi* was largely based upon the economic thesis put forth by Asakawa Kan’ichi.¹ His ideas were subsequently propagated by early generations of Western scholars of Japanese history and culture such as George Sansom and E. O.

¹ For example see Asakawa’s 1929 English publication *The Documents of Iriki: Illustrative of the Development of the Feudal Institutions of Japan*.

Reischauer.

In simple terms, this once standard view purports an unambiguous interpretation of events that led to the surfacing of powerful provincial warrior families in the late Heian period (794–1185). For example, in Sansom's classic three-volume treatise of Japanese history he states that, "the gradual collapse of the civil power after the decline of the Fujiwara dictators was accompanied by a rise in the influence of warrior clans."²

The warriors, this interpretation advocates, had become dislocated from their connections in the capital due to the gradual crumbling of the *ritsuryō* system³ extending from 645 to the late tenth century. Put into effect in 702, the Taiho Code was the first set of rules fully implemented in the *ritsuryō* system. Under this system, the people were obligated to pay taxes directly to the court, and participate in compulsory military service.⁴ Oppressed by taxes, many peasants deserted their fields for other occupations, adversely impacting the Heian government's income and influence. This caused instability and tension throughout the land. Those in the provinces were compelled to fortify themselves to protect their holdings from marauding bands of rival warriors, and even engage in acts of aggression to extend their own estates. The court found itself unable to protect its assets in the provinces, and its economic base was significantly weakened as a result. Newly formed bands of provincial warriors were able to gather political momentum and assert their dominance through the

² George Sansom, *The History of Japan: To 1334*, p. 234

³ "*Ritsu*" (律) means "penal code", and "*ryō*" (令) means "civil and administrative rules".

⁴ With the introduction of the Taihō *ritsuryō* code, conscription was a burden placed on commoners registered in the national census conducted every six years. Conscript warriors formed the 'backbone' of the court's military might in the eighth century and relied heavily on the influence of district magistrates to enforce the policies. As such, conscription of unwilling commoners was considered a weakness in the *ritsuryō* system. One soldier was from every household of three adult males between 21–60 years of age was expected to train for a period of one month a year for up to two or three years, and also supply their own equipment to take on military expeditions or postings. These included guarding the capital; the shores of Kyūshū, and in expeditions in the northern territories. With the introduction of the *kondei* system in 792, the conscription system was for the most part abolished, but not completely just in case of national emergencies. As Yamamura Kōzō states in regards to the *kondei* system "only the sons of 'the wealthy'—that is, the sons of district magistrates, local holders of tax-exempt land (by virtue of rank), and others who had managed to increase their landholdings, were conscripted to form the equivalent of an officer corps in the standing army." See, Yamamura's "The Decline of the Ritsuryō System: Hypotheses on Economic and Institutional Change", *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1. (1974), p. 18. Also see Wayne Farris's *Heavenly Warriors*, pp. 49, 106 for an explanation of the early conscription system and its flaws.

use of military force.

Eventually, the provincial warriors became economically dominant, and by virtue of their martial skills, the courtiers were unable to offer much resistance. After the Gempei Disturbance (1180–1185), and the inevitable abdication of the ‘incompetent’ nobles, *bushi* were able to elevate themselves to powerful positions simply by filling the political holes that appeared. This influence reached its zenith with the eventual formation of the Kamakura shogunate in 1188 by Minamoto Yoritomo (1147–1199).

However, in recent years, this assessment of the rise of the warriors to political dominance has been substantially modified. Among Western scholars, prominent theorists include J. W. Hall,⁵ Jeffrey Mass and Marius B. Jansen. In essence, they refuted the simplistic idea of courtier resignation and consequent warrior self-promotion. The contemporary consensus is that courtiers actually maintained significant degrees of control, and provincial *bushi* were certainly not afforded a free reign in the political machinery.

For example, Jansen states, “By the twelfth century, warriors had come to exercise a dominant share of the total volume of local government, but even after two hundred years they remained politically immature.”⁶ Jansen stresses that the Heian system of aristocratic rule “remained the essential framework within which the *bakufu* (warrior government) during its lifetime, was obliged to operate.”⁷

Changes in the theoretical understanding of the rise to prominence of *bushi* have been postulated in Japan and the West from many different angles, especially in the last two decades. Some of the representative works in English include William Wayne Farris’s *Heavenly Warriors*, Karl Friday’s *Hired Swords*, and more recently Ikegami Eiko’s *The Taming of the Samurai*.

⁵ See J. W. Hall’s *Government and Local Power in Japan, 500 to 1700*

⁶ Marius B. Jansen, *Warrior Rule in Japan*, p. 1

⁷ *Ibid.*

Farris's thesis avoids the term "emergence" and instead promotes the "evolution" of warriors as an on-going process spanning many centuries before the eventual consolidation of the Kamakura shogunate. He also fervidly contests what he terms the "Western analogue theorists", who, he asserts, forcibly apply a Western model of feudalism to the *bushi* experience. In his book, he divides his analysis of *bushi* evolution into eight sections extending back to approximately 500 A.D. There, he draws our attention to the culture of mounted archers – not uncommon throughout Asia – who were consciously organised into an imperial army by Emperor Temmu (?–686, 天武 literally "heavenly warrior", hence the title of his book).

He conjectures that the aristocratic warriors of the Heian period did not suddenly appear and fill a political vacuum, but rather were the inheritors of a much older culture that continued to develop over time. In Farris's words, "By the beginning of the ninth century, the basic technology of warfare was available and mounted warriors were supremely important on the battlefield; many soldiers organized themselves into houses with the exclusive right to practice the martial arts, either as local aristocrats or local strongmen."⁸

Farris avers that during the period extending 500 to 1300, warriors were not pitted against the courtiers, but instead "acted as shields for the court, defending it from enemies both at home and abroad...until finally samurai declared their political independence, which, despite court machinations, they secured in the thirteenth century."⁹

Another American scholar, Karl Friday, also denies the inactivity or impotence of the court. Through a detailed analysis of the military technology and motivations in the structure of the imperial army and conscripts, he contends that the warriors at court and those stationed in the provinces were in fact court co-operatives. Furthermore, the court was active in making use of the provincial warriors to improve the overall military and policing system.

⁸ William Wayne Farris, *Heavenly Warriors*, p. 367

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 355

There were instances in which certain warriors did exert significant influence such as Taira Kiyomori (1118–81), the prominent warrior who rose to dominate court politics, and oversaw the enthronement of his infant grandson Antoku (1178–1185) as emperor. Nevertheless, Friday argues that for the most part, “the evolution of military institutions in Japan between the seventh and twelfth centuries followed a consistent and relatively steady pattern, a pattern characterized by ever-increasing reliance on the privately fostered martial skills and resources of provincial elites and of the lower tiers of the central aristocracy.”¹⁰ Furthermore, Friday observes that the provincial warriors and lower-level court nobles had two main incentives to develop their “skill-at-arms”: These were “State military policy, and the growing private competition for wealth and influence among various parties and factions in both the capital and the provinces.”¹¹

Ikegami Eiko’s book, *The Taming of the Samurai*, also addresses the question of the rise of the warriors. Her thesis focuses on the specialist skills in “violence” developed by *bushi* as being the decisive factor in their development. Based on recent work by historians Takahashi Masaaki, Ōishi Naomasa, and Chiba Tokuji, she concludes that the emergence of the samurai “can no longer be understood simply as the extension of wealth among a subset of farmers resulting from changing land tenure patterns.”¹² Similar to Europe in which “a mounted warrior class emerged in societies where pastoral and agricultural modes of life had existed side by side and the tradition of a hunting tradition remained vital”,¹³ she highlights specific characteristics that were not solely agrarian-based and the advancement of a distinguishing *raison d’être* among the Japanese warrior subculture that made them distinct from other echelons of society. “The origin of the early form of the samurai was apparently related, at least in part, to the violent groups of eastern warriors who had a close affinity

¹⁰ Karl Friday, *Hired Swords*, p. 172

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 174

¹² Ikegami Eiko, *The Taming of the Samurai*, p. 59

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 58

with indigenous non-agricultural people.”¹⁴ She maintains that a hunter-like warrior culture developed in the ninth or tenth centuries in the eastern provinces, and central to her thesis is the concept of honour (*na*), and the bonds of loyalty that were formed between the warrior and his lord through actual combat experience.

2b. Consolidating Occupational Functions

The gradual rise of *bushi* to political prominence on a national scale was activated by the on-going dismantling of military obligations forced upon the general populace under the *ritsuryō* system. The system encouraged a rigid hierarchy in court where certain offices became hereditary among a select but small group of nobles. These families, determined to maintain their privileges and monopoly on government posts, increasingly sought affiliation with, or created their own private armies of warriors. This in turn provided useful opportunities for career advancement among the middle to lower ranked nobles. They were quick to realise that martial ability was their ticket to a successful career in a mutually beneficial arrangement with the powerful families that controlled the seats of government. “The greater such opportunities became, the more enthusiastically and the more seriously such young men committed themselves to the profession of arms.”¹⁵

Furthermore, changes made to the tax revenue collection system enforced under the *ritsuryō* system acted as a significant catalyst in the rising status of warriors. By the mid-Heian period, collection responsibilities were moved from the central government to newly appointed provincial governors. The onus of collecting tax revenue was subsequently placed by the governors on the ‘local elites’, who also stood to profit greatly by the arrangement. Serving as middlemen for this transactional arrangement were career officials (*zuryō*) hailing from hordes of middle-ranked nobles.

As Friday points out, “By the tenth century, military service at court and service as a provincial

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 61

¹⁵ Karl Friday, *Samurai, Warfare and the State in Early Medieval Japan*, p. 6

official had become parallel and mutually supportive careers for the members of several middle-ranked courtier houses collectively known as the *miyako no masha*, or ‘warriors of the capital.’”¹⁶ The best-known warriors were members of the houses of the Minamoto (Genji) and the Taira (Heiji). These two great warrior leagues provide the heroes (and anti-heroes) of many of Japan’s representative *gunki monogatari* (genre of literature meaning ‘war tales’). Their feats in battle, particularly in the Hōgen (1156) and Heiji (1160) Disturbances, in addition to the Taira-Minamoto War (Gempei Disturbance of 1180–1185), were recorded for posterity in all their gore and embellished glory.

Although the war tales provide valuable insights into *bushi* culture in many ways, stories surrounding the two great families (and their allies) have been at the root of the glorification and mis-conceptualisation of *bushi* culture throughout the centuries, even among *bushi* themselves.

The stories pertaining to the eventual rise to ‘supremacy’ of Minamoto Yoritomo (1147–1199) in the lead up to the establishment in Kamakura of the first warrior government in Japan, is a pivotal time in the evolution of the *bushi*. However, it should be reiterated that the formation of this “government within a government”¹⁷ was not the end of court control *per se*. It did, however, signify the beginning of new conventions and rules grafted onto old that instilled new notions of *bushi* self-identity.

Yoritomo’s initiatives included legally elevating loyal vassals to the status of privileged ‘housemen’ (*gokenin*), who were obligated to show loyalty only to him. He also placed himself in the position of being the only possible agent connecting his vassals and court, which in effect rendered the *miyako no masha* stationed in the capital ineffectual. In 1185, he rewarded his vassals with the titles and accompanying privileges of governor (*shugo*) and land steward (*jitō*), with land rights (*shiki*). He

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 8

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 13

formed what Friday aptly terms a warrior “union”¹⁸ headed by Yoritomo with “new mechanisms for organizing and directing its housemen, as well as an unprecedented clarity to the reciprocal obligations that bound them.”¹⁹

Generally speaking, by the Kamakura period (1185–1333), *bushi* had developed a distinctive subculture to the extent that they would, ideally, risk or sacrifice their lives to maintain honour. Other members of society were not nearly as enthusiastic to demonstrate their sense of honour to the point of death.

Although there is an ever-increasing volume of scholarship regarding the evolution of the *bushi* and the fascinating intricacies of the Kamakura government, it falls out of the purview of this thesis to enter into any further detailed analysis than what has been outlined above. However, it is still useful to offer a succinct definition, as far as that is possible, of what a *bushi* was. Of course, this is futile in many ways as the various periods throughout Japanese history demonstrate a continued transformation in warrior culture. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this research, Motoki Yasuo proposes a useful description of how *bushi* can be defined, and how they can be distinguished from other combatants active throughout Japanese history.

Bushi refers to the hereditary professional warriors who wielded political authority in medieval (*chūsei*) and early-modern (*kinsei*) Japan. Naturally, as professional warriors, they were distinctive from peasant or civilian conscript soldiers of the ancient (*kodai*) and modern (*kindai*) periods. In the sense of being hereditary, their existence differed greatly to the officials who were merely assigned military duty in ancient times, and also to the modern career soldier.²⁰

The distinction between warriors and non-combatants was formally systematised with the eventual introduction of Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s (1537–1598) decrees segregating Japanese society into the

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 47

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 44

²⁰ Motoki Yasuo, *Bushi no Seiritsu* (The conception of *bushi*), p. 1

four classes of warriors (*shi*), farmers (*nō*), artisans (*kō*), and merchants (*shō*). The ensuing enforcement of *heinō-bunri* (separation of farming and military roles) policies secured occupational roles for those who were permitted to engage in military affairs, and those who were not. In actuality, Hideyoshi's decrees were not totally unique innovations. Other Sengoku *daimyō* (warlords) also consciously segregated occupations into agriculture, production, commerce, and martial training.²¹ This facilitated the rise of structured castle towns (*jōka-machi*) surrounded by farmland, which served as an administrative, economic and military base for *daimyō* from the sixteenth century onwards.

Moreover, with the introduction of the first nationwide “sword hunt” edict (*katanagari-rei*) of 1588, only *bushi* were entitled to possess swords and other weapons, and inter-class mobility was thus severely restricted. Although the reality of total disarmament of non-warrior groups has been overstated by many scholars in spite of considerable evidence to the contrary, we can at least conclude that government-sanctioned class and occupational segregation made martial training ‘officially’, but loosely, the sole prerogative and responsibility of *bushi* from the end of the sixteenth century onwards.²² This subject will be addressed in more detail in the next chapter.

3. The Customs of Medieval Japanese Warfare

If we interpret the larger-than-life accounts of warrior feats in battle recorded in the war tales at face value, we could construe the ‘way of war’ to be a well-ordered and noble pursuit. The battles portrayed in the popular literature through the centuries – such as the *Heike Monogatari* (The tale of the Heike, early thirteenth century), *Taiheiki* (Chronicle of great pacification, circa 1370) and so

²¹ Futaki Ken'ichi, *Kassen no Butai-ura* (Behind battle scenes), p. 92

²² For example, refer to Fujiki Hisashi's book *Katana-gari* (Sword hunt) for an interesting analysis of how the myth of total peasantry disarmament does not stand up to scrutiny.

on – are renowned for exaggerating the truth and purporting historical inaccuracies to be interpreted as fact. This section briefly analyses the various falsehoods and common misconceptions surrounding medieval warfare (1200–1600) in Japan, and more specifically, the role of the sword.

3a. Illusions of Medieval Warfare and Beautified Perceptions of Warrior Behaviour

The typical battle scene, although thoroughly bloody and violent, is often depicted as conforming to distinct ritualised stages. The influential Japanese historian Ishii Susumu described these stages in the following sequence: Both sides mutually agreeing on the time and place of battle; dispatch and safe passage of messengers (*gunshi*) when both armies faced off on the battlefield; the release of arrows to signal the start of battle; gradual advancement of armies who loosed increasingly accurate volleys of arrows at the enemy; opponent selection, self-introductions and close-quarters fighting using bladed weapons; and guaranteed safety of non-combatants.²³

Suzuki Kunihiro also divides the “ritual” of battle into similar stages and also makes mention that enemy generals were not killed if at all possible, and women, children and other non-combatants were left alone.²⁴ This was for the simple reason that today’s enemy could very well be tomorrow’s ally, and unprovoked slaughter of innocents could consequent future revenge when least expected.

As much as it is convenient to emphasise the ‘structured’ nature of medieval battles, the reality was most certainly quite different.²⁵ Recent scholars such as Saeki Shin’ichi and Thomas Conlan have focussed their research on debunking the mythical dignified images of warfare. They challenge the romantic and glamorous ideals that have become accepted wisdom, and part of the lore that is now widely known as *bushidō*.

²³ Ishii Susumu, *Kamakura Bakufu*, pp. 134-39

²⁴ Suzuki Kunihiro, *Nihon Chūsei no Shisen Sekai to Shinzoku* (The world of private wars and family in medieval Japan), p. 94

²⁵ For a detailed and methodical quashing of this formalised interpretation of battle format in medieval Japan in English, refer to Karl Friday’s *Samurai, Warfare and the State in Early Medieval Japan*, Chapter 5 “The Culture of War”, pp. 135-163

In reality, winning was everything to medieval Japanese warriors, and the method with which victory was attained was of little consequence. If underhanded means were necessary to accomplish a gruesome task, then little compunction was shown. One does not even need to read between the lines in the old war tales to find accounts of blatant treachery, trickery and what can essentially be described as far-from-gentlemanly behaviour.

As further testimony to *bushi* pragmatism, an interesting hint of the ‘all’s fair in love and war’ mentality can be seen in house codes such as the *Takeda-kakun*. The “Ninety-nine articles” were mostly written by Takeda Shingen’s (1521–1573) younger brother, Takeda Nobushige (1525–1561), in 1547. They represent a fine example of pragmatic rules to guide behaviour of *bushi* in a Warring States period (Sengoku, 1467–1698) warrior clan (*buke*) to ensure that order was maintained, and prosperity guaranteed for generations to come. The fact that these rules and similar ones in other warrior houses were deemed necessary in the first place is an indication that orderliness was not a *fait accompli*, and that the warrior’s existence was extremely precarious indeed. Vigilance against any form of treachery or violent intent was a simple matter of survival, both on and off the battlefield.

Desperate times called for desperate measures, and a keen eye for taking the initiative was the only way to prevail. For example, the following article in the “Ninety-nine articles” of the Takeda clan relates to the ‘rules’, or more accurately, the arbitrary nature of rules to triumph in battle.

One must under no circumstance lie. In the oracles it is said, “Those who are honest, even if not all is reported at once, will receive divine protection.” However, on the occasion of battle, [honesty] depends on the situation. Sun Tzu taught, “Avoid the enemy’s strengths, and strike at their lies.”²⁶

In other words, if attacking the enemy front-on seemed a suicidal task, it was considered more prudent to attack their hidden weakness instead. This could involve a surprise attack at night or an

²⁶ Sakai Kenji (ed.), *Kōyō-gunkan Taisei* Vol. 1, p. 47

ambush, or just straight out deception and betrayal. Anything was permissible for the sake of victory.

Many other interesting tenets of Takeda Shingen's rational battle wisdom can be found in the *Kōyō-gunkan*. For example, according to transcriptions of his conversations on military affairs, he maintained a policy of "winning six or seven battles out of ten."²⁷ To attack all enemies with full strength at all times (i.e. attempting to win ten out of ten encounters) would result in one's own army sustaining heavy casualties. Hence, you may win the battles, but you would be recurrently weakened, and subsequently lose the war. As survival of the house (*ie*) was at stake, the *bushi*'s greatest weapon was a deep-rooted mastery of strategy, of which the underlying ideology was valour bolstered with cunning, deception and duplicity, or even running away to avoid a confrontation.

To be sure, a samurai would forfeit his life in battle if cornered and he believed posthumous benefits (an indelible reputation of honour) could be gleaned from doing so. This point is often simply thought to signify the strong bonds of loyalty (*chū*) between the lord and his men. Bonds of loyalty did exist, and the warrior ethos has been described with such terms as *kenshin-no-dōtoku* ("the moral of selfless dedication") coined by Watsuji Tetsurō.²⁸ Nevertheless, there was also a very calculated side to this emotional connection. Although the concept of *chū* was championed as the adhesive for *bushi* relationships, and as one of the most moving themes in the literature, loyalty was in actuality more often based on an extremely tenuous premise. History abounds of examples of warriors who would readily change allegiance if conditions were better elsewhere.²⁹

Ideally, the warrior was expected to repay his lord's special favour (*go'on*) with servitude (*hōkō*). As a matter of course this meant mobilisation on military campaigns, and an expectation that he would perform valiantly to the death if need be. Battle provided an opportunity for the warrior to display

²⁷ Ibid., p. 452

²⁸ Watsuji Tetsurō, *Nihon Rinri Shisō-shi* Vol. 1 (The history of Japanese ethics and thought), pp. 251-420

²⁹ It was not until the Tokugawa period when Confucian ethics became the standard framework in which the *bushi* ethos was posited, that the ideal of loyalty to one lord became hereditary and truly resolute.

his martial prowess. If he performed well and took a number of enemy heads (preferably those of well-known warriors), he would be rewarded by his lord. If he was killed in battle, this would be seen as a heroic death. Although the deceased would not benefit directly, he would die assured that his lord would continue bestowing favour upon his descendants, or at least the good family name would have survived another generation.

The intangible benefit gained from gallantry was the currency of honour (*na*). The dead warrior's honour would be inherited by his sons and grandsons. His feats would be recounted as family lore, and the prosperity of his *ie* (household or clan) would endure. Conversely, if the warrior was seen as cowardly, his reputation – hence that of his ancestor's and descendant's – would be irreconcilably tarnished.

The European knight fought courageously and self-righteously to secure a posthumous place in God's Kingdom. The *bushi*, who were resigned to the belief that their destiny ultimately lay in one of the hundreds of Buddhist hells before rebirth, fought boldly to ensure the perpetual fortune of his family line. Notions of abiding loyalty, and rhetoric promoting a beautiful and honourable death in battle were arguably nothing more than pragmatism cloaked in romanticism.

Furthermore, an ensuing paradox existed with regards to the warrior's martial ability, especially in the Warring States period (1467–1568). The more valiant and skilled a warrior was at his trade, the more likely he was to be approached and recruited for service in another *daimyō* army. In this way, loyalty was very much a transferable emotional tie.

The house codes of this chaotic era often urge lower-ranked warriors to remain faithful and true to their lords. Likewise, a great onus is also placed on lords to be balanced in their outlook, provide an open environment that did not stifle the individual attributes of each warrior, and to reward bravery and valiant service. Not to do so could lead to dissention, desertion, and ultimately extinction of the *ie* altogether. The lord had a delicate task of encouraging an independent spirit in

his warriors while also maintaining control over their actions.

Another common theme in warrior house codes (*buke kakun*) was the weight placed on training in military arts. This was the *bushi*'s vehicle for accrual of honour – a credit-line for financial benefits. Fighting was his profession, and weapons were the tools of his trade, but what did apprenticeship in the profession-of-arms involve? Apart from actual combat experience, by what means did the *bushi* hone his military skills?

3b. Shifting Trends in Weaponry and Strategy

The word *bushidō* has become a generic term to describe the unique culture, ideals, and lifestyle of *bushi* from all time periods. This oversimplification of the term is erroneous for a number of reasons. Firstly, the term itself did not even exist until the end of the Sengoku period / beginning of the Tokugawa period; and even during the Tokugawa period it was not widely used.³⁰ In fact, it was not until the mid to late Meiji period (1868–1912) that the word came into vogue and was bandied about as if to represent all that was noble in the Japanese people, and provided a direct association between modern Japanese and the samurai past extending as far back as the Heian and Kamakura periods.

This topic will be delved into in Chapter 3. The point here is to draw the reader's attention to the plethora of other words that were commonly used to describe the 'way of the warrior' in Japan. Particularly common were terms such as '*kyūsen no michi*' and '*kyūba no michi*' (the way of the bow and horse), or '*yumiya no narai*' (the customs of the bow and arrow), which all illustrate the warrior

³⁰ The term '*bushidō*' first appeared in the *Kōyō-gunkan*. This treatise concerning the life and times of Takeda Shingen and his son Katsuyori, and the eventual demise of the Takeda house, is a treasure-trove of information in ascertaining the Sengoku warrior ethos. However, due to the usual historical inaccuracies in regards to battles and so forth, many scholars have discredited the text as untrustworthy. There is even controversy over who actually wrote the book. Most of the chapters are signed by Kōsaka Danjō Masanobu (1527–1578), an Elder in the Takeda house. However, a number of scholars have contested that the actual or main author was the prominent military scholar Obata Kagenori (1572–1663). Exhaustive research of the language used in the *Kōyō-gunkan* by Sakai Kenji shows that it is reminiscent of that used in the Muromachi period, and was therefore probably written by Kōsaka Danjō, and compiled by Obata Kagenori in the early years of the Tokugawa period. See Sakai Kenji's *Kōyō-gunkan Taisei* (Vols. 1-4).

profession in medieval Japan based on the principal tools of the bow and the horse. There are no terms such as ‘*kenba no michi*’ (way of the horse and sword) or ‘*tachi no narai*’ which indicate the predominance of the sword in battle.

The Japanese sword, commonly referred to as the *katana* or *nihontō* in modern times, was primarily an auxiliary weapon until the fourteenth century, and even after. The importance of mounted archery to the warrior, however, is described by Friday as giving birth to the *bushi* and served to shape “Japanese tactical thinking from the eighth through the late fourteenth centuries.”³¹ Furthermore, he states that “there is not a single example, in any document, text or drawing produced before the thirteenth century that depicts warriors wielding swords from horseback.”³²

Kondō Yoshikazu conducted an extensive study of the war tales and other documents to ascertain the type of weapons used in medieval warfare and the style of utilisation. He broadly categorises combatants into four types: Mounted archers (*kyūsha kibe*); archers on foot (*kyūsha hohei*); cavalry armed with shock weapons (*uchimono kibe*); and foot-soldiers wielding shock weapons (*uchimono hohei*).³³

The upshot is that in the early medieval period (up to the fourteenth century), battles were primarily fought by mounted-archers, foot-soldiers armed with “shock weapons” such as glaives (*naginata*) and pole arms, and archers on foot. Battles in this era were waged by *bushi* determined to show individual prowess rather than as integrated armies. According to Friday, early medieval warrior clashes “tended to be aggregates of lesser combats: melees of archery duels, and brawls between small groups, punctuated by general advances and retreats, and by volleys of arrows launched by bowmen on foot, protected by portable walls of shields.”³⁴

³¹ Karl Friday, Op. Cit., p. 103

³² Ibid., p. 84

³³ Kondō Yoshikazu “Chūsei bugu to sentō” (Medieval military equipment and warfare) in Kobayashi Kazutake, Noritake Yūichi (ed.), *Chūsei Sensō-ron no Genzai* (The current state of theories on medieval warfare), p. 29

³⁴ Karl Friday, Op. Cit., p. 112

Early forts were often no more than makeshift barracks, and offered little protection against marauding warriors in search of spoils and personal honour. By the latter medieval era, fortifications were less yielding in structure, and served as permanent bases from which to wage war as rival warriors vied to usurp each other's landholdings. Archers on foot were central to the attack and defence of these castles.

Accordingly, concentrated force became necessary to make or break the defence of fortifications. Thus, from the Nanbokuchō period (1337–1392) a shift can be seen away from battles centring on the skills of individual mounted warriors to tactics based on organised group attacks. There is also an increase in the use of foot-soldiers, and a transition from the mounted-archer to mounted-warriors wielding shock weapons, albeit much later than is usually thought.³⁵

Conversely, Suzuki and a handful of other scholars have suggested that there was no period in the history of Japan where warriors fought each other from horseback with swords.³⁶ This is not to say that the practice did not exist at all, but was perhaps not nearly as prevalent as sources such as the *Taiheiki* lead us to believe. Suzuki asserts that “Horses were not for actual fighting, but for travelling to the fight”,³⁷ and he speculates that the ubiquitous image of *bushi* waging war with swords from horseback was actually created and disseminated in the Meiji period, probably influenced by imported Western imagery.

Whatever the case, standard discourse suggests that the fourteenth century signified a new age in which mounted-archers were replaced for the most part by shock cavalry and foot-archers. Here, specialisation in certain weapons and greater variation of tactics and methods for waging war becomes evident.³⁸ This was concurrent with a change in the motivations for war, where the goal became primarily the acquisition of territories. To achieve this objective, the commander needed an

³⁵ Kondō Yoshikazu, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 48-9

³⁶ Suzuki Masaya, *Katana to Kubi-tori* (Swords and head-taking), p. 30

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 31

³⁸ Karl Friday, *Op. Cit.*, p. 167

array of specialist platoons which could work as cogs in the greater machine, and battle became highly regimented from the middle of the medieval period.

Ikegami sums up the changes in the method of warfare in the late medieval period as follows: (1) an increased amount of manpower mobilised in battle; (2) a strategic shift away from fights between individual champions to battles between planned collective movements of armies; (3) a rise in the number of strong fortified castles; (4) the emergence of foot soldiers as a significant strike force; and (5) the introduction of firearms.³⁹

Due to their manoeuvrability, archers and gunners on foot (as opposed to mounted-archers) were used to great effect against infantry brandishing shock weapons. “The heavily armoured mounted warrior could be unseated by a relatively untrained gunner of low station.”⁴⁰ Furthermore, light infantry were formidable in defence, and when dug in with vicious wooden pikes stuck in the ground from where they could reload, they were a fearsome match, or at least an effective hindrance, for any charging cavalry.⁴¹

3c. The Development of Swords in Japan

Along with the changes in the method of warfare, there was also a distinct evolutionary process seen with weaponry. In the case of swords, straight double-edged blades (*tsurugi* or *chokutō*) were used from the Kofun period (300–710) to around the tenth century. The first swords with curvature (*warabite-katana*) were developed in the sixth century. From the mid-tenth century, a more stylised curved sword (*kenuki-gata tachi*) was carried by ranking military officers. The first sword with true curvature in the blade (rather than just bending from the hilt) was the *tachi*, which appeared slightly before the *kenuki-gata tachi* around the ninth century.

³⁹ Ikegami Eiko, *The Taming of the Samurai*, p. 139

⁴⁰ G. Cameron Hurst, *Armed Martial Arts of Japan*, p. 38

⁴¹ Karl Friday, *Op. Cit.*, p. 168

It is conjectured that curved blades were more effective than straight blades for fighting from horseback as the cut was said to be made more powerful with less shock reverberating up the arm of the user.⁴² However, the validity of this interpretation is now considered problematic, especially considering evidence that using swords from horseback was rare, and the true reason for the development of distinctive curved blades in Japanese swords is still a point of contention among scholars.

The advent of the *uchi-gatana* was seen during the twelfth century. This was a curved short sword, which was inserted through a sash at the waist with the blade facing upwards, as opposed to the *tachi* which dangled at the side with the blade facing downwards. Both the *tachi* and the *uchi-gatana* were generally worn as a set.

Kondō draws our attention to the differences in use between the *tachi* and *uchi-gatana* by analysing the terms that appear in the war tales. With the *tachi*, a warrior would cut (*kiru*) or strike (*utsu*) their enemies; but with the *uchi-gatana* he would stab (*sasu*) or thrust (*tsuku*) instead.⁴³ In other words, early references to the *uchi-gatana* (*katana*) show that it served as a kind of dirk for close-quarters combat.

However, by the fourteenth century, the *uchi-gatana* was lengthened and eventually replaced the *tachi* altogether as the standard bladed weapon. From this time on, the *uchi-gatana* was called “*katana*”, and with its extra length was used both as a cutting and thrusting weapon. As the curvature was slight, the blade was effective for thrusts as well as cuts. An even shorter weapon referred to as the *wakizashi* complemented the *katana*, and was simultaneously inserted through the sash to complete the standard two-sword set.

The change in the preferred way of wearing swords (i.e. at the left waist with the blade facing upwards instead of dangling) also accompanied a transformation in the style of armour worn by

⁴² Ishioka Hisao (et al.), *Nihon no Kobujutsu* (Classical Japanese martial arts), p. 14

⁴³ Kondō Yoshikazu, *Yumiya to Tōken*, p. 122

warriors. Heian and Kamakura warriors donned grand but cumbersome sets of armour known as *ō-yoroi*. With moveable protective flaps, the *ō-yoroi* provided the mounted-archer with ample protection and flexibility to release his arrows, but greatly restricted manoeuvrability when forced to fight on foot.

From the late Kamakura through to the Muromachi period there was a transition to the cheaper, lighter and less-burdensome *hara-maki* type of armour. The growing popularity of versatile *hara-maki* and *hara-ate* armour suggests a shift away from mounted-archers as the dominant factor in battle. The simpler armour and the *katana* firmly inserted at the waist offered the warrior stability, and the option to use an array of longer weapons such as *yari* (spears) without impediment.

Around this time, there is also a considerable rise in the number of sword smiths. In the latter Heian period, Shimokawa records references to 450 smiths; 1,550 in the Kamakura period; and 3,550 in the Muromachi period.⁴⁴

This is not to say that archers, mounted or on foot, were becoming obsolete in combat. In fact, records of battle wounds analysed by scholars such as Thomas Conlan, Suzuki Masaya and others have shown that, for example, in the Nanbokuchō period (1337–1392) arrow wounds were more prevalent than any other battle injury. Scrutinising 175 documents, Suzuki found 554 identifiable injuries in addition to 44 straight out fatalities. Of the injuries, 480 (86.6%) were caused by arrows; 46 (8.3%) by bladed weapons; 15 (2.6%) by rocks thrown by sling, or rolled from hilltops or castles; 6 (1.1%) by spears.⁴⁵ Suzuki's motivation for analysing these statistics was to demonstrate that even during the Nanbokuchō period, clashes of cold steel were significantly less prevalent in actual battle than the use of bows and projectile weapons. However, by the fifteenth century, group tactics, changing military technology, and increased diversity in strategy relying on regimented

⁴⁴ Shimokawa Washio, *Kendō no Hattatsu* (The development of *kendō*), p. 96

⁴⁵ Suzuki Masaya, *Op. Cit.*, p. 80

power over individual skill “ended the identification of the *bushi* as ‘Men of Horse and Bow.’”⁴⁶

3d. The Predominance of Swords – Fact or Fiction?

It has been argued that the introduction of firearms in the sixteenth century supposedly raised the prominence of swords on the battlefield. The standard line of argument explaining this irony has been promoted by scholars such as Imamura Yoshio and Tominaga Kengo. They suggest that the use of firearms increased the rapidity in which warriors sought close-quarter engagements. Musket balls could penetrate even the heaviest of armour, and warriors started to use lighter and less cumbersome suits, which left them more susceptible to weapons such as swords.⁴⁷

However, some scholars have started to refute the idea that firearms served to significantly change the face of warfare in sixteenth century Japan immediately after their arrival – generally thought to be in the 1540s via Tanegashima. Udagawa Takehisa states, “For a great number of guns to be utilised effectively requires many instructors (*hōjutsu-shi*) to teach the art of musketry to officers and men, the formation of mobile gunnery units, and many gunsmiths to make the weapons. These requirements could not be met immediately after the introduction of firearms.”⁴⁸ He asserts that firearms became more significant in battle as their use was increased by *daimyō* armies in the Tenshō period (1573–1591). By this stage, specialist schools of swordsmanship were already well-established.

There is also evidence that actually negates the sword as being the primary choice of weapon in close-quarter engagements, even by this time. Suzuki Masaya’s research reveals that of the 584 battle wounds recorded in documents extending from 1563–1600, 263 were inflicted by guns; 126 by arrows; 99 spear wounds; and only 40 warriors suffered from sword lacerations. The remainder were

⁴⁶ Karl Friday, *Op. Cit.*, p. 168

⁴⁷ See Imamura Yoshio, “Budōshi gaisetsu” (Outline of *budō* history), pp. 8-10 and Tominaga Kengo, *Kendō Gohyakunen-shi* (*Kendō*’s five-hundred year history), pp. 47-53

⁴⁸ Udagawa Takehisa, *Shinsetsu Teppō Denrai* (True theory – the transmission of firearms), pp. 10-11

30 injuries from rocks, and 26 warriors who were felled by a combination of weapons.⁴⁹

To take these statistics at face value is not advisable, and I have yet to be convinced as to how a stab wound from a spear and a sword can possibly be differentiated. Nevertheless, Suzuki contends that, although swords were used to a certain extent in battle, more often they were merely utilised to cut off the heads of fallen foe (*kubi-tori*). These were then taken back for inspection as ‘invoices for payment’ for the warrior’s personal contribution to victory.

Suzuki’s assumptions are based in part on the work of *katana* expert Naruse Sekanji (1888–1948). Of particular interest are Naruse’s observations that the famed Japanese *katana* was flawed as a weapon. Of 1681 blades that Naruse repaired personally, 30 per cent had been damaged in duels, and the remaining 70 per cent were damaged through everyday use such as inadequate cleaning and care, or reckless *tameshi-giri* (cutting practice).⁵⁰

Records show the common occurrence of the hilt (*tsuka*) snapping with use, and the silk braiding on the hilt unwinding. Furthermore, the bamboo pegs (*mekugi*) that secured the *tsuka* to the tang were also apt to crack or come loose, thereby rendering the sword unusable.⁵¹ The sword guard (*tsuba*) also had a tendency to loosen, and the blade is easily bent when cutting with incorrect blade trajectory (*hasuji*). The *katana* was known to snap easily when struck on the flat of the blade (*shinogi*) by such weapons as *yari* (spear) or the staff.

Swords were handy in narrow spaces or indoors where longer weapons could not be wielded freely, and were the weapon of choice in assassinations.⁵² Especially in the Tokugawa period, the sword was most certainly the predominant weapon employed by *bushi* in political murders, fights, and

⁴⁹ Suzuki Masaya, *Teppō to Nihonjin: “Teppō Shinwa” ga Kakushite Kita Koto* (Guns and the Japanese: What the “myth of guns” has concealed), pp. 163-83

⁵⁰ Suzuki Masaya, *Katana to Kubi-tori*, p. 96

⁵¹ Many swords also used metal *mekugi*. However this became less common by the Tokugawa period as metal tended to enlarge or distort the peg holes in the tang. Also, there is little agreement on why Japanese swords have removable *tsuka* in the first place. The most probable explanation that I have heard is that it serves as a ‘shock-absorber’ much in the same way as the pommel at the bottom of the handle did in European swords.

⁵² Suzuki Masaya, *Katana to Kubi-tori*, p. 114

exacting honour through revenge (*kataki-uchi*). This was because the *bushi* always carried a *katana* at his side as a symbol of his status, and nobody wore armour anymore. The *katana* is perfect for cutting through flesh and silk, but its practical use in the chaotic melees of medieval battlefields is questionable. In this sense, although by no means an ineffectual weapon, it is a fair assumption that the sword's practical value was less than that of the sturdy, versatile, and easier to use *yari* in the thick of battle, but was invaluable as a weapon for self-defence in the course of daily life, which for warriors, was precarious and always fraught with danger.

3e. The Sword Fetish and the Symbolic Value of 'Meitō'

What then, elevated the sword to occupy the position of emblematic favouritism it irrefutably received from warriors? Since the end of the Heian period, over three million swords were produced, and over half of these were made after the Sengoku period.⁵³ Suzuki poses the question, how could there be such a disproportionate number of swords that have survived to the present day compared to other weapons such as guns?

Suzuki postulates that more swords have survived as they were not used as prolifically in battle as many people assume. "While the *katana* did serve as a weapon, it also retained an important and peculiar quality beyond a simple, benign implement of war."⁵⁴ In other words, the *katana* was not only a sidearm (like a revolver to an officer in a modern army), but it was also revered as a ceremonial object imbued with religious qualities. Swords have figured prominently in Japan's national mythology, are one of the symbols of ascendance in the imperial family (three imperial regalia), and were treasured as important family heirlooms even before wearing two swords became the defining symbol of warrior status in the Tokugawa period.

Apart from the important mythological associations and ritualistic functions of the sword, there

⁵³ Ibid., p. 14

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 20

was also a very practical, albeit non-combative, reason for its reverence. There are countless instances of warriors naming their swords, and even *yari* to a certain extent. Conversely, guns and other weapons rarely received such honourable treatment. The term *meitō* (名刀) refers to a sword of special importance. A *meitō* would have a name, and be appraised as such through having been made by a renowned smith, considered to have an awe-inspiring ‘cutting quality’, or even to have belonged to an historical figure.

To possess a *meitō* afforded the owner status and prestige. It was a symbol of his importance, wealth and valorous feats in battle. In fact, from the Sengoku period, warlords appeared to have been infatuated with *meitō*, and they very much desired to acquire them, not to include in their personal arsenals for use in battle, but rather, much in the same way that modern collectors seek priceless works of art, for the cultural capital they bestow upon on the owner.

Apart from the narcissistic satisfaction derived from owning a *meitō*, swords of worth also became a widespread form of currency in warrior society from the Sengoku period. Warriors fought for prizes. Ideally, they would receive parcels of land from their lord as a reward for heroism. However, instead of land they were often repaid in lieu with money, antique tea utensils, or with swords.⁵⁵

Of course, only a very small number of the literally millions of swords produced were afforded the status of *meitō*. Still, even with regards to swords that were not designated *meitō*, the more valuable the sword the more prestige it afforded the possessor. Records were being kept for appraising the value of swords from as early as Ashikaga Yoshimasa (1436–1490), the eighth shogun of the Muromachi period.⁵⁶ At least from this period it can be surmised that the sword was emblematic of an owner’s wealth, authority, and gallantry, and it also served as an important form of exchange due to its aesthetic attributes.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 49

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 49

⁵⁷ It is worth mentioning that this custom of rewarding a good deed with a sword in lieu of money or other prizes remained an extensive practice in the Tokugawa period. Nothing was valued more than a sword with

4. Aspirations for ‘Bun’ and the Aestheticisation of ‘Bu’

If the sword was in fact no more than a subsidiary weapon in battle, then an important question needs to be asked. What was the impetus for the development of specialist martial schools from as early as the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that, although including an array of weapons in their curricula, often tended to focus on swordsmanship? Judging by the recent scholarly discourse that questions the standard interpretation of the method of warfare waged in the late medieval period, it seems unreasonable to assume that the sword – as statistics of battle wounds supposedly show us – was the primary battle weapon. Moreover, if we follow Suzuki’s hypothesis, swords appear to have been used mainly for desecrating warriors who were already dead. What then caused an infatuation with swordsmanship among the founders and students of the earliest *ryūha-bugei*? The question is simple enough, but surprisingly few scholars have attempted to answer it. This section will analyse the reasons why swordsmanship occupied a privileged position in the warrior’s craft.

4a. ‘Buke Kojitsu’ and ‘Kakun’ in Muromachi Warrior Culture

Karl Friday claims that “*ryūha-bugei* itself constituted a new phenomenon – a derivative, not a linear improvement, of earlier, more prosaic military training.”⁵⁸ The fact that swordsmanship became the focus suggests the plausibility that *ryūha-bugei* evolved not just for the sake of military training, but were profoundly influenced by the formulation and systematisation of other art forms (*gei*) around the same time or earlier. The Muromachi period was epochal in terms of *bushi* aesthetic development, and hence martial art evolution.

A short synopsis of the historical background of the period is in order here. After being exiled for a plot to overthrow the weakening Kamakura shogunate in 1324, the emperor Go-Daigo (1288–

the signature of the shogun engraved on the tang. Also, a fine sword could be presented by a subordinate to gain the ear of a superior. In sum, swords were an extremely coveted form of currency in *bushi* circles.

⁵⁸ Karl Friday, “Off the Warpath: Military Science & Budō in the Evolution of Ryūha Bugei”, in Alexander Bennett (ed.), *Budo Perspectives*, p. 257

1339) returned to Kyoto in 1333 even more determined to restore imperial power. His objectives were realised with the aid of renegade shogunate generals Ashikaga Takauji (1305–1358) and Nitta Yoshisada (1301–1338). This led to the instigation of Go-Daigo's Kemmu Restoration (1333–1336), but the alliance was short-lived as Yoshisada joined forces with Go-Daigo to overthrow Takauji's authority. This eventually started a war of legitimacy between the northern and southern courts (1337–1392), and Takauji's formation of the Muromachi shogunate (1338–1573).

As Takauji's hold over the capital was insecure, he felt obliged to reside there rather than in Kamakura in the east. Consequently, there was a massive influx of *bushi* from the provinces into Kyoto. With this migration, *bushi* rapidly came to control political and cultural life in the capital. As they replaced courtiers in positions of authority, they saw the necessity to learn and behave in an appropriate manner, and break away from the rustic mannerisms that had earned them the scorn of more refined individuals. In other words, the growing preoccupation seen in warriors for cultivating decorum and artistic sensibility was an act of "adaptive upgrading"⁵⁹ motivated largely by the desire for survival.

Bushi concern for propriety is evident through two main trends that manifested in the Muromachi period: the proliferation of house codes (*kakun*); and the circulation of texts outlining distinctive *bushi* ceremonies, rules and customs (*buke kojitsu*) – which originated in the ceremonies and customs of the ancient imperial court (*yūsoku kojitsu*).

Warriors started to develop their own forms of *kojitsu* from the Kamakura period. With the onset of the Muromachi period, the study of cultural and ceremonial standards set by court took on more urgency among the warrior subculture as they sought to assert their cultural equality and political superiority.⁶⁰ The content included various stipulations outlining court ceremonies, various

⁵⁹ Talcott Parsons, *Societies: Evolutionary and Comparative Perspectives*, p. 27

⁶⁰ Refer to Fuji Naomoto's analysis in *Buke Jidai no Shakai to Seishin* (The spirit and society of the age of the warrior houses), pp. 123-126

religious rituals, appropriate clothing, etiquette for everyday interaction, and the treatment and use of arms and armour, especially with regards to archery. The two main styles or authorities that directed *kojitsu* norms for *bushi* were the Ogasawara and the Ise families.⁶¹

House codes of the period exhibit a newfound concern for balancing martial aptitude with the refinement in the genteel arts and civility; namely an equilibrium between *bu* (武= martial) and *bun* (文= letters or the arts). It was deemed no longer appropriate for warriors to be seen as brawny, bucolic bumpkins with no sense of decorum or edification. They needed to be worthy rulers able to assert dominance through the virtue of intellect, and violence was only to be used as a last resort. The *bushi* had long felt culturally inferior to the nobles, and sought to at least coagulate a mantle of equality, but more likely assert elitist sentiment over their cultural superiors.

There are a number of well-known house codes from the period such as Shiba Yoshimasa's (1350–1410) *Chikubasho* (Selected precepts for young generations, ca. 1383) and Imagawa Ryōshun's (Sadayo) (1325–1420) *Imagawa Ryōshin Seishi* (The regulations of Imagawa Ryōshun) which were studied enthusiastically by later warriors of the Tokugawa period. House codes also characteristically offered detailed advice on proper social deportment. Kondō Hitoshi states “*Kakun* outlined many facets of everyday life; namely, where to sit at a banquet, how to exchange *sake* cups, cleaning, travel etiquette, and so on.”⁶²

The *buke kojitsu* texts were more detailed in this regard, and applied to all warriors; whereas the *kakun* were more subjective in nature, and were intended for the warriors of a particular family or house. Primarily written by the patriarch of the *ie* to ensure that his sons or retainers did not induce shame in the warrior community of honour, they accentuate the right “mind-set” rather than just “form” in protocols of etiquette.

Ashikaka Takauji also supposedly wrote a set of house rules (*Takauji-kyō Goisho*, The testament

⁶¹ Futaki Ken'ichi, *Chūsei Buke Girei no Kenkyū* (A study of medieval warrior ceremony), p. 175

⁶² Kondō Hitoshi, *Buke-kakun no Kenkyū*, p. 60

of lord Takauji). The thirteenth article clearly shows the importance placed on ‘*bunbu-ryōdō*’ (the two ways of the civil and martial arts).⁶³ “*Bu* and *bun* are like two wheels of a cart. If one wheel is missing, the cart will not move...”⁶⁴ This emphasis, it should be pointed out, was primarily aimed at the upper echelons of *bushi* society. In his *kakun* of 1412, Imagawa Ryōshun declares “It is natural that *bushi* learn the ways of war and apply themselves to the acquisition of the basic fighting skills needed for their occupation. However, it is clearly stated in ancient military texts such as the *Shishi Gokyō* (The four books and five classics) that without applying oneself to study [the civil arts], it is impossible to be a worthy ruler...”⁶⁵

Another *tour de force* in *kakun*, Shiba Yoshimasa’s *Chikubasho* (1383), also admonishes the ruling class to pay attention to matters of propriety, self-cultivation, and attention to detail. “Have a mind to improve one step at a time, and take care in speech so as not to be thought a fool by others...”⁶⁶ Furthermore, “Be aware that men of insincere disposition will be unable to maintain control. All things should be done with singleness of mind... Warriors must be of calm disposition, and have the ability to understand the measure of other people’s minds. This is the key to success in military matters.”⁶⁷

More specifically in regards to the genteel arts, “If a man has attained ability in the arts, it is possible to ascertain the depth of his mind, and the demeanour of his *ie* can be ascertained. In this world, honour and reputation are valued above all else. Thus, a man is able to accrue standing in society by virtue of competence in the arts and so should try to excel in them too, regardless of whether he has ability or not... It goes without saying that a man should be dexterous in military pursuits using the bow and arrow such as *mato*, *kasagake*, and *inuōmono*.”⁶⁸

⁶³ It is difficult to substantiate whether or not he was the actual author. It is highly probable that he was not, but the articles still provide a good indication of the ideals of the time.

⁶⁴ Kakei Yasuhiko, *Chūsei Buke-kakun no Kenkyū* (Studies of medieval military house codes), p. 32

⁶⁵ Yoshida Yutaka, *Buke no Kakun* (Military house codes), p. 83

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 52

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 60

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 48. Refer to footnote No. 75 for an explanation of *inuōmono* and *kasagaki*.

Here, Yoshimasa is stating the importance of the warrior being *au fait* with arts such as linked verse and the playing of musical instruments, as well as the military arts. Interestingly, he refers to “military pursuits” that all utilise the bow and horse, but swordsmanship was also seen as an essential military art, especially for self-defence in the course of daily life. This is alluded to in the *Yoshisada-ki* (Records of Nitta Yoshisada, ca. first half of the fourteenth century).

Our house records admonish that when you walk along the road and see someone, pass by with an arrow fixed to your bow, or with your hand on the long sword’s hilt. These are customs of the past. Our times are not that hard and these [specific] customs are outdated and ridiculous, but in your heart you should treat every person [you meet in the street] as your enemy. Even if you do not reveal this state of alertness in your outward appearance, people will certainly know it.⁶⁹

4b. The ‘Aestheticisation’ of Swordsmanship

The elevation of swordsmanship into an art in itself coincides with the patronisation by *bushi* of other so-called artistic ways (芸道= *geidō*), and it is plausible that it was the influence of genteel arts that gave swordsmanship a major boost in perceived importance. It was practical, and easily suited to refinement of movement, and systemisation of technique and philosophy in the same vein as performing arts such as Noh theatre. A master of the ‘art of swordsmanship’ stood to gain high social standing and patronage like teachers of other arts, and hence honour, employment and wealth. In other words, practical combat application was not the sole stimulus resulting in the eventual ascendance of schools of swordsmanship over other combat systems in the late medieval period.

The word ‘*geidō*’ first appeared in the renowned Noh master Zeami’s (1363–1443) *Kyōraika* (1433).⁷⁰ He considered Noh and the arts to be ‘ways’ (*michi* or *dō*, 道) for seeking perfection. ‘*Dō*’

⁶⁹ From the *Yoshisada-ki*. Quoted from Anatoliy Anshin, *The Intangible Warrior Culture of Japan: Bodily Practices, Mental Attitudes, and Values of the Two-sworded Men from the Fifteenth to the Twenty-first Centuries*, (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of New South Wales, 2009), p. 43

⁷⁰ Nishiyama Matsunosuke (et al.), *Kinsei Geidō-ron* (Theories of early-modern artistic ways), p. 585

was used as a suffix for various occupations from the Heian period and earlier, but it indicated the pursuit of specialist skills, and did not necessarily contain the spiritual connotations implied in the term *geidō*.

With regards to the gradual formation of a distinct *geidō* mentality in medieval Japan, Hayashiya Tatsusaburō gives the example of the learning process in calligraphy. Initially the student calligrapher must master the basic forms, a stage known as ‘*shin*’ (真=essence). When the basic form becomes second nature, that is, an embodiment of the student, individual style can be infused (*gyō* 行=running style). Following further intensive practice, the student creates a distinctive cursive style which in the final stage is referred to as “grass-writing” (草=*sō*). This cursive style abbreviates and links the characters resulting in a curvilinear, highly artistic form of writing.

The practitioner first learns the art by abiding by set precepts and rules. Hayashiya asserts that the *gyō* stage of any given art form is essentially the beginning of the “Way”. Art forms do not just stop at following prescribed conventions (*hō*). Students are encouraged to progress and apply the knowledge to all aspects of their lives in the quest for perfection,⁷¹ and Buddhist-like enlightenment.

In this way, an array of *geidō* such as calligraphy, painting, pottery, Noh, dance, poetry, tea and so on, were permeated with deeply spiritual underpinnings, and exponents who reached a level of mastery would receive accolades from the members of high society that patronised them. To enhance and maintain their prestige, the masters of these arts sought to codify their knowledge into schools (*ryū*) in order to pass it on to select disciples, thereby creating a form of ‘traditionalism’ which afforded them a high social standing and authority.

Seeking the same kudos, skilled martial art practitioners followed a similar pattern in the ‘aestheticisation’ (芸化=*geika*) of their martial skills. Although practical combat application was

⁷¹ Hayashiya Tatsusaburō, *Kodai Chūsei Geijutsu-ron* (Ancient and medieval artistic theory), p. 729

always a primary consideration, infatuation with artistic qualities in the techniques, spiritual or religious revelations, in addition to financial motivations, were clearly important factors in the genesis of *ryūha-bugei*. Furthermore, with its long history entrenched in Japan's ancient myths, connections to religious ritual, and the beauty of its exterior form, the sword was the obvious weapon to be elevated to a realm which superseded only combat concerns. Nevertheless, it was a stringent preoccupation with questions of life and death aroused through actual combat experience that set this *geidō* apart from all the other arts.

5. The Genesis of Martial Arts Schools

The medieval battlefields of Japan were not just settings for murderous intent; it was far more complicated than that. "It was a world both religious and artistic in nature, where men demonstrated their physical and spiritual prowess bolstered by ingenuity and strategy, and ultimately decided by the will of heaven."⁷² Schools of swordsmanship evolved around this time (fourteenth century) based on artistic concepts, and ideals of perfection that sought to train the warrior in practical combat techniques, and also provide him with the psychological and spiritual strength to prevail in the throes of combat. The *kanji* for *ryū* (流), means to flow or stream, and in the arts it inferred the flow of knowledge of a "school" or "tradition" from one generation to the next; and, from a small number for source schools, literally hundreds more sprang forth in the ensuing centuries. This section will analyse the emergence of the earliest martial schools, and how they became established and influenced future generations of swordsmen.

5a. Pre-Ryūha Martial Procedures

Superstition, divination and religious beliefs played just as much an important role in the way battle

⁷² Futaki Ken'ichi, *Kassen no Butai-ura*, p. 94

was waged as the martial skills of the individual warriors and the military tactics of the commander. For example, the battle fan (*gunbai*), now associated with the judging of professional *sumō* matches, was inscribed with codes used to interpret natural phenomena. Strategy and tactics for each battle were determined by the interpretations put forth by specialists in military divination (*gunbai-shi*). Another major factor in a commander's decisions revolved around the study of time-tested classic Chinese books on strategy such as *Sun Tzu*, *T'ai Kung*, *Ssu-ma*, *Wu-tzu*, *Wei Liao-tsu*, and *Huang Shih-kung*.⁷³

As for the actual techniques utilised in combat, it is difficult to find traces of established combat schools before the fourteenth century. What sources that can be found are generally scant and open to conjecture. However, there are some examples in the old war tales of what appear to be distinctive styles of swordsmanship with named techniques.

Even though the *Heike Monogatari* depicts the exploits of the Taira warriors in the Gempei Disturbance of the twelfth century, it is thought to have been written sometime in the early thirteenth century. As such, it predates the earliest known schools such as the Kage-ryū or the Nen-ryū, but some episodes indicate the existence of distinctive combat styles. One example concerns the warrior-monk, Jōmyō Meishū. In the section titled "Battle on the Bridge", this fearsome warrior killed twelve men and wounded eleven others with twenty-four arrows; then used his spear which snapped after engaging his sixth enemy. Finally, he uses his sword as a last resort.

Hard-pressed by the enemy host, he slashed in every direction, using the zigzag, interlacing, crosswise, dragonfly reverse, and waterwheel manoeuvres. After cutting down eight men on the spot, he struck the helmet top of a ninth so hard that the blade snapped at the hilt rivet, slipped loose, and splashed into the river. Then he fought on desperately with a dirk as his sole resource.⁷⁴

⁷³ For English translations of these influential works, refer to Ralph D. Sawyer's *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China*.

⁷⁴ Helen Craig McCullough (trans.), *The Tale of the Heike* ("The Battle at the Bridge"), p. 153

The kind of combat training warriors engaged in varied from period to period. When mounted archery was considered the highest form of combat, warriors would hone their skills through activities such as *yabusame*, *inuōmono* and *kasagake*.⁷⁵ Obviously, for combat efficiency the warrior needed to be familiar with a variety of different weapons. He did not necessarily need to be a master in all of them, but at least have a degree of expertise in diverse combat methods. When his arrows ran out he would use his sword; when his sword broke, he would need to use his dirk, or resort to barehanded grappling. Moreover, dealing with different adversaries with assorted weapons required that he had at least a rudimentary understanding of how they were utilised.

We can surmise from this *Heike Monogatari* passage that combat systems which included an array of weaponry can be traced back to the twelfth century, but were probably comparatively basic at this time. During the Sengoku period in particular, there emerged more sophisticated and all-encompassing systems referred to by modern scholars as *sōgō-bujutsu* (composite martial systems). The curricula included not only weapons training, but divination, strategy, theory and even engineering. However, it was the sword that increasingly took the central role.

5b. The Criteria for Establishing Martial Art Schools

Ryūha-bugei did not just appear randomly. Nakabayashi Shinji stipulates three criteria which had to be met for the successful formation and continuation of a *ryūha*.⁷⁶ First, not just any warrior could suddenly make his own school on a whim. He had to have extensive combat experience and have earned a reputation for brilliance that exceeded his peers. In order to gather students, a high degree

⁷⁵ *Yabusame* is still popular as a tourist attraction in Kyoto and Kamakura, and involves a mounted archer who releases arrows at three stationary targets or boards while riding a straight course at a full gallop. In the case of *kasagake*, mounted archers galloped down a similar course to that used in *yabusame* while releasing hollow whistling *kaburaya* arrows at targets. *Inuōmono* was a rather pitiless activity where a large circular area was roped off with a smaller circle inside the larger one. Warriors galloped around the outer ring and fired their arrows at moving targets – hapless dogs placed in the inner circle.

⁷⁶ Nakabayashi Shinji, *Budō no Susume* (An appreciation of *budō*), p. 23

of charisma and technical proficiency was a prerequisite.

Second, the techniques developed by the founder (*ryūso*) had to be effective and proven in battle. They also had to be learnable. A rational and sophisticated set of techniques that could be emulated by anybody who entered the master's tutelage, regardless of physique, needed to be developed in order to be diffused effectively.

Third, the *ryūso* needed to formulate a rational and methodological system for imparting his knowledge to disciples. This enabled disciples to master the techniques, and also ensured the continuation of the teachings long after the founder had passed away. Instruction would usually revolve around man-to-man teaching of techniques by the master to his disciple(s) utilising predetermined patterns of movements (型=*kata*), oral teachings (口伝=*kuden*), and, later on in the Tokugawa period, written teachings (伝書=*densho*) in the form of scrolls. These were often purposefully vague or elusive to ensure 'trade-secrets' were not divulged to outsiders.

5c. Ryūha Training Methodology – 'Aesthetic Asceticism'

The fear of death or injury greatly weakens combative efficiency. When fear sets in, the warrior becomes disoriented, ineffective, and a liability to his lord. Conversely, a warrior who does not fear death is a formidable foe indeed. Learned through actual experience in fighting to the death, the founders of *ryūha* incorporated fundamental psychological considerations into their curricula. Typically, the highest level of teachings (*ōden* or *hiden*) in a *ryūha*, were simultaneously esoteric, spiritual, and pragmatic.

As will be covered in the next chapter, the content of *ryūha* teachings became progressively more esoteric and mystical in nature during the peaceful Tokugawa period. Ideally, teachings in a school held the key to the 'holy grail' of combat, a superlative combination of body and mind which made the warrior invincible in battle (technically and spiritually) through a supposed transcendence of

concerns for life and death. Understandably, these teachings were jealously guarded by the students of the *ryūha*.

Synergy of body and mind were taught through *kata*, predetermined techniques usually performed in pairs. Martial arts in China and Korea also utilised *kata* training, but were mainly performed individually. Through practising *kata* in pairs, the Japanese warrior was able to learn the significance of timing and distance (*maai*), breathing (*kokyū*), attacking opportunities, posture, and spirit (*ki*).⁷⁷

Kata can be defined as types of ‘death rituals’ that provide the blueprints for technical and spiritual growth. I stress the term ‘death ritual’, as regardless of the *ryūha*, in almost all *kata*, one side is figuratively killed. Furthermore, in *kata* the ‘death role’ is usually enacted by the senior adept or the instructor. This is typically rationalised by the notion that the senior practitioner’s role is to teach his junior the correct instant to attack, and what constitutes valid openings in an enemy. The junior adept is focusing on unison of mind and technique. Whereas the senior, who is presumably already technically and mentally mature, is another step up the spiritual ladder, and is constantly facing not the possibility, but the virtual reality of his mortality through participating in this ritual.

Being on the receiving end of the *coup de grace* in the *kata*, the warrior is a step closer (or is reminded) of the importance of the spiritual transcendence of life and death. This aspect was to become increasingly important from the Tokugawa period when *bushi* were rarely afforded an opportunity to test their mettle in actual combat, despite retaining their status as professional warriors.

In his book simply titled *Kata*, Minamoto Ryōen describes the value of *kata* to the warrior. “Through the physical act of polishing techniques, the adept deepens his spiritual resolve.”⁷⁸ By

⁷⁷ Nakabayashi Shinji, “Nihon kobudō ni okerushintai-ron” (Mind-body theory in Japan’s classical martial arts), *Risō* (Vol. 604, Sept. 1983), p. 108

⁷⁸ Minamoto Ryōen, *Kata*, p. 165

repeatedly practising each movement of the *kata*, the *bushi* becomes entranced and oblivious to the cold steel (or wooden swords) stopping only a fraction away from a vital spot on his body. He learns to maintain a placid state of mind (*heijōshin*) while engaging in mock combat, and programs his body to move unconsciously in relation to a plethora of technique combinations and possibilities. The warrior thus trains his body and mind to seek openings and destroy his opponent in the most efficient way, with a mental state that exceeded concerns of self-preservation.

In this sense, the techniques of *bujutsu* far exceeded merely flailing a weapon around randomly, but required and aimed for the harmonious synergy of body and mind. Without fear of death or injury, the spirit, weapon, and body had to function as one unified entity in order to overwhelm the enemy. Training to this purpose was far more than a physical pursuit, and could more accurately be described as a form of religious practice encapsulated in the term *shugyō* (修行= ascetic training) which was utilised in the worlds of both *bushi* and Buddhist monks, and is still used to this day to describe the study of martial arts.

Cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz formulated a definition for religion which is also wholly applicable to martial art *ryūha* and the warriors who studied in them. According to Geertz, a religion is:

- (1) A system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.⁷⁹

Indeed, the martial systems that developed in the latter medieval period utilised various forms of symbolism in terms of protocol, ritual, and 'divine' techniques which inspired warriors in their

⁷⁹ C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 90

quest for technical perfection and spiritual infallibility. Prescribed teachings in the schools imparted principles of the order of the universe and the meaning of their existence within the cosmos, which in turn served to afford warriors an air of uniqueness and sense of immortality compared to warriors from rival *ryūha* and those from other occupations and echelons of society.

Nishiyama Matsunosuke states that when the adept trains “religiously” to the extent that the techniques become a part of the warrior’s persona, he will reach a sublime elevated state of total selflessness which came to be described with various terms of Buddhist origin such as ‘*muga*’ or ‘*mushin*’ (‘no-self’, ‘no-mind’).⁸⁰ When this level has been reached, the disciple is no longer a student *per se*, but is in fact an enlightened master of combat.

The process for learning the *kata* is different in each tradition. However, universal principles do apply, and one common explanation can be found in the concept of *shu-ha-ri* (守破離 = protect, break, separate). This notion is used to explain the learning process in other Japanese arts, but is now a common ideal often referred to in modern martial arts (*gendai-budō*).

The Ono-ha Ittō-ryū explains that, in order to first learn the techniques, the teachings of the master must be strictly and obediently adhered to (*shu*). When the student has absorbed all he can from the master, he must try and find his own interpretation of the techniques. He moves away and breaks everything down to try and acquire a higher understanding of the teachings (*ha*). After testing and enhancing his basic knowledge, the warrior aims to acquire a deep understanding of the teachings, so profound in fact, that he essentially creates his own path (*ri*).⁸¹

There are many other similar terms essentially outlining the same process of learning the basic moves, improving on them, and then finally achieving a transcendent state in which the techniques become an expression of the warrior’s very being, and his being is an expression of the techniques. This ultimate state of ‘martial enlightenment’ is supposedly the stage in which a new *ryūha* may be

⁸⁰ Nishiyama Matsunosuke, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 586-7

⁸¹ Sasamori Junzō, *Ittō-ryū Gokui* (Higher teachings of the Ittō-ryū), p. 632

formed. It is a perfect unification of technique and mind, reinforced by a spiritual philosophy, and organised into a rational curriculum for teaching, ensuring continuation to each generation.

5d. The First Traceable Schools of Swordsmanship

The emergence of comprehensive martial systems that incorporated such criteria can be seen from approximately the fourteenth century. Initially, there were three main traditions that subsequently provided the core teachings for many hundreds of subsequent offshoot schools. They are cited by many scholars as being the Katori Shintō-ryū, Shinkage-ryū, and the Ittō-ryū streams.⁸² Although the Ittō-ryū became one of the preeminent schools of swordsmanship in Tokugawa period through its patronisation by the shogun, it can be traced back further to the Chūjō-ryū, which had its roots in the Nen-ryū. Thus, it is the Tenshinshō-den Katori Shintō-ryū (天真正伝香取神道流 lit. ‘Direct and correct teachings from the deity of the Katori Shrine’), Nen-ryū (念流 lit. ‘School of perception’, and the Kage-ryū (影流 lit. ‘Shadow school’) that were central to the genesis of *ryūha-bugei*. In particular, the regions of Kashima and Katori were “hotbeds for martial arts from ancient times.”⁸³

According to Sakai Toshinobu, Shintō priests of Kashima Jingū shrine taught a style of swordsmanship that is sometimes referred to as Jōko-ryū or Chūko-ryū (Ancient school) or Kashima-no-Tachi (Sword of Kashima). It was this tradition that theoretically served as the basis for the so-called “Seven Schools of Kashima” (see table below). The tradition was apparently started by a priest at the Kashima Shrine, Kuninazu no Maihito, during the era of Emperor Nintoku (first half of the fifth century). Through his worship, he eventually became enlightened to the secrets of ‘*shinmyō-ken*’ (divine sword) which were conveyed through the custodians of the Kashima Shrine as

⁸² Nakabayashi Shinji, *Budō no Susume*, p. 29

⁸³ T. Sakai (Alexander Bennett trans.), *A Bilingual Guide to the History of Kendo*, p. 123

a kind of religious ritual. The region became known as “sacred ground for the martial arts”.⁸⁴

The following table shows how the various schools were categorised by scholars in the Tokugawa period. Note that given the close proximity of Katori and Kashima, sword traditions emanating from these regions were often considered to be essentially the same in terms of origin, or at least with significant overlap among the progenitors. Also, the Tenshinshō-den Katori Shintō-ryū is often abbreviated to the Katori-ryū, or even the Shintō-ryū (神道流), which sometimes causes confusion with the Shintō-ryū (新當流) created by Tsukahara Bokuden (1489–1571).

Outline of Japan’s first schools of swordsmanship as defined by Tokugawa scholars

Name	Notes
(Tenshinshō-den) Katori Shintō-ryū (天真正伝香取神道流) Kashima Shin-ryū (鹿島神流)	Iizasa Yamashiro-no-Kami Ienao (飯笹山城守家直)(1387–1488?). Foremost offshoots from this school include the Bokuden-ryū (Shintō-ryū); and the Arima-ryū.
Nen-ryū (念流)	Formed by the monk Jion (慈音)(1351–?).
Chūjō-ryū (中条流)	The Chūjō stream traces its origins back to the monk Jion. Related schools include Toda-ryū and the well-known Ittō-ryū.
Kage-ryū (陰流)	Formed by Aisu Ikōsai (1452–1538), the Kage-ryū stream became increasingly influential in the Tokugawa period with the shogunate’s patronisation of the Yagyū Shinkage-ryū.
7 Schools of Kantō (関東七流) Also referred to as 7 Schools of Kashima (鹿島七流)	This classification of schools was devised by scholars in the Tokugawa period to represent the main streams or branches evolving in the eastern provinces. 1. Kashima (鹿島) 2. Katori (香取) 3. Honshin-ryū (本心流) 4. Bokuden-ryū (卜伝流) 5. Shintō-ryū (神刀流) 6. Yamato-ryū (日本流) 7. Ryōi-ryū (良移流)
8 Schools of Kyōto (京八流)	These schools are more problematic in that their actual existence is difficult to verify. They are traditionally associated with Kyōto and the Kurama-dera Temple, and were offshoots of martial arts originally taught to eight monks by Kiichi Hōgan. 1. Kiichi-ryū (鬼一流) 2. Yoshitsune-ryū (義経流) 3. Masakado-ryū (正門流) 4. Kurama-ryū (鞍馬流) 5. Suwa-ryū (諏訪流) 6. Kyō-ryū (京流) 7. Yoshioka-ryū (吉岡流) 8. Hōgan-ryū (法眼流)

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 87

The exact origin of most of these early traditions is somewhat unclear and shrouded in mythical claims often alluding to divine inspiration. For example, in the Tenshinshō-den Katori Shintō-ryū, considered the oldest school of swordsmanship in Japan, legend has it that at the age of sixty, the founder Iizasa Chōisai Ienao (1387–1488) endured a harsh thousand-day training regime (*senrō kaigan*) at the Katori shrine.⁸⁵ One night the shrine deity, Futsunushi-no-Kami, appeared to him in as a small boy standing on top of a plum tree and passed on the secrets of strategy and the martial arts in a special scroll stating, “Thou shalt be the master of all swordsmanship under the sun.”⁸⁶ It was on the basis of these divine teachings that he formed his own *ryū*.

The following descriptions of the Tenshinshō-den Katori Shintō-ryū, Nen-ryū, and Kage-ryū, as well as the respective progenitors, are found in Hinatsu Shigetaka’s (1660–1731) 1716 treatise *Honchō Bugei Shōden* (Brief accounts of our country’s military arts). This is arguably the most important work recording the history of classical martial schools of swordsmanship, archery and other martial arts. Many subsequent works dealing with the same topic such as the *Gekiken Sōdan* (A collection of stories on swordsmanship, 1790), *Bujutsu Keifu-Ryaku* (Martial school genealogies, 1790), and *Bujutsu Ryūso-Roku* (Record of martial school heads, 1843) rely heavily on the information recorded by Hinatsu.⁸⁷ The following description concerns the origins of the Tenshinshō-den Katori Shintō-ryū.

Iizasa Yamashiro-no-Kami Ienao was born in Iizasa Village in Katori in the province of Shimōsa. He later moved to the village of Yamazaki in the same province. Interested in

⁸⁵ The Kashima shrine is situated in modern day Ibaraki Prefecture and the deity worshipped is Takemikazuchi-no-Mikoto, who is believed to have descended to the Japanese islands with Futsunushi-no-Kami, the resident deity of the Katori shrine (Chiba Prefecture). According to Shintō mythology, these deities arrived ahead of Ninigi-no-Mikoto in order to orchestrate the transfer of Japanese islands to Amaterasu Ōmikami’s descendants. Both deities are traditionally connected with military prowess, and for many centuries warriors paid homage at the shrines for protection and inspiration. Due to the rich warrior traditions associated with the shrines, modern martial artists still visit the shrines to this day.

⁸⁶ R. Ōtake, *Katori Shintō-ryū: Warrior Tradition*, p. 11

⁸⁷ The late John Rogers provided martial art scholars with an exemplary translation of Hinatsu’s work which I quote from extensively below.

the arts of the sword and spear since childhood, he attained great skill. Iizasa prayed regularly at the shrines of Kashima and Katori. He hoped that his style, which he called the Tenshinshō-den Shintō-ryū, would become known throughout the land. Later in life he adopted the name Chōisai. He was the father of the arts of the sword and spear in the middle period. In *Sōunki* it is written:

‘The deity enshrined at Kashima protects brave warriors and has been revered by all since time immemorial. Ever since Iizasa Yamashiro-no-Kami Ienao, a resident of Kashima, taught what he had learned through his study of swordsmanship, the art spread throughout the land. Iizasa was the founder of the swordsmanship of the middle ages.’

Swordsmen of the Shintō-ryū say that their school uses the phrase ‘Tenshinshō-den’ because Iizasa was taught the art by the gods of the Kashima and Katori shrines and ‘Tenshinshō’ refers to them.⁸⁸

Aisu Ikōsai Hisatada (1452–1538) was the founder of the Kage-ryū. Again, to quote from the *Honchō Bugei Shōden*:

According to some authors, a swordsman by the name of Aisu Ikō went into retreat at the Udo caves in Kyūshū and there through a dream came to master swordsmanship. He called his style the Aisu Kage-no-ryū and it was this style of swordsmanship that Kamiizumi learned and later developed into the Shinkage-ryū.⁸⁹

Little is known about Aisu Ikōsai, but it is believed that he was engaged in piracy and was well-travelled, even going as far as China.⁹⁰ Where, and from whom he learned swordsmanship is a cause of much conjecture, however, legend has it that he was enlightened in the Udo caves in Kyūshū. The reason why he called his school the Kage-ryū was because of the “shadowy”

⁸⁸ Hinatsu Shigetaka, *Honchō Bugei Shōden* (1716), translated by John M. Rogers “Arts of War in Times of Peace: Swordsmanship in *Honchō Bugei Shōden*, Chapter 5”, *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 45, No. 4. (Winter, 1990) p. 419

⁸⁹ Hinatsu Shigetaka, *Honchō Bugei Shōden* (1716), translated by John M. Rogers, “Arts of War in Times of Peace: Swordsmanship in *Honchō Bugei Shōden* Chapter 6”, *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 46, No. 2. (Summer, 1991), p. 180

⁹⁰ Watatani Kiyoshi, *Nihon Kengō 100-sen* (A selection of 100 Japanese swordsmen), p. 29

monkey-like apparitions that appeared to him, and passed on the secrets of combat. His student,⁹¹ Kamiizumi Ise-no-Kami, created the Shinkage-ryū ('New shadow school') which came to great prominence in the Tokugawa period.

Jion (1351–?, formerly known as Sōma Shiro Yoshimoto before taking the tonsure), the founder of the Nen-ryū, and his student Chūjō Hyōgonosuke (?–1384) of the Chūjō-ryū formed the third significant stream of swordsmanship that was developed in the fourteenth century. This stream eventually gave rise to the Ittō-ryū ('School of one-sword'), one of the most illustrious schools of swordsmanship of the Tokugawa period, and considered to be one of the main influences on the techniques and philosophy in modern *kendō*.

Chūjō Hyōgonosuke lived in Kamakura in the province of Sagami and was a devotee of Chifukuji. Around that time, a monk named Jion lived at the temple and offered to teach Chūjō the art of the sword and spear. Chūjō was delighted and studied hard for many years, finally mastering the inner secrets of the art, which he later transmitted to Kai Buzen-no-Kami. Ōhashi Kageyuzaemon carried on Kai's tradition and became quite famous... Some say that the monk Jion was enlightened to the secrets of swordsmanship through a divinely inspired dream at the grottos of Udo in Kyūshū. In the writings of the Toda school, Jion is referred to as a monk-in-residence.⁹²

It could be a coincidence that the "grottos of Udo" feature in the development of both the Kage-ryū and the Nen-ryū, and Watatani points out the possibility that Ikōsai originally studied the Nen-ryū.⁹³ Then again, it could simply be historical error that has become accepted in the lore of the martial arts. Unfortunately, there is little that can be confirmed as totally factual with regards to the earliest of the *ryūha-bugei*. We can only piece together titbits of information and try to avoid the

⁹¹ This is also unclear and it is likely that Kamiizumi studied under Aisu Ikōsai's son (Koshichirō) instead. It is also thought that Kamiizumi was the student of Matsumoto Bizen-no-Kami and studied the unrelated stream of the Kashima Shin-ryū stemming from the Tenshinshō-den Katori Shintō-ryū. All of these theories are difficult to verify, but probably all hold some elements of truth.

⁹² Hinatsu Shigetaka, *Op. Cit.* (Winter, 1990), p. 434

⁹³ Watatani Kiyoshi, *Op. Cit.*, p. 30

temptation of believing all of what has been written by later generations of direct students who understandably had a tendency to embellish the history of their schools and its lineage.

Given the secretive and pseudo-religious nature of these schools from the outset, followers often asserted the divine beginnings of their *ryū*. Much tradition has been ‘invented’ to enhance the reputation and perceived potency of the school’s teachings (both technical and spiritual), and hence the standing of its students. However, compared to those of the increasingly elaborate streams of schools seen throughout the Tokugawa period, the techniques at the source schools were usually simplistic and pragmatic.

6. The Age of the Sword Masters

By the mid to late sixteenth century, *daimyō* began to seek the tutelage of professional *bugei* instructors (*heihō shihan*) to train them and their men in military affairs. Individual warriors also sought skilled teachers to take them to new levels in their martial prowess and employability. This was a time when *bushi* would roam the countryside in search of opponents to test their skills in duels in a practice of errantry referred to as *musha-shugyō*. This could involve traveling for months or years at a time engaging not only in duels with other warriors, but also austere physical and spiritual training to temper the mind and body. Some hoped for religious revelation and spiritual liberation, while others were more pragmatic and sought to make a name for themselves as *kengō*, or master swordsmen with no equal. Naturally, this was an extremely hazardous occupation, but those who excelled and survived were able to create their own schools, and gather many disciples. This section will explore some of the more prominent *kengō* and how they were interrelated.

6a. The Kage-ryū Line

Of the three main streams of schools mentioned above (Tenshinshō-den Katori Shintō-ryū,

Kage-ryū, Nen-ryū), it was the second and third generations of disciples that were in a position to take advantage of the growing prestige of *bugei-ryūha*, and the opportunities that came with notoriety. After soaking up the enlightened knowledge of the founders and receiving certification to prove it, they created more sophisticated philosophical frameworks to supplement the evolving technical curriculum.

There were many renowned swordsmen involved in this evolutionary process, and numerous schools sprang from the initial three main source *ryūha*, and other lesser known systems. However, the following commentary will be restricted to the most celebrated ones which were to become dominant in the Tokugawa period.

First, from the Kage-ryū, Kamiizumi Ise-no-Kami (1508–?) soon gained legendary status throughout Japan. As we saw in the previous section, he is thought to have studied under Aisu Ikōsai. However, some historians also speculate that he perfected his craft under the auspices of Matsumoto Bizen-no-Kami Naokatsu (1468–1524) of the Kashima Shin-ryū.⁹⁴ Due to the paucity of documents, and the unreliability of the ones that do exist, this point is difficult to confirm either way. However, according to the *Honchō Bugei Shōden*,

Kamiizumi resided in the Minowa castle and was unequalled in martial skill. He had studied the sword and spear of the Aisu Kage-no-ryū style and reached the highest level of mastery. He then added his own revisions to this style and founded what he called the Shinkage-ryū.⁹⁵

Kamiizumi had a dozen or so students, most of whom made names for themselves as skilled warriors and were sought after as instructors. Of them, Hikita Bungorō (1537?–1605?), Marume Kurandonosuke Nagayoshi (1540–1629), and Yagyū Tajima-no-Kami Muneyoshi (Munetoshi or

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 32

⁹⁵ Hinatsu Shigetaka, Op. Cit. (Summer, 1991), p. 179

Sekishūsai, 1527–1606) and their students were particularly influential.

Hikita Bungorō accompanied Kamiizumi Ise-no-Kami on his travels throughout the provinces and in doing so mastered swordsmanship. Kampaku Toyotomi Hidetsugu employed him in his entourage; he learned the arts of the sword and spear from him, and bestowed gifts upon him in recognition of his skill. Hikita had many disciples. Among them, Yamada Fugetsusai and Nakai Shimpachi possessed superlative ability. Famous for his swordsmanship, Nakai lived in Karatsu in Hizen and was a retainer of Terazawa Hyōgo-no-Kami Katataka. Some say that Hikita Bungorō was the nephew of Kamiizumi and that he first called himself Hikita Shohaku. His style of swordsmanship, still existing today, is known as Hikita Kage-ryū and has offshoots in many provinces.⁹⁶

Marume Kurandonosuke Nagayoshi began his *musha-shugyō* adventure aged seventeen. Following a chance meeting with Kamiizumi, he was able to engage the famous warrior in a duel. He was soundly defeated, but his life was spared by the master swordsman because of Kamiizumi's insistence on using a revolutionary bamboo sword (*fukuro-shinai*) instead of a potentially lethal wooden sword or live blades, which was the norm.⁹⁷ Although being a seasoned warrior, Kamiizumi seems to have been somewhat a pacifist, and preferred not to take the life of his challengers if at all possible. The fortunate Marume immediately became Kamiizumi's disciple, and "he studied and mastered swordsmanship and the art of the spear."⁹⁸ After absorbing Kamiizumi's secrets, he formed his own branch school which he later called the Taisha-ryū.

Later, [Marume] moved to the western provinces. Marume had many disciples, among whom Okuyama Saemon Taifu was outstanding. Later, he changed the name of his style to Shinnuki-ryū, offshoots of which are still practised even today.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 182

⁹⁷ Watatani Kiyoshi, Op. Cit., p. 52

⁹⁸ Hinatsu Shigetaka, Op. Cit. (Summer, 1991), p. 184

⁹⁹ Ibid.

Another student of Kamiizumi, Yagyū Tajima-no-Kami Muneyoshi, was highly experienced in combat and commanded significant political influence in his later years. Kamiizumi was not his only teacher, having studied swordsmanship under other illustrious masters such as the Shintō-ryū with Tsukahara Bokuden, and Itō Ittōsai's (1560?–1653?) Ittō-ryū. His martial skill was evident from a young age.

Yagyū Tajima-no-Kami Muneyoshi was born in the village of Yagyū in Yamato, where his family had lived for generations... As a young man, Muneyoshi was fond of the arts of the sword and spear... One day, Kamiizumi Ise-no-Kami came to Yagyū village accompanied by Jingo Izu-no-Kami and Hikita Bungorō. Muneyoshi immediately sought an interview and asked to be taught swordsmanship. Kamiizumi agreed and taught him the art of the sword. After some time, Kamiizumi departed from Yagyū, leaving Hikita behind, and set off for other provinces, accompanied by Jingo... Kamiizumi later returned to Yagyū and initiated Muneyoshi into the inner mysteries of swordsmanship. He praised his skill, saying, 'Muneyoshi's swordsmanship has at last reached the highest levels of mastery, the very heart of the Shinkage style. His swordsmanship has surpassed mine.' With this, Kamiizumi presented Muneyoshi with written acknowledgment of his skill. Sometime after that, Muneyoshi received letters of invitation from *shōgun* Ashikaga Yoshiaki and Oda Nobunaga; Muneyoshi chose to serve under the latter... Many *daimyō* and samurai sought to study under him. Later in life, Muneyoshi received the tonsure and embraced a life of seclusion in Yagyū. After the Battle of Sekigahara in Keichō 5 [1600], Tokugawa Ieyasu commissioned Muneyoshi to teach swordsmanship. Ieyasu awarded Muneyoshi with the highest acclaim and his name was known in the capital as well as throughout the provinces.¹⁰⁰

The contribution made to the development of swordsmanship by Muneyoshi's son, Munenori will be analysed in the following chapter. Suffice it to say, the relevance of the Yagyū line of the Shinkage-ryū in Tokugawa politics and swordsmanship cannot be overstated.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 182-3

6b. The Tenshinshō-den Katori Shintō-ryū Line

Next, from the Tenshinshō-den Katori Shintō-ryū line, warriors such as Matsumoto Bizen-no-Kami, Tsukahara Bokuden and his student Matsuoka Hyōgonosuke (birth and death dates unknown) were preeminent in their age. Conveniently, the *Honchō Bugei Shōden* details the prowess of these swordsmen in the same section:

Tsukahara Bokuden was from Tsukahara in the province of Hitachi. His father, Tsukahara Tosa-no-Kami, studied Tenshinshō-den under Iizasa Chōisai. Tosa-no-Kami's son, Shinzaemon, carried on his father's art of the sword and spear, but unfortunately died an early death. Thus, his younger brother Bokuden carried on his elder brother's tradition. He travelled throughout the land to improve his swordsmanship and won great acclaim... Around that time there lived one Kamiizumi Ise-no-Kami in Shimotsuke. He was the founder of the Kage-no-ryū and was a master of the sword and spear. Bokuden set off for Shimotsuke, where he studied under Kamiizumi and mastered the essence of his teachings. He later travelled to the palace in Kyoto, where he taught swordsmanship and the art of the spear to the shoguns Ashikaga Yoshiteru and Ashikaga Yoshiaki. Many high-ranking samurai studied under Bokuden and among them Lord Kitabatake Tomonori, Governor of Ise, was the best; Bokuden imparted the secret of *hitotsu no tachi* (solitary sword) to him... Matsuoka Hyōgonosuke also mastered the essence of Bokuden's teachings on the sword and spear and later became teacher to shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu, to whom he taught the secret of *hitotsu no tachi* and for that was well rewarded... In *Kōyō Gunkan Massho Ketsuyōbon* it is written:

'Tsukahara Bokuden, an expert swordsman, was a great fighter. Although the particular secret of Bokuden's swordsmanship is said to be *hitotsu no tachi*, this technique was actually created by Matsumoto Bizen-no-Kami. In the battles of Katori and Kashima, Matsumoto fought in combat with the spear twenty-three times and claimed the heads of twenty-five officers and seventy-six ordinary soldiers. Twice he conducted services for those whose heads he claimed and this leaves one head remaining. Bokuden himself fought in battle with the spear nine times and claimed twenty-one heads. Among those, seven were classed as *yarishita*, *kuzuregiwa*, and *banaka*. He earned the title of 'valiant warrior'.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Hinatsu Shigetaka, Op. Cit. (Winter, 1990), pp. 426-7

Bokuden, as with so many of the legendary warriors of his day, sought divine guidance from the Katori Shrine deities. There, he dedicated himself to “one-thousand days” of rigorous physical and spiritual training, and, receiving divine guidance, was enlightened to the secrets of ‘*hitotsu no tachi*’ (solitary sword).¹⁰² Whether he learned it from Matsumoto Bizen-no-Kami or from his *shugyō* at the Katori Shrine is difficult to know. However, “Bokuden used and refined his *hitotsu no tachi* until he was satisfied, and he taught the secret to *daimyō* throughout the land. He even taught it to Ashikaga Yoshiharu, Ashikaga Yoshiteru, and Ashikaga Yoshiaki – three successive generations of shoguns.”¹⁰³

This secret technique was to form the basis of his new school which he named Shintō-ryū using different characters to the Tenshinshō-den Katori Shintō-ryū developed by Iizasa Chōisai. To avoid confusion, his school is also often referred to as Bokuden-ryū. With regards to the celebrated “*hitotsu no tachi*” technique, the *Honchō Bugei Shōden* records the following explanation.

Hitotsu no tachi can be divided into the three levels of *hitotsu no kurai*, *hitotsu no tachi*, and *hitotsu dachi*. The first uses the timing of heaven. The second uses the vantage of the earth and is the move that unites heaven and earth. The third secret technique teaches harmony of man and innovation.¹⁰⁴

Eventually dying at the age of 83, Tsukahara Bokuden had amassed many celebrated students ranking as high as *daimyō*. It is no exaggeration to say that he was the most important swordsman of his era, and greatly contributed to the proliferation of Iizasa Chōisai’s teachings, and the status of swordsmanship as a profession.

¹⁰² Watatani Kiyoshi, Op. Cit., p. 24

¹⁰³ Hinatsu Shigetaka, Op. Cit. (Winter, 1990), pp. 426-7

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

6c. The Nen-ryū Line

Finally, from the Nen-ryū line, Itō Ittōsai also stands out as being a giant of his age. Little is known about this warrior, except that his legacy culminated in one of the most influential schools of swordsmanship in Japanese history. Apparently learning his trade from Kanemaki Jisai (1536–1615, Chūjō-ryū and Kanemaki-ryū), Ittōsai was a veteran of thirty-three ‘life or death’ duels, making him a sought-after teacher. He named his school the Ittō-ryū (一刀流), not as an expression of using ‘one sword’, but from the Daoist philosophy that all things arise from ‘One’ and then return to where they came from.

Itō Ittōsai Kagehisa was from Izu. He studied under Kanemaki Jisai and mastered the Chūjō style of martial arts. He achieved great proficiency. (According to the writings of the Kotōda school, Kagehisa studied under Kanemaki Toda Michimasa and mastered the art of the sword.) Kagehisa travelled throughout the provinces to improve his swordsmanship and was in thirty-three duels with other swordsmen. His techniques were amazing and seemed more than humanly possible. His skill was simply beyond description. It is uncertain where he died. Some say that the date of his death was the 7th day, the month and year uncertain.¹⁰⁵

Of course, there were dozens more warriors of this era, such as the legendary Miyamoto Musashi (1584–1645), who could be mentioned for their contributions to the systemisation of *ryūha-bugei* and who also acquired celebrity status for their sublime skill in swordsmanship. Their fabled feats are still admired today in historical novels, traditional plays, manga, movies, and television dramas. Unfortunately, the distinction between fact and fiction has become too blurred over the centuries to know what kind of men they really were. It is clear, however, that swordsmanship to them was more than a means for killing opponents. Apart from self-defence, it provided them with a life philosophy, and was the source of their aesthetic ideals and religious sentiment.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 441

This introspective experience was by no means limited to Japan's *bushi*. Warriors from all cultures in any period are in some way altered by the intense lifestyle and severe anxiety inherent in such an occupation in which they are constantly faced with their own mortality. However, with the arrival of pax-Tokugawa – a period that spanned an unprecedented 250 years – traditional military arts ceased evolving into progressively more devastating modes of combat. Instead, Japan's martial anachronisms were consciously and continuously 'reinvented' to not only survive, but thrive as highly esteemed vestiges of 'traditional' *bushi* culture and holistic personal edification.

The chart on the last page of this chapter is an outline of the main *ryū* introduced here, and the offshoot schools that are related to them. It is by no means comprehensive, and some aspects are difficult to verify, but it provides a visual representation of how martial schools developed and interrelated.¹⁰⁶

7. Conclusion

Friday states that in many ways, the founders of these schools “were military anachronisms, out of step with the changing face of warfare in their times. And in their pursuit of this quest through *musha shūgyō* and other ascetic regimens – their devotion to their arts over conventional military careers and service – they were self-indulgent and quixotic.”¹⁰⁷ Although not all *ryūha* were devoted solely to the sword, it was the principal weapon studied by most. From the time of the founders, tradition was 'invented' to validate the mysterious powers of the sword, the efficacy of the techniques developed in the particular *ryūha*, and the godlike skills and spiritual powers of those who headed or founded them.

¹⁰⁶ I created this chart from information contained in T. Yamada, K. Watatani, *Bugei Ryūha Daijiten* (Encyclopaedia of martial art schools) and *Hiden! Bugei Ryūha Ryūso-roku* (Secret teachings: A record of martial art school headmasters) compiled and published by Shinjinbutsu Ōraisha.

¹⁰⁷ Karl Friday, “Off the Warpath: Military Science & Budō in the Evolution of Ryūha Bugei”, in Alexander Bennett (ed.), *Budo Perspectives*, p. 256

More than any other weapon, it was the masters of the sword who came to represent the symbolic status of warrior culture from the later medieval period. Ironically, infatuation with the sword became even more ardent with the onset of the peaceful Tokugawa period, and an exponential proliferation of pseudo-religious *ryūha* dedicated to *kenjutsu* led to intensification in the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment through studying the techniques of swordsmanship.

Training in the formalised martial arts instilled warriors with a sense of superiority and confidence, as well as the hope of prospering financially through demonstrating valorous feats in battle, or through becoming a certified master in their own right. From a functional perspective, warriors trained to kill, and simultaneously acquired a profound sense of ‘spiritual awareness’ gleaned through the arousing experience of mortal combat.

The systemisation of martial arts (especially swordsmanship) evolved through the need to establish a balance between *bun* and *bu*. In the highly volatile political setting of the Muromachi period, it was a case of infusing *bun* into a world stricken by *bu*, and influenced by other *geidō*, *ryūha-bugei* provided a perfect medium for this cultural transition. However, as will be shown in the next chapter, in the Tokugawa period the function of *bugei* was reversed. *Bugei* took on the role of infusing *bu* within *bun* as *bushi* struggled to come to grips with, and reinterpret their *raison d’être* in an era of relative passivity. In the following chapter, I will investigate the transition from a time of war to that of peace, and examine the continued advancement of *kenjutsu ryūha* as ways of self-cultivation; the ‘civilising process’ and various innovations in training equipment and methodological approaches to the martial arts; and the tenuous reconciliation between tradition and modernisation.

Chapter 2

The ‘Civilising Process’ of Kenjutsu

1. Introduction
2. The Solidification of Class Boundaries and a New Function for Martial Art Schools
3. The Intellectualisation of Kenjutsu
4. Spiritualisation and Pacification
5. Commercialisation
6. Sportification
7. Conclusion

1. Introduction

With the onset of Tokugawa period (1600–1868), opportunities for warriors to demonstrate their prowess in battle became virtually non-existent. Nevertheless, they were still expected to study the military arts even if the practical necessity to do so no longer seemed apparent. Anatoliy Anshin observes that “the kinds of military arts that the *bushi* could study were directly linked to the subclass to which they belonged.”¹ However, swordsmanship was studied by all, regardless of rank, although the particular school a warrior was allowed to study also depended on the subclass to which he was a member.

In any case, military drill was indispensable for maintaining a sense of self-identity, as well as providing the symbolic basis of class identity. The culture of honour that warriors had developed over many centuries was based on pride and honour sustained by martial ability.

As Ikegami Eiko asserts, warriors were “tamed” during the pax-Tokugawa period. Their

¹ Anatoliy Anshin, *The Intangible Warrior Culture of Japan: Bodily Practices, Mental Attitudes, and Values of the Two-sworded Men from the Fifteenth to the Twenty-first Centuries*, (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of New South Wales, 2009), p. 89

distinctive subculture was refocused with “an emphasis on the inner dimension of self-control in peacetime.”² The role martial arts training played in this process was vital. It is often overlooked that affiliation to a *bugei-ryūha* (martial art school) helped to refocus meaning in the lives of *bushi* in a time of peace.

The evolution of the martial arts in the Tokugawa period was a progression to which Norbert Elias’s notion of the “civilising process” seems applicable. Although Elias was referring to the European context, he maintained that the civilising process was one in which “the social standard of conduct and sentiment, particularly in some upper-class circles, began to change fairly drastically from the sixteenth century onwards in a particular direction. The ruling of conduct and sentiment became stricter, more differentiated and all-embracing, but also more even, more temperate, banishing excesses of self-castigation as well as of self-indulgence.”³

It is arguable that Japanese society also experienced a clear “civilising process” during the Tokugawa period, which coincides with the age Elias focussed on, and the advancement of swordsmanship throughout this era provides an excellent microcosmic indicator of how the process unfolded.

Bakufu (military government or shogunate) sanctions to control violence acted as a catalyst for the development of *kenjutsu* from techniques for killing, to ‘Ways’ of self-perfection, and ultimately to what could be termed ‘spiritual sports’. Participation provided recourse to ‘controlled decontrolling’ of pent-up tensions, and the excitement and total focus required in mock-battle helped warriors preserve their elitist collective identity *vis-à-vis* other classes.

A number of distinct trends could be witnessed in the martial arts in this period, particularly in swordsmanship. These included: 1. intellectualisation; 2. spiritualisation and pacification; 3. commercialisation; and finally, 4. sportification. In this chapter, these four broad trends in the

² Ikegami Eiko, *The Taming of the Samurai*, p. 31

³ Norbert Elias, Anderic Dunning, *The Quest for Excitement*, p. 21

evolution of swordsmanship during the Tokugawa period will be examined to show how the totality of this progression exemplifies a “civilising process”, and how it also served to sustain elitist sentiment among members of the warrior class.

2. The Solidification of Class Boundaries and a New Function for Martial Art Schools

After centuries of domestic instability and warfare, by the beginning of the Tokugawa period *bushi* culture incorporated a distinctive ethos that was pragmatic and morally aloof. However, peace brought a new problem for members of this distinct and idiosyncratic subculture. *Bushi* needed to justify their position at the top of the newly enforced social strata of warriors, farmers, artisans and merchants (*shi-nō-kō-shō*). In this time of newfound peace there was ostensibly no need for a class of professional warriors – even though the shogunate demanded that at least a façade of military preparedness was maintained – and thus the *bushi*'s dilemma was, in essence, one of legitimisation. How did warriors justify their new role in a peaceful society?

2a. Establishing Samurai Responsibilities

Bushi were acutely aware of the frustrating dichotomy of being combatants in peacetime. As Ikegami Eiko observed, “When a state attempts to monopolize the right to use violence by delegitimising feuds and other forms of private conflict resolution, the concept of honour, originally linked to the personal use of violence, is affected.”⁴ By whom, and by what means was the warrior's paradoxical existence reconciled?

An answer of sorts was crafted incrementally from the beginning of the Tokugawa period by

⁴ Ikegami Eiko, Op. Cit., p. 33

military experts (*gungakusha*) such as Hōjō Ujinaga (1609–1670) and his students, whose lineage was inherited and adapted by prominent neo-Confucian scholars such as Yamaga Sokō (1622–1685) and Daidōji Yūzan (1639–1730). They constructed a new ideological framework for warriors that encouraged meticulous attention to matters of etiquette and duty. From this time onwards, *bugei-ryūha* played an increasingly important role in the everyday lives of *bushi* for reasons other than war. But, before describing the function these schools played, it is necessary to outline the immediate changes and regulations introduced by the *bakufu* in the uneasy calm of the early Tokugawa period.

The introduction of a stipend system by the *bakufu* made *bushi* ‘government employees’ of sorts, essentially demobilising previously domain-held armies and making all warriors ultimately directly accountable to the shogunate. The system ensured allegiance and obligatory military service (*gun'yaku*) in return for stipends. According to John Rogers, the *bakufu* fashioned particular legislation that both encoded the responsibilities of *bushi* as well as set the boundaries that separated them from commoners (*shomin*).⁵

2b. Bakufu Policies Dictating Warrior Behaviour

First, the *bakufu* introduced the obligation to maintain a readiness to fight if called to battle. *Daimyō* (lords) were duty-bound to retain a number of battle-ready men and equipment, dictated by the size of allotted domain holdings. The extent of responsibility from a logistical standpoint was clearly stipulated, but the actual details of military preparation were never explicitly expressed in any of the official government ordinances. The major legal documents promulgated by the *bakufu*, namely the *Buke-shohatto* (Laws for the military houses, 1615) and the *Shoshi-shohatto* (legal codes and guidelines for *bushi* of *hatamoto* and *gokenin* status - i.e. direct vassals of the *bakufu*, 1632)

⁵ J. Rogers, *The Development of the Military Profession in Tokugawa Japan*, (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1998), p. 13

merely stated that *bushi* should be versed in ways of both civil and military matters (*bunbu-ryōdō*).⁶ What this entailed was never explained in detail. Moreover, few if any records exist of *bushi* having been punished for negligence or non-compliance with *gun'yaku* duties.⁷

Second, the *bakufu* introduced numerous sumptuary laws outlining restrictions in activity and personal expenditure for all classes of society including the samurai. These sought to prevent financial exuberance which could weaken the infrastructure of the *bakufu*. For the samurai, they also included restrictions on ostentatious accessories such as improperly decorated swords which may attract unwelcome attention.

Third, laws regarding appearance were issued, dictating a thorough dress code. This governed the kind of clothes *bushi* were permitted to wear, their hairstyle and grooming, and, at the same time, what was off-limits to non-*bushi*.

Fourth, the *bakufu* instigated a system of symbolic rewards which functioned as a form of exclusive *bushi* currency. 'Famous swords' (*meitō*), or objects emblazoned with the Tokugawa family crest, became key symbols of status.

Fifth, the myriad of edicts issued by the *bakufu* to guide its warriors did not direct *bushi* on how to use their stipends; they only prescribed what was not permitted.⁸ In this sense, the promulgation of guidelines for ethical behaviour by the *bakufu* could be described as *laissez-faire*. The drafting of guidelines was for the most part fulfilled by independent Confucian or military scholars such as Yamaga Sokō, Daidōji Yūzan, Nakae Tōju (1608–1648), and Kumazawa Banzan (1619–1691), to name but a few. These individuals are well known to students of Japanese history, especially for their contributions in formulating a code of ethics commonly referred to today as *bushidō*.

The sixth policy was the issuance of a series of edicts regarding the bearing of arms. Even though

⁶ Ishii Ryōsuke (ed.), *Tokugawa Kinrei-kō* Vol. 1, p. 61

⁷ J. Rogers, *Op. Cit.*, p. 42

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15

the *katana-gari-rei* (sword hunt edict) had been enacted by Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598) in 1588, many commoners carried weapons with impunity during the early years of the Tokugawa period. Actually, commoners were permitted to carry long and short swords when travelling, or when they felt the need to defend themselves. The actual prohibition of sword carrying by anyone but warriors was a gradual process extending from the 1640s–1690s. In 1668–69 the *bakufu* issued decrees that forbade commoners from carrying swords, apart from in extenuating circumstances such as weddings, funerals, and fires.⁹ Interestingly, however, there were no laws at this time forbidding *bushi* from teaching commoners the military arts.¹⁰

In 1683, the fifth Tokugawa shogun, Tsunayoshi (1646–1709), issued an ordinance unequivocally forbidding commoners from carrying swords under any circumstances.¹¹ With this edict, the carrying of two swords formally became the symbolic badge of *bushi* status.¹² This policy “firmly established edged weapons as the primary professional tool of the samurai”,¹³ and the number of *kenjutsu* schools increased rapidly thereafter.

3. The Intellectualisation of Kenjutsu

Tominaga Kengo divides the development of martial art schools during the Tokugawa period into three broad stages: the early period (1603–1680); the middle period (1680–1786); and the late

⁹ Fujiki Hisashi, *Katana-gari*, p. 147

¹⁰ J. Rogers, Op. Cit., p. 18

¹¹ Fujiki Hisashi, Op. Cit., p. 148

¹² Each domain maintained a certain degree of freedom in the establishment of their own laws, but for the most part they generally followed the lead of the *bakufu*. There were a number of domains that were relatively lenient with regards to commoners possessing swords. For an interesting analysis of faults with standard theories on the disarmament of non-warrior echelons of society, see Fujiki Hisashi's *Katana-gari*. Another important point concerned with regulations on weaponry is that from the outset of the Tokugawa period, both the *bakufu* and domains issued strict edicts prohibiting the use or carrying of firearms except under extraordinary circumstances. That is not to say, however, that firearms were not stored in great quantity in farmhouses in rural villages.

¹³ J. Rogers, Op. Cit., p. 23

period (1787–1867).¹⁴ These periods roughly correspond with my analysis of the intellectualisation (early stage); spiritualisation and pacification (middle stage); commercialisation (middle & late stages); and sportification (late stage) of *kenjutsu*. In this section, consideration will be given to the process through which the martial arts were “intellectualised”. Also, the proliferation of complex philosophies that underpinned the technical corpus of the growing number of martial traditions will be clarified by comparing the two examples of the Yagyū Shinkage-ryū, and Miyamoto Musashi’s (1584–1645) martial philosophy.

3a. The Yagyū Shinkage-ryū and the “Heihō-kadensho”

As the Tokugawa period progressed, *kenjutsu* passed through a “civilising process”. The first obvious transition was the ‘intellectualisation’ of swordsmanship. This entailed a marked proliferation in martial art literature, and the application of combat principles to concerns other than warfare.

Perhaps one of the most representative examples of ‘intellectualisation’ can be seen in the Yagyū Shinkage-ryū tradition. Yagyū Munenori (1571–1646) was one of the most influential warriors in the early Tokugawa period by virtue of his illustrious students, and he had a profound effect in the process of social justification of the peacetime military.

Munenori was the son of the renowned Sengoku period (1467–1568) warrior Yagyū Muneyoshi (1529–1606, also known as Munetoshi), founder of the Yagyū Shinkage-ryū and student of Kamiizumi Ise-no-Kami (1508?–1577?). Although not as battle-hardened as his father reputedly was, during the summer siege of Osaka Castle in 1615, Munenori was surrounded by the men of Kimura Shigenari (1593–1615, a retainer of Hideyoshi). He proved his worth in battle by despatching seven of his foe. This feat enhanced his reputation, and many high-ranked *bushi*, including *daimyō* and their direct retainers, sought his instruction in the martial arts. More

¹⁴ Tominaga Kengo, *Kendō Gohyakunen-shi*, p. 163

significantly, among his students were the second and third Tokugawa shoguns, Hidetada (1579–1632) and Iemitsu (1604–1651).

In 1632, Munenori finished his magnum opus, the *Heihō-kadensho* (Book on family transmitted military arts) – a complex fusion of Muneyoshi’s and Kamiizumi Ise-no-Kami’s technical teachings on swordsmanship, combined with wisdom gleaned from texts on both Noh and Zen ideals. The influence of celebrated Zen priest Takuan Sōhō (1573–1645) also features throughout the text. This fêted treatise is believed to have held considerable sway with Munenori’s powerful disciples, providing them not only with a basis for their study of Yagyū Shinkage-ryū *kenjutsu* techniques, but also guiding their political acumen for ruling the country, or domains.

The book is divided into the three sections of ‘*shinrikyō*’ (進履橋= ‘the shoe-offering bridge’), ‘*setsunin-tō*’ (殺人刀= ‘death-dealing blade’), and ‘*katsunin-ken*’¹⁵ (活人劍= ‘life-giving sword’). ‘*Shinrikyō*’ summarises the techniques of the Yagyū Shinkage-ryū; of which there are the three sections called ‘*jo*’, ‘*ha*’, ‘*kyū*’ – each containing nine techniques.¹⁶ As techniques were generally taught directly from master to disciple, only cursory information is chronicled regarding the mechanical intricacies of sword work. However, the other two sections provide thorough philosophical expositions on the importance of the mind in swordsmanship, and its applicability to governance.

¹⁵ Some scholars, especially former students of preeminent martial arts scholar, the late Watanabe Ichirō from the Tokyo University of Education (now Tsukuba University), pronounce this concept as “*katsunin-ken*”. However, the standard reading used in most books is “*katsujin-ken*”.

¹⁶ 序破急 This is a principle of inflection and movement. It is a concept found in many of Japan’s traditional arts and indicates that any action should start slowly, gain in speed, and then finish swiftly. Although originating in traditional court music known as *gagaku*, it was researched and put to use by Zeami in his Noh plays. Yagyū Muneyoshi borrowed the concept from Noh and applied it to *kenjutsu*.

天道 = 活人剣

“Tendō” = Heaven’s Way = “Katsunin-ken”. This is the highest level of technical, political and spiritual perfection where the paradox of ‘war equals peace’ is achieved, and the “death-dealing-blade” becomes the “life-giving-sword”.

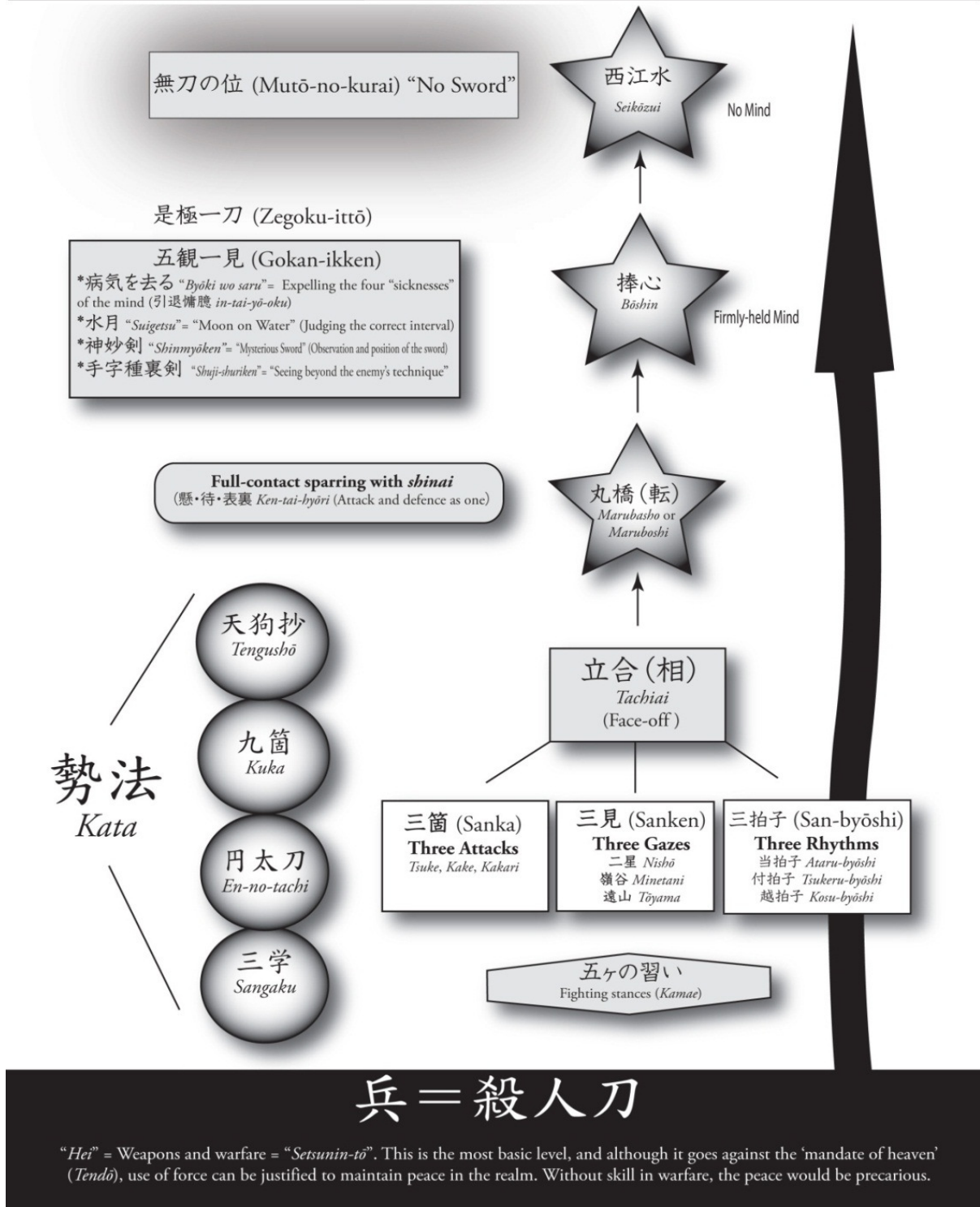


Diagram of the Yagyū Shinkage-ryū’s curriculum and course of training based on descriptions in the Heihō-kadensho

Of particular relevance here is the chapter titled ‘*setsunin-tō*’. Ironically, Munenori starts by pointing out that weapons of war are inherently bad as they are meant for destructive purposes; and killing is an act that runs counter to the “Way of heaven” (*tendō*) in which life is sustained and valued. However, he asserts that there are times when use of force is unavoidable in order to maintain the peace: “Killing one man’s evil so that ten thousand may live.”¹⁷ In order to “kill one man’s evil” the warrior needs to be skilled in combat lest he be killed himself. Munenori then elaborates on this paradox by explaining how in individual combat there is only one winner and one loser, and how this can be regarded as “small war-craft” (*chiisaki-heihō*). Strategy for subduing the realm is “great war-craft” (*dainaru-heihō*). According to Munenori, regardless of the scale of the battle, victory or defeat is determined by whether or not the warrior embodies the principles of warfare in his mind. Munenori contends that, in essence, the smallest encounter between two warriors with swords is equivalent strategically to a *shōgun* who has to make decisions to rule the country.

It is *heihō* (strategy) to be aware of disorder when ruling the country in a time of peace. Likewise, it is *heihō* to scrutinise the internal workings of the realm to understand what turmoil is, and to rule the people effectively before pandemonium erupts.¹⁸

Although the martial philosophy of the Yagyū Shinkage-ryū espoused in the *Heihō-kadensho* was influential in warrior high-society, it had little direct sway on the *bushi* rank-and-file. It was however, one of the first important martial texts (*bugei-densho*) which organised a martial philosophy linking the training of body and mind into a systemised holistic corpus for life and governance. Also, it was one of the first clear examples of *kenjutsu* being associated with something other than just combat.

¹⁷ Yagyū Munenori, *Heihō-kadensho*, contained in Imamura Yoshio (ed.) *Nibon Budō Taikei* Vol. 1 (Compendium of Japanese *budō*), p. 101

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 100

3b. Miyamoto Musashi and “Gorin-no-sho”

Probably the most celebrated warrior in Japanese history is Miyamoto Musashi. Musashi is credited with writing several books related to the martial arts including *Hyōdōkyō* (The mirror of the way of strategy, 1605), *Hyōhō Kaki-tsuke* (Notes on strategy, 1638), *Hyōhō Sanjūgo-kajō* (Strategy in thirty-five articles, 1641), *Dokkōdō* (The way to be followed alone, 1645), and the most famous of his treatises, *Gorin-no-sho* (Book of five rings, 1645).¹⁹ He supposedly wrote this book in the Reigandō cave in Kumamoto, but the original text no longer exists.

Gorin-no-sho consists of five chapters: ‘*chi*’ (earth), ‘*sui*’ (water), ‘*ka*’ (fire), ‘*fū*’ (wind), and ‘*kū*’ (void). In *chi*, Musashi documents the first half of his life. He also provides an introduction to military tactics and the philosophy behind the school he created known as Niten Ichi-ryū. In *sui*, Musashi explains various aspects of individual combat such as mental and physical posture, gaze, how to manipulate the sword, footwork, and fighting stances. In *ka* he expounds on how to choose the best site for duelling, how to control the enemy by taking the initiative, and implementing stratagems. In the penultimate chapter *fū*, he critiques other schools of swordsmanship, and outlines their weaknesses. *Kū* is a short but decidedly complicated section where Musashi delves into how he developed the Niten Ichi-ryū on the basis of his combat experience. In it, he discloses the supreme level of combat and all arts by referring to the allegorical “void”. “Attaining this principle means not attaining the principle. The Way of strategy is the Way of nature.”²⁰

What makes Musashi’s treatise on strategy distinctive is the way he endeavours to apply it to all manner of activities such as combat, art, and even carpentry.

If you master the principles of sword, when you freely beat one man, you beat many men in the world. The spirit of defeating a man is the same for ten-million men. The

¹⁹ There are a number of different English translations of varying reliability available, referred to as “A Book of Five Rings”. The most widely read is that by Victor Harris (see the following footnote).

²⁰ Miyamoto Musashi, *Gorin-no-sho*, translated by Victor Harris as *A Book of Five Rings*, p. 33

strategist makes small things into big things, like building a great Buddha from a one-foot model. I cannot write in detail how this is done. The principle of strategy (*heihō* or *hyōhō*) is having one thing, to know ten-thousand things.²¹

His overall thesis is simplistic when compared to the Munenori's *Heihō-kadensho*, and he does not dwell on the deep philosophical underpinnings of Zen or Confucian terminology. Nevertheless, there are similarities such as the emphasis he places on the mind in combat, and how mastery of the principles of strategy is a lifelong pursuit, and are applicable to all facets of life.

Both books were written by warriors who experienced the chaos prior to Japan's unification in the Tokugawa period, and then the ensuing peace. They provide a link between two different worlds of *bushi* experience, and are still widely read and referred to by modern practitioners of *kendō*.

4. Spiritualisation and Pacification

Related to 'intellectualisation', another predominant trend was the overt 'spiritualisation' and 'pacification' of the martial arts. This section will investigate how the martial arts took on increasingly spiritual and pacifistic tendencies while adapting to a society that no longer tolerated brazen violence among its warriors.

4a. Seeking Higher Principles and Holistic Penchants

The number of martial art schools proliferated exponentially from the late 1600s, and they tended to specialise in specific weapons rather than a variety as had been the case in previous, more turbulent eras. The techniques and *kata* became increasingly ostentatious and removed from the realities of combat. Elaborate and arcane philosophies were concocted by the headmasters of the

²¹ Ibid., p. 32

schools to accompany the techniques, giving military drill an increasingly spiritual zest as the focus moved away from combat efficiency to ‘Ways’ of spiritual development and self-discipline.

This is not to say that martial traditions of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries did not embody philosophical or psychological principles. The greatest weakness to any warrior is stress and the fear of death. This was readily acknowledged by *bushi*, and students of the earliest *ryūha* (schools) were subjected to secret rituals and religious teachings to overcome fear. They even studied divination to attain a magical advantage in battle. The philosophical and spiritual elements became more well-defined, however, in the Tokugawa period. The focus was not to supplement combat efficiency so much as to provide a framework in the ascetic quest for perfect unity of body and mind, and spiritual enlightenment.

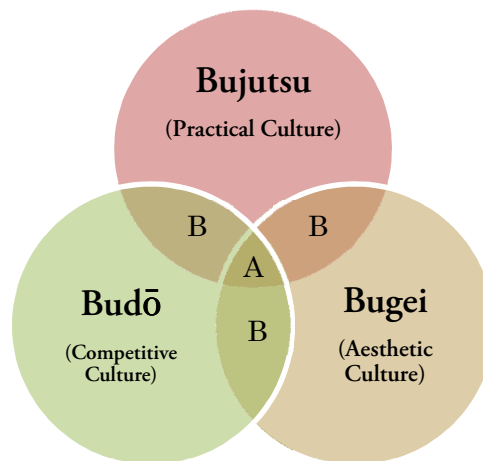
It is no exaggeration to say that the majority of *kenjutsu ryūha* resembled pseudo-cult religions, and the further war faded from the collective memory of warriors in the Tokugawa period, the more esoteric in nature *kenjutsu* became. *Ryūha* also started applying Confucian and Buddhist (especially Zen) terms to their techniques and ideals,²² as well as holistic Daoist teachings of the ancient Chinese philosopher Chuang Tse. Developing both mind and technique as a path to individual spiritual liberation became the key objective in many of the schools that emerged in the middle period (1680–1786).

In times of social tumult, spiritual fortitude and transcendence were ways of dealing with the reality of mortality. However, in times of peace martial training transformed into an intrinsic part of nurturing individual morality and self-control; that is something more than the ability or will to actually kill. The oft quoted *cliché* in martial arts research describes this transition in combat training from *bujutsu* (martial technique) to *bugei* (martial art), and then later to *budō* (martial

²² Imamura Yoshio, *Jūkyū-seiki ni okeru Nihon Taiiku no Kenkyū* (A study of Japanese physical education in the nineteenth century), p. 79

Way).²³ However, this interpretation is too one-dimensional, and ignores the fact that the martial arts contained various aspects simultaneously. In all eras and schools, there were aspects of combat practicality (*bujutsu*, ‘martial techniques’), aesthetic beauty and pursuance of higher mystical ideals (*bugei*, ‘martial art’), and self-cultivation through competition (*budō*, ‘martial way’). The degree to which these aspects were accentuated depended on various circumstances. The following diagram shows the juxtaposition of martial art values.²⁴

The three pillars of the martial arts combine to form differing cultural values.



‘A’ represents the essential nature of *kendō* throughout history. ‘B’ existed simultaneously in the Tokugawa period.

Yuasa Akira observed that through the process of learning techniques, the warrior also sought to acquire a higher spiritual state of mind, which led to the focus of martial arts training as ways of personal self-perfection.²⁵ This is a simplistic analysis, but for all intents and purposes the martial traditions from this period on gradually enveloped a highly metaphysical approach to training that sought to encourage moral growth and spiritual liberation.

To this end, influential tomes in the genre of ‘martial spiritualism’ include Niwa Jurōzaemon

²³ Yuasa Akira, *Budō Densho wo Yomu* (Reading martial art texts), p. 43

²⁴ AJKF, *Kensō*, April, 2007, p. 14

²⁵ Yuasa Akira, *Op. Cit.*, p. 43

Tadaaki's (1659–1741) *Tengū Geijutsu-ron* (Discourse on the art of the mountain demons, 1727) and *Neko-no-myōjutsu* (1729). Tadaaki was a gifted student of Zen, Confucian and the Chinese classics, as well as the martial arts. *Neko-no-myōjutsu* (translated into English as “The cat’s eerie skills”) is a well-known story of a large rat that torments the local cats with his defiant behaviour. Each cat tries to outdo the other and capture the bold rat, but none is successful. Then, an aged cat decides to take up the challenge and captures the rat with seemingly no effort. The other cats are amazed by his graceful deftness, and inquire how he could have achieved such a feat. The narrative then turns to the wise old cat educating his much younger protégés; his discourse centres on the ‘natural way of the universe’ (*dōri*) and the use of vital force or life energy (*ki*), and how the warrior who can maintain control over his mind and access the very essence of his existence will be able to triumph in anything.

Similarly, the *Tengū Geijutsu-ron* was also popular among *bushi*. This is a story about a warrior who had studied the martial arts for many years, but had reached an impasse. He knew the legend of how Minamoto-no-Yoshitsune (1159–1189) was taught the highest secrets of strategy from the fabled *tengū* – goblin-like creatures that were half man and half bird, and extremely skilled in the arts of war. Hoping to also receive their wisdom, the warrior goes to the mountains and meditates in an attempt to summon the *tengū*. He continues this nightly ritual until eventually the *tengū* appears in a large cedar tree and answers his questions about the secrets of swordsmanship. The dialogues make no mention of sword techniques *per se*, but instead focus on how the warrior should hold his mind without fixation.

Transformation of the warrior’s physical and mental stance and the ability to harness and control the power of *ki* are themes that the two stories have in common. The value of the latter’s message is summed up in the preface written by Kanda Hakuryūshi in 1728:

Recently there are a number of samurai who have acquired magnificent reputations through their expertise in swordsmanship. Each school divides into ten-thousand more branches, and so-called masters continue to teach their students so that all blindly follow each other. Some pass on dubious theories with the promise that if the student obediently follows and masters the knowledge, he will be able to command heaven, earth and the whole realm. They teach willing disciples to wield their blades in all directions and how to single-handedly overcome ten adversaries simultaneously. Other teachers proclaim that by correcting the mind and developing *ki* one can gain victory in any encounter without even having the need to move. Indeed, nonsensical theories abound. These tenets of wisdom are spurious and should not be construed as acceptable swordsmanship. Students who believe such ill-conceived interpretations will in turn pass them on to their own disciples; just as one dog barks a lie, ten thousand more will convey it as the truth. This is a reprehensible state of affairs.²⁶

He concludes by stating how Tadaaki's homily is a welcome text to help warriors keep on the "correct path of swordsmanship" rather than stray off into the mists of obscurity and "seek knowledge of frivolities" instead of the "true principles" of the martial arts.²⁷

'True principles' varied depending on the school, but even the most prestigious *kenjutsu* schools such as the Ittō-ryū increasingly incorporated Daoist sword rituals and other religio-magic procedures related to esoteric Buddhism and ancient Chinese cosmic theories, and spiritual training.

One of the most famous 'spiritual treatises' is Shirai Tōru Yoshinori's (1781–1843) *Heihō Michi Shirube* (A guide to the martial arts, 1834). In it, he explains the secret Daoist respiratory methods employed in his style of fencing, the Nakanishi-ha Ittō-ryū. He divulges in rather abstract terms how *ki* should be circulated in the lower-abdomen (*tanden*) in accordance with the teachings of the Daoist deity Tenshin (Heavenly Truth). These ideals of *ki* and the importance of the *tanden* are still regarded as fundamental considerations in modern *kendō*.

²⁶ Niwa Jūrōzaemon Tadaaki, *Tengū Geijutsu-ron*, contained in Hayakawa Junsaburō (ed.) *Bujutsu Sōsho* (Various writings on the martial arts), p. 313

²⁷ Ibid.

4b. Anti-violent Violence

Even without war, *bushi* were obligated to maintain military readiness as ‘keepers of the peace’. They were also expected to cultivate their humanity, to be paragons of moral perfection in their redefined duty of serving as a guiding light for the masses. At least that was the ideal according to popular books by Yamaga Sokō, Daidōji Yūzan, and many other scholars of the day.

John Rogers observes the nature of martial arts of the Tokugawa period as showing “a spirit of non-lethality”, and this accords perfectly with the features of the civilising process.²⁸ Regardless of the fact that Tokugawa warriors had little opportunity to prove their worth and accumulate the ‘currency of honour’ through their feats in battle, the question of death still remained (at least in theory) a central component of their ethos. Although death was very much a romanticised notion by the eighteenth century, and idealised without actual demonstration,²⁹ the ideal of death could be re-enacted through continued training in the martial arts.

To this day, the vast majority of martial art *kata* sequences end in the pretend defeat of one of the practitioners. In theory, this is the moment in the performance of mock combat at which the adept faces his mortality. This ritual of ‘death’ or conversely ‘the power to take life’, or not take life even though they had the ability to do so, served to reinforce *bushi* ideas of their uniqueness and identity as professional warriors, distinct from other echelons of society. In other words, *kenjutsu ryūha* took on significance not only as practical combat systems, but as the symbolic basis for the warrior’s self-identity and elitist sentiments at a time when *bushi* questioned the very point of their own existence.

Ironically, this led to the pacification of the martial arts, i.e., to a conspicuous inclination towards

²⁸ J. Rogers, Op. Cit., p. 135

²⁹ In the early years of the Tokugawa period, there were increasing instances of *bushi* customarily following their lords in death by committing ritual suicide. This practice was known as *junshi*, but was outlawed by the *bakufu* in 1663. Enforcement of the ban became more stringent towards the end of the seventeenth century, much to the frustration of many warriors who were denied any opportunity to demonstrate their honour, sense of duty, autonomy, and recourse to decide their own fates.

non-lethal techniques, and avoidance of confrontation altogether. A good example is the concept of *ai-nuke* (mutual passing through [to avoid mutually assured destruction]), promoted by Odagiri Ichiun (1636?–1706) and appearing in his treatise *Kenpō Sekiun-sensei Sōden* (Inherited teachings of swordsmanship from master Sekiun, 1686). Odagiri was inspired by his teacher Sekiun Harigaya (1593?–1662). The term refers to the scenario in which two warriors of equal outstanding skill, and lack of concern for their own death, purge ‘murderous intent’ from their minds and end the confrontation with no *coup de grâce*.

When the contestants are of equal calibre and proficiency the game as it is generally played finishes with an *ai-uchi*, which, when carried on with real steel, means killing each other. An *ai-nuke*, however, does not at all involve any kind of killing or hurting each other, as *nuke* means, not ‘striking down’ as *uchi* does, but ‘passing by’, or ‘going through’ unhurt...³⁰

Again, this is reminiscent of Elias’s theory of change and the subdual of impulsive violent tendencies in the civilising process. “Part of the tensions and passions that were earlier directly released in the struggle of man and man must now be worked out within the human being.”³¹ No doubt, the idea of winning an encounter by not actually engaging the opponent was mocked by warriors of a more pragmatic disposition. But it was a trend that gathered momentum, and was probably welcomed by *bakufu* authorities who were keen for temperamental warriors to avoid confrontation by any means possible, and thereby maintain social order.

From around this time (mid-Tokugawa era), the interpretation of ‘*bu*’ (武) i.e. ‘martial’ also evolved to mean ‘anti-war’. Originally, the character is said to consist of the radicals for ‘foot’ (足) or possibly ‘to walk’ (歩) with ‘lance’ (矛) in hand. In other words, the character was alluding to

³⁰ Daisetz Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture*, p. 172

³¹ Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, p. 375

foot-soldiers marching off to battle. From around the middle of the Tokugawa period it began to be construed pacifistically as ‘to stop’ (止) fighting with the ‘lance’ (矛).³²

5. Commercialisation

How did proficiency in *ryūha* martial arts provide samurai with the means to satisfy their obligations as warriors in Tokugawa Japan? Certification of achievement or advancement in a martial art *ryūha* was significant to the *bushi* in two ways. First, objectively speaking, it provided them with the credentials needed to prove they were actually earning their stipends by maintaining military readiness. Second, subjectively speaking, it also enabled the *bushi* to see themselves as practising warriors rather than just brush-wielding bureaucrats, despite having no opportunities to prove their worth in real combat. This catalysed market demand for expert teachers, and consequently the number of *ryūha* increased. The proliferation and competitive nature of the *ryūha* to attract students consequently led to a perceived demise in the practicality of *bugei*, and a surge in the ‘invention of tradition’ to legitimise their approaches; but it also led to an overall decline in enthusiasm in the martial arts due to a perceived dwindling in their quality. This section will address how the problem of ‘quality’ facilitated the next stage of *kenjutsu*’s development.

5a. Ryūha Proliferation and Meeting Market Demand

Warriors could maintain appearances of being ‘qualified’ combatants by demonstrating intellectual martial competence in place of grit in a real fight. This state of affairs was also agreeable to the *bakufu* who desired warriors to be prepared but not overly aggressive; in other words, men who could perform military duties if called upon to do so, but who were not so primed and explosive that they would pose a threat to the stability of *bakufu* hegemony.

³² For example see Sakai Toshinobu and Alexander Bennett, “The History of Kendo”, *Kendō Nippon Monthly*, May 2008, pp. 126-128

According to Elias's examination of violence in European society, "If social tensions approach or reach the threshold of violence, a parliamentary regime is in danger of breaking down."³³ This was also very much the case with the Tokugawa shogunate. Furthermore, Elias asserts that governmental functionality is "dependent on the effectiveness of a country's monopoly of physical violence, on the stability of a society's internal pacification. That stability, however, is to some extent dependent on the personal restraint-level of the human beings who form these societies."³⁴ This belief, in some ways, can also explain why the *bakufu* was not opposed to the commercialisation of *kenjutsu*. After all, one of the primary objectives of these schools was to teach spiritual ideals and self-restraint on the road to self-perfection.

One aspect of the commercialisation of *kenjutsu* was the increased length of tenure as a disciple. In the Sengoku period apprenticeship was a short tenure lasting from a few months to a few years before the disciple travelled the countryside testing their skills in life-or-death duels in the practice known as *musha-shugyō*. If the warrior survived his duelling escapades and lived long enough to make a name, he would start his own branch of the school after receiving certification from the master.

In the Tokugawa period, however, proprietors of schools made it more exacting to advance by introducing arduous promotion systems that required money and long apprenticeships.³⁵ Intricate curriculums took more time to master, and in many cases lacked practicality. Warriors no longer formed schools on the basis of combat experience, but through receiving certification and permission to do so after long apprenticeships. Other schools also adopted the *iemoto*-system

³³ Norbert Elias, Anderic Dunning, Op. Cit., p. 28

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ This demonstrates a clear precursor to the modern *budō* arts where federations glean substantial proportion of their operational income from promotion examinations. Classical martial arts groups that survive today as operational entities, although hardly considered as lucrative businesses, still take considerable sometimes even exorbitant amounts of money from students when awarding licences as proof of progress into the 'inner secrets' of the school.

whereby succession became hereditary rather than based on skill. Many *han* (domains) chose to employ the services of one master house (*shihan-ke*), and warriors were discouraged from learning a number of different sword styles simultaneously. Sometimes the *ryūha* in question would be taught exclusively to the domain warriors in *hankō* (domain schools).

In all, the position of *kenjutsu* instructor held considerable prestige and was rewarding financially. With high market demand for instruction and certification, the number of schools continued to proliferate. According to research conducted by Imamura Yoshio, by the late eighteenth century there were 45 schools of *kyūjutsu* (archery), 61 schools of *bajutsu* (horsemanship), 121 schools of *sōjutsu* (spearmanship), 173 schools of *hōjutsu* (gunmanship), 167 schools of *jūjutsu* (grappling), and, the most numerous by far, 620 schools of *kenjutsu*.³⁶

5b. 'Flowery' Kenjutsu

New schools developed novel and untested techniques, and *kata* routines became ever more flamboyant and visually appealing, but removed from the realities of combat. Towards the end of the seventeenth century there were few if any samurai still alive who had actually experienced war. Although some *ryūha* such as the Suiō-ryū tried to retain a purely battle-oriented curriculum, many others were far from pragmatic, and esoteric interpretations of their techniques were emphasised to highlight the uniqueness and profound depth of their styles.

Purists deplored this state of affairs, and *kenjutsu* schools of the day were referred to rather sarcastically as *kahō kenpō* (flowery swordsmanship). According to Imamura, “*metsuke* (gaze), *kamae* (fighting stances) and various superfluous and useless technical aspects became abundant and served

³⁶ Imamura Yoshio, *Jūkyū-seiki ni okeru Nihon no Taiiku-shi*, pp. 340-343. Imamura made his study by comparing six different historical martial art chronicles that were published between 1716 and 1912. The data he gathered represent no more than approximations of actual figures. In a number of instances one *ryūha* was known by different names, or to add to the confusion, different *ryūha* may have used the same name. Furthermore, his figures fail to include the myriad of smaller or provincial *ryūha* that were overlooked by the original authors of the works examined.

no more purpose than decoration.”³⁷ This was inevitable given the ban on duelling between followers of different schools (*taryū-jiai*) imposed by the *bakufu* (1651) to avoid unnecessary conflict, and possible retribution among the samurai of various *han* after a confrontation as ‘matches’ often ended in serious injury or death.³⁸ The ban also resulted in a decline of *musha-shugyō*, and schools and the efficacy of their techniques remained for the most part unverified and enigmatic. The period extending from the fourth shogun Ietsuna (1641–1680) through to his successor Tsunayoshi (1646–1709) is generally considered to be one of decline in the martial arts.

Spiritual idiosyncrasies set schools apart from rivals and were an important feature in attracting students. This was a serious problem for schools as, according to marketing projections calculated by Rogers based on Japan’s population and the number of schools in operation at the time, the martial arts market was probably close to saturation by the early 1700s.³⁹ This led to a number of innovations by schools in the mid-Tokugawa period: the proliferation of magnificent colour scrolls and certification to acknowledge advancement; the increased induction of townsmen into martial art halls by some schools; as well as the further accentuation of spiritual and holistic attributes of the school. One observer of the time made the following cynical remark:

All swordsmanship of today is almost entirely the creation of people living in a time of peace... They make great display of their strikes, and place some primary emphasis on winning in a spectacular fashion. Some samurai [teaching the art] today do quite well for themselves and debate lofty theories. Other samurai concentrate on perfecting their choreography and gestures... (Ogyū Sorai, 1729)⁴⁰

The issue of the ‘inventing tradition’ will be addressed in more detail in the next chapter with

³⁷ Imamura Yoshio (ed.), *Nihon Budō Taikei*, Vol. 10, p. 74.

³⁸ Shimokawa Washio, *Kendō no Hattatsu*, p. 256

³⁹ J. Rogers, Op. Cit., p. 155

⁴⁰ Quoted from J. Rogers, *Ibid.*, p. 150

regards to the role *kendō* played in the rise of nationalism. Most discussion on the phenomenon of inventing tradition is concerned with the emergence of modern nationalism and perceptions of national culture and identity around the nineteenth century. It is important to note here, however, that the many schools of *kenjutsu* that arose in the Tokugawa period were also invented entities emblematic of elitism and selectness. Although not ‘nationalistic’ in the sense that *ryūha* were devised and used to legitimise a particular nation-state or construct a national identity, they were in a way a precursor to the socio-political course of Japan’s eventual nationalisation. *Ryūha* mentality served to augment the legitimisation and elitist sentiment of the warrior social strata; and just as *kenjutsu* was symbolic of warrior culture as a whole, it has since been held by nationalistic Japanese as a mark of Japanese ‘uniqueness’.

The progenitors of new schools attempted to “establish continuity with a suitable historic past.”⁴¹ Often the connection to legendary warriors and prototypical *ryūha* from centuries ago was quixotic and tenuous at best, but became all the more prevalent as *bushi* became further removed, practically speaking, from their combatant roots. To use Ikegami’s term, the fast growth of *kenjutsu* schools was a consequence of “refocusing” the warrior culture of honour, and they were also a key factor in maintaining a self-perceived air of exclusivity.

6. Sportification

The aforementioned regression of *kenjutsu* from rational techniques for war into ‘flowery’ performances with swords ultimately led to its ‘sportification’ with the invention of protective training equipment (now called *bōgu*) and bamboo swords (*shinai*) from the early eighteenth century. The training method utilising this equipment was known as *shinai-uchikomi-geiko* (*shinai*

⁴¹ Eric Hobsbawm, Terrence Ranger (ed.), *The Invention of Tradition*, p. 1

striking practice method). This section will analyse how these revolutionary developments resulted in the transformation of *kenjutsu* into a competitive sporting pursuit.

6a. The Expansion of Full-contact Fencing

The initial motivation for the development of protective training equipment was widespread dissatisfaction with the growing lack of practicality in *kenjutsu*. It is also feasible that another reason was the need for excitement among the warrior class who were yearning for the thrill of battle, albeit in more civilised form.

As Elias observes with regards to the rise of sports in Europe (particularly in England), “A phase of struggle, of battle-tension and excitement which may be demanding in terms of physical exertion and skill but which can be exhilarating in its own right as a liberation from the routines and stress-tensions of non-leisure life, is usually followed by a phase of decision and release from battle-tension either in triumph and victory or in disappointment and defeat.”⁴²

With a centuries-old subculture based on idioms of honour, the samurai’s latent drive to defend or enhance his reputation was not something that could be quelled easily. The problem that needed to be overcome in a society that had been consciously pacified was how to satisfy this drive while avoiding conflict. As with the evolution of sports in Europe, a similar question of “how to keep the risk of injuries to players low, yet keep the enjoyable battle-excitement at a high level”⁴³ is applicable to the Japanese experience as well. The development of protective fencing equipment in early-modern Japan enabled full-contact fencing bouts, as opposed to long and complex *kata*-centred training methods which had come to resemble dance movements.

Exactly how and when such equipment came into use is unclear. Schools of *sōjutsu* (spearmanship) were utilising full-contact training methods before *kenjutsu* did. Padded head

⁴² Norbert Elias, Anderic Dunning, Op. Cit., p. 50

⁴³ Ibid., p. 51

protectors were already being used by students of the Maniwa Nen-ryū in the early seventeenth century. Bamboo practice swords covered in leather sheaths (*fukuro-shinai*) were utilised in training by Yagyū Muneyoshi in his Yagyū Shinkage-ryū towards the end of the sixteenth century. All of these factors contributed to the formation of *shinai-uchikomi-geiko*.

The proliferation of protective equipment in mainstream *kenjutsu* was a gradual process in which Yamada Heizaemon Mitsunori (1639–1716) of the Jikishin Kage-ryū played a central role. Heizaemon is believed to have suffered a serious injury at the age of eighteen in a match fought with *bokutō* (wooden swords). He was able to resume his training under a teacher who utilised rudimentary armour for safety. Heizaemon further developed the armour, which enabled the practitioner to make vigorous full-contact attacks without the concern of injuring or being injured, or even killed in the throes of the engagement.⁴⁴ His third son, Naganuma Shirōzaemon Kunisato (1688–1767) improved his father's design, and the training method became firmly established in the Jikishin Kage-ryū thereafter.

After Heizaemon and Kunisato experimented with protective armour, Nakanishi Chūzō Tsugutake of the Nakanishi-ha Ittō-ryū tradition also introduced protective armour in training sessions in the period extending from 1751–1764. His disciples engaged in full-contact striking with protective mask (*men*) complete with a metal face grill, plastron (*dō*), gauntlets (*kote*), and bamboo swords.⁴⁵

Although it signified a revolutionary way of training in swordsmanship, its introduction was not without controversy. There was a fixation in some schools with preserving traditional methods, and maintaining that all-important perceived link with the past. Even within the same *ryūha*, there were splits in opinion on the preferred training methodology. There were those who stubbornly clung to

⁴⁴ Shimokawa Washio, Op. Cit., p. 270

⁴⁵ This style of fencing became known as *gek(i)ken* whereas *kenjutsu* refers to swordsmanship in general.

the traditional method of *kata* practice, and those who sought to engage in training that was both safe and exhilarating. For example, a well-known and often quoted exchange of letters on the subject by Ono Tadayoshi (Ono-ha Ittōryū), Yamaga Hachirō Zaemon Takami, and Nakanishi Chūzō Tsugutake (Nakanishi-ha Ittō-ryū) offer interesting insights into the dilemma faced by schools with the development of fencing equipment.

Yamaga Hachirō was a warrior from the Tsugaru domain who reached the *menkyo* level in the Ittō-ryū. He questioned the validity of Nakanishi Tsugutake's use of protective equipment and bamboo swords in training, and wrote a letter consisting of eleven articles to his master, Ono Tadayoshi (seventh generation headmaster of the Ono-ha Ittō-ryū), for his opinion. Tadayoshi was less than enthusiastic and replied in a letter that "When using a wooden sword, you strike the enemy's *ki* (spirit) first, and then attain victory. However, with the *shinai*, you strike the enemy's body first, and then are able to win."⁴⁶ He also criticised the *shinai* by saying that "the strikes are weak", and that "it was nothing more than child's play" in which the practitioner learns distaste for the realisms of combat.⁴⁷ Yamaga passed on the master's response to Nakanishi, who, obviously chagrined by these criticisms, crafted a reply to discount his doubters by first acknowledging why some would consider the training method problematic.

I believe that it is virtually impossible to be able to attack with sacrificial conviction when engaging in training with a blunt or wooden sword. This is precisely the reason why men who are skilled [at combat] are more likely to be victorious. When people train with bamboo swords and protective equipment (*men-gusoku*), those who are weak or technically inept are able to attack with full conviction without any fear [of injury or losing] and so it is difficult to foresee who will prevail in the encounter... This method of training will result in a distorted view of the bout in which the practitioner will not feel as though he has been defeated unless the blow is very

⁴⁶ Sasamori Junzō, *Ittō-ryū Gokui* (Higher teachings of the Ittō-ryū), p. 635

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 635

strong.⁴⁸

Nakanishi then offered solutions for these problems by emphasising that the trainee should always strive to use *shinai* as if it were a wooden or blunted sword, and concede defeat even if the received blow is light. In addition, he stated that the warrior should enter each bout as if the opponent was a great swordsman to maintain a sense of reality and tension. In this way, training with bamboo swords and protective equipment would, he advocated, facilitate improvement in the art of swordsmanship as if it were real combat.⁴⁹

Initially, the two camps remained opposed, but by the end of the eighteenth century most *kenjutsu* schools incorporated both approaches into their curricula to differing degrees, although it was the “new schools” centred on actual fencing rather than traditional *kata* that successfully attracted the most students. This leads us to the conclusion, as Anatoliy Anshin points out, that more than just concerns for enhancing practical swordsmanship, the promoters of the full-contact fencing method of training were “converting the most fundamental element of the intangible warrior culture into a profitable sport.”⁵⁰

6b. The Latter-Tokugawa Fencing Renaissance

Nakabayashi Shinji lists the seven core *ryūha* that became prominent in the early 1800s with the expansion of *shinai-uchikomi-geiko*: They were the Shingyōtō-ryū, Nakanishi-ha Ittō-ryū, Hokushin Ittō-ryū, Kōgen Ittō-ryū, Shindō Munen-ryū, Jikishin Kage-ryū and the Kyōshinmeichi-ryū.⁵¹ This method of fencing enabled swordsmen to safely engage in matches with students of other schools

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 638

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Anatoliy Anshin, *The Intangible Warrior Culture of Japan: Bodily Practices, Mental Attitudes, and Values of the Two-sworded Men from the Fifteenth to the Twenty-first Centuries*, (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of New South Wales, 2009), p. 99

⁵¹ Nakabayashi Shinji, *Budō no Susume*, pp. 81-92

(*taryū-jiai*), and subsequently sparked resurgences in *musha-shugyō* whereby students of swordsmanship travelled the provinces in the search for opponents to fence to polish their skills, and hopefully make a name for themselves.

From the end of the seventeenth century there was a rise of commercial *dōjō*, especially in Edo, with flat wooden floors which facilitated the categorisation of universal fencing techniques. These private fencing academies (*machi-dōjō*) differed from the domain schools (*hankō*) where *han* retainers and their children were instructed in the martial arts.⁵² They also operated independently from the *bakufu* and the various *han*, and became very prosperous, particularly towards the end of the Tokugawa period. As Rogers pointed out, “This emphasis on rough-and-ready sparring shifted the focus from hereditary sword masters to rising young stars—popular teachers at well-known training halls who commanded attention not only as pontifical grandmasters but as great competitive fencers.”⁵³

Although fencing was popular in the provinces, Edo was considered the Mecca for ambitious swordsmen, and the most renowned of the hundreds of fencing academies were the “three great *dōjō*” of Edo. These were Chiba Shūsaku’s (1794–1856) Gembukan (Hokushin Ittō-ryū) established in 1820, Saitō Yakurō’s (1798–1871) Rempeikan (Shindō Munen-ryū) formed in 1826, and Momonoi Shunzō’s (1825–1885) Shigakkan (Kyōshinmeichi-ryū) founded in 1849. Each one boasted thousands of students. The respective masters were charismatic and enjoyed celebrity status. Chiba was known for his technical skill, Saitō for his power, and Momonoi for his elegant fencing.

⁵² Many *hankō* were established around the end the eighteenth century, but there was considerable variation in timing and scale between the various domains. Martial arts were an important part of the curriculum, as were studies in the classics. It was common for a number of martial arts to be taught simultaneously but *kenjutsu* was by far the most prolific. Compared to commercial *dōjō* in cities, *hankō* martial arts were far more concerned with education and a balance in the ideals of *bun* (letters) and *bu* (martial). Refer to Nakabayashi Shinji, *Budō no Susume*, p. 77; and Ōta Masayasu, “Bakumatsu ni okeru bujutsu-ba no yōso ni kansuru kenkyū” (Research into aspects of martial art training venues in the Bakumatsu era), *Budōgaku Kenkyū* Vol. 35 (2002), p. 3

⁵³ J. Rogers, *Op. Cit.*, p. 165

6c. Non-Bushi Participation in Fencing

Wealthy townsmen paid fees to fencing masters to learn *kenjutsu*, and although this trend was frowned upon, it was never stopped outright by the *bakufu* or *han* authorities.⁵⁴ The sportive style of *kenjutsu* (commonly referred to as *gekiken*—‘batling swords’) attracted townsmen as well as the wealthier farmers in the provinces who took great joy in emulating samurai culture.

Ironically, non-samurai also played a significant role in popularising this prototype of modern *kendō*. A number of the celebrated fencers from the early nineteenth century were in fact not of warrior stock. Match records that survive from the 1840s in the region that makes up modern day Saitama Prefecture reveal that peasants mainly affiliated with the Shintō Munen-ryū, Kōgen Ittō-ryū, or Ryūgō-ryū accounted for eighty per cent of competitors, while *bushi* were only six per cent of the total.⁵⁵ The extent of commoner participation in *kenjutsu* is difficult to gauge, and is an area of research on the martial arts has been largely ignored by scholars to date.

Rogers asserts that a saturation of the martial arts market forced proprietors of schools to open doors to their social inferiors even before the 1800s. Furthermore, according to Rogers, it was commoner (*shomin*) influence that triggered the move away from learning long sequences of *kata*. *Kata* required meticulous man-to-man teaching whereas *shinai-uchikomi-geiko* could be conducted in groups, and required less attention to detail when teaching.⁵⁶ Although there is some legitimacy in this analysis, it is plausible that the main impetus for this evolutionary change to full-contact fencing came from the *bushi*’s “quest for excitement”, rather than just the external influence of commoners and market demand. Although not as intense as the stimulation experienced in actual combat, fencing was exciting enough to incite the thrill of competition in warriors, and also for the *bakufu* to revive the traditional practice of *musha-shugyō* as there was little chance of death or injury.

⁵⁴ Imamura Yoshio (ed.), *Nihon Budō Taikei*, Vol. 10, p. 77

⁵⁵ Yamamoto Kunio, *Saitama Bugei-chō* (Martial arts in Saitama), pp. 86-88

⁵⁶ J. Rogers, Op. Cit., pp. 161-165

Nōmin bujutsu (peasant martial arts) and the participation of wealthy townsmen had a different dimension from warrior *shugyō* (ascetic training) in the martial arts. Arguably, the main difference between the samurai and non-samurai *kenjutsu* exponents centred on attitudes to death, and hence the symbolic role of *kenjutsu* in maintaining warrior self-identity. The question of death remained central to the samurai subculture, albeit in a rather abstract and philosophical form. This concern with death was the cornerstone of the code of ethics known as *shidō* or *bushidō*, and was emphasised in samurai education (especially in *hankō*) in which *kenjutsu* played an important role. In contrast, most commoners who were able to study *kenjutsu* probably did so as a diversionary pursuit. Although many were undoubtedly serious in their undertaking, they did not see it as a crucial factor in their social *raison d'être*.⁵⁷

6d. The Creation of New Rules for Engagement

To the warrior, *kenjutsu* from the mid-eighteenth century onwards was far more than a form of entertainment. It could accurately be described as a 'spiritual sport'. Even though the possibility of death or injury had been virtually eliminated, the warrior's sense of honour and self was inextricably bound with the rituals and ideals espoused in the *dōjō*. To the European, "Fighting, in games of war, was centred on the ostentatious display of the warrior virtues which gained for a man the highest praise and honour among other members of his own group..."⁵⁸ Likewise, *shinai-uchikomi-geiko* provided the *bushi* with a 'game of war' for accruing honour and accolades.

On the question of sport, another interesting phenomenon can be seen in the systemisation of

⁵⁷ Of course, there were always exceptions to the rule, and in the *bakumatsu* era there were even examples of commoners who had reached such a high level that they instructed samurai in the art of fencing, proving that class lines were often transgressed. Even though commoners became increasingly prominent in fencing circles, there was undoubtedly a certain amount of condescension from *bushi* quarters with regards to their social inferiors masquerading as pseudo-warriors on the basis of their skills. For example, highly skilled fencing masters not of warrior stock were disregarded for positions in the *bakufu*'s military academy – the Kōbusho – established in 1856. I will analyse the significance of the Kōbusho in the next chapter.

⁵⁸ Norbert Elias, *Anderic Dunning*, Op. Cit., p. 138

unified fencing techniques with the advent of *shinai-uchikomi-geiko*. Kōsaka Masataka's *Chiba Shūsaku Jikiden Kenjutsu Meijin-hō* (1884) contains a detailed explanation of the sixty-eight fencing techniques Chiba Shūsaku created for the Hokushin Ittō-ryū. These techniques became highly influential in the *bakumatsu* era (mid-nineteenth century) fencing, and form the basis for the *modus operandi* of modern *kendō*. The breakdown of the techniques is as follows: *men* (head) twenty techniques; *kote* (wrists) twelve; *tsuki* (thrusts to the face or throat) eighteen; *dō* (body strikes) seven; and *renzoku-waza* (combinations) eighteen. Although it is unclear when exactly these techniques were systemised by Chiba Shūsaku, it must have been before 1844 when Kōsaka entered his tutelage.

Fencers at Chiba Shūsaku's *dōjō* were known to strike opponent's legs, although there is only one technique that is categorised as such.⁵⁹ The Ryūgō-ryū was also known to have employed such techniques,⁶⁰ but they were uncommon and disappeared completely from the technical repertoire of fencers by the Meiji period as rules for engagement became more unified.⁶¹ This development is concurrent with similar ideals seen in combat sports in Europe. "Like many other bodily contests, fighting with bare knuckles assumed the characteristics of a sport in England where it was first subjected to a tighter set of rules which, inter alia, totally eliminated the use of legs as a weapon."⁶²

Perhaps this trend seen in both boxing in the West and *kenjutsu* in Japan is indicative of the degree to which both had become 'gentlemen's sports', or at least imbued with ideals of 'fair play', since in real combat most would resort to kicking or cutting any part of the body that was open.

By the *bakumatsu* era, however, concerns were raised once again about the practical realism of *kenjutsu* and the other martial arts. Deference towards the traditional martial arts was brought to an

⁵⁹ Katōda Heihachirō, "Higashi asobi nikki-shō" (A diary of travels to the east) in AJKE, *Suzuka-ke Bunsho Kaisetsu* (Explanation of the Suzuka house documents), pp. 104-105

⁶⁰ Watanabe Ichirō, *Bakumatsu Kantō Kenjutsu Eimei-roku no Kenkyū* (Research into famous Bakumatsu *kenjutsu* exponents in Kantō), p. 51

⁶¹ Nakamura Tamio, *Kendō Jiten*, p. 311

⁶² Norbert Elias, *Anderic Dunning*, Op. Cit., p. 21

abrupt end with the arrival of Commodore Perry's 'Black Ships' in Japanese waters in 1853. The *bakufu* created a military academy in 1856 (Kōbusho) in an attempt to remedy these concerns, but this measure proved to be of little use.

After centuries of self-imposed isolation (*sakoku*), Japan found itself outdated, outgunned and out of its depth with the Western powers. Although seclusion from the rest of the world had given *kenjutsu* time to develop into fascinating martial sports, rich in ritualistic symbolism and spiritualism, they were no match for the devastating firepower of Western nations demanding that Japan open her ports.

Guns, cannons, and a new conscript army were the order of the day if Japan was to compete with the rest of the world. The era abounded with catch phrases such as *wakon-yōsai* (Japanese spirit, Western technology) and *fukoku-kyōhei* (rich nation, strong army) as the authorities strove to educate the masses, arm the nation, and match the West in terms of a new modern civil society and colonial power. Consequently, *kenjutsu* temporarily fell into obscurity due to the widespread perception that it lacked any practical application in the modern age. Nevertheless, *kenjutsu* was to be revived yet again with its objectives and form refocused in line with Japan's modernist ambitions. *Kenjutsu* was a perfect conduit for imparting 'wakon'. The fate of *kenjutsu* as a traditional spiritual sport in the Meiji period will be the focus of the next chapter.

7. Conclusion

Norbert Elias's term "civilising process" is a useful concept for contextualising the overall evolution of *kenjutsu*. Japanese scholars often describe the process as a transformation from *bujutsu* (martial technique) to *bugei* (martial art), and then finally to *budō* (martial 'Way').⁶³ For example, Yuasa

⁶³ Yuasa Akira, Op. Cit., p. 43.

Akira observed that through the process of learning techniques the warrior also sought to acquire a higher spiritual state of mind, which led to the focus of martial arts training becoming a “Way” for self-development.⁶⁴

According to an enormous number of ethical almanacs published throughout the Tokugawa period, as the privileged class, samurai were obligated to maintain military preparedness as keepers of the peace, and also cultivate their humanity. They were expected to serve as ‘beacons of moral perfection’ always demonstrating dedication to duty. Training in *kenjutsu* helped fulfil this requirement at many levels.

The peaceful Tokugawa period afforded warriors little opportunity to prove their manhood and accumulate the currency of honour through the performance of great exploits in battle as their ancestors had done. Still, the question of death remained, at least in theory, a central component of the samurai ethos. The ideal of death, or training the mind to a level of transcendence, could be augmented through training in a form of *kenjutsu* that had become highly athletic and internally focused. Just as sports did in the West, *kenjutsu* provided a solution to a “human problem of particular significance in societies at a high level of pacification.”⁶⁵ *Kenjutsu* evolved through a process of ‘intellectualisation’, ‘spiritualisation’ and ‘pacification’, ‘commercialisation’ and ultimately ‘sportification’. Like sports in early-modern Europe, practitioners could “experience the full joy of a battle without hurting human beings, that is, with a minimum of physical injuries.”⁶⁶ Techniques originally meant to kill were transformed into a form of holistic culture where the focus of participation became a ‘cultivation’ of one’s self rather than the ‘annihilation’ of one’s enemy.

The “civilising process” as far as *kenjutsu* was concerned reached an impasse during the *bakumatsu* era. As I will show in the next chapter, the fact that it was eventually able to rise from obscurity was

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Norbert Elias, Anderic Dunning, Op. Cit., p. 58

⁶⁶ Ibid.

a cultural sensation of sorts. The elitist sentiment that remained an integral component of *kenjutsu* throughout the civilising process of the Tokugawa period found a new expression as “reinvented tradition”. It proved to be the perfect tool to inculcate nationalistic pride based around the samurai spirit among Japan’s citizens.

Chapter 3

The Demise and Rise of Samurai Culture, and the Nationalisation of Kenjutsu

1. Introduction
2. Dismantling the Centuries-old Warrior Hegemony
3. The Reinvention of Kenjutsu
4. The Dai-Nippon Butokukai – Self-Appointed Gatekeepers of Bujutsu
5. Conclusion

1. Introduction

British envoy Thomas McClatchie (1852–1886) was a great aficionado of the Japanese sword. He even studied the forms of Japanese swordsmanship under the famous master swordsman Sakakibara Kenkichi (1830–1894) during his sojourn in Meiji Japan. McClatchie underscores the relevance of the sword in Japanese culture in his speech to the Asiatic Society of Japan in 1873.

There is no country in the world where the sword has received so much honour and renown as in Japan. Regarded as of divine origin, dear to the general as a symbol of authority, cherished by the samurai as a part of himself, considered by the common people as their protection against violence, how can we wonder to find it called the living soul of the samurai?¹

McClatchie could be accused of being overly enthusiastic about his assessment of swords in Japan. The idea of the sword being “protection against violence” for the common people was most certainly a one-sided construal that he presumably gleaned from his dealings with former samurai. Nevertheless, as detailed in the previous chapters, reverence for the sword was undoubtedly a feature of Japan’s early-modern warrior culture. However, with the arrival of the modern era, notions of the

¹ Thomas McClatchie (Read before the Asiatic Society of Japan on the 26th November, 1873), “The Sword of Japan; Its History and Traditions”, *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan* Vol. 7, 1884, pp. 50-56

sword and the traditional martial arts such as *kenjutsu* were subject to a significant change in symbolic interpretation. Immediately after the Meiji Restoration (1868) there was a distinct ebb in enthusiasm for the weapon, followed by a full recovery, or more precisely, a ‘reinvention’ of its emblematic function as being representative of Japanese spiritual culture which has survived to this day.

Continuing from the previous chapter in which the “civilising process” of *kenjutsu* during the Tokugawa period was introduced, this chapter will analyse two interconnected themes in the cultural and social evolution of Japanese swordsmanship: “Reinvention” and “cultural nationalisation”.

Following on from the well-established theories of Eric Hobsbawm, the first important consideration concerns the “reinvention” of *kenjutsu* into a form of popular culture associated with a nation rather than a particular social class. According to Hobsbawm, invented traditions are “a set[s] of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.”²

Due to the course Japan took in its quest to modernise, certain elements of traditional culture were shed for sake of advancement. *Kenjutsu* and the other traditional martial arts consequently gave way to modern methods of warfare concomitant to Japan’s modern conscript army. However, centuries of sword worship by warriors could not be so easily mollified: the symbolic potency proved irresistible to individuals, private, and national bodies. After a short lapse, swordsmanship was reinstated in society on a much broader scale, catalysed by a number of fortuitous conjunctures such as the *gekken-kōgyō* (fencing shows), the introduction of *kenjutsu* into the police force, and then later into the national education system.³

² E. J. Hobsbawm, T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, p. 1

³ To avoid confusion, a brief explanation of the terminology referring to swordsmanship is in order. Although traditional Japanese swordsmanship is generally referred to as ‘*kenjutsu*’, other terms were also widely used. ‘*Gekiken*’ or ‘*gekken*’ was coined in the mid-Tokugawa period and mainly referred to fencing with *shinai* and protective armour. Depending on the context, *kenjutsu* also had that meaning, but encompassed the *kata* methodology as well. The term *kendō*, although not unheard of in the Tokugawa period, did not come into common usage until the Taishō era. Thus, the documents quoted in this chapter jump from one appellation

This evolution was facilitated by a paradigm shift as to who owned the culture. To borrow Pierre Bourdieu's widely quoted concepts, within the cultural field – “a series of institutions, rules, rituals, conventions, categories, designations and appointments which constitutes an objective hierarchy, and which produce and authorise certain discourses and activities”⁴ – exists cultural capital or “culturally authorised attributes” which confer power and status on the individual or group. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, *kenjutsu* had become a captivating *divertissement* among townsmen and farmers towards the *bakumatsu* era (early to mid-nineteenth century), although participation was supposed to be prohibited to anyone other than samurai. Although a degree of cultural simulation among social inferiors was tolerated, traditionally *kenjutsu* had been considered as the exclusive “cultural capital” of warriors within their specific “cultural field”.

According to Bourdieu, society incorporates “symbolic goods, especially those regarded as the attributes of excellence, [...as] the ideal weapon in strategies of distinction,”⁵ and cultural elements or aesthetic preferences thought to be particularly distinguished are incorporated into the cultural capital of the dominating class so that “differences in cultural capital mark the differences between the classes.”⁶ With the reinvention of *kenjutsu* in the Meiji era (1868–1912), the idea of the martial arts as being representative of a noble warrior past and a “marker of natural superiority”⁷ was retained and increasingly exploited. *Kenjutsu* came to be known not simply as fencing, but “Japanese fencing”, bringing into physical form the “unexpressed conditions” of being Japanese. As

to another, although *gekiken* seems to be the prevalent term in the historical period covered. In 1919, Nishikubo Hiromichi, a former Tokyo City mayor who served as vice president of the Dai-Nippon Butokukai and also the principal of the Butokukai's specialist training school (Bujutsu Senmon Gakkō) changed the suffix ‘-jutsu’ for ‘-dō’ in the martial arts. His motivation was to accentuate the spiritual qualities of the martial arts as a ‘Way’ of life (*dō*), rather than the quest technical proficiency. ‘*Jūjutsu*’, ‘*kenjutsu*’ and ‘*kyūjutsu*’ became ‘*kendō*’, ‘*jūdō*’ (different to Kanō Jigorō's ‘*Kōdōkan Jūdō*’, and ‘*kyūdō*’ respectively, and the collective term ‘*bujutsu*’ became ‘*budō*’. However, Nishikubo was not the only educator to take this viewpoint, and a similar stance was taken by others to emphasise “mental discipline” in rival schools such as the Tokyo Higher Normal School (Tōkyō Kōtō Shihan Gakkō) which changed the name of its fencing club from ‘*gek(i)ken*’ to ‘*kendō*’. Some believe that Kanō Jigorō's ideals underpinned this adaptation, but this is open to speculation. The MOE officially changed its terminology from *gekiken* to *kendō* much later in 1927. For a detailed analysis of the transition in terminology in education circles at the turn of the century, refer to Kinoshita Hideaki's “Historical study of the process of change from *Kenjutsu* to *Kendō*”, *Taiiku-gaku Kenkyū* 51 (2006), pp. 33-48.

⁴ Jen Webb (et al.), *Understanding Bourdieu*, p. 10

⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. 66

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 69

⁷ Jen Webb (et al.), *Op. Cit.*, p. 148

kenjutsu was gradually introduced into the national education system at the end of the Meiji period, the “doxa” or core principles of revived notions of ‘*bushidō*’, and its physical manifestation as represented by a newly created national version of *kenjutsu* had become firmly consecrated as cultural and symbolic capital for all Japanese.

In particular, within the paradigm of popular nationalism (*vis-à-vis* statist nationalism) *kenjutsu* came to represent a “symbol of a continuous social history” that served to link “an aesthetic past with the present by giving life to extraordinary moments of creation in the past that confirmed the creative potential of everyone in the present.”⁸

In this sense, *kenjutsu*, which had been associated with the upper classes in feudal Japanese society had evolved and become enfranchised as something inherently good, was embedded in the psyche of all citizens by virtue of them being born Japanese. The foremost ‘gatekeepers’ of the new nationalised culture were the private organisation known as the Dai-Nippon Butokukai (later to become an extra-governmental organ), and the Ministry of Education (Mombushō). The transition was so complete, that even those who did not engage in *kenjutsu* themselves came to see it as indicative of the ‘Japanese spirit’. The reinvention of *kenjutsu*, and the martial arts in general, culminated in a kind of modern social phenomenon through the establishment of principles of vision and division; but now the locus of the division was not class, but race, as the ‘living soul of the Japanese’.

This chapter will detail the series of events that transpired as *kenjutsu* was reinvented and eventually came to be seen as a common cultural pursuit transcending class. It will examine how *kenjutsu* became associated with newly forming notions of Japanese nationalism. In line with Anthony Smith’s assertion that nations “provide individuals with ‘sacred centres’, objects of spiritual and historical pilgrimage, that reveal the uniqueness of their nation’s ‘moral geography’”,⁹ the content of this chapter will argue that this is precisely the role that *kenjutsu* was increasingly used to play in Japan in the modern era.

⁸ Najita Tetsuo, *Japan: The Intellectual Foundations of Modern Japanese Politics*, p. 117

⁹ A. D. Smith, *National Identity*, p. 16

2. Dismantling the Centuries-old Warrior Hegemony

Why, and how did seven centuries of warrior hegemony come to be replaced by an imperial government? What were the motivations of the warriors who drove Japan's eventual modernisation? How did this transpire, given the fact that they had to relinquish their position as regulators of the profession of arms in order to establish a modern army? What did their championing of "functional equality" achieve in the "ethno-symbolic reconstruction" of the Japanese people and society? These are these questions that will be addressed in this section.

2a. Breaking Up the Old Order

In 1853, Commodore Matthew C. Perry (1794–1858) navigated his American flotilla of Black Ships to the shores of Japan. *Bushi* from the Satsuma and Chōshū domains laid the foundation for a monumental social revolution in opposition to the ineffectuality of the *bakufu* (military government) in the face of possible impending foreign aggression. The last shogun, Tokugawa Yoshinobu (1837–1913), came under mounting pressure due to his seemingly feeble diplomatic response to the threat posed by Western powers, and the Tosa domain recommended that he abdicate in favour of the restoration of imperial governance. The imperialist warriors promoted the idea of creating a modern army and navy to match those of the West, and advocated the adoption of a new social system in which those with merit, regardless of class background, would be afforded opportunities to engage in careers previously not open to them.

Towards the end of 1867, Yoshinobu tentatively agreed to these proposals; however, on January 1, 1868, the Satsuma forces expedited the adaption by announcing the restoration of imperial rule while surrounding the palace in Kyoto. Yoshinobu sent his forces from Edo to engage the imperialists in what became the first confrontation of the Boshin War (1868–1869). The imperialists prevailed, and Japan embarked on a frenzied path of modernisation under the newly installed Emperor Meiji (1852–1912).

Until the Meiji Restoration, *bushi* society was fraught with complicated dichotomies generated by

powerful notions of autonomy (individual pride and honour) and duty. In reality, Tokugawa warriors were rarely given an opportunity to demonstrate their martial prowess, and there was little social mobility. Warriors were, for the most part, destined to remain suspended exactly where they were born within the multi-layered hierarchy of *bushi* society, regardless of individual skills and talents.

Fukuzawa Yukichi (1834–1901), the well-known Meiji statesman and educator, was the son of an impoverished low-ranking warrior from the Nakatsu domain. He remarked that the traditional *bushi* hierarchy was “the enemy of his father”, but hoped that at least the formless spiritual dignity peculiar to the samurai class be maintained in the course of modernisation.¹⁰

Following the Meiji Restoration, traditional *han* (domains) were abolished in favour of a progressive prefectural system headed by governors selected by the central government. Furthermore, in 1869, the class distinctions of *shi-nō-kō-shō* (warrior, farmer, artisan, merchant) were also abnegated and replaced with *kazoku* (nobles), *shizoku* (former *bushi*) and *heimin* (commoners).¹¹

With regards to the dismantling of social status in Europe, Sonoda Hidehiro observes that due to the struggle between those who enjoyed privileges derived from a high social status and those who did not, the closer status concerned the centre of state apparatus, the harder it was to establish ideas of equality. However, in the case of Japan, he argues, *bushi* instigated a type of “self-revolution” with an “internal breakdown”, enabling “the rapid establishment of ideals of functional egalitarianism.”¹²

In other words, the reason why the old system of *bushi* governance was replaced was not because of the masses revolting, but rather through the self-will of *bushi* themselves. It was precisely the *bushi*'s “specialised military duty” (*bu-shoku*) as professional warriors that helped them realise the necessity of a substantial social overhaul, lest Japan become victim to powerful Western nations, just as the once almighty China had a few years before.

¹⁰ Sonoda Hidehiro, “The Decline of the Japanese Warrior Class, 1840–1880”, *Nichibunken Japan Review* No. 1 (1990), p. 79

¹¹ Legal privileges for *shizoku* were abolished in 1882, and by 1914, the term was no longer used in family registers (*koseki*).

¹² Sonoda Hidehiro (ed.), *Shizoku no Rekishi Shakaigaku-teki Kenkyū: Bushi no Kindai* (Social historical study of *shizoku*: The modern era for *bushi*), p. 17

As Iida Yumiko points out with regards to the Japanese path to modernisation, it was “much more than a series of incremental adaptations of Western institutions and technologies; instead, it entailed a voluntary participation in an alien game played by what Meiji intellectuals called ‘the logic of civilization,’ in which the Japanese accepted the task of struggling to overcome their Western-defined inferiority.”¹³

2b. Rethinking the Question of Japan’s Military Preparedness

Ironically, it was the perceived need for revitalisation of the military profession which ultimately led to the abolishment of the samurai as a class. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the military arts evolved into holistic pursuits quite removed from the realities of modern combat. Far from being battle-hardened warriors, *bushi* had developed into salaried bureaucrats and duty-bound servants to their lords, and ultimately the shogunate. With the exception of the occasional skirmish or family feud, as well as the inter-domain rivalry and tension that characterised Edo society, war had become a distant memory, and in many ways an abstract ideal.

Nevertheless, apart from temporary lulls in enthusiasm, particularly at the beginning of the eighteenth century, martial arts remained a primary concern in the lifestyle of samurai and continued to function as a symbolic locus for their self-identity as a warrior elite, setting them apart from the other echelons of society. Martial arts evolved into extremely spiritual and religious entities which arguably prepared warriors for controlled duels, but not the chaos of modern warfare. Martial arts transformed into ‘Ways’ in which warriors trained the inner-self. The premise for appraisal was not so much combat skill *per se*, but based on a rather intangible projection of inner-strength, the number or level of licences of expertise the warrior managed to procure, and his demeanour and form during training.¹⁴

Consequently, by the time Perry’s ships arrived in Japan, it was evident that skill in the traditional martial arts was not going to be enough to defend Japan from a potential Western invasion, and a

¹³ Iida Yumiko, *Rethinking Identity in Modern Japan*, p. 4

¹⁴ J. Rogers, *The Development of the Military Profession in Tokugawa Japan*, (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1998), p. 140

new military system was established to bolster Japan's strength and security. After the Meiji Restoration, the latest weaponry was imported from the West, and a conscript army was established to train soldiers in modern warfare techniques and strategy.

Beforehand, the *bakufu* had attempted to rectify Japan's military weakness by establishing a military academy known as the Kōbusho, albeit based on the intention of maintaining traditional values of *bun-bu* (civil and martial arts) to fortify national security.¹⁵ The Kōbusho was created in 1856 to instruct Tokugawa retainers. Although it was closed a decade later in 1866, there were over five-hundred instructors (mostly assistants) of *kenjutsu*, *sōjutsu* (spearmanship) and *kyūjutsu* (archery). Lessons were also offered in *jūjutsu* (unarmed grappling) and firearms, but the latter was afforded less importance than traditional weaponry and combat methods. In fact, over two thirds of the instructors employed taught traditional weapon usage, an actuality that led Rogers to the conclusion that the Kōbusho merely “served as a reassertion of early-modern [combat] skills.”¹⁶

Even so, it is possible to detect a progressive streak in the way the academy was organised. For example, in the Kōbusho's regulations consisting of 42 articles, it is clearly stipulated that matches (sparring) would be the focus of all training. Interestingly, Article 13 makes reference to the situation that “numerous schools of the spear and sword rely on *kata* (forms) practice.” Evidently, although full-contact sparring with protective armour was extremely popular in the *bakumatsu* era, many traditionalists still adhered to the old form of practising choreographed sequences of techniques. The regulations warn, however, “that such methods result in a lowering of morale (*shiki*)”, and all students, even those from the illustrious Yagyū Shinkage-ryū, would be required to proactively participate in rigorous matches, which were deemed to be far more practical.¹⁷ Rogers notes that a fencer who defeated a ranked opponent from an established school of swordsmanship had the right to formally request that the Kōbusho award him a comparable rank. This was a revolutionary innovation “as it took ranks out of the hands of the hereditary heads of schools of

¹⁵ Imamura Yoshio, *Jūkyū-seiki ni okeru Nihon Taiiku no Kenkyū*, pp. 552-54

¹⁶ J. Rogers, Op. Cit., p. 205

¹⁷ Andō Naokata (ed.), *Kōbusho (Tōkyō-shi Shigai-ben)*, p. 16

military drill and began to award ranks for actual skill rather than the length of an apprenticeship.”¹⁸

The Kōbusho also affected other revolutionary changes in the *modus operandi* of swordsmanship. For example, through the introduction of fixed-length bamboo practice swords (*shinai*) and match rules to adjudicate contests, the academy authorities attempted to inculcate a style of fencing that transcended school (*ryūha*) rivalries and prejudices.¹⁹ This was the first government attempt to condense the diversity of the various fencing schools, and create a unified style of swordsmanship. Unification of the various methods into one homogenous form was going to become a pressing issue in the national popularisation of *kenjutsu* at the end of the Meiji era, and will be explained later in this chapter.

Even so, Kōbusho instruction clung closely to traditional ideals in terms of technique and the notion of *kenjutsu* as a medium for spiritual development. The *bakufu* was not alone in its persistence in accentuating holistic combat. The Hikone domain, for example, was adamant in its policy that its warriors’ military training should be centred on archery, horse riding, swordsmanship and spearmanship, and that attention should be paid to “propriety and a sense of shame”. This is a clear indication that purist ideals of self-perfection and traditionalism were still key considerations in martial arts training.²⁰

In spite of Japan’s precarious state of national security, it is understandable that a certain degree of sentimental attachment to the symbolic value of the sword remained strong among *bushi*. Even Mori Arinori (1847–1889), one of the principal advocates for the edict forbidding the wearing of swords in public (*haitō-rei*) in 1876, wrote of the significance of traditional cultural concepts such as ‘*bunbu-ryōdō*’ (studying both the civil and military arts). Nevertheless, his belief in the necessity to keep pace with Western security practices superseded any nostalgic cultural sensitivities.²¹ The *katana* was functional in defending the life of the individual warrior faced with other sword-wielding foe; but Japan, as a nation, needed the latest in Western technology to defend and

¹⁸ J. Rogers, *Op. Cit.*, p. 206

¹⁹ Enamoto Shōji, “Kōbusho no kenkyū” (A study of the Kōbusho), *Budōgaku Kenkyū* 8 (2), p. 72

²⁰ Cited in Imamura, *Op. Cit.*, p. 145

²¹ Sonoda Hidehiro, “The Decline of the Japanese Warrior Class”, p. 83

expand its interests.

Some of the more pragmatic and, from the *bakufu*'s perspective, problematic domains, such as the Saga *han* quickly converted to the Western military model whereby every member of a warrior's entourage, not just the warrior himself, carried a firearm.²² As *bushi* were supposedly the only authorised combatants in early-modern Japan, to instigate such practices on a national scale required the eradication of the exclusive traditional class system and deeply-rooted social and cultural prejudices.

2c. The Abolition of Class Distinctions and the Promotion of "Functional Equality"

In spite of measures taken by the *bakufu* to modernise national defence, it was difficult to ignore traditional bonds of loyalty and devotion between lord and vassal that exemplified the *bushi* hierarchy. However, I agree with Carol Gluck in her observation, "National spirit, national thought, national doctrine, national essence, nationality—this outburst of nation-mindedness included explorations of national character, reassertions of indigenous ways, and projections of Japan into the world order as the nineteenth-century West defined it."²³ There was growing acceptance of the idea that firepower was to replace certain customs for the sake of Japan's continued existence, and the abscission of traditional patterns of behaviour and human relationships was inevitable. It is from this time that the martial arts were to enter a temporary period of hibernation, eventually to gestate into an ideological vehicle that utilised notions of tradition to supplement modernity.

Before this eventuation, however, to successfully maintain a new army, and ironically, fulfil their professional responsibilities as warriors, the dismantling of traditional bonds of fealty and the disposal of the special privileges that *bushi* had enjoyed for so many generations was crucial. As Anderson points out, in the period between 1868 and 1871, "all residual local 'feudal' military units were dissolved, giving Tokyo a centralized monopoly on the means of violence."²⁴ Nevertheless, the problem of who should lead the modern conscript army launched in 1873 to fit the

²² Ibid., p.85

²³ C. Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, p. 23

²⁴ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 95

“nation-of-citizens model” remained.²⁵ In other words, would the officers in the newly founded armed forces be men formerly of *bushi* stock, or would the position be open to anyone thought to possess adequate skills to lead, regardless of their class background?

When considering the intense sense of honour that was characteristic of *bushi* society, and the emphasis that had been placed on selfless dedication to one’s duties, such a transformation in social demarcation was not to be taken lightly. The warrior’s sense of honour and duty was rooted in centuries of social evolution, and was the very essence of the samurai *raison d’être*. The onus was on them to terminate, through their own volition, what they held as sacrosanct, and to pave the way for parity with their social inferiors. Functionalism and the fulfilment of their duty as warriors and as protectors of the nation dictated a total refurbishment of the traditional system, and what amounted to committing social *seppuku* (ritual suicide) for the sake of the nation.

Thus, with the formation of the Meiji government, bureaucratic and military positions of responsibility were afforded to men by virtue of their abilities rather than hereditary status. One of the new policies introduced was the opening of entrance examinations to the army and navy, as well as institutions of higher education, to people of all class backgrounds in a policy Sonoda described as being based on “functional equality”.²⁶

Following the Conscription Ordinance of 1873, all men over the age of twenty were obligated to complete three years of military training. With the *danpatsu-rei* edict of 1871, *shizoku* cut off their now passé topknots (*mage*) and were not required to carry swords. When the Sword Ban Order (*haitō-rei*) of 1876 was issued, *shizoku* were forbidden from carrying swords in their sashes; this right was instead transferred to military officers and policemen, of whose ranks constituted a mix of class backgrounds.²⁷

These changes signified the initiation of a process akin to “ethno-symbolic reconstruction”, or to use Smith’s words, “the reselection, recombination and recodification of previously existing values, symbols, memories and the like, as well as the addition of new cultural elements by each

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Sonoda Hidehiro, *Shizoku no Rekishi Shakaigaku-teki Kenkyū*, p. 11

²⁷ Fukuchi Shigetaka, *Shizoku to Samurai Ishiki* (*Shizoku* and samurai consciousness), p. 2

generation.”²⁸ The implementation of these edicts was the final step in the removal of *bushi* from the mantle of the military profession, and it signified the activation of a modern form of Japanese nationalism.²⁹

To make the transition less excruciating, *shizoku* received stipends from the government from 1873, but they were forced to exchange these for government bonds in 1876 (*chitsuroku shobun*), leading to the impoverishment of many former *bushi*. Although a considerable number of *shizoku* were able to re-establish themselves in government services, education, and private enterprise, there were still many who remained destitute with no tangible skills suited to modern commerce, nor any experience to help them negotiate their rapidly changing social circumstances.³⁰

3. The Reinvention of Kenjutsu

Following the loss of social status and privileges, coupled with the disadvantage of having few business-related skills or experience, many *shizoku* faced a time of great hardship. The fate of Japan's traditional martial arts was as precarious as the future prospects of former samurai. How did *kenjutsu* survive this period of tumultuous social change to become an integral medium for imparting ideas of “Japaneseness” among the populace?

To answer this important question, a number of significant chance events that were to keep the martial arts, especially *kenjutsu*, in a position to be capitalised upon as Japan's modern nationalism began to flourish will be examined in this section. The consequence of Sakakibara Kenkichi (1830–1894) and his fencing shows known as *gekken-kōgyō* will be investigated first. It was his innovative idea in the midst of modernisation that helped save a seemingly useless tradition from total demise,

²⁸ A. D. Smith, *Nationalism*, p. 20

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22

³⁰ With no status or money to live on, seditious groups of forlorn *shizoku* engaged in assassinations and rioting. Notable victims of *shizoku* wrath were influential Meiji leaders such as Ōmura Masujirō (assassinated in 1869) and Ōkubo Toshimichi (1878). Major rebellions included the Saga Rebellion (February 1874), Hagi Rebellion (October 1876), Shinpūren Rebellion (October 1876) and the Seinan War of 1877.

and ultimately contributed to its reinvention as a crucial form of police training, as well as become a prototypical Japanese method of physical education in schools.

3a. Sakakibara Kenkichi and the Gekken-Kōgyō

An innovation by the prominent martial artist Sakakibara Kenkichi provided an intriguing source of income for a number of poverty-stricken *shizoku*. Based on the model of *sumō* tournaments which were popular with fee paying spectators, Sakakibara founded public fencing shows called *gek(i)ken-kōgyō*. His motivation was to preserve traditional forms of swordsmanship, and enable swordsmen to earn money by peddling their fencing talents in demonstration matches.

Sakakibara's father served the Tokugawa shogunate as a *hatamoto* (direct retainer). From a young age he demonstrated great aptitude in the martial arts, and his father entrusted his tuition to Inoue Denbei – a teacher of the Jikishin Kage-ryū style of swordsmanship.³¹ When Denbei was assassinated in 1842, Sakakibara entered the tutelage of Otani Seiichirō Nobutomo (1798–1864), who awarded him a teaching license (*menkyo-kaiden*) in the tradition in 1856. In March that year, Otani recommended that his protégé be appointed as one of the *kenjutsu* instructors at the Kōbusho. That year he also married Taka, the niece of the celebrated Meiji statesman and naval engineer, Katsu Kaishū (1823–1899), and later became the head-instructor of *kenjutsu* at the Kōbusho in 1858.

Lamenting both the rapid decline of *kenjutsu* in the post-Restoration era and the indigence suffered by once venerated experts, Sakakibara avowed to remedy the situation. He initially organised open training sessions and demonstrations at his training hall (*dōjō*) in Shitaya Kurumasaka (Tokyo) in February of 1873, in which exponents from all fencing styles were invited to attend. Members of the public were also allowed to observe the proceedings.

Among the spectators was a priest named Tanuma Toshiaki, and a wealthy teahouse proprietor called Yakataie Naojirō. Both men enthusiastically proposed a plan to commercialise the event on a

³¹ Ishigaki Yasuzō, *Jikishin Kage-ryū Gokui Denkai* (Elucidating the secret teachings of the Jikishin Kage-ryū), p. 112

grand scale. Sakakibara was quick to see the financial potential of such a venture, and also the chance to save *kenjutsu* from possible extinction.³² He filed an application to the Tokyo Metropolitan Government to hold a public display of fencing, which was sanctioned on March 8, 1873.³³

Sakakibara also issued a statement concerning the method in which the matches would be conducted. In a similar vein to the Kōbusho style of competition, the *shinai* used by fencers would be limited to 3-*shaku* 8-*sun* (approx. 115cm), and matches would be decided by the best of three points (*sanbon-shōbu*) judged by neutral adjudicators. Members of the public were also invited to challenge the fencers by registering the day before, and equipment would be leased for a fee if required.³⁴

Newspapers were enthusiastic, and spread the information to interested members of the public throughout the country. The first event was held for ten days from April 26, 1873; interest was so intense that hundreds of people lined up outside the makeshift arena set up near the riverbank in Asakusa. Many were turned away disappointed due to the restricted space inside the enclosed tents; but following the remarkable success of the first demonstration, Sakakibara convened a second martial arts gala a few weeks later in Yokohama in a much larger arena. The Yokohama amphitheatre was surrounded by red and white drapes symbolising the colours of the Genji and Heike clans, and contained a raised square wooden floor measuring nine metres each side.

Sakakibara's troupe of performing martial artists incorporated local swordsmen from Yokohama, and the event was well received by spectators. Within two months after the first *gekken* meet the shows started to spread throughout Japan, becoming a national phenomenon with troupes sprouting up to take advantage of the interest.

Were the events truly profitable for the participants? Okada Kazuo's research shows that in the big tournaments organised by Sakakibara Kenkichi, more well-known fencers could receive the modern day equivalent of 20,000–30,000 yen for an appearance (NZ \$250–400). Lesser fighters

³² Ibid., p. 124

³³ All Japan Kendo Federation (ed.), *Kendō no Rekishi*, p. 461

³⁴ Tokyo City (ed.), *Tōkyō-shi Shikō (Shigai-ben #55)* (Historical documents of Tokyo City), pp. 83-85

only received one-tenth of that amount, but daily appearances over a week would bring in a welcome sum of money.³⁵ Given the money-making potential, some of the fighters within Sakakibara's company broke away to coordinate their own shows, while others simply copied his model in Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, Kyūshū and other regions.³⁶

There was a variety of match formats including sword versus sword, sword versus *naginata* (halberd mainly used by women), and sword versus the *kusarigama* (sickle and chain).³⁷ Even Thomas McClatchie who is quoted at the beginning of this chapter, and another Englishman named Jack Binns (possibly Vince) debuted in what must have been a sight to behold for Japanese commoners not used to seeing traditional fencing let alone foreigners doing it.³⁸

It is impossible to know exactly how many martial artists participated in *gekken* tournaments as records are too scant to verify statistics. However, newspaper articles from the period indicate how the sudden rise in companies led to a marked decline in the quality of the matches, and a gradual loss of interest among the public. To counter falling patronage, the proprietors attempted to make the shows more entertaining and dynamic. At first, the acrobatic spectacles rekindled excitement, but were short lived as the media began to take an increasingly critical stance. Editorials and magazine articles lambasted the swordsmen for being nothing more than “performers”,³⁹ who sold their honour for cash to spend on “booze and women”, and sullied the good name of their swords which once signified the pride and reputation of followers of *bushidō*.⁴⁰

The government had no inkling that the *gekken-kōgyō* meets would become such a dishevelled phenomenon. Had government officials known, they would probably not have allowed the events to go ahead in the first place, and the carnival-like atmosphere featuring Japan's ‘greatest warriors’ was probably a source of embarrassment to them as the country sought parity with the West. No

³⁵ Okada Kazuo, “Meiji shoki Hitachi-no-Kuni Kasama wo chūshin to shita gekken kōgyō no jittai” (The actual condition of Japanese fencing exhibitions in the Kasama Clan of Hitachi Province in the early Meiji era), *Budōgaku Kenkyū* 23 (1), 1990, pp. 1-7

³⁶ Imamura Yoshio, *Nihon Budō Taikei* Vol. 10, p. 93

³⁷ Ozawa Aijirō, *Kōkoku Kendō-shi* (*Kendō* history of the empire), p. 225

³⁸ Watanabe Ichirō, *Shiryō: Meiji Budō-shi* (Documents of Meiji *budō* history), p. 728

³⁹ Ozawa Aijirō, Op. Cit., p. 226

⁴⁰ Nakamura Tamio, *Kendō Jiten*, p. 160

more than three months after the first *gekken-kōgyō* meet was authorised, the government issued a decree on July 15, 1873, banning such gatherings in Tokyo effective from July 31, and other regions followed suit reasoning that they were “impeding the productivity of the people”.⁴¹

The real motive, in addition to discomfiture, was undoubtedly political rather than economical. With the Satsuma Rebellion in full swing, west Japan was politically volatile, and authorities saw the *gekken-kōgyō* venues as potential hotbeds for disgruntled *shizoku* to congregate and engage in subversive plotting. Meets were banned with the threat of imprisonment for those that did not comply.⁴² For example, the Kyoto prefectural government threatened to incarcerate perpetrators for six months in Nijō Castle.⁴³

Nevertheless, the restrictions were less stringently enforced in eastern Japan, and even in the peak of the fighting between government forces and Satsuma rebels in Kyūshū, the Tokyo government allowed the fencing exhibitions to be held once again. Sakakibara quickly organised a “demonstration” of fencing in Ueno on March 2 and 3, 1874. An article reporting an exhibition of matches using *shinai* and “*yamato-zue*” (Japanese sticks) appears in the *Yomiuri Newspaper* on April 17, 1877. Interestingly, the word *ken* (sword) was avoided by Sakakibara. In another newspaper article with a humorous twist, one senses a change in attitude by authorities and the general public regarding the value of martial arts:

We reported previously how, sparked by the exploits of the government police unit the Battōtai in the Satsuma Rebellion, *kenjutsu* had become popular far and wide. Apparently, Sakakibara Kenkichi has accepted a number of young women aged 7 to 16 into his tutelage. They are studying the martial arts enthusiastically, and have formed a group of formidable *naginata* exponents ready to cut the testicles off Saigō [Takamori] and his henchmen.⁴⁴

By this stage, the popularity of the *gekken* meets was starting to decline, but in spite of the harsh

⁴¹ Tokyo City (ed.), *Op. Cit.*, p. 80

⁴² Hasegawa Noboru, *Hakuto to Jiyū Minken Undō* (Gamblers and the Popular Rights Movement), pp. 107-08

⁴³ All Japan Kendo Federation (ed.), *Op. Cit.*, p. 163

⁴⁴ *Yomiuri Shimbun*, August 18, 1877

criticism the displays had been subjected to, it cannot be denied that they played a crucial role in keeping *kenjutsu* in the public's mind. It is unlikely that *kenjutsu* would have disappeared completely had it not been for *gekken-kōgyō*, however, it certainly contributed greatly to its adaptation in the modern era.

3b. The Adoption of Kenjutsu by the Police

Cameron Hurst contends that “if the resuscitation of fencing can be credited to the Meiji *gekken* shows, it was the Tokyo Metropolitan Police that reorganized the disparate styles of Tokugawa *kenjutsu* into modern *kendō*.”⁴⁵ Just as had been the case when Sakakibara first sought permission for the *gekken* shows, once the ban had been lifted, the events experienced a temporary revival. However, they gradually fizzled with a reassessment of the perceived worth of the martial arts, especially by the police, who started hiring the *gekken* stars as fulltime police instructors.⁴⁶ This change in fortune for *kenjutsu* was in part due to the outcome of a rather peculiar incident during the Satsuma Rebellion involving the abovementioned Battōtai. It also denoted the start of an era in which the martial arts became increasingly popular with the masses on a scale never seen before.

In recent times, one can hear the battle cries of many people, including peasants, engaging in *kenjutsu* practice in the mountains on moonlit evenings, and in temple gardens. Could this be the far-reaching inspiration of the Battōtai?⁴⁷

The Battōtai were an elite government police unit made up of former *bushi*, many of whom were from the Aizu domain, and who were particularly skilled in swordsmanship.⁴⁸ They achieved an astounding victory over the rebel Satsuma force which was superior both in numbers and firepower at the Battle of Tabaruzaka (in Kumamoto Prefecture) from March 4–20, 1877. This emphatic victory was widely reported in the media, and retrospectively proved to be a turning point for

⁴⁵ G. Cameron Hurst, *Armed Martial Arts of Japan*, p. 157

⁴⁶ Nakamura Tamio, *Op. Cit.*, p. 164

⁴⁷ *Yomiuri Shimbun*, May 16, 1877

⁴⁸ Keishichō (ed.), *Keishichō Budō Kyūjūnen-shi* (Ninety-year history of Keishichō *budō*), p. 16

traditional martial arts, as well as for some destitute martial arts experts.

However, close inspection of documents reveals that the victory was achieved through a series of tactical blunders, shortage of food and munitions, and lack of vigilance by the Satsuma rebels.⁴⁹ Incredible as it must have seemed to the general public, in such circumstances it is understandable how the cold steel of the Battōtai – which was only one unit accompanying others that were actually equipped with firearms – could prevail. The Battōtai were arguably sensationalised by the media to some extent, but this triumph proved to be a tremendous windfall for many of the *gekken-kōgyō* fighters, and ultimately fortified the bridge for martial arts to cross into the modern world.

Kawaji Toshiyoshi (1829–1879), a former Satsuma warrior and commissioner of the newly formed national police force, expressed his unreserved admiration for the Battōtai and their feats. It was most likely notions of nostalgic romanticism that encouraged him to write his thesis “Kenjutsu Saikō-ron” (Reviving *kenjutsu*) in November 1878, before departing on an inspection tour of European police forces in 1879. The gist of his argument was that *kenjutsu* was not a useless remnant of a bygone era, but had proved itself in modern warfare. It would, he maintained, surely provide an excellent means for training the nation’s police officers, both physically and mentally, whilst also providing them with the necessary skills for self-defence.

Swordsmanship is studied with much enthusiasm in the West. If we in Japan lose our way of fencing, we will be forced to learn it off them in the future. The Western sabre is not nearly as sharp as the Japanese sword (*nihontō*). If we do away with our style of swordsmanship (*kenpō*) and take up the Western sabre, this is analogous to discarding gold and replacing it with clay roof tiles. Although we are in an era in which guns are predominant, we have seen proof of the efficacy of swordsmanship through the great exploits of the Battōtai in the Satsuma Rebellion. Furthermore, *kenjutsu* is particularly useful for developing individual character and encouraging diligence.⁵⁰

The curriculum guidelines for the Police Academy were formulated on January 19, 1880. It was

⁴⁹ Yamashita Ikuo, *Kenkyū Seinan no Eki* (Satsuma Rebellion research), pp. 283-300

⁵⁰ Kawaji Toshiyoshi quoted in Yokoyama Kendō, *Nihon Budō-shi* (The history of Japanese *budō*) p. 311-2. I suspect that his fear of “losing” traditional Japanese fencing to the Western method was referring to the introduction of French fencing by the Toyama Military Academy.

stipulated that all cadets were to learn *kenjutsu* in their regular course of study. Even before this, *kenjutsu* had already been introduced into the curriculum at the Constable Training Centre (Junsa Kyōshūjo) as an extra-curricular course for police cadets in 1879,⁵¹ and a specialist *dōjō* was constructed inside the precinct headquarters the following October. The academy was closed in 1881 with an overhaul of the national police training system in which responsibilities fell on the individual regional departments. *Kenjutsu* continued to become an important part of police instruction as can be ascertained by a comment offered by a policeman in the *Yomiuri Newspaper* in 1882.

Since *gekken* is valuable for policing, I have continued to train diligently. But yesterday, a police sergeant urged officers at each police station to maintain a level of training in swordsmanship even when they are off-duty.⁵²

As the police recruited the most skilled of the *gekken-kōgyō* fighters, the shows became depleted of talent, and public interest waned. The recruitment of accomplished fencers in the police department was a fantastic turn of fortune for some impoverished *shizoku*, but it eventually resulted in the demise of *gekken-kōgyō*. Some troupes of fighters, such as the one led by Satake Kanryūsai, continued their travelling shows in the provinces, but the majority had disappeared by the 1890s.

Early prominent police *kenjutsu* instructors included master swordsmen such as Kajikawa Yoshimasa, Ueda Umanosuke and Henmi Sōsuke. The police began to sponsor their own *kenjutsu* tournaments of which the first was held in November, 1882. In August, 1885, police martial arts regulations were established along with the first police *kenjutsu* promotion system. Police martial arts tournaments became more prevalent, and match regulations were amended in August 1885 so that *shinai*-length was limited to less than 4-*shaku* (approx. 121cm).

At a police tournament held in June, 1886, representatives from influential *kenjutsu ryūha*

⁵¹ Keishichō (ed.), *Op. Cit.*, p. 18

⁵² *Yomiuri Shimbun*, October 10, 1882

contributed to the creation of a unified police *kata* which formed the basis for the Keishi-ryū.⁵³ A total of ten techniques were eventually adapted from the Jikishin Kage-ryū, Kurama-ryū, Tsutsuhōzan-ryū, Tatsumi-ryū, Hokushin Ittō-ryū, Asayama Ichiden-ryū, Jigen-ryū, Shintō Munen-ryū, Yagyū-ryū, and the Kyōshin Meichi-ryū. Hurst observes that “this was a tentative first step toward the unification of *kata* from various *ryūha* into the systemized body of techniques for training and teaching purposes.”⁵⁴ Such codification had already been attempted with full-contact fencing in the Kōbusho, as well as in the formulation of protocols in the *gekken-kōgyō*, but creating hybrid *kata* from different *ryūha* by the government had never been attempted before.⁵⁵

The army also experimented with *kenjutsu* at the Rikugun Toyama Gakkō (military academy), however this was primarily based on French and German one-handed fencing. It was not until 1915 with the third revision of *Kenjutsu Kyōhan* (Fencing textbook) used by the military that two-handed fencing was introduced.⁵⁶ The Imperial Police (Kōgū Keisatsu) also participated in *kenjutsu* training as a way of training the body and mind under the guidance of legendary swordsman Yamaoka Tesshū (1836–1888).

3c. Kenjutsu and Commoners

Another venue in which the general public was able to come into contact with *bujutsu*, especially *kenjutsu*, was at Popular Rights Movement (*jiyū minken undō*) meets.⁵⁷ The movement consisted of loosely allied nonconformist popular nationalist groups known as *kessha*, which were made up of *shizoku* and *heimin* with the uniform goal of encouraging reform in the Meiji government along the lines of Western democratic thought.⁵⁸ Kevin Doak suggests that the movement’s spirit of individualistic nationalism “was increasingly engulfed by a romantic, historicist nationalism that

⁵³ Keishi-ryū *iaidō* (sword-drawing *kata*) is still practised today by some officers in the Tokyo Police.

⁵⁴ G. Cameron Hurst, *Armed Martial Arts of Japan*, p. 159

⁵⁵ Another development worthy of mention was the introduction of *kenjutsu* by the Imperial Palace Police in 1881, and the construction of their Saineikan training hall in 1893 which was headed by Watanabe Noboru of the Shindō Munen-ryū, and the celebrated Meiji statesman and swordsman Yamaoka Tesshū.

⁵⁶ All Japan Kendo Federation (ed.), *Op. Cit.*, p. 309

⁵⁷ Toyama Shigeki, Satō Shigerō, *Jiyūtō-shi* Vol. 2 (History of the Liberal Party), p. 387

⁵⁸ Arai Katsuhiro et al. , *Jiyū Minken to Kindai Shakai* (Popular rights and modern society), p. 48

asserted the particularity of the Japanese ethnic nation (*Nihon minzoku*).⁵⁹

Little research has been done on the extent of martial arts participation in this nationwide political movement in the early Meiji period, but according to Yuasa Akira, *kenjutsu* clearly served an important purpose. Yuasa asserts that displays of swordsmanship were conducted before political speeches, and served to “lift spirits and heighten the tension” as a sign of opposition to government authorities.⁶⁰

Participants engaged in a variety of matches, including individual contests, and large scale free-for-all battles with the aim of claiming the opposition’s flag. A clear objective for such melees was to nurture leadership, a fighting spirit, and teamwork for a common cause among members.⁶¹ It was also symbolic of the way in which the cultural capital of the feudal samurai, in accordance with democratic ideals, now belonged to the citizenry of Japan.

Naturally, the authorities were wary of these political meetings, and this is perceivably another reason why the police force started introducing *kenjutsu* training in earnest, not only to keep tabs on the seditious behaviour of Popular Rights groups, but also to ensure that the police were able to employ the services of charismatic sword experts who could otherwise lead the *kessha* or other potentially subversive groups. Skilled fencers were also possibly used by the police as spies. Although it is not stated explicitly, an article in the *Yomiuri Newspaper* (May 27, 1888), reports of “three police officers skilled in the art of *kenjutsu*” who were sent on an extended period of “*musha-shugyō*” (travelling to engage in matches) in the provinces, which implies ulterior motives beyond simply testing their ability in competitive bouts.⁶²

The promulgation of the “Constitution of the Empire of Japan” in 1889 essentially spelled the end for the Popular Rights Movement. At its zenith, it is estimated that there were 255 Popular Rights groups in Japan. Such popular *kenjutsu* participation at the grassroots level in the early to mid-Meiji era conceivably aided the rapid acquiescence of *bujutsu* arts with the formation of the

⁵⁹ Kevin Doak, *A History of Nationalism in Modern Japan: Placing the People*, p. 194

⁶⁰ Yuasa Akira, “Jiyū minken undō to bujutsu ni tsuite- kōsatsu” (A study on the relation between liberty and people’s rights movement and bujutsu (martial arts) in the Meiji era), *Budōgaku Kenkyū* 32 (2), p. 2

⁶¹ All Japan Kendo Federation, Op. Cit., p. 170

⁶² *Yomiuri Shimbun*, May 27, 1888

Dai-Nippon Butokukai. This was an organisation set up in 1895 to oversee the preservation, promotion, and research of Japan's traditional martial arts, and also to champion the arts for inclusion in the national school curriculum.

The Butokukai will be looked at in more detail below. Suffice it to say, the timing of the Butokukai's formation coincided with a significant rise in nationalistic sentiment after Japan's jubilant victory in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894–95. Martial spirit (*shōbu*) or the “spirit of martial patriotism remained high” well after the war had ended with a Japanese victory.⁶³ Ironically, this was also the era in which revamped notions of Japan's glorious *bushi* history and culture were briskly popularised and indorsed as being the driving force behind the phenomenal success Japan was enjoying in her quest to modernise.

By the later 1880s, as Garon observes, “intellectuals, local elites, and officials broadly agreed on the need to foster ‘a sense of nation’ in the masses if Japan were to modernize and compete with Western rivals.”⁶⁴ It is precisely in this period that questions of “Japaneseness”, that is, the essence of what it meant to be Japanese, became a popular matter of debate. In many ways, the Japanese were feeling their way as they attempted to form a national identity, and according to Doak, this epoch signified the “first important moment in Japanese nationalism when culture, as a code for conceptualizing the collective identity of the Japanese as a single people, was mobilized in agendas that spanned the political spectrum.”⁶⁵

With momentous popular and symbolic appeal, *kenjutsu* and other martial arts seemed an increasingly irresistible, albeit highly romanticised, feature of the cultural makeup of the people. Harumi Befu referred to this phenomenon as the “samuraisation” of the Japanese people, in which “characteristics such as loyalty, perseverance, and diligence said to be held by a small (but elite) segment of the population – the samurai – were gradually extended through propaganda, education, and regulation to cover the whole of the population.”⁶⁶

⁶³ C. Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, p. 150

⁶⁴ S. Garon, *Molding Japanese Minds*, p. 8

⁶⁵ Kevin Doak, Op. Cit., p. 195

⁶⁶ H. Befu, *Japan: An Anthropological Introduction*, pp. 50, 52

3d. Introducing Kenjutsu into the School Curriculum

Iida Yumiko notes that to create a nation, “one must successfully enmesh such myths with the pre-existing discourses guiding people’s everyday practices... [I]t necessitates the willing participation of the national subject who accepts and practices the state’s hegemonic myths as an integral part of their everyday lives.”⁶⁷ Although attention was being directed at the martial arts with more frequency than ever before in the public domain by the 1880s, perhaps it was too early at this stage to refer to a “reinvention” of *kenjutsu* into national myth. However, the process was underway, and the next phase of *kenjutsu*’s modern development would ensure that it would become entrenched in Japan’s cultural fabric, and perceived as being representative of the spiritual and aesthetic splendour of the nation.

Thus, never completely suppressed, the images of the noble Japanese warrior and swordsmanship lay dormant waiting for an opportunity to burgeon in Japan’s rapidly modernising society. With the abolition of the feudal class structure, and the elimination of symbols of class identification such as the wearing of swords in public, the way was paved for a modern reinterpretation of *kenjutsu* that was not limited to a privileged elite. First, interest in *kenjutsu* among the general public was piqued through Sakakibara Kenkichi’s exhibitions. The Popular Rights Movement provided an opportunity for more commoners to experience the thrill of emulating samurai culture, and the police and newly formed armed forces prescribed *kenjutsu* training for cadets. However, the apex of the popularisation of *kenjutsu* was reached at the end of the Meiji period when instruction was finally permitted in schools. Still, in spite of the fever-pitched lobbying for *bujutsu* education by the Butokukai, individual martial artists and educators, in addition to the wave of nationalism generated by victories over China and Russia, the process for *kenjutsu* to be officially admitted as a part of the national school curriculum was surprisingly slow.

Despite the interest shown in the martial arts at the popular level, the government consistently demonstrated caution in introducing them for educational purposes. This was possibly due to

⁶⁷ Iida Yumiko, *Rethinking Identity in Modern Japan*, p. 262

number of reasons: a degree of cultural elitism among former *bushi* in officialdom who opposed the idea of popularising their heritage; apathy among anti-traditionalist government officials who advocated modern Western knowledge and technology as a reason for challenging the value of traditional martial arts; and, the existence of intense *ryūha* dogmatism and indifference to the concept of creating a unified form of *kenjutsu* that superseded *ryūha* affiliation.

The governor of Kyoto, Makimura Masanao (1834–1896), was quite succinct in his opinions for not introducing *kenjutsu* into education. In his thesis “Kenjutsu Yūgai-ron” (An analysis of why *kenjutsu* is harmful) written in 1878, he outlines how the study of *kenjutsu* could be detrimental to the balanced growth of youth.

Recently *gekken* is seen everywhere as our country navigates a cultural swing. But it is highly unlikely that *gekken* will be successful as it makes people aggressive and it may lead to hurting others as sword practitioners mislead themselves. As the old saying goes, ‘A little learning is a dangerous thing.’ Moreover, it damages health, rattles the brain; dangerous thrusts to the chest, throat or face can affect respiratory function, and randomly jumping around causing painful palpitations, yelling and the like are all excessive actions detrimental to one’s wellbeing. Rather than spending valuable time on such harmful activities and making the mind and body suffer, if we are committed to other jobs and work hard, we can help our country and families prosper far more effectively. Please understand what this means, and by no means allow yourself to be misled.⁶⁸

Suzuki Toshio states that the process of inducting *bujutsu* into schools passed through three stages: First, in 1883–84 when the Ministry of Education (Mombushō) commissioned the National Institute of Gymnastics (Taisō Denshūsho) to conduct a survey on the merits and demerits of martial arts education; second, in 1886 when the School Hygiene Advisory Board (Gakkō Eisei Komon-kai) conducted a similar investigation and reported to the Mombushō; and third, the period extending from the turn of the century until 1911, when enthusiastic lobbying by martial arts experts and educators to the Mombushō culminated in the inclusion of *bujutsu* in middle and

⁶⁸ Quoted in A. Bennett, T. Uozumi (eds.), *The History and Spirit of Budō*, p. 40

normal schools in 1911.⁶⁹ The following table details a genealogy of the main events in the induction process of *kenjutsu* and the other martial arts into schools:⁷⁰

Key events leading to the introduction of bujutsu into the school system

Year	Event
1872	Physical Exercise (<i>taijutsu</i>) and Hygiene (<i>yōsei</i>) are included in the elementary school curriculum following the promulgation of the Education Order.
1875	Sakatani Shiroshi publishes articles in the <i>Meiroku Zasshi</i> advocating martial arts as a form of spiritual education for youth.
1878	Formation of the National Gymnastics Institute (Taisō Denshūsho).
1879	With the Education Order (<i>kyōiku-rei</i>) of 1879, gymnastics is introduced into schools as an optional subject.
1880	An unsuccessful petition is made to the Council of Elders (Genrōin) to include “ <i>bugi</i> ” (martial technique) as a part of physical education.
1881	<i>Kenjutsu</i> is taught as a subject at the Gakūshuin (Peers School).
1882	Formation of Nihon-den Kōdōkan Jūdō by Kanō Jigorō.
1883	The Mombushō commissions the Taisō Denshūsho to conduct a survey on the merits of introducing <i>gekken</i> and <i>jūjutsu</i> as a part of the school gymnastics syllabus.
1884	Taisō Denshūsho announces the findings of its survey recommending that <i>kenjutsu</i> and <i>jūjutsu</i> not be included in the education system. A debate about the merits of <i>bujutsu</i> education rages in articles published between May and August in the journal <i>Tōkyō Iji Shinshi</i> .
1889	A <i>kenjutsu</i> society is established at the First Middle School.
1893	Seki Jūrōji becomes the first private citizen to petition the Mombushō to adopt <i>kenjutsu</i> into the school curriculum.
1896	The Mombushō commissions the School Hygiene Advisory Board to investigate the merits of <i>gekken</i> and <i>jūjutsu</i> in the school curriculum. They recommend that martial arts are suitable as extra-curricular activities for boys over the age of 15 who are of good health.
1897	Another proposal is made by Seki Jūrōji at the 10 th Diet plenary session to incorporate <i>gekken</i> and <i>jūjutsu</i> as regular middle school subjects. The petition was accepted and forwarded for government consideration. Seki continues making the same petition annually.
1898	The Mombushō announces its refusal to allow the martial arts as regular subjects in middle and normal schools.
1900	A proposal is made by Shibata Kokki at the 14 th Diet plenary session to incorporate <i>gekken</i> and <i>jūjutsu</i> as a regular school subject. The petition is accepted and forwarded for government consideration. Shibata also continues submitting his petition annually.
1901	Well-known fencers Ozawa Ichirō and Takano Sasaburō imitate an annual petition to the Mombushō to introduce <i>kenjutsu</i> to schools.
1905	A proposal is made by notable fencer Hoshino Kyūzō to the 21 st Diet plenary session to incorporate martial arts as regular school subjects from middle school and above. The petition is denied.
1906	Another proposal is made by Hoshino Kyūzō to the 22 nd Diet plenary session. The Mombushō visits Kawagoe Middle School to observe martial arts classes. The Dai-Nippon Butokukai creates a unified set of <i>kenjutsu kata</i> (<i>Ten, Chi, Jin</i>) for national instruction.
1907	At a national meeting for normal school principals, it is agreed that martial arts education could be adopted for boys with some amendments.
1908	Another proposal is made by Hoshino Kyūzō to the 24 th Diet plenary session.
1910	At a national meeting for normal school principals, it is decided that <i>kenjutsu</i> and <i>jūjutsu</i> would made a regular subject for boys and that <i>naginata</i> and <i>kyūjutsu</i> should be promoted for girls.
1911	In Article 13 of the renewed “Curriculum Regulations for Middle and Higher Schools” it is announced that “ <i>Gekken</i> and <i>jūjutsu</i> may be added to the program of study.” In reality, they become optional subjects. A Mombushō sponsored national seminar to unify martial arts instruction is held at the Tokyo Higher Normal School.
1912	Naitō Takaharu from the Butokukai is invited to teach <i>kenjutsu</i> at the second Mombushō national instruction seminar. Martial arts instruction for boys at normal schools is officially ratified. The Butokukai creates a new set of unified <i>kata</i> (“Dai-Nippon Teikoku Kendō Kata”) to replace the standardised forms created in 1906.
1913	It is decreed by the Mombushō that <i>gekken</i> and <i>jūjutsu</i> be taught to boys at middle and normal schools as regular subjects.

⁶⁹ Suzuki Toshio, “Conflict Between Educators and Hygienists: The Advisory Committee of School Health and the Introduction of Martial Arts to Regular Curriculum”, *Hokkaidō Daigaku Kyōiku Gakubu Kiyō* (The Annual Reports on Educational Science, 54:1990)

⁷⁰ Compiled from Motomura Kiyoto, “Nihon no gakkō ni okeru budō” in A. Bennett and S. Yamada (eds.), *Nihon no Kyōiku ni Budō wo – 21-seiki ni Shin-gi-tai wo Kitaeru*, pp. 57-8; Alexander Bennett (ed.), *Budō: The Martial Ways of Japan*, pp. 294-98

The importance of the education system in promulgating nationalistic ideals cannot be overstated. As Gellner observes with regards to nationalism, modern societies “possess a very homogenous educational system which provides a basically common generic training for the whole population, or for as much of it as possible, and on the basis of which a more specialised and extraordinarily diversified system of occupations is erected, as a kind of second stage.”⁷¹ In Japan’s case, with the issuance of the Education Order in 1872, the Meiji government consolidated its first modern school system, and included physical education based on Western-styled gymnastics.⁷² Predictably, however, there were educators and politicians who were circumspect with regards to totally Westernising the school curriculum, and they advocated retaining a certain amount of “Japaneseness”. For example, Sakatani Shiroshi (1822–1881) was one such proponent who yearned not only for the inclusion of the martial arts in the school curriculum, but also for making them compulsory. In the *Meiroku Zasshi* in 1876 he writes:

What I would stress here is reviving the military arts. Of course gymnastics are all right, but we have already attained proficiency in our traditional training in the use of swords, spears, cudgels, and *jūjutsu*. Actually, it is only barbarism to reject these skills because they did not emerge in the West. There are now many from the former warrior classes who are expert in these arts. We should invite these former samurai into the lower and middle schools and into the police and the military where they should be encouraged to practice their skills energetically during their free time.⁷³

Despite Sakatani’s passionate plea, many education experts remained opposed to the introduction of the martial arts. *Kenjutsu* was condemned as being totally unsuitable for young children to learn due to the possibility of cerebral damage occurring through repeated hitting of the head. Sakatani died before he could offer counter-arguments to his rebutters, but the debate continued to rage without

⁷¹ E. Gellner, *Selected Philosophical Themes*, p. 146

⁷² A. Guttmann, L. Thompson, *Japanese Sports: A History*, p. 90

⁷³ Sakatani Shiroshi (trans. William Reynolds Braisted), “On Nurturing the Human Spirit” (part 2), *Meiroku Zasshi*, Issue 41, February 1876, p. 493

him. Proponents of Sakatani's point of view saw the need to nurture feelings of "patriotism" in Japan's youth, as well as healthy minds and bodies fit for military service. To this end, introducing *kenjutsu* into schools was promoted as a practical exercise to stimulate mental and physical growth, and an appreciation of Japan. Opponents argued, however, that the martial arts had little cultural worth, and even less use in physical education. This argument was amplified by the perceived potential health risks that might be incurred through participation.

One of the first serious debates pertaining to the suggested inclusion of *kenjutsu* into the national school curriculum was conducted by the Council of Elders (Genrōin) in 1880, when the merits of including martial techniques (*bugi*) into the Education Code were discussed. The councillor who initiated the discussion was Kusumoto Masataka (1838–1902). He and his supporters advocated for the inclusion of *bugi* (martial technique) as a form of military training rather than as a holistic form of education, but a vote was held and the proposal was defeated 12-7.

Not long after the Genrōin's deliberation, and the formation of Kanō Jigorō's Kōdōkan Jūdō (1882), the Greater Japan Private Hygiene Society (Dai-Nippon Shiritsu Eiseikai) also engaged in spirited contemplation of what *bujutsu* had to offer Japan's schoolchildren. This discussion was propelled by a growing number of vociferous advocates in addition to the increasing number of schools introducing martial arts education of their own volition, without government sanction.

Eventually the Mombushō was compelled to enter the debate, and it finally commissioned the Taisō Denshūsho to conduct a thorough survey to ascertain the advantages of introducing *bujutsu* into the national curriculum. The survey commenced in May, 1883, with an investigation of *jūjutsu* first, followed by *kenjutsu*. Experts from various *ryūha* representing both arts were consulted and given an opportunity to forward their opinions regarding the benefits to be gained from its study.⁷⁴ In particular, notable exponents from the Jikishin Kage-ryū, Ittō-ryū, Tamiya-ryū and Hokushin Ittō-ryū played a key role in the interviews on behalf of *kenjutsu*.⁷⁵

The thrust of the investigation was to ascertain exactly what effects on child growth and

⁷⁴ *Yomiuri Shimbum*, October 30, 1883

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, December 26, 1883

maturation could be expected through learning *kenjutsu*. Medical experts at the Tokyo Imperial University were contracted to conduct the analysis, and among them were two German doctors, Erwin Bälz (1849–1913) and Julius Scriba (1848–1905). Diaries written by Bälz show that he was enthusiastic about Japan’s traditional swordsmanship, especially given the poor physical state of students at the Imperial University of Tokyo who “often broke down and sometimes actually died” due to their arduous study regimes.

Recognizing that *kenjutsu* [sic], the old Japanese sword-fencing, was an excellent gymnastic method, I recommended its revival, but it was discountenanced as a rough and even dangerous sport. Not until, in order to overcome this prejudice, I myself took lessons from the most famous fencing master of the day, Sakakibara, and secured a little publicity for the fact in the newspapers, did interest in this old method of fencing revive. It was felt that, if a foreigner, and, what was more, a professor of medicine at what was then the only university in the country, was studying this art, it was impossible to suppose that Westerners could regard it as barbarous or dangerous.⁷⁶

Nevertheless, the conclusion reached was that *kenjutsu* could be hazardous without adequate protection, and heated arguments ensued as the survey results became known. It could be scientifically proved, opponents argued, that continuous strikes to the head with a bamboo *shinai* were detrimental to the brain. Many *kenjutsu* exponents retorted, however, that it had never done them any harm, and considering the number of Diet members who were former *bushi* and had studied *kenjutsu* as children in their respective domain schools (*hankō*), this particular observation was probably not well-received. Nevertheless, the Taisō Denshūsho submitted their findings to the Mombushō in October 1884 with the following conclusions:

Benefits:

1. An effective means of enhancing physical development.
2. Develops stamina.
3. Rouses the spirit, and boosts morale.
4. Expurgates spinelessness and replaces it with vigour.

⁷⁶ Toku Baelz (ed.), *Awakening Japan: The Diary of a German Doctor: Erwin Baelz*, p. 73

5. Arms the exponent with techniques for self-defence in times of danger.

Disadvantages:

1. May cause unbalanced physical development.
2. Always an imminent danger present in training.
3. Difficult to determine the appropriate degree of exercise, especially as physically strong students must train together with weaker individuals.
4. Could encourage violent behaviour due to the rousing of the spirit.
5. Exhilarates the will to fight which could manifest into an attitude of winning at all costs.
6. There is a danger of encouraging a warped sense of competitiveness to the extent that the child could even resort to dishonest tactics.
7. Difficult to sustain unified instructional methodology for large numbers of students.
8. Requires a large area to conduct training.
9. Even though *jūjutsu* only requires a *keiko-gi* (training wear) *kenjutsu* requires the use of armour and other special equipment which would be expensive and difficult to keep hygienic.⁷⁷

The institute concluded their investigation by recommending that *bujutsu* should not be included as a regular subject in schools.⁷⁸ Although the proposed inclusion of *kenjutsu* was rejected, it was becoming widely acknowledged that it contained elements that could complement an academically oriented curriculum. Nevertheless, it was not readily accepted that *kenjutsu* provided apposite medical and physiological merits, and it was thought that *kenjutsu* could even be detrimental to balanced physical growth in children. It was also supposed that participation in *kenjutsu* could nurture undesirable aggression and violent behaviour. From a logistical perspective, the most critical problem was the lack of a unified teaching methodology due to the greatly divergent technical curriculums of the different *ryūha*. Besides, *kenjutsu* had the added disadvantage of requiring expensive equipment.

Still, the proponents' voices could not be hushed, and the Greater Japan Private Hygiene Society (Dai-Nippon Shiritsu Eiseikai) weighed in on the debate. They found that one advantage of

⁷⁷ Takano Sasaburō, *Kendō*, p. 290

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 291

kenjutsu and other martial arts over Western gymnastics was that the latter did not cultivate “Japanese spirit” (*yamato damashii*), nor did it provide pupils with skills in self-defence. However, similar to the findings of the Taisō Denshūsho, concerns surrounding balanced physical development, the potential for cerebral damage, and the difficulty in teaching large classes of students simultaneously were still cited as mitigating factors in the decision not to teach martial arts in schools.⁷⁹

Accordingly, the introduction of *bujutsu* education was shelved once more. However, with the establishment of the School Hygiene Advisory Board (Gakkō Eisei Komonkai) in May 1896, the issue was addressed yet again. The physiological demerits remained a cause for resistance, but they found no reason to prevent adolescents over the age of fifteen from participating in the martial arts as an extra-curricular activity.⁸⁰

Bujutsu’s eventual introduction into the national curriculum was helped by a form of experimental hybrid-*bujutsu* developed to overcome the various problems indicated by government sponsored surveys. In traditional *kenjutsu*, knowledge was imparted from teacher to disciple on an individual basis. This approach was no longer practical in the modern educational environment with large groups of pupils, and the first concerted effort to resolve this particular quandary resulted in the creation of ‘*bujutsu* callisthenics’ (*bujutsu-taisō*).

The idea soon caught on, and before long schools throughout Japan allowed pupils to participate in newly developed callisthenic exercises using wooden weapons such as *bokutō* (sword) and *naginata* (glaive). One of the main instigators of the method was Ozawa Unosuke (1865–1927). He stated that the purpose of developing *bujutsu* callisthenics was not only as a tool for children’s education but also to “nurture a nation of people with physiques by no means inferior to Westerners.”⁸¹ As a curricular activity, Ozawa appealed that the *bujutsu* derived exercises would be an effective means of cultivating physical adeptness, and that as an extra-curricular activity, it would

⁷⁹ Nakamura Tamio, Op. Cit., p. 179

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 180

⁸¹ Ozawa Unosuke, *Bujutsu Taisō-ron* (Theory of martial art callisthenics), reproduced in Nakamura Tamio (ed.), *Kindai Kendō-sho Senshū* Vol.4 (Selection of modern *kendō* books), pp. 109–265

be a tantalising form of recreational exercise that would encourage discipline and overall physical wellbeing.⁸²

Apart from Ozawa, others also experimented with the development of an indigenous system of gymnastic exercises based on *kenjutsu*. Of particular note was Nakajima Kenzō (1868–1925) who had studied the Jikishin Kage-ryū tradition in his childhood. It is unknown whether or not Ozawa and Nakajima ever collaborated; however, the efforts of both men saw their initiatives spread nationwide with seminars being held in various localities. Despite significant support, there were also those who vehemently opposed the systems. Reasons for opposition were varied, but the most common criticisms were that the techniques were unrealistic and ineffective, paying little attention to *hasuji* (flight or cutting direction of the blade), and too much twisting, turning and ostentatious movement. Many could not see the difference between *bujutsu-taisō* and another form of popular exercise, baton twirling.

Books explaining *bujutsu-taisō* started appearing in the 1890s. A plethora of publications appeared that were written as collaborations between educators and martial artists to adapt *bujutsu* techniques to suit the goals of the physical education curriculum. Not until 1904–1905 did books written as *bujutsu* textbooks (as opposed to *taisō*) for teaching novices and children appear, but they were, nevertheless, heavily influenced by the *taisō* style and methodology.

With the promulgation of the first national “School Gymnastics Curriculum Guidelines” in 1911, the Lingian approach to gymnastics was prescribed in accordance with trends in Great Britain, America, and Scandinavia. This was supplemented with military drill and games (*yūgi*), and each school was expected to devise its own curriculum following the guidelines stipulated by the Mombushō.⁸³ For the first time, both *gekken* and *jūjutsu* were finally elevated to the status of “optional subjects” (*zuika*) in 1911 in the “Guidelines”, and consequently became “regular subjects” (*seika*) for boys in middle and normal schools from 1913.

The Mombushō’s issuance of the guidelines for gymnastics in 1911 spelled the end of the *bujutsu*

⁸² Nakamura Tamio, *Kendō Jiten*, p. 181

⁸³ Guttman & Thompson, *Op. Cit.*, p. 153

callisthenics initiatives. *Bujutsu-taisō* did prove that the martial arts could be practised in large groups quite easily, and without expensive equipment, contrary to previous beliefs. From this standpoint, it is fair to say that it had a profound effect on the methodological approach to teaching beginners in the martial arts. In other words, subsequent martial arts training and teaching methodologies were influenced to a degree by Western gymnastic instruction methods.

Still, martial artists avoided referring to what they were doing as *bujutsu-taisō*, instead preferring to describe their initiatives as “group teaching methodology”. In fact, after *bujutsu* was finally accepted into the official school curriculum, many turned face and rained harsh criticism on earlier *bujutsu-taisō* initiatives as being nothing more than performance exercises with sticks. It was, they asserted haughtily, in no way related to true *bujutsu*.

4. The Dai-Nippon Butokukai – Self-Appointed Gatekeeper of Bujutsu

Probably the single most important event in the nationalisation of traditional swordsmanship and its reinvention into modern *kendō* was the establishment of the Dai-Nippon Butokukai, a private society dedicated to the protection and propagation of Japan’s martial culture. How were they able to obtain and sustain the mantle of being the gatekeeper of *bujutsu*? What effects did the Butokukai have on the evolution of *kenjutsu*? And, where should it be posited in the web of late Meiji and Taishō period (1912– 1926) nationalism? These are issues that will be investigated in the following section.

4a. Foundation of the Dai-Nippon Butokukai

Although there was a certain degree of overlap, discourse on Japanese nationalism in the late nineteenth century usually centres on two types: “state nationalism” (*kokka-shugi*), which focuses on the state, and “popular nationalism” (*minzoku-shugi*) which focuses on the nation as a people. Advocates of the former type of nationalism insisted that Japanese citizens revere and serve the state

as the highest object of loyalty; whereas popular nationalists emphasised notions of “Japaneseness” based on a common history, language, customs and traditions, and individual morality. State nationalism was propagated through imperial decrees such as the “Imperial Rescript on Education” (1890), and various other means culminating in ultranationalist and militaristic dogmas in the 1930s.

Popular nationalism revolved around intellectual movements such as pan-Asianism and Japanism (*Nihon-shugi*), and became particularly prevalent among citizens who considered the state to be bowing to Western powers instead of asserting its own dominion, especially in the period extending from the Sino-Japanese war (1894–95) through to the Russo-Japanese war (1904–05). According to Garon, by the late 1880s, “intellectuals, local elites, and officials broadly agreed on the need to foster ‘a sense of nation’ in the masses if Japan were to modernize and compete with Western rivals.”⁸⁴ They attempted to achieve this by “promoting, preserving, and in general renovating an immutable Japaneseness.”⁸⁵

Benedict Anderson contends in his thesis on nationalism that in addition to states being able to activate their resources in order to piece together an invented social convergence, other organisations are also capable of utilising the same methods to create alternative nationalistic interpretations at a popular level, and in some instances, these could even compete with the state.⁸⁶ In the case of Japan, the Dai-Nippon Butokukai served as a veracious medium for promoting a sense of “Japaneseness”. It was undoubtedly the most influential organisation in the eventual elevation of *kenjutsu* to the regular school curriculum.

As Dennis Gainty asserts in his thesis on the social significance of the Butokukai, the society was able to make itself the “guardian of elite ideas and symbols” through various means such as “locating itself in Kyōto, gathering support from notables in government, asserting the complex of samurai/martial arts values and claiming the endorsement of the Imperial institution past and

⁸⁴ S. Garon, *Molding Japanese Minds*, p. 8

⁸⁵ B. McVeigh, *Nationalisms of Japan*, p. 153

⁸⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, pp. 80–128

present.”⁸⁷ Gainty also points out that many historians show a tendency to “simplify the moment of the Butokukai’s creation as a point of sharp transition between two opposing worldviews: that of an early Meiji mix of fascination with Western modernity and learning coupled with a concomitant weakening of the Japanese spirit to a subsequent return to Japanese tradition and martial self-sufficiency.”⁸⁸ This interpretation seems feasible, however, the Butokukai’s considerable influence cannot be underestimated with respect to the elevation of *kenjutsu* to a symbolic agent representative of the fusion of tradition and modernity.

The Dai-Nippon Butokukai was established by Torimi Kōki (1849–1914), a Kyoto tax collector who had a proclivity for the martial arts. The construction of the Heian Shrine in Kyoto was scheduled for 1895 to celebrate the 1,100th anniversary of Emperor Kammu’s (737–806) creation of the Heian capital (794). Torimi observed with a cynical eye how celebrations for the Shrine’s ground-breaking ceremony were being unsatisfactorily conducted, as were other preparations for the festivities marking such prestigious occasion. Joining forces with Konishi Shin’emon – an enthusiastic swordsman and wealthy brewery owner of the *sake* brand Shirayuki⁸⁹ – together they planned a martial arts demonstration to mark the historical event fittingly.⁹⁰

Few people gave Torimi and Konishi’s ideas much credence at first. Nevertheless, Torimi’s enthusiasm was infectious, and Niwa Keisuke, a local *kimono* maker, together with Kyoto District Police Commissioner Sasa Kumatarō, suggested that Torimi go a considerable step further and establish an organisation to oversee all of the martial arts. Before long, momentum for his project began to gather.

The timing was contemporaneous with the growing sentiments of nationalism, especially with the triumphant war against almighty China. Japan’s victory in the war made it the dominant Asian

⁸⁷ Denis Gainty, *Martialing the National Body: Structure, Agency, and the Dai Nippon Butokukai in Modern Japan*, (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pennsylvania), p. 77

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20

⁸⁹ By coincidence, I worked for Shirayuki (Konishi Shuzuo) which is based in Itami City from 1990–1991. The company still maintains a very strong tradition in the martial arts of *kendō* and *naginata* which are practised at the company’s Shūbukan Dōjō. I was employed in the office of the All Japan Naginata Federation which was and still is sponsored by Konishi Shuzuo Corporation.

⁹⁰ Dai-Nippon Butokukai, *Butokushi* 1.2 (1906), p. 39

power, and the only one that was afforded much in the way of respect from other colonialist nations. The Japanese as a whole were understandably proud of their country's success, and it was from around this time that a broader appreciation of traditional culture began to flourish. A particular allure was felt to the culture and ideals of the samurai.

4b. The Butokukai's Main Objectives and the Enlistment of Political Authority

Torimi was able to solicit the assistance of Kyoto governor Watanabe Chiaki (1843–1921), who, wielding his political influence, was further able to recruit Mibu Motonaga (Head Priest of Heian Shrine) and Tanaka Kidō (Kyoto Prefecture Police Chief) as officers for the society. From its earliest stages, the yet to be formed organisation already had ties with the police force, and Naimushō (Home Ministry) and other government offices largely through the patronage of Watanabe Chiaki.

The leaders all met for the first time on April 3, 1895, and a general assembly was convened on April 17 where the founding principles of the Dai-Nippon Butokukai were formulated. A proposal to reconstruct the ancient Hall of Martial Virtue (Butokuden) near the Heian Shrine and have it serve as the base *dōjō* was agreed upon, and the Butokukai was officially launched. Following its inauguration, the Butokukai gradually extended its networks throughout the country to unify isolated pockets of martial arts experts, and to preserve and promote the various schools (*ryūha*) still in existence. Another of its stated objectives was to gather data pertaining to military technology and systems overseas, and to publish periodicals related to the culture of war. According to its articles of association (English left as original):

Article 1:

The Butokukwai shall undertake to accomplish the following works with [the] object of encouraging military arts and diffusing martial spirit and virtue:-

1. To build Butokuden within the Heianjingu grounds.
2. To observe Butokusai festival.
3. To hold grand match at the Butokukwai with a view of preserving martial virtue.
4. To establish schools for the training of military arts.
5. To provide for the preservation of old military arts deemed worthy of preservation.

6. To construct an arsenal for the collection of ancient and modern arms and weapons of both home and foreign origins.
7. To publish ancient and modern histories of wars and campaigns, military arts, and arms and weapons of our Empire and foreign countries.⁹¹

Another great triumph for the organisation was the successful appointment of Prince Komatsu-no-Miya Akihito (1846–1903) as its superintendent, giving it the powerful legitimacy of imperial benefaction. Before long, branches (*shibu*) of the Butokukai were established in each prefecture, and influential government and military leaders were appointed as officials of the organisation. Notable among them were Itō Hirobumi (1841–1909), Yamagata Aritomo (1838–1922), and Saigō Jūdō (1843–1902).⁹² As the Butokukai network grew, prefectural governors were appointed as branch chairmen, senior prefectural officials served as secretaries, and committees were comprised of mayors and other willing dignitaries from each locality.⁹³

The first branch was created in Toyama Prefecture on February 25, 1896. By 1909, branches had spread throughout the country, amassing a total membership of 1.5 million. Apart from celebrated martial arts tournaments held annually since its inception in Kyoto, in 1902 the Butokukai instigated an award system to commend individuals who had made significant contributions to the promotion of *bujutsu*. Furthermore, a school for training instructors (Bujutsu Shidōin Yōsei-ka) was established in 1905. The Butoku School (Butoku Gakkō) was established in 1911, and was changed in name to the Bujutsu Vocational School (Bujutsu Senmon Gakkō) the same year. This name was again changed to the Budō Senmon Gakkō in 1919, but this occurrence will be explained in the following chapter.

In the inaugural *Butokushi*, the Butokukai's official publication, there is an explanation of the various arts the society represented: athletic arts, target shooting, horsemanship, bayonet practice, fencing, *jūjutsu*, swimming, rowing, archery, and classical military arts. With regards to fencing, the explanation is blatantly, or more accurately, nationalistically biased (English left as original):

⁹¹ Dai-Nippon Butokukai, *Butokushi* 1.1 (1906), p. 3

⁹² Nakamura Tamio, *Kendō Jiten*, pp. 193-95

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 195

Fencing is practiced in every country though differing more or less in the instruments used and the ways of using them. Yet we believe ours is highly superior to that of any country, with the sword of one sided blade so sharp and deadly in offense and defense. When this art is mastered, one can foil his enemy even with a piece of stick. Moreover, it inspires one with chivalric spirit, which enables him to stand fearlessly against any odds. As soon as the Gymnasium [Butokuden] is ready we shall at once open the school, with masters of this art for its teachers, and by examination shall classify the pupils according to the degrees of their skill.⁹⁴

4c. The Invention of Conventions for a Nationalised Style of Kenjutsu

In 1906, Watanabe Noboru (1838–1913) chaired the first Butokukai committee tasked with the formulation of a set of generic *kata* for the purpose of disseminating standardised *kenjutsu* in schools nationwide. The committee was appointed on May 7, and consisted of six other notable *kenjutsu* experts from various *ryūha*, all of whom were recipients of the Butokukai's honorary title of “Hanshi”, the highest honour afforded to outstanding martial artists. In July, a further seven “younger experts” who held the lesser title of “Kyōshi” were also included in the planning, and the culmination of their efforts was presented to the president of the Butokukai on August 13.⁹⁵ They created a set of *kata* known as the “Dai-Nippon Butokukai Seitei Kenjutsu Kata”, which consisted of three forms: *jōdan* (*ten*=heaven), *chūdan* (*chi*=earth), and *gedan* (*jin*=man).

However, significant opposition was articulated after the *kata* were unveiled. The reasons for resistance were many; due to the hastiness of the *kata* creation (approximately three months from committee inception to the *kata* presentation), there was little chance for debate and in-depth discussion about the content. The main complaints concerned the nomenclature of the fighting stances (*kamae*) used in the *kata*. For example, a *kamae* that resembled *hassō* (sword is held vertically at the right side of the face) in most traditional *ryūha* was formally referred to as *chūdan* (the middle stance in which the sword is typically held out in front of the body).

In spite of the illustrious swordsmen who were part of the committee, it seems that Watanabe's

⁹⁴ Dai-Nippon Butokukai, *Butokushi* 1.1 (1906), p. 3

⁹⁵ Nakamura Tamio, *Kendō Jiten*, p. 117

high social standing and authoritarian approach thwarted any meaningful dialogue. The radical shift away from orthodoxy invited the scorn of traditionalists, and due to the strident opposition to the *kata* that emerged, especially by the rather disgruntled sword master Negishi Shingorō (1844–1913) who was also on the committee, the wide national circulation that they were designed for did not eventuate.

With the abovementioned modifications made to the physical education guidelines for middle schools in 1911, allowing martial arts as optional subjects, the Mombushō sponsored an intensive five-week *bujutsu* seminar from November 6 that year at the Tokyo Higher Normal School (Tōkyō Kōtō Shihan Gakkō) to establish guidelines and teaching methodology for instruction in schools. Kanō Jigorō (1860–1928) the founder of modern *jūdō* and principal of the school, oversaw the first seminar at which the Butokukai's *kata* problems were openly reviewed. It was decided that the three *kata* created in 1906 were unsuitable for teaching in schools. Negishi Shingorō, Takano Sasaburō, and Kimura Nobuhide, accompanied by ten other *kenjutsu* instructors, started crafting a different set of three *kata* more conducive to the requirements of *kenjutsu*'s nationalisation. The Butokukai attempted to overturn this slight on their authority, but the Mombushō was adamant, and their protests amounted to nothing.

With the abandonment of the “Butokukai Seitei Kenjutsu Kata”, and the movement to introduce something completely new, the Butokukai convened an extraordinary meeting in December 1911 to assess their predicament. Eventually, another committee was formed to develop a new set of *kata* which would enable the effective dissemination of a cohesive form of *kenjutsu* in the nation's schools.⁹⁶ They were assisted by twenty other instructors, and in October 1912, they presented the “Dai-Nippon Teikoku Kendō Kata” (Greater-Japan Imperial Kendō Kata) which consisted of the three *kata* created at the Mombushō's seminar, plus four more new forms totalling seven *tachi* (long sword) versus *tachi*, and three *kata* of *tachi* versus *kodachi* (short-sword). Frequent modifications were made to the original version in the ensuing years, but it essentially constituted what modern

⁹⁶ The five *kenjutsu* masters from various *ryūha* tasked with this responsibility were Negishi Shingorō, Tsuji Shimpei, Naitō Takaharu, Monna Tadashi, and Takano Sasaburō.

exponents still practise as the “Nihon Kendō Kata”.⁹⁷

In this manner, the Mombushō *bujutsu* seminars were an important step for gaining the consensus necessary to truly nationalise the martial arts. Nakamura calculates that there were ten seminars for *kenjutsu* instruction, attended by over four-hundred fencers who would then transmit the content in their own provinces. At the first seminar, Negishi was appointed to lecture on the unified principles of *kendō*. These were later published by Nakayama Hakudō (Hiromichi) (1872–1958) in *Kendō Kōwa* (1914, *Kendō* lectures), and included chapters (to be taught in schools as one-hour lectures) concerning the “greater meaning of *kendō*”, and various philosophical and technical concepts such as “*maai*” (interval), “*kiai*” (spirit) and so on.

Takano and Kimura were given the responsibility of lecturing specifically on teaching methodology for groups, and technical content. This included *kata* and actual fencing techniques with full protective equipment. Broadly speaking, the curriculum consisted of a regimented system of warm-up exercises, etiquette and ritual formalities, fighting stances, basic striking techniques to the designated targets of head (*men*), wrists (*kote*), torso (*dō*), thrusts to the throat (*tsuki*), and other applied techniques. These were published in two monumental *kendō* textbooks; *Kendō* (1915) by Takano Sasaburō of the Tokyo Higher Normal school, and *Kendō Kihon Kyōju-hō* (Teaching *kendō* fundamentals, date of publication unknown) by Naitō Takaharu (1862–1929) of the Butokukai’s teacher training college, the Bujutsu Senmon Gakkō.

An important achievement in the creation of modern *kendō* was the consolidation of ritual forms of etiquette, which are still considered to be an integral part of *kendō* training to this day. All traditional *ryūha* maintained their own special rituals, which differed to varying degrees in form and ideology. In short, the introduction of a nationalised form of *kendō* included a sequence of movements consisting of a standing bow to the opponent with the sword (*shinai* or *bokutō*) held at

⁹⁷ The first three *kata* in fact utilised the same notions as the *Butokukai Seitei Kenjutsu Kata*. The first three techniques used the same *kamae* (stance) of *jōdan*, followed by *chūdan*, and then *gedan*. When the Butokukai learned that their *kata* were not to be utilised, they organised a committee to further investigate new forms. A plan for the remaining seven *kata* was overseen by the committee consisting of Negishi Shingorō, Tsuji Shinpei, Naitō Takaharu, Monna Tadashi and Takano Sasaburō at the Myōdenji Temple in Kyoto in the summer of 1912. The finalised proposal for the *kata* was announced on October 16, 1912.

the waist in the left hand with the blade facing up (*teitō*); drawing the sword and crouching into the *sonkyo* position; commencement of bout; sheathing the sword in *sonkyo*; and a standing bow from *teitō* to conclude the engagement. Furthermore, at the commencement and conclusion of the lesson or training session, all students were required to bow simultaneously to the teacher as a sign of respect. It also included a bow to a Shintō altar (*shinzen*) positioned in a predetermined location in the training hall.

Naitō Takaharu, head *kendō* instructor of the Butokukai, is credited with further refining the ritual into the “*sansetsu-no-rei*”, in which the form of bowing was determined by three different objects of respect – “the *shinzen* or emperor”, “instructor”, and “one’s peers”.⁹⁸ Thus, from the outset, the newly formed nationalised methodology incorporated notions of state Shintō that were to become even more stringent in the militaristic 1930s.

At any rate, the decision to make the martial arts regular subjects in the national school curriculum eventuated in the creation of Japan’s first-ever nationalised style of *kenjutsu*. It came complete with a unified technical prospectus, an underpinning ideology that reified the connection between the Japanese people and the samurai, and a rich framework of symbolic meaning and rituals that could be associated with, or utilised to promote a “sense of Japaneseness”. But, more significantly, it now had the sanction of the government to ensure rapid and effective dissemination.

Smith states in his seminal work on nationalism, “It is through a shared, unique culture that we are enabled to know ‘who we are’ in the contemporary world. By rediscovering that culture we rediscover ourselves, the ‘authentic self’, or so it has appeared to many divided and disoriented individuals who have had to contend with the vast changes and uncertainties of the modern world.”⁹⁹ After it had been nationalised, *kenjutsu* was to serve an important role for precisely this reason.

⁹⁸ Nakamura Tamio, *Kendō Jiteni*, p. 56

⁹⁹ A. D. Smith, *National Identity*, p. 17

5. Conclusion

This chapter outlined the historical process in which Japanese swordsmanship modernised, and has drawn on various social theories to show how the elite culture of the samurai, *kenjutsu*, was reinvented and found new meaning as a social adhesive for Japanese citizens serving as a form of physical and moral education.

As Hobsbawm suggests, “so much of what subjectively makes up the modern ‘nation’ consists of such constructs and is associated with appropriate and, in general, fairly recent symbols or suitably tailored discourse (such as ‘national’ history), the national phenomenon cannot be adequately investigated without careful attention to the ‘invention of tradition.’”¹⁰⁰ The time it took for the Meiji period of modernisation to take its course corresponds exactly with the time period in which *kenjutsu* – a highly ascetic combat art that symbolised *bushi* culture from medieval times – was reinvented into a nationalised structure.

To return to Thomas McClatchie’s view of the symbolic significance of the sword in Japan during the Meiji era:

It is gratifying to find the Japanese themselves so far awakened to a sense to the uselessness on their once dearly-cherished swords as to actually ridicule, in the public press, the few who still adhere to the old custom. Honesty of purpose and firmness in action, – straightforward dealing and steadfast endeavour will do far more to help on this country to her rightful place in the world than could ever have been achieved by means of her formerly much-prized possession, ‘the girded sword of Great Japan.’¹⁰¹

Retrospectively, it could be argued that there was a major flaw in his commentary. As his observations were tendered in the dormant stage of *kenjutsu*’s transition, there was no way he could foresee how *kenjutsu* would, over the ensuing four decades, actually become a means through which Japanese citizens be imparted the ideals of “honesty of purpose and firmness in action”. As Fukuchi Shigetaka stated, after the edict prohibiting the wearing of swords in public, the *katana* was

¹⁰⁰ E. J. Hobsbawm, T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, p. 14

¹⁰¹ Thomas H.R. McClatchie, Op. Cit., pp. 50-56

removed from its original practical function and instead “became a tool for spiritual education in which ideals of nationalism were conveyed... and [the Japanese people] could touch the *bushi* soul.”¹⁰² A new nationalistic education regime popularised the idea that the Japanese people were the “inheritors” of samurai culture, even though before the abolition of class distinctions warriors only made up 5–6% of Japan’s total population.

Newly created notions of *bushidō* and ideas of a glorious warrior past were propagated vigorously from the 1890s onwards, and many of the national myths created during this period became so strongly entrenched in the Japanese psyche that they still remain as unquestioned essentials of Japaneseness. To be sure, *kendō*’s lineage can be traced directly back to the warriors of old, but the actual techniques, ideals, equipment, teaching and training methodology, match rules, philosophical concepts and so on were for the most part developed during this period.

The *gekken-kōgyō* expositions, the Popular Rights Movement, the formation of the Dai-Nippon Butokukai, in addition to the push to include the martial arts in the national school curriculum represent the second significant phase of *kendō*’s cultural evolution – the first being the events discussed in the previous chapter on Tokugawa swordsmanship. In the next chapter, an analysis will be made of the period designated in this thesis as the third phase; which extends roughly from “Taishō Democracy” to the fascist 1930s era militarism when *kendō* was made a compulsory subject in schools.

¹⁰² Fukuchi Shigetaka, Op. Cit., p. 33

Chapter 4

Kendō's Fascistisation in the Taishō and Early Shōwa Periods— De-civilising Kendō Culture

1. Introduction
2. Nurturing the Agents for Kendō's National Dissemination
3. The Start of Kendō's Fascistisation and Gradual Elevation to Compulsory Education
4. The Reversion from Competition to Combat Kendō
5. From Ideals of Self-perfection to the Reality of Self-sacrifice
6. Sengika (Militarisation) and Total State Control of Kendō
7. The Immediate Post-war Aftermath
8. Conclusion

Kenjutsu is the product of centuries of life-risking determination by the Japanese people (Yamato minzoku). The essence of the Yamato spirit is manifest in Japanese kenjutsu. It represents the blossoming of the Yamato soul.¹

1. Introduction

The previous chapter analysed *bujutsu* in the Meiji period (1868–1912) up until *gekken* (*kendō*) and *jūjutsu* were introduced into the national school system (middle and normal schools) as a “regular subject” in 1911 and 1912. This chapter will investigate how the role of *kendō* (and other martial arts) became progressively prominent in schools at all levels, culminating in its elevation to a compulsory subject in the militaristic 1930s.

Kendō education took on an exceedingly combative nature as nationalistic education policies took precedence in the 1930s. In this period, the violent aspects of *kendō* – which actually prevented it from becoming a regular subject in schools during the Meiji period – were instead accentuated, and it was because of its eventual association with ultra-nationalism and militarism that participation was prohibited in the immediate post-war period.

Although the introduction of *bujutsu* into the national curriculum came under the rubric of physical education (*taiiku*), the underlying motivation from the outset was to instil a sense of “Japaneseness” in students as a counterbalance to the unbridled importation of Western ideals and

¹ Sugahara Tōru, “Gakkō kendō ni tsuite” (About school *kendō*), *KK* Vol.1 (May–July, 1939), p. 99

teaching content. As Kikuchi Yūko contends, “the ambivalent feelings the Japanese had about the clash between their own indigenous ideas and those of the Occident, arising as a reaction to the radical Westernisation in the early half of the Meiji period, slowly developed into cultural and politico-economic nationalism.”² *Kendō* provides a clear example of this phenomenon as it was consciously promoted in schools and in the general community in a way that exceeded mere physical education or sports in the Western sense; rather, it was intended to embody and impart all that was deemed to be superior in terms of Japaneseness.

Kendō and other traditional martial arts struck a progressively emotional chord with advocates of popular nationalism, and this sentiment gained particular momentum from the Taishō period (1912–1926). This was a time when *Nippon-shugi* (Japanism) or *minzoku-shugi* (ethnic nationalism), which “emphasised the uniqueness of and reverence for Japan’s traditions”,³ caught the public’s imagination. It was also a time when, as Kikuchi states, “the main concern of the intellectuals was to define the originality and identity of the Japanese, and [to promote the] actual realisation of *wakon-yōsai* (Japanese mind with Occidental knowledge). They struggled to retain intrinsic qualities while not denying the need for Westernisation.”⁴ *Kendō*, with its connection to Japan’s noble warrior culture, proved to be a perfect medium for imparting traditional values in the progression of identity formulation.

Later, however, *kendō* was earmarked by the wartime government as an effective means for preparing youth for the rigours of modern war. The 1930s saw the systematic appropriation of *kendō* by the state, and although there is some evidence of opposition to the government’s commandeering of the martial arts and their overtly militaristic goals, *kendō* was caught up in an unstoppable drift into what is widely considered now to be the darkest period in its history.

Ivan Morris’ definition of nationalism in imperial Japan contextualises perfectly the social, political and cultural climate of the 1930s and 1940s which facilitated *kendō*’s militarisation:

- (1) precedence of loyalty to the national over every form of loyalty;
- (2) hostility towards any extension of democratic rights and towards international socialism;
- (3) support of militarism and opposition to pacifist movements;
- (4) glorification of a

² Kikuchi Yuko, *Japanese Modernisation and Mingei Theory: Cultural Nationalism and Oriental Orientalism*, p. 77

³ B. McVeigh, *Nationalisms of Japan*, p. 153

⁴ Kikuchi Yuko, *Op. Cit.*, p. 77

national “mission”; (5) appeal to protect national traditions and culture from sinister outside influences; (6) emphasis on duties as opposed to rights, on order as opposed to freedom; (7) stress on the individual’s family and birthplace as the fundamental bonds of social cohesion; (8) tendency towards the authoritarian regimentation of all human relationships; (9) integration of the national spirit in support of orthodox ideas; (10) tendency to be especially vigilant and suspicious in regard to intellectuals and members of the free professions, on the grounds that they are apt to become the disseminators of “subversive thoughts.”⁵

In what ways was *kendō* of use to the ultra-nationalistic government of the 1930s and 40s? As the American wartime observer C.N. Spinks reported, “the Japanese warrior sought to acquire through the sports he practiced perfection in the art of *kiai*, or psychic equilibrium, which affords mental composure and supreme confidence in one’s own spiritual superiority.”⁶ This observation seems rather abstract, but mystical allusions to the spiritual superiority of *kendō* over Western sports, and by implication, the superiority of the Japanese people, typically coloured the lofty rhetoric that promoted the virtues of *kendō* and its inextricable connection with being Japanese. For example, the following excerpt from the wartime periodical *Nippon Budō* (Jan., 1941) is representative of the immense body of nationalistic expression attached to the study of *kendō*, and the spiritual and jingoistic sense of self-denial and self-sacrifice that could be nurtured through training.

The objectives of the practice of *kendō* are not only [to master] the techniques, but to become aware of the national essence (*kokutai*) and conscious of the national spirit, showing total loyalty to the emperor, and developing a preparedness to die for one’s country.⁷

It is no surprise then that *kendō* was, for the most part, banned by Occupation authorities in the aftermath of the Second World War. *Kendō* in schools was prohibited with the issuance of notification by the Mombushō on November 6, 1945, and again on December 26 by the head of the Physical Education Bureau. The Dai-Nippon Butokukai was dissolved in 1946, and all remnants of *kendō* equipment in schools were destroyed. Although *kendō* was practised

⁵ Ivan Morris, *Nationalism and the Right Wing in Japan: A Study of Post-war Trends*, pp. xvii-xviii

⁶ Charles Nelson Spinks, “Indoctrination and Re-Education of Japan’s Youth”, *Pacific Affairs* Vol. 17, No. 1 (March, 1944), p. 62

⁷ Quoted in Sakaue Yasuhiro, Ōtsuka Tadayoshi, “Senjika ni okeru *kendō* no hen’yō katei no kenkyū (sono 1) – shiai no kitei to gijutsu no henka no bunseki” (Research into the process of change in wartime *kendō* part 1: Analysis of changes in match rules and techniques), *Budōgaku Kenkyū* 21 (2) (1988), p. 160

surreptitiously in the community, and then openly after 1952 with the formation of the All Japan Kendo Federation, it was not until 1957 that the sound of bamboo clashing and shrill vocalisations could be heard in school gymnasiums during PE classes.

This chapter will plot the path of the fascistic⁸ development of *kendō* in the Taishō and early Shōwa (1926–1989) years. It will show how *kendō* transformed from the “cultural capital” of popular nationalists represented mainly by the Dai-Nippon Butokukai to a jingoistic tool adopted by the agents of state nationalism with the intensification of the war effort. Through this process of appropriation, *kendō* changed in terms of technical form and objectives, and became overtly combative and violent. Contemporary scholars and *kendō* experts often refer to this era as a dismal exploitation of *kendō* culture by the state. However, such critics are neglecting to acknowledge that combat always was, and still is, an intrinsic part of *kendō*. It will be shown that in many ways this period represents not a repugnant deviation of fundamentally ‘peaceful’ *kendō*, as much as a swing of the pendulum back in the direction from whence *kenjutsu* came, following a de-civilising process of sorts.

What exactly was that de-civilising process and how did it unfold? How did the state manage to appropriate *kendō* and what were its intentions? In what ways does this process inform our understanding of the flourishing of ultra-nationalism in imperial Japan? Based on three basic and traditional concepts of Japanese ultra-nationalism, namely, “the divinity of the Emperor, the superiority of the Japanese people, and the sacredness of Japanese soil”,⁹ *kendō* education in schools and in the community functioned on many different levels: it was slated to simultaneously cultivate a superior sense of ethnicity (Japaneseness) and state-ness, promote sacrificial sentiment to die for “emperor and country”, and finally, as ludicrous as it may seem in the theatre of modern warfare, to equip the nation with the practical combat skills and indomitable spirit to prevail on the battlefield in defence of the sacred empire.

⁸ There are a number of scholars outside Japan who refute that Japan’s experience of militarism in the 1930s until the end of the Second World War can be equated with fascism due to the lack of a fascist-style political party and charismatic leader of the likes seen in Hitler’s Germany and Mussolini’s Italy. For example, see Peter Duus and D. Okimoto, “Facism and the History of Pre-War Japan: The Failure of a Concept”, *Journal of Asian Studies* 39, No. 1 (Nov. 1979) pp. 65–76. Although scholars disagree on the various definitions of fascism, in ordinary usage the term has come to represent “almost any authoritarian right-wing ideology, political party, or state.” (Gordon Marshall, *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*, p. 225). In this sense, I am of the opinion that fascism is an appropriate term for describing the political and social climate of this period in Japanese history.

⁹ General Headquarters – Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers Civil Information and Education Section, Education Division, “Education in the New Japan Volume 1”, Tokyo, May 1948, p. 33

2. Nurturing the Agents for Kendō's National Dissemination

As explained in the last chapter, the martial arts were designated “regular subjects” (*seika*) in middle schools from 1911, and normal schools from 1912. The acceptance of educational *budō* was the culmination of decades of campaigning by numerous educators and martial arts enthusiasts in the private and public sectors. But, there remained the problem of who was going to actually teach the martial arts. Compounded by the lack of equipment and suitable facilities, until there were enough qualified teachers able to fill instructional positions in the country's schools, martial arts remained, in reality, optional subjects.

The two main colleges¹⁰ that stood at the forefront of fostering expert martial arts instructors in the early years were the Dai-Nippon Butokukai's specialist teacher training college in Kyoto, and the Tokyo Higher Normal School (Tōkyō Kōtō Shihan Gakkō), presided by the progenitor of Kōdōkan Jūdō, Kanō Jigorō (1860–1938). The following two subsections will evaluate the significance of these schools in the promotion of *kendō* education.

2a. The Dai-Nippon Butokukai's School

The Butokukai first created the “Bujutsu Kyōin Yōseijo” (Martial art teacher training department) in 1905 to train martial art teachers, but this was closed in 1911, replaced by the Butoku Gakkō (School of Martial Virtue) following modifications to the private school edict (*Shiritsu Gakkō-rei*). Coinciding with the Mombushō's (Ministry of Education) decision to make *bujutsu* a “regular” school subject, the Butokukai made an application to hoist its school to the status of “vocational school”, to which permission was granted in 1912. The “Butoku Gakkō” thus became the “Bujutsu Senmon Gakkō” (Bujutsu Vocational College) which enabled it to offer a more intensive three-year course in martial art instruction. The institution was set up to graduate martial arts and physical

¹⁰ Another tertiary institution often associated with *budō* education is Kokushikan in Tokyo. The forerunner to Kokushikan University was first established in 1917 as a small private school called Kokushikan Gijuku. The school was founded on the idea “When the evil of materialism is predominant, it is spiritual civilization that can lead material civilization back to the righteous path. It is our purpose to cultivate true knowledge to serve as the pillar of society by advocating moral civilization and principled education. Not concerned with mere form, our institution desires become a *dōjō* for unreservedly imparting knowledge based on action and morality.” These were the words of the founder, Shibata Tokujirō. In 1929, a college was set up with teacher training courses in Japanese and Chinese Classics, *jūdō* and *kendō* based on its contemporary, the Budō Senmon Gakkō in Kyōto. Kokushikan remains a powerhouse in college *kendō* to this day but was in no way as prestigious as other two schools. Kokushikan University is notorious even now for its proclivity for right wing education and ultra-nationalistic tendencies. See *Budō: The Martial Ways of Japan*, Nippon Budokan (Edited and translated by Alexander Bennett), p. 278

education teachers “with the goal of nurturing *esprit de corps* through fostering martial virtue in the Japanese people...”¹¹

In 1916, the Mombushō issued a further directive stating that “physical education teaching licenses” would be classified into the three specific categories of “callisthenics, *gekken*, and *jūjutsu*”, thus denoting the issuance of *bujutsu*-specific teacher qualifications. This prompted the Bujutsu Vocational College to increase their course length by one year in amendments made to the school’s statutes in 1917; and from 1918, graduates automatically received nationally recognised certification to teach *gekken* or *jūjutsu* without needing to sit the national teacher certification examinations.

Around this time, the Bujutsu Vocational College compiled a standard manual for teaching *kendō* in schools titled *Kendō Kihon Kyōju-hō* (Teaching method for *kendō* fundamentals). The content paralleled the subject matter taught at the Taishō period “National Bujutsu Seminars”, sponsored by the Mombushō and conducted at the Bujutsu Specialist College’s rival school, the Tokyo Higher Normal School. It was also a response to the Tokyo Higher Normal School’s earlier book titled *Kendō* written by Takano Sasaburō (1863–1950) in 1915, which is still considered a classic by *kendō* enthusiasts.¹²

Incidentally, it was at this time that the Dai-Nippon Butokukai officially changed the terminology for the martial arts by adding the suffix “-dō” (道=Way). In 1919, vice president of the Butokukai and principal of the Bujutsu Vocational College, Nishikubo Hiromichi (1863–1930),¹³ announced that “*bujutsu*” would be referred to thereafter as “*budō*”, *kenjutsu* as *kendō*, *jūjutsu* as *jūdō*, and so on. He had previously delivered a series of lectures to the police in 1914 explaining his

¹¹ Nakamura Tamio, *Kendō Jiten*, p. 213

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 216

¹³ Nishikubo Hiromichi (1863–1930) was born into a low ranking *bushi* family in the Nabeshima domain (Saga). After graduating from the Shihōshōhō Gakkō (later amalgamated with Law Faculty of Tokyo Imperial University) in 1895, Nishikubo commenced an illustrious bureaucratic career with posts in the police and public administration affiliated with the Home Ministry. In 1926, he retired from his position as the Police Superintendent General and was appointed as a member of the House of Peers (Kizokuin). In 1919, he was assigned the position of Dai-Nippon Butokukai vice president and principal of the Bujutsu Senmon Gakkō. He was elected as the mayor of Tokyo in 1926, but also served as the governor of Fukushima Prefecture and the director (Chōkan) of Hokkaidō. He was a particularly large man in terms of physique and the following unflattering article appeared in *Time Magazine* in shortly after becoming Tokyo’s mayor. “Recently the citizens of Tokyo chose famed swordsman-fencer Hiromichi Nishikubo as their Mayor. Last week he stepped upon a pair of scales to determine whether his now sedentary life has affected his weight. It has not. Mayor Nishikubo still weighs 238 pounds. (*Time Magazine*, January 31, 1927). He was awarded the highest title of Hanshi in *kendō* in 1929.

motivations for such a change. Although Nishikubo is widely attributed with rendering the changes, the precedent had already been set long before in 1882 with Kanō Jigorō's Kōdōkan "*jūdō*".¹⁴ Subsequently, the "Bujutsu Senmon Gakkō" became the "Budō Senmon Gakkō" (often abbreviated to Busen).

The reason for this modification was to emphasise the important "spiritual" heritage of the martial arts over mere "technical acquisition". It represented a kind of purism and highlighted the uniqueness of the Japanese seen through the Japanese martial arts *vis-à-vis* a growing fervour for Western sports. Moreover, the perceived overt competitiveness that the martial arts were developing especially among student practitioners was also a factor facilitating the change in terminology. Incidentally, the Mombushō did not officially make the same changes to martial arts terminology until 1926, albeit through Nishikubo's earlier recommendation.

As Tessa Morris-Suzuki points out, "the problems of dealing with 'Japaneseness' were compounded by problems of terminology. Was the defining characteristic of Japaneseness to be looked for in 'national character' (*kokuminsei*), in ethical systems like Bushidō, or (as Nishida Kitarō had suggested) in distinctive perceptions of reality?"¹⁵ In this sense, the Butokukai's (a private organisation) policy to accentuate the spirituality of the martial arts, and use this as the cornerstone of their educational and promotional policies, was most certainly meant to draw attention to notions of "Japaneseness", and the uniqueness of Japan's "superior" spiritual and physical culture over Western sports that were merely fixated on matters of "victory or defeat".

2b. The Tokyo Higher Normal School

Although the Butokukai is frequently extolled as the principal association for *bujutsu* promotion from the end of the Meiji period onwards, undoubtedly the Bujutsu Vocational College's equal in the field of specialist *budō* instructor education was the Tokyo Higher Normal School, which, as already alluded to, actually established educational standards in the early years. The highly influential educator and martial artist, Kanō Jigorō, was appointed the school's headmaster from

¹⁴ Another curious result of the Butokukai's adoption of "*-dō*" was the confusion it caused in the world of *jūdō*. Until this point, *jūdō* was used in reference to the style of *jūjutsu* taught by Kanō's Kōdōkan, but now the distinction was less obvious. Needless to say, the relationship between Kanō and the Butokukai, even though he was a key figure in the establishment of Butokukai *jūjutsu* protocols and *kata* in the early years, deteriorated significantly.

¹⁵ Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "The Invention and Reinvention of 'Japanese Culture'", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 54, No. 3, pp. 766

1893, and he immediately set about promoting physical education (including the martial arts) at this prestigious institution.

He created five sports clubs in 1896 including one for *gekken* (*kendō*), as well as *jūdō*, which he instructed himself. It was not until 1899 with the appointment of Kimura Nobuhide (1855–1924) of the Jikishin Kage-ryū as the head teacher that the *gekken* club became more active. After a number of changes, Takano Sasaburō was appointed as the supervising instructor, and was responsible for implementing the *dan* and *kyū* system of ranking from 1908. The police were already utilising a *kyū* system to designate rank, but based on Kanō Jigorō's innovations in *jūdō*, this was the first time that *dan* grades had been used in *kendō*, despite initial opposition from the Butokukai.¹⁶

Kanō was successful in raising *jūdō* and *kendō* to regular subjects of study at the Tokyo Higher Normal School from 1906 along with calisthenics; and from 1913, these were divided into three separate courses in which graduates were conferred with a nationally recognised teaching licence. Their specialist martial arts teaching qualification was approved by the government, and preceded that of the Bujutsu Vocational College. However, the first graduates of the Bujutsu Vocational College's four-year course were conferred a “Bachelor of Budō”, the first of its type in Japan.

To reiterate, with the decision to allow *bujutsu* education in schools, the Mombushō sponsored national *bujutsu* seminars for the purpose of gaining uniformity in teaching content, and also to improve the competence of the teachers. The first such seminar – there were ten in total – commenced from November 6, 1911 for five weeks. The instructor for *kendō* theory was Negishi Shingorō (1844–1913), with Takano Sasaburō and Kimura Nobuhide (Tokyo Higher Normal School) allotted the task of tutoring participants in *kata* and *shiai* (match) methodology. Given that the seminar was held at the Tokyo Higher Normal School, as well as the fact that most of the instructors for *kendō* and *jūjutsu* were teachers at the college, the dominant position of the school in early *budō* education cannot be overstated. Bujutsu Vocational College teachers were asked to teach only from the third seminar when Naitō Takaharu (1862–1929) took over from Negishi Shingorō's

¹⁶ The *dan* and *kyū* system indicates the level of one's technical proficiency and understanding of *kendō*. And ranks ranged from *shodan* (first *dan*) being the lowest up to *jū-dan* (tenth *dan*). In the present day, eighth *dan* is the highest technical rank in *kendō*. *Kyū* grades range from sixth *kyū* which is the lowest up to *ikkyū* (first *kyū*) which is the rank before *shodan*. When the Butokukai eventually adopted this system in 1917, it became standardised throughout Japan.

lecturing duties.

One of the important focal points of the early seminars was the creation of a unified set of *kata* to propagate nationally (see previous chapter). Another significant development that arose from the seminars was the refinement of group teaching methods (*dantai kyōju-hō*). If one compares the notes of the seminar taken by Sugiyama Kiyosaku to the aforementioned books subsequently published by the Tokyo Higher Normal School and Bujutsu Vocational College, the respective syllabi and group training methodology outlined in the texts are very similar.¹⁷

The tone was thus set for the wide-scale national dissemination of *kendō*. Armed with a modern pedagogical methodology, a cohesive unified curriculum, a growing number of qualified teachers, in addition to state sanctioned, mounting popular enthusiasm, *kendō* was about to experience wide scale propagation to an extent never seen before.

3. Kendō's Fascistisation and Promotion to Compulsory Education

With the onset of the period often referred to as “Taishō Democracy” there was an emergent trend for students to rebel against the establishment, and this trend was concomitant with increasing indications of militarism at the government level. The Mombushō was particularly concerned with the “dangerous propensity” for students to sympathise with left-wing or liberalist ideals, and this concern led to the formation of a “Student Section” within the Mombushō in 1924. One of the Student Section's main tasks was to investigate ways to thwart adherence to undesirable ideologies. Their methods included the use of physical education, and a “Physical Education and Exercise Deliberation Committee” (Taiiku Undō Shingikai) was inaugurated to devise approaches of utilising sports for this purpose.

3a. Taishō Democracy and “Dissident Philosophy”

According to a SCAP report written in the post-war period regarding the Butokukai's historical development, “when ultranationalistic development got under way [in the Taishō period], the leaders of the school system directed a ‘thought war’ against all forms of this dissident philosophy.

¹⁷ See Nakamura Tamio, Op. Cit., p. 228-29

Liberal student organizations and activities were put down, while substitutes that were congenial to nationalistic ideology were encouraged.”¹⁸

An important initiation in 1924 to fight the “thought war” was the creation of the “Meiji Shrine Sports Tournament” (Meiji Jingū Taikai). This competition was held as an annual event on the date of Meiji Emperor’s birthday, November 3, at the Meiji Shrine. The celebrated tournament featured fourteen events including *kendō*, and the objective was to use sports “as a ritualistic means of spiritual mobilization of youth” to promote the “Emperor System”.¹⁹ Interestingly, the Dai-Nippon Butokukai refused to participate in the tournament despite repeated pleas, as the idea of “competition” ran counter to the ideals of “spiritual development” that the organisation espoused.

At this point, an ideological rift is evident between the ideals advocated by the Butokukai and the state’s nationalistic agenda. Kevin Doak contends, “Nationalism, especially the popular and ethnic version, was a central, perhaps even the defining, ingredient in what has come to be known as ‘Taishō democracy.’”²⁰ The Taishō era saw many concerned groups and individuals petition the government to include *budō* studies as a regular subject in primary schools from a populist nationalist stance for inculcating a sense of “Japaneseness” through individual “spiritual development”, rather than as a sport or for state compliance. The state’s appropriation of sports was to become seen as an effective means for “ideological control” to instil “collective behaviour, moral training, [and] aspiration of national spirit.”²¹ The motivations at this point were different, and there was clearly an ideological misalignment evident between the Dai-Nippon Butokukai – as a private organisation and popular gatekeeper of *budō* – *vis-à-vis* the government’s political incentives for ideological control.

3b. Taishō Hedonism versus Traditional Asceticism

Around this time, some primary schools also started introducing martial arts after being designated a regular subject in middle schools; although, initially, such schools were few in number. The Mombushō commissioned the School Hygiene Board (Gakkō Eiseikai) to investigate the prospect

¹⁸ “Education in the New Japan Volume 1”, General Headquarters – Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers Civil Information and Education Section, Education Division, Tokyo, May 1948, p. 37

¹⁹ Abe Ikuo, Kiyohara Yasuharu, Nakajima Ken, “Fascism, sport and society in Japan”, *International Journal of the History of Sport*, (Volume 9, Issue 1), 1992, pp. 1-28

²⁰ Kevin Doak, “Culture, Ethnicity, and the State in Early Twentieth-Century Japan”, pp. 192-198 in *Japan’s Competing Modernities*, ed. S. Minichiello, p. 181

²¹ Abe Ikuo (et al.), *Op. Cit.*, p. 11

of including *budō* in primary education. Publishing their findings in 1918, they recommended that inclusion of *budō* into the primary curriculum as an “optional subject” (*zui-ka*) would be acceptable.

It was from this juncture that primary school *kendō* courses increased dramatically. According to research by Nakamura Tamio, 957 of a total of 21,006 primary schools nationwide chose to offer *kendō* in 1917. In just over two decades, this number had increased to a staggering 5,908 schools out of 20,308 by 1938, with 5,001 instructors holding *dan* ranks.²²

The momentum for encouraging *kendō*'s full admission into the primary and middle school curricula continued. In 1925, a petition was submitted to the 50th Imperial Diet House of Representatives plenary session to make *budō* a “regular subject” in primary schools, and a “compulsory subject” in middle schools. Deliberations were generally favourable toward the propositions, but it was decided that the promotion of martial arts to regular subjects of study in primary schools was “premature”.

Kendō during this period also experienced an enthusiastic following among university students in extracurricular clubs who enjoyed participating in *kendō* competitions and tournaments held throughout the country. Although the popularity of *kendō* among this demographic was applauded as demonstrating successful dissemination nationwide, purists or traditionalists were vehemently critical of the penchant shown by students to ‘corrupt’ the spirit and techniques of *kendō* for the sake of winning matches to appease their own egotistical desires. This clash of hedonism versus asceticism / pragmatism continued into the Shōwa period, but was vigorously swayed towards the latter with the onset of the militaristic 1930s, culminating in almost total state arrogation of *kendō*.

4. The Reversion from Competition to Combat *Kendō*

A comprehensive analysis of the national militarisation of *kendō* will be offered below based on the framework of Sakaue and Ōtsuka's “three stages” of state involvement.²³ These phases were in turn based on Irie Katsumi's examination of “four stages” of fascist development in Japanese physical education which he categorised under the labels of “germination” (1917–31), “shift” (1931–37),

²² Nakamura Tamio, Op. Cit., p. 249

²³ Sakaue Yasuhiro, Ōtsuka Tadayoshi, Op. Cit. p. 160

“control” (1937–41), and “culmination” (1941–45).²⁴ The first stage in Sakaue and Ōtsuka’s thesis was from 1931–1937 – a period in which a thorough reassessment was made of the competitive nature of *kendō* and its combat practicality. *Kendō* had already become immensely popular among students, and events such as inter-college competitions and the prestigious “Tenran-jiai” (*jūdō* and *kendō* tournament conducted before the emperor) accentuated the competitive dimension of *kendō*.²⁵

It was the growing “sportification” at the popular level that earned the wrath of militarists and ultra-nationalists, who interpreted such tendencies as proof of the polluting influences of Westernisation. How did they seek the “purification” of traditional *budō* and attempt to keep it untainted and indicative of the “Japanese spirit”?

4a. *Kendō*’s ‘Decolourisation’ and Reification of the Shinai as a Symbol of Patriotism

As Abe Ikuo (et al.) argues, “Contests and games were ritualised to indoctrinate militarism, patriotism, and above all, the ideology of the Emperor System. All kinds of physical activities were coloured by notions of *bushidō* (“the Way of the Warrior”) and *Yamato-damashii* (“Japanese soul”). Meanwhile play elements and the liberalism of sports were decolourised.”²⁶

With the “decolourisation” of *kendō*, we also see a massive surge in ethnolaudistic expressions connecting it with concepts such as *Yamato-damashii* and *Nippon-seishin* (Japanese spirit). This trend was evident from the time of the Dai-Nippon Butokukai’s foundation, but escalated from the 1930s onwards. Increasing references sought to connect modern Japanese people with feudal warriors through the martial arts. The following declaration by the Butokukai in 1930 is a clear indication of the swelling militaristic sentiment and the spiritualistic (*dō*) linkage being drawn between the nation, the noble warrior past, and *budō*, especially *kendō*:

Our current army is not made up of a distinct class of *bushi* warriors. All the people of the nation are soldiers. The nation is the army. The Way of the warrior (*bushidō*) is the

²⁴ Irie Katsumi, *Nippon Fashizumu-ka no Tāiiku Shisō*, pp. 35-37

²⁵ The “Tenran” tournaments were competitions held in front of the emperor. These included other sports as well, but in the case of *budō* (*jūdō* and *kendō*) the first was held on May 4–5 1929. In the division for specially selected competitors, Mochida Moriji won the *kendō* competition, and Kurihara Tamio won the *jūdō*. The second Tenran tournament was held again on May 4–5, 1934 in honour of the birth of the crown prince. The third tournament took place on June 18–20, 1940, in celebration of the 2600th anniversary of the founding of Japan.

²⁶ Abe Ikuo (et al.), *Ibid.*, p. 23-24

Way of the nation (*kokumindō*). *Bushidō* education must be the moral education of the people. Therefore the people must know the history of the *bushi*, study the spirit of martial virtue (*butoku*), and aspire to be like the *bushi* of old by being a good citizen at home, and a good soldier in the army.²⁷

Also related to *kendō*'s decolourisation, there were numerous reinterpretations and refining of competition rules, ranks, technical revisionism, and motivations for training and teaching. The nationally popularised modern form of *kendō* developed in the twentieth century found itself torn between conflicting definitions, a state of affairs which still causes heated debate among enthusiasts. In reference to this inconsistency between the ideals of the *katana vis-à-vis* the bamboo *shinai*, Ōtsuka Tadayoshi has coined the expression the “dual structure” of *kendō*.²⁸

In short, the principle of “*butoku*” or martial virtue espoused by the Butokukai – “the great spirit that protects world peace and augments the welfare of the people...”²⁹ – encouraged the practitioner to use the *shinai* as a *sword* to acquire a state of transcendence over issues of life and death, and also to instil a close sense of affinity with the samurai and their *bushidō* ethos. Given such considerations, it was deemed preposterous to celebrate or exaggerate the scoring of a point on an opponent (*hikiage*), for example, or to execute showy or aberrant techniques with the *shinai* for the sake of winning that could never be successfully accomplished with a real sword. However, this “corruption” of swordsmanship had already become quite commonplace among fencers in university and community clubs.³⁰

In this sense, of all the private *kendō* groups in existence in the Taishō and early Shōwa periods, the Butokukai saw itself as representing the moral high ground in terms of what was considered

²⁷ Hongō Fusatarō, “Seishin rikkoku to butoku no tanren” (Founding the nation’s spirit and forging martial virtue) (Dai-Nippon Butokukai Honbu, June, 1930), (SSK, pp. 173-194), p. 183

²⁸ T. Ōtsuka, *Nihon Kendō no Shisō* (The ideals of Japanese *kendō*), p. 144

²⁹ Hongō Fusatarō, Op. Cit., p. 174

³⁰ When considering the formation of national bodies and the development of *kendō*, the role that students played should not be forgotten. Although *kendō* was recognised as a regular subject in middle schools and normal schools from 1911, it had been practised in educational institutions at the tertiary level as an extra-curricular activity and optional subject for many years before. In fact, an inter-college convention (Tōkyō Gakusei Rengō Kendōkai) was held as early as 1906. Many of the great post-war *kendō* masters have their roots in the student *kendō* world. In Kansai, Kyoto Imperial University was instrumental in holding national college tournaments for *kendō*, the first being held in 1913. A national body was inaugurated in 1928 with the launching of the All Japan Students’ Kendo Federation with an initial thirty-two affiliated universities and colleges. This increased to ninety by 1940. With the formation of the federation, students engaged in numerous national and regional tournaments at all levels. Student trips referred to a “*musha-shugyō*” were also made to Korea and Manchuria. See AJKF, *Zen-Nihon Kendō Renmei Gojū-nen Shi* (Fifty-year history of the AJKF), p. 165

ideal *kendō*. In Butokukai matches competitors were given scores based on their attacking, posture, attitude, and spirit; i.e. those who were recognised to be upholding the principles of the *katana* scored highly. This system of scoring continued for eight years until 1927 when a unified definition for criteria to judge a valid point was devised by the Butokukai. “A valid strike (*yūkō-datotsu*) will be judged when the attack is conducted in full spirit, and the technique is executed with the proper blade angle (*basuji*), while maintaining correct posture.”³¹

In 1929, the first of three “Tenran-jiai” were held in Kyoto to decide the best fencer in Japan. To many, this threatened the demise of *kendō*, regardless of the honour involved in performing before the emperor himself. Opposition to such an exalted tournament may initially seem odd, but it was indicative of the extant antagonism between populists and statist, as was the case with the Butokukai’s abovementioned opposition to the Meiji Jingū Taikai.

The Tenran tournament employed for the first time a five-minute time limit for each bout, which encouraged the “cowardly behaviour” of some competitors who, after scoring first (in the best of three), would avoid confrontation until time was up. Nevertheless, despite criticisms from *kendō* purists, this provided the catalyst for many more similar tournaments in other sectors of the *kendō* community.

However, after the Manchurian Incident (1931) – in which cold-steel was actually used in battle³² – government and military officials began to vigorously criticise *kendō* as a competitive sport, and sought ways to draw attention to its combative qualities and practical applications, as well as for promoting a strong sense of patriotism.³³

³¹ Nakamura Tamio, Op. Cit., p. 80

³² There are many accounts boasting the efficacy of the sword of modern weaponry. The following description by career army officer and prolific writer, Sakurai Tadayoshi, is chilling for its unvarnished tone: “Upon investigating the bodies of Chinese soldiers in the Manchurian Incident, there were many that had been cut in the head. This is indicative of our soldiers charging over the enemy huddled in trenches to cut them. It seems clear that they attacked with purpose to score *ippon* on the *men* (head target in *kendō*). Due to the style of clothing worn by the Chinese soldiers it was inevitable that they were cut from the neck up, but I also saw a body that had been dispatched with a fantastic diagonal cut (*kesa-giri*) from the left shoulder down to the right hip. I was impressed with the quality of the cut. Probably, the executor had a fine sword in hand. There is no escaping an enemy with skill and a sword. Chinese soldiers are afraid of the *nihontō*. They do not think much of pistols, but when a *nihontō* is lifted overhead, it seems that their testicles ride up inside their bodies. They believe that they will be reborn as a dog if they get dispatched by a sword, so they despise the weapon. But that cannot be helped. I think that it is best to cut quickly and not be predisposed to a specific target. Not just *o-men* (head), *o-kote* (wrists), *o-dō* (torso), or *o-tsuki* (throat), but the butt or the legs are also legitimate targets. *Kenjustu* that aims for any target is also appealing. In real battle, there is no such thing as *o-men* or *o-kote*. There is no objection for cutting any target that is open.” Sakurai Tadayoshi (Army Major General) “Teki wo kiru hanashi” (Talk of cutting the enemy), in *KK* Vol. 11 (1941 July–September), p. 132

³³ The demand for *guntō* (mass-produced military swords) increased as did various forging innovations to

4b. The Dawn of Proactive State Engagement in Kendō Education

From the late 1920s, the government also became a driving force behind compulsory inclusion of *budō* education into schools, rather than just on the basis of traditional lobbying by the Butokukai and other private groups and individuals. This visibly proactive stance germinated in 1929 with the formation of the “Bunsei Shingikai” (Educational and Cultural Policy Council).³⁴ In 1930, the council published a report outlining the importance of a “rational approach”³⁵ to promoting physical education among youth; and *budō* rather than Western sports was touted as an expedient way of inculcating the “Japanese spirit”.

Based on this, the Mombushō decided that *budō* would become a compulsory subject in all middle and normal schools from 1931. It was announced that *kendō* or *jūdō* would be studied by boys, whereas girls were to study *naginata* (glaive) or *kyūdō* (archery) as an effective means for promoting nationalistic ideals. Due to the hurried introduction of this policy, an outline for teaching content was not issued until 1936. When the outline was released, it stipulated the techniques and mind-set expected in *kendō* instruction in schools in great detail. Interestingly, at this stage, the focus of recommended teaching content was still based on character development rather than the practical combat application of the sword. The virtues expected to be cultivated in compulsory *kendō* education in middle schools were specified as follows:

1. There are many ways in which agile and stable [physical] movement extends to spiritual movement (*seishin undō*).
2. It is suitable for nurturing powers of discernment and ability to accomplish tasks.
3. It can be beneficial in forging courage and grit.
4. It increases self-confidence and creates a calm demeanour.
5. One can learn the spirit of *bushidō*, and, through rigorous training, the virtuous qualities of liveliness, fortitude, perseverance, endurance and diligence can be

make the blades more resilient and battle-effective. For example a magazine advertisement by the Shōheikan Gunsō Company states that, among the many other attributes of its *guntō*, due to a new forging process in which heat is retained for longer in the blade it does not bend as easily, it does not cut the hand if touched accidentally, and “being silent, it is perfect for night operations” – presumably because it did not rattle in the sheath, and because the enemy could be dispatched by a soundless cut. For example, see advertisement in *KK* Vol. 8 (1940 October–December), p. 116

³⁴ “The Educational and Cultural Policy Council shall be under the supervision of the Prime Minister and shall respond to his inquiries by conducting investigations and deliberations of important matters on educational and cultural policy (*bunsei*) such as the encouragement of the spirit of the people, the decision of educational policy, and so forth.” (“Gakusei Hyakunenshi” published in its abridged and recompiled form under the title of “Japan’s Modern Educational System”. Accessed on January 17, 2011) http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/hakusho/html/hpbz198103/hpbz198103_2_119.html

³⁵ “Rational” in this case infers “moral”.

cultivated.

6. One will come to know correct protocols of etiquette (*reigi-sabō*), with composure in deportment, and grace.
7. Uprightness is stressed, and it is expected that the student's character will become complete with a strong sense of honour.
8. In short, *kendō* will serve to nurture broad-minded Japanese people with the human qualities of wisdom, compassion and feelings.³⁶

Compared to the militarised *kendō* that was to arise in the near future, the expectations outlined here seem to be civilised, and sought to assist individual growth. The text also states that *kendō*'s ultimate purpose is one of "peace", but can be used for the purpose of "self-defence if the need arises." It also equates the "spirit of *kendō*" with the "spirit of *bushidō*", and ultimately "*Yamato-damashii*" which is defined as the "unique spirit of the Japanese people which places loyalty and filial piety (*chūkō*) above all else, is rich in a spirit of self-sacrifice, and inspires purity of heart with a clean conscience, and accomplishing exploits that bring no shame."³⁷ The tone of the text is clearly nationalistic in a popular sense, but is a far cry from the state's militaristic pitch that would be implanted in *kendō* instruction a year later when war broke out with China again in 1937.

It was not until the 70th Imperial Diet House of Representatives plenary session in 1937, around the outbreak of the second Sino-Japanese war (1937–1945), when Imai Shinzō's proposal to include *budō* as a regular subject in primary and "youth schools" was assented.³⁸ This signified a sudden intensification of interest from various sectors for a fiercer political role for *kendō*. For example, together with the prominent nationalist Ishii Saburō (1880–1948) of the Kōdō Gikai, renowned *kendō* instructors of the day such as Takano Sasaburō and Naitō Takaharu were involved in the establishment of the "Kendō Deliberation Council" (Kendō Shingikai), a consultative body to the Mombushō in 1938.³⁹

Their motivation was to facilitate a greater understanding of the effectiveness of *kendō* as a means to instil a sense of national spirit, and thereby influence the path of governmental policy with regards to the wider sponsorship of *kendō* in education and the community. Later, in 1940, the

³⁶ Kendō Kyōiku Kenkyūkai, *Chūgakkō Kendō Kaisetsu* (Explanation of *kendō* in middle schools, reproduced in *KKMT* Vol. 11), p. 258

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 254

³⁸ Youth schools or "Seinen Gakkō" were secondary education facilities for working boys and girls that operated between 1935 and 1947

³⁹ Nakamura Tamio, *Op. Cit.*, p. 244

Kendō Shingikai announced “It is our hope that *kendō* be recognised as the greatest source for providing spiritual strength needed in the people to endure the long period of war.” They also advocated the creation of a “central government controlled training institution” for *kendō* teachers, something that was to eventuate in 1942.⁴⁰

If the nation embodies the spirit of *kendō*, and it is propagated to the extent that there are no Japanese who do not study *kendō*, this would indeed be a wonderful accomplishment from the state’s point of view. This great objective will be very difficult to achieve without the active cooperation of the state...The spirit of *kendō* will return to the apex of devotion and dying for the emperor (*kunkoku*).⁴¹

Apart from the Kendō Shingikai, various groups and individuals also intensified the push for a more extensive role for *budō*. Of particular consequence were the twenty-two proposals submitted by parliamentarian Fujio Yasutarō (1895–1971) and others concerning *budō* education in primary, youth,⁴² and girls’ schools. The thrust of his argument was to cultivate “national morality” (*kokumin dōtoku*) to ensure Japan’s survival as it headed into what threatened to be a prolonged era of war. These propositions were to have a resounding effect on the implementation of *budō* education thereafter.

Fujio’s ultimate request was that as *budō* was so valuable in enhancing the physical and mental strength of the nation’s people, it must be considered seriously as a compulsory form of physical education – distinct from Western-styled physical education – for Japanese youth. As one observer noted, “Regardless of the country, regardless of ethnicity (*minzoku*), final victory is determined by the health of the nation’s people (*kokumin*) and the training they engage in to maintain it.”⁴³ *Kendō* and the other martial arts promised to contribute to this goal, and more.

Fujio’s proposals were tendered with a number of other similar propositions and combined into one submission consisting of nine articles. These included a suggestion to construct a martial arts hall in the precincts of the Meiji Shrine; establish a “Budō Deliberation Council” (Budō Shingikai,

⁴⁰ Kendō Shingikai Jimusho, “Kendō shingikai ni tsuite: Zenkoku kendōka shoshi ni tsugu” (About the Kendō Deliberation Council: A call to kendoists throughout the nation), June 1940, *SKK*, pp. 57-64

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 59

⁴² In 1935, vocational supplementary schools and youth training centers were combined to form “youth schools” (*seinen gakkō*), or secondary education facilities to provide an educational program for working youths.

⁴³ Hiranuma Ryōzō, “Kokka no kōbō to kokumin no tanren” (Defence of the state and training the people), *KK* Vol. 3 (November–December, 1939), p. 7

later to be established as the Budō Shinkō Inkaï); promote *sumō(-dō)*; construct municipal martial arts training halls in cities and towns; create a *budō* section or department in the Ministry of Health and Social Security (Kōseishō); include *budō* education as a regular subject in all primary, youth and girls' schools; create more institutions to train *budō* instructors; establish a system of school inspectors to oversee *budō*; and afford special privileges to *budō* instructors.⁴⁴ Fujio's suggestions were acquiescently endorsed by lawmakers, signifying a culmination of many years petitioning the government for a more active stance in supporting *budō* as a cultural vehicle for educating the people.

As McVeigh contends, "though the connections between state core and the usages of culture are not always clear, it can at least be said that officialdom authorizes and legitimates the meanings of culture, thereby injecting a fair amount of state-ness in the discourse."⁴⁵ From the purview of the development of modern *kendō*, the early Shōwa era marks the beginning of the state's endeavour to authorise the martial arts for national advancement and infusing state-ness (= Japaneseness) as Japan prepared for war.

4c. *Kendō*'s Induction into State Cultural Policy

Some populist advocates proclaimed that it had taken too long for the authorities to recognise the important role that could be filled by *kendō* in primary education to counter the pervasive and detrimental influence of Western ideals in the Japanese education system. The reasons why it had finally become possible, according to one kendoist of the time, Watanabe Sakae, were threefold: "1) The Japanese people recognised that *kendō* is the national sport of Japan and formed the basis for national ideals (*kokumin shisō*); 2) children had the right frame of mind to learn the spirit of *kendō* properly; and 3) *kendō* could further facilitate ideal physical and mental development for children."⁴⁶

Still, other influential advocates took a different track in popularising *kendō* – one that was initially wary of too much state involvement. For example, Satō Ukichi⁴⁷ (1895–1975), a

⁴⁴ Nakamura Tamio, Op. Cit., p. 250

⁴⁵ B. McVeigh, Op. Cit., p. 190

⁴⁶ Watanabe Sakae (Kendō Hanshi), "Jikyoku to kendō" (*Kendō* in the current situation), *KK* Vol. 2 (August–October, 1939), p. 17

⁴⁷ Satō Ukichi (1895–1975) was a graduate of the Tokyo Higher Normal School in 1919, after which he became an assistant to his mentor Takano Sasaburō. He was a highly influential figure in the 1930s with

prominent *kendō* master and professor at the Tokyo Higher Normal School, wrote in his classic book *Kendō* in 1928 that by extolling the spirit of “true patriotism” (*shin-no-aikokushin*) that was represented in the “one-nation, one-state” (*ichi-minzoku ichi-kokka*) of Japan, it behoves individual Japanese people to “preclude the insalubrious ideals of foreign countries”, and “keep in touch with the spirit of the *Yamato minzoku* (Japanese people)” through the study of *kendō*. In the same year, he also wrote in the educational journal *Taiiku to Kyōgi* (Physical education and sport) of the importance of cultivating “*minzoku-ishiki*” (ethnic consciousness) i.e. a sense of “Japaneseness” through *kendō*, rather than *kokka-ishiki* (state consciousness).⁴⁸

However, the internal development of a sense of Japaneseness through *kendō* took on a new meaning after the Manchurian Incident (1931) when absolute state values were increasingly attached to *kendō* – a physical and spiritual activity that was viewed as being inherently morally superior to Western sports, and thereby useful for nurturing not so much “good individuals” as “good imperial subjects”. Given the exigency of war, the state’s agenda was given increasing credence by educator’s and *kendō* instructors with little open resistance.

Another way in which the government connected the study of *kendō* to state consciousness was through a decree that made compulsory the instalment of *kamidana* (literally “god-shelf”, Shintō altar) in all *dōjō* (martial art training venues) and school halls where *kendō* was practised. Items of worship such as scrolls and the like were often placed in martial arts training areas for the martial arts in the Tokugawa period, but there are few examples of Shintō altars having been installed at the time. As Nakamura Tamio relays, Shintō altars have prevailed in martial arts halls since the end of the Meiji period or the beginning of the Shōwa period “as a part of the national reinforcement policy of Imperial Fascism which was joined together with National Shintoism.” In a survey conducted in 1932 it was discovered that 47.2% of middle schools had *kamidana* in the *dōjō*, a figure that was deemed highly inadequate.⁴⁹ In a meeting of heads of physical education and exercise convened by the Mombushō in 1936, it was announced that henceforth all *dōjō* would install *kamidana*. “The sanctity of the *dōjō* must always be maintained... All *dōjō* will be furnished with

considerable sway in devising the syllabus for *kendō* teaching in schools in 1936. He eventually became a full professor at his *alma mater* in 1940, and also taught at various educational institutions including Tokyo Gakugei University and Chukyo University. After the war he received the title of *kendō* Hanshi and was promoted to the rank of 9-dan.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Sakaue Yasuhiro, Ōtsuka Tadayoshi, “Senjika ni okeru *kendō* no henyō katei no kenkyū (sono 1) – *Kendō-ron no bunseki*”, *Budōgaku Kenkyū* 21 (2) (1988), p. 159

⁴⁹ Nakamura Tamio, Op. Cit., p. 46

a *kamidana*.”⁵⁰

This promulgation effectively forced a direct relationship between *kendō* and *kōdō* – or reverence of the imperial way. Whenever a training session commenced or finished, all students would bow to the *kamidana* as a sign of deep respect to state Shintō deities, and by virtue of this, the emperor and the state itself. It was obviously meant as a way of indoctrinating nationalistic ideals among youth through the use of symbols and invented protocols of propriety.⁵¹

In another pivotal development in the state control of *kendō*, the Army Ministry proposed that a Ministry of Health and Social Security (Kōseishō) be established in 1937 in order to “secure human resources for the war effort.”⁵² The ministry was inaugurated in January 1938, and under its auspices was the “Board of Physical Fitness” (Tairyoku-kyoku). This board was tasked with overseeing all aspects of public health and fitness, and its jurisdiction even extended to previously independent sports organisations. The only area of significance that it did not regulate was school physical education, which was controlled by its rival ministry, the Mombushō.⁵³

The Kōseishō also requisitioned the annual Meiji Jingū Tournament and renamed it the “Meiji Jingū National Training Tournament” (Meiji Jingū Kokumin Rensei Taikai), adding a patently militaristic theme to the program by including “mass gymnastics, air raid drill, *budō*, and military combat drills”, and the removal of Western sports.⁵⁴ Thus, through its various ministries the government had consciously forged a multi-pronged hold on all sports in Japan, and had set up a framework to wrest administrative control from private governing bodies. Furthermore, as Abe (et al.) concludes, “most Japanese militarists, physical education teachers and sportsmen began to seek Japanized physical education and sports to which they gave such diverse terminologies as ‘Taiiku-Dō’ (the way of physical education), ‘Sports-Dō’ (the way of sport), ‘Ishiteki-Taiku’ (physical education controlled by will) and the like.”⁵⁵ The addition of the suffix ‘-dō’ represents an interesting trend of the ‘budōfication’ of sports as opposed to the ‘sportification’ of *budō*.

⁵⁰ “Gakkō ni okeru kendō jūdō nado no jisshi ni kanshi toku ni ryūi subeki jikō ikan (Points to keep in mind regarding the implementation of kendō and jūdō classes (May 7, 1936, Taiiku undō shujikai tōshin” (Whitepaper on physical education), Mombu Daijin Kanbō Taiiku Undō-ka, SKKS, pp. 195–197

⁵¹ For an in-depth examination of the historical significance of *kamidana* and their forced introduction into school training halls, see Nakamura Tamio’s extensive thesis “Budō-jō to kamidana (1)” (The budo exercise hall and the Shinto altar 1 & 2), *Fukushima Daigaku Kyōiku Gakubu Ronshū* #39, 1986, pp. 35–51. Part 2 of this investigation appears in the same journal the following year from pages 1–17.

⁵² Abe Ikuo (et al.), Op. Cit., p. 23

⁵³ Ibid., p. 22

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 21

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Sakaue and Ōtsuka plotted the fusion of *kendō* with state cultural policy by citing the following occurrences: 1) the inclusion of the Butokukai in the “Kokumin Seishin Sōdōin Chūō Renmei” (Central League for the Mobilisation of National Spirit) in 1937; 2) the inauguration of the “Budō Shinkō Inkaï” in 1939; and 3) the elevation of *budō* to a “provisional regular subject” (*jun-seika*) in primary schools in 1939, and then to a full regular subject in 1941.⁵⁶ They state also that, “*Kendō* lost its ‘life force’ for internal development” as a result of the forced change into a tool for the promotion of nationalism and militarism.⁵⁷

However, it is possible to argue that it was not a case of *kendō* losing its “life force”, but rather a case of another intrinsic component of *kendō* coming to the fore. Post-war Japanese scholars often lament the state’s appropriation of *kendō* as a kind of reprehensible abuse of the traditionally “peaceful” art of *kendō*. They are missing two points of significance: first, it was not only the state, but also former popular nationalists who were at the forefront of the charge so to speak; and second, despite its many historical expressions of attaining individual spiritual peace, *kendō* has always maintained an intrinsically combative nature.

There was a distinct process in which *kendō*’s aggressive component was revitalised in the late 1930s, although surprisingly few scholars have attempted to analyse it. The process essentially involved downplaying *kendō* as a way of “self-development” in the traditional holistic sense, and promoting nationalist sentiments through state sanctioned forced participation – mainly in schools. As the phrase “*gisei-teki seishin*”⁵⁸ (spirit of self-sacrifice) suggests, *kendō* was now not for spiritual growth for the sake of individual advancement, but rather to create cogs in the national machine sustaining emperor and state, in compliance with the ideals promulgated in the *Kokutai no Hongi* (*Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan*): “To give up one’s life for the sake of the Emperor cannot be called self-sacrifice. Rather, it is a discarding of one’s lesser self to live in the great Imperial Virtue, and the exalting of one’s true life as a national subject.”⁵⁹

After the commencement of the Sino-Japanese War and the build-up to Japan’s involvement in the Second World War, even popular nationalist *kendō* experts such as Watanabe Sakae began promoting the correlation between *kendō*, the state, and the nation, or at least a strong sense of

⁵⁶ Sakaue Yasuhiro, Ōtsuka Tadayoshi, Op. Cit., p. 160

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 159

⁵⁸ Dai-Nippon Butokukai, *Butoku* (August, 1943), p. 11

⁵⁹ Quoted in “Education in the New Japan Volume 1”, General Headquarters – Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers Civil Information and Education Section, Education Division, Tokyo, May 1948, p. 35

patriotism to accomplish state and national ambitions. In his words: “As the national sport of Japan, the spirit of *kendō* lies at the root of the spirit of the nation, the promotion of the national spirit is tantamount to the promotion of the spirit of *kendō*. The spirit of *kendō* and the current situation [with the war in China] are inseparably linked. In recent times we have endorsed the ideal of patriotic *kendō* (*kendō hōkoku*), and this is going to become even more important from now into the future.”⁶⁰

The jingoistic rhetoric used to evoke cultural pride and association with the *bushi*'s value of self-sacrifice is clearly evident when *kendō* is compared with sword arts developed in the West. For example, “Western swordsmanship was developed in accompaniment with the shield which was used for protection while trying to kill the enemy. Self-defence and safety are the primary concerns. In the case of Japanese *kenjutsu*, protecting the self is never a consideration. If there is an opportunity to cut or thrust, all of one's energy is put into a committed attack, and it is unpardonable to think of anything else.”⁶¹ Military and government leaders used traditional Japanese concepts to foster a “national spirit’ to make the new generation fanatics for the ‘Mission of Japan’, and so directed education as to impel the people to regard unlimited personal sacrifice and suffering for the national cause a duty and an honour.”⁶²

Similarly, Western sports in general were seen as “liberal” and potentially dangerous, or at least not conducive to promoting the national militaristic ideology. In 1938, the Kōseishō even went as far as branding athleticism as a “germ of Western self-pride” and enforced a policy requiring all sports organisations to comply with the government for the sake of “improvement of fitness”.⁶³ *Kendō* was intimately linked with a glorious warrior past and was perceived as “uniquely” Japanese. It encouraged physical fitness, mental toughness, discipline, combat preparedness, and was also a conduit for promoting national morality – the content of which was dictated by the times and the exigency of war. In so many ways, *kendō* was the ultimate tool for the dissemination of nationalistic ideology.

⁶⁰ Watanabe Sakae, Op. Cit., p. 17

⁶¹ Sugahara Tōru, Op. Cit., p. 99

⁶² SCAP, “Education in the New Japan Volume 1”, pp. 32-33

⁶³ Abe Ikuo (et al.), Op. Cit., p.21

5. From Ideals of Self-perfection to the Reality of Self-sacrifice

According to Sakaue and Ōtsuka, the second stage of *kendō*'s fascistic development, 1938–1941, was the period falling between the second Sino-Japanese war and the Pacific War. This was the most concentrated period for *kendō*'s de-civilising and re-militarisation process. With the implementation of “National Mobilisation”, numerous aspects of Japanese society were modified to support the war effort, and *kendō* being no exception, was consciously restructured to be more combat-oriented through further changes to match rules and teaching methodology. The following excerpt from a report by the Budō Shinkō Iinkai (Budō Promotion Committee, see 5d. below) makes this point clearly: “As *budō* inspires the Imperial Way (*kōdō*) and aims to protect and develop the Japanese empire, its study should not be limited to only as a form of individual character development (*jinkaku rensei*), but viewed as a means to directly strengthen the nation as a form of training from a national basis for the national polity...”⁶⁴ This section will examine the makeover of *kendō* ideals as Japan prepared for war.

5a. Cultivating the Attacking Spirit

Renowned *kendō* and *iaidō* master, the legendary Nakayama Hakudō (1869–1958), also showed his warrior colours as opposed to his usual educator demeanour with the following statement regarding the role of the sword in the modern theatre of battle. “It is fighting with cold steel that makes the enemy petrified of our Japanese army, and is our greatest weapon and strongest point. The spirit of using one’s own body to attack the enemy in hand-to-hand combat is the quintessence of *Yamato-damashii*.”⁶⁵ This sentiment was also endorsed by the government, and in a report issued by the Budō Shinkō Iinkai it states that although modern warfare is fought with “science and technology”, final victory is only attained through “attacking with swords with soldiers flinging themselves at the enemy.” That is, “facing the enemy front on, and stabbing and cutting them.”⁶⁶ Charles Nelson Spinks also observed a swaggering attitude in Japanese military men and their fetish for swords when “General Sadao Araki once boasted that Japan was not greatly concerned about the

⁶⁴ *Naimu Kōsei Jibō* (Vol. 5 No. 8; July 30, 1940), “Budō shinkō no konpon hōsaku ikan” (Basic directions in budō promotion), *SKK*, p. 72

⁶⁵ Nakayama Hakudō (Kendō Hanshi), “Budō no seishin” (The spirit of *budō*), *KK* Vol. 2 (August–October, 1939), p. 11

⁶⁶ *Kendō Shingikai Jimusho*, Op. Cit., *SKK*, p. 60

standards of her material weapons, that if imbued with the real Japanese spirit, her soldiers could defeat the world with bamboo swords.”⁶⁷

Given the proliferating nationalistic and statist ideologues engulfing Japan concurrently with the advancement of militarism, it is hardly surprising that leading figures in the field of martial arts education backed the violent manipulation of *kendō*. By 1942, “all physical training leaned toward militaristic aims rather than health and recreation”⁶⁸, and as Spinks recounted in the midst of the war, “physical perfection and the test of muscular strength are not ignored in Japanese athletics, but they are of secondary importance compared with the attainment of mental and spiritual composure in the face of danger.”⁶⁹

It was not only the fortitude to overcome hardship experienced in war and the spiritual strength to function in battle that was projected as the ultimate goals of *budō* education. *Kendō* and the other martial arts were imparted to teach Japanese to be highly aggressive, and if necessary, suicidal. With regards to this “aggressive spirit”, Watari Shōzaburō, a teacher at the Tokyo Higher Normal School, had the following high expectations for *budō* education.

This spirit is the unique spirit of our country. It is the Japanese spirit. This spirit experienced remarkable development as *bushidō*, so the phrase ‘*mononofu no Yamato-damashii*’ (warrior Japanese spirit) means that the spirit of the *bushi* and the spirit of Japan are the same thing. With the advance of *bushidō* came the parallel development of the techniques of fighting, or *budō*. Our country, martial Japan, a nation without peer in the world, is looked up to by all others because of the Japanese spirit and Japanese *budō*. *Budō* is represented by the virtue of valour (*buyū*). How is this virtue manifest in the Japanese spirit? (1) A brimming attacking spirit (*kōgeki-seishin*)... (2) This fighting spirit becomes even more resolute in the face of a strong enemy and adversity... (3) The tenacity to keep fighting to the bitter end regardless of the outlook... (4) The fighting spirit is so full of vim and vigour, that even in death the enemy will ultimately also be destroyed... (5) In the throes of combat with the enemy, the mind is calm and able to move freely.⁷⁰

But to be effective in the long term, such training and mind-set needed to be cultivated through

⁶⁷ Charles Nelson Spinks, *Op. Cit.*, p. 62

⁶⁸ SCAP, “Education in the New Japan Volume 1”, General Headquarters – Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers Civil Information and Education Section, Education Division, Tokyo, May 1948, p. 120

⁶⁹ Charles Nelson Spinks, *Op. Cit.*, p. 61

⁷⁰ Watari Shōzaburō (TKSG Professor), “Nihon seishin to budō” (The Japanese spirit and *budō*), in *KK* Vol. 4 (January–March, 1940), p. 7

budō from an early age. In fact, the earlier the better. As already mentioned in this chapter, one of the most significant events in terms of governmental control of sports during this period was the eventual introduction of martial arts into primary schools. As Fukutake maintains, “basic state schooling was, one might say, schooling for soldiers.”⁷¹ It was then, inexorable that primary schools were included in the scheme of military indoctrination for the war effort, and *kendō* was assigned an important function as a precursor to formal military training through childhood indoctrination of the “indomitable Japanese fighting spirit”.

5b. Budō Education’s Admittance into Primary Schools as a “Regular Course” of Study

The Mombushō elevated *budō* to the status of “provisional regular subject” (*jun-seika*) in May of 1939 with the promulgation of the “Primary School Budō Instruction Guidelines” (*Shōgakkō Budō Shidō Yōmoku*). Nevertheless, instructions for how classes were to be structured and carried out were somewhat vague at first, but they were later clarified in an explanatory text published by the ministry in December that year. The stated objective was to “encourage from childhood academic studies and martial practice (*shūbun-renbu*), nurture a strong mind, and through this reap the fruits of practical disciplined education, while cultivating a loyal and patriotic Japanese character (*kokumin-teki seikaku*).”⁷² Classes were to be conducted two times a week outside of regular class hours; and in the case of *kendō*, “*shinai* or *bokutō* were to be utilised, but not *bōgu* (protective armour)” – probably because the extra resources needed to supply equipment to schools nationwide were not available.

The promotion of *budō* from a provisional to a regular subject was generally a welcomed move. For example, Abe Mamoru, a teacher at the Ibaraki Prefecture Normal School, supported the policy because offering Japanese children the chance to participate in the martial arts as “national physical education” would enable them to be “nurtured in accordance with the ways of the Japanese Empire.”⁷³ Furthermore, Nakayama Hakudō described in 1939 the value of this policy in terms of the limits of compulsory education (*gimu-kyōiku*), which only extended to the end of primary school.

⁷¹ T. Fukutake, *The Japanese Social Structure: Its Evolution in the Modern Century*, p. 70

⁷² Mombu-Daijin Kanbō Taiiku-ka, *Shōgakkō Budō Kaisetsu*, December 1939, p.2

⁷³ Abe Mamoru “Kokumin gakkō to budō”, in *KK* Vol. 9 (1941 January–February), p. 117

Not all primary school students continue through to higher education. Actually, of one-hundred children, sixty or seventy will be unable to continue due to their home situation, and only one-quarter or one-third will be able to receive higher education. Many will enter society after only receiving primary education. These children will not be given the opportunity to study *budō*. They will hear of the word, but will not be afforded the chance to study it. All come together to serve as defenders of the state upon reaching conscription age. Those who make the grade as conscripts will have never studied *budō* before. What a shameful state of affairs if our nation's soldiers, born and bred in Japan, go through life without knowing *budō*. Looking at the kind of *kendō* practised at universities and vocational colleges nowadays, all they do is compete with taps of the bamboo sword. They engage in matches for the sake of competing rather than to learn the spirit of *budō*. To equate this state of affairs with pot plants or *bonsai* trees, it is like fussing over the shape of the branches, but not paying any attention to the roots. This cannot be regarded as an ideal order of development. Why would such *kendō* arise (not that it should be called *kendō*) in which the practitioners vie to hit each other with *shinai* without forging the gut. This is the destructive influence of foreign sports.⁷⁴

Still, there remained the usual problem of who was going to teach children in primary schools. At a national meeting of normal school principals held in June 1939, those present were urged to make an effort to foster capable *budō* teachers. This would become an even more acute issue with the introduction of compulsory *budō* education into primary schools waiting around the corner.

5c. The “National Peoples’ School Order”

With the “*Kokumin Gakkō-rei*” the Japanese compulsory school system was reorganised (National Peoples’ School Order) of 1941, influenced by the concept of the German *Volksschule*. The idea was a product of the nationalistic character of society during the war years, and the curriculum centred on cultivating “loyal imperial subjects” in accordance with “the way of imperial subjects” (*kōkokumin no michi*); and “the major effective provision was that of loading the curriculum heavily with nationalistic training.”⁷⁵ The objectives were to “embody the spirit of the nation (*kokumin seishin*), and retain resolute faith in the state polity (*kokutai*) and be prepared to fulfil the mandates of the Empire.”⁷⁶ In Article 10 of the *Kokumin Gakkō-rei* directive it is clearly stipulated that nurturing a strong physique and vigorous spirit would serve to enhance the strength of the nation,

⁷⁴ Nakayama Hakudō, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 12, 13

⁷⁵ SCAP, “Education in the New Japan Volume 1”, General Headquarters – Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers Civil Information and Education Section, Education Division, Tokyo, May 1948, p. 39

⁷⁶ Inoue Kazuo, *Gakkō Taiiku Seido-shi* (The history of the school PE system), p. 122

and this was perceived as necessary for the defence of the homeland.⁷⁷ With this enactment, *budō* was made “compulsory” for all school children from their fifth year of elementary school, an amendment that was considered to be a vital component of the new curriculum.

The physical education curriculum was thus divided into two sections in which “*taisō*” (physical education) consisted of callisthenics and *budō*, and was renamed “*tairen*” (physical discipline). It was stipulated that all boys in Year-Five and above were required to take *budō* classes, and, in addition to this, girls were initially given the option to participate. The purpose was for “children to strengthen body and mind, and forge an open-hearted and sturdy spirit to serve as devoted subjects (*kōkokumin*) of the empire.”⁷⁸ The new curriculum was designed to prepare Japan’s youth for war, and the type of *kendō* education offered was highly disciplined and practical. Students were taught that the “essence” of *budō* was to always attack without concern for the outcome. “*Tairen-ka budō* education will consist of teaching the fundamental movements of *budō*, and to train the body and mind to encourage the spirit of *budō*.”⁷⁹ In the *Shotō-ka* (lower) section, boys will study *kendō* or *jūdō*. This will be continued in the *Kōtō-ka* (upper) section. Girls may also be taught *naginata*.⁸⁰ Apart from strengthening body and mind in preparation for military service, another stated goal of this system was to indoctrinate the “traditional spirit of the people”.⁸¹

An important characteristic of the content taught in *tairen-ka budō* classes apart from the basic and applied techniques was the inclusion of lectures which covered the objectives of *budō* training, the structure of the *nihontō* (Japanese sword), the correct mind-set for study, and how *budō* was intimately linked with the Japanese psyche. In fact, the lecture portion of the *budō* syllabus was conducted in correlation with the content taught in the National Department (*Kokumin-ka*) consisting of classes in moral education (*shūshin*), national language studies (*kokugo*), national history (*kokushi*), and geography (*chiri*).

After the enactment of the *Kokumin Gakkō-rei*, regulations for middle, higher and other school

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 124

⁷⁸ Nakamura Tamio, *Kendō Jiten*, p. 251

⁷⁹ According to MEXT’s white paper on the history of education in Japan “The eight-year period of compulsory education was scheduled to be enforced in 1944 (and the students who completed the sixth grade of the National School and studied at a middle level school for two years were supposed to satisfy the eight-year requirement for compulsory education), but in fact due to the wartime emergency it was not put into effect.”

http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/hakusho/html/hpbz198103/hpbz198103_2_142.html (accessed on May 6, 2011).

⁸⁰ Quoted in Inoue Kazuo, Op. Cit., p. 124

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 124

categories were issued, and consequently *budō* education was intensified from early 1943. For example, guidelines for *Tairen-ka* classes in middle schools stipulated that “bodies will be trained and spirits forged to nurture vigorous and unyielding resources for the purpose of increasing the national capacity for defence, and improving capabilities for loyal service. (*Chūgaku Kitei*, Article 5.)”⁸² In the case of normal schools,

1. We must induce [our students] to master our nation’s unique martial arts, and train healthy, vigorous minds and bodies.
2. As well as nourishing a disposition to hone a martial spirit, esteem propriety, and value modesty, we must encourage an aggressive spirit and a confidence in certain victory.
3. We must inculcate a spirit of self-sacrifice and train a fighting mentality.⁸³

5d. Augmentation of Budō at all Levels and the Budō Promotion Committee

The Kōseishō also became particularly active in the promotion of the martial arts from 1939 when they established the “Budō Shinkō Iinkai” (Budō Promotion Committee). However, there was a jealous demarcation conflict between the Kōseishō’s policies for furthering “national ideals” (*kokumin shisō*) and the Home Ministry’s (Naimushō) Keihō-kyoku (Police Bureau), and the Keishichō (Tokyo Police Bureau) because of their long association with *budō*.

The Minister of Health and Social Security chaired the Budō Promotion Committee. He was accompanied by the Minister of Education, and up to thirty highly ranked government officials and experts in the field of *budō*.⁸⁴ The first meeting was convened in February 1940 to establish the basic direction *budō* promotion should take. The only *kendō* representative present was Takano Sasaburō, who reportedly sat in the room hardly contributing to the discussions.⁸⁵ The reason for his seeming passivity at the inaugural meeting remains somewhat a mystery, but perhaps it was due to his old age – he was 77 at the time, or maybe his presence was considered as being no more than a token one. In any case, *budō* experts were not afforded the same liberty to express themselves as the bureaucrats. One of the outcomes of their five meetings was the creation of a central body in government to govern the martial arts. According to their official mandate:

⁸² Ibid., p. 124

⁸³ Quoted in Cameron G. Hurst, *Armed Martial Arts of Japan*, p. 165

⁸⁴ Nakamura Tamio, Op. Cit., p. 245

⁸⁵ Watanabe Ichirō (ed.), *KBKS III* (Modern *budō* history research sources), p. 1

Budō today has become centred on competitive matches, and there is a predisposition to be a mode of simple physical education. To instil the true spirit of *bushidō* and return the special characteristics of *budō* that make it an effective means to combat enemies, we have decided to construct a composite form of *budō* suitable for the times. Namely, taking elements from *jūdō*, *kendō*, *kyūdō* (archery), *kidō* (horse-riding), *suiei* (swimming) and creating a pragmatic form of *budō* so that all youth can fulfil their responsibilities for universal conscription (*kokumin-kaihei*). In accordance with the ideal of both literary and military paths (*bunbu-ryōdō*), the aim is to stir the national spirit and bolster national strength. To facilitate this, each *budō* organisation will be integrated into a central body to be supervised by the government. Instructors will be trained, and a supreme organisation for *budō* education will be established.⁸⁶

This eventually did happen with the state's reorganisation of the Dai-Nippon Butokukai into an extra-governmental organisation in 1942 – an eventuation which was to have far-reaching consequences for the martial arts during and after the war. This development will be discussed in section 6.

5e. Deficient in the Skill to Kill

For the meantime, the style of *budō* being promoted by the government was still not pragmatic enough for some advocates. For example, a *kendō* instructor named Takayama Masayoshi lamented that *budō* was in a state of disarray with too much focus being placed on “spirituality” over practicality. “If teachers instruct elevated principles along the lines that it is okay to lose so long as one engages fairly and squarely, this will create a distorted understanding to the extent that the martial arts will be unrecognisable as Japanese *budō*. That is the situation that *budō* faces at the moment.”⁸⁷ Furthermore, according to Takayama, the very attributes that were touted so vehemently to get *budō* taught in schools were now superfluous inconsequentialities that had no place in the exigency of war. “The cultural preponderance that surrounds *budō* with its interpretation in accordance with current trends has led to it be expressed with beautiful and elegant phrases without an understanding of true *bushidō*. It has regressed into a weak means for moral

⁸⁶ “*Budō Nihon wo kengen: Shinkō iinkai no hōsaku*” (Opinions on *budō* Japan: The direction of the Dilerberation Council), *KK* Vol. 7 (1940 July–September), p. 130

⁸⁷ Takayama Masayoshi (Kendō Kyōshi), “*Budō kaikaku shoken*” (Findings on *budō*'s development), *KK* Vol. 5 (April–May, 1940), p. 31

development (*shūyō budō*).”⁸⁸

His scathing appraisal of *budō* in general was that it was completely removed from the realism of war, and resembled “puppet theatre.”⁸⁹ Takayama saw the need to move away from *budō* for the sake of “moral development and spirituality”, to a policy that reinforced its usefulness in the field of battle. “Only through studying the way of *kami* (deities), *waza* (techniques), and death will one be able to sacrifice one’s life in service of the emperor; *Yamato-damashii* will then manifest, and loyalty and bravery will transpire.”⁹⁰ He loathed the “weak-willed, spiritless armchair intellectuals” who were involved in concocting the teaching guidelines.⁹¹ “Current *budō* education does not teach how to kill... surely this amounts to no more than salt that is not salty, sugar that is not sweet, or *senpuri* (*swertia Japonica*) that is not bitter.”⁹² Although Takayama could be categorised as representing one polar extreme, he was certainly not alone in his thinking, and as will be shown below, *budō* education in schools and in the community was to gradually conform to his ideal.

With regards to the way in which *kendō* should be taught in the Kokumin Gakkō system (scheduled for the following year), Nakayama Hakudō took a different standpoint and lamented that the “spirit of Japan”, or the “spirit of *bushidō*” was hardly understood by Japan’s youth at all. The reason for this regrettable situation was, according to Nakayama’s summation, because Japanese youth were not given the opportunity to “learn or possess a pure spirit through *kendō*.” The purpose of *kendō* in Nakayama’s mind was to “make human beings”, thus, “it is not difficult to imagine that youth who receive instruction in *kendō* will develop into complete people, sturdy in bone and spirit.”⁹³

At first glance it appears that Nakayama was taking the opposite stance to Takayama’s ilk in his advocacy of “personal cultivation”; however closer inspection shows that this was not exactly the case, and the issue of pragmatism was, in fact, very much on his mind. He relays chilling information about the war in China imparted to him by his student Terada Kanzō, himself a highly ranked *kendō* and *iaijutsu* (sword drawing) exponent. After the conclusion of a battle between “six-hundred Chinese soldiers and two-hundred Japanese”, the Japanese soldiers asked each other

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 34

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 37

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 39

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 47

⁹² Ibid., p. 30

⁹³ Nakayama Hakudō, “Gakkō *kendō* ni tsuite” (Regarding school *kendō*), *KK* Vol. 8 (October–December, 1940), p. 89

how many of the enemy each had cut down:

Terada reported to his peers that he had cut off the right hands or left feet of his enemies, and that they should go and count. It turned out that there 66 enemy bodies without a right hand or left foot, and there wasn't a single chip on his blade. However, others who boasted of their skill in *kendō* claimed ten or twenty kills, but their *guntō* (military issue *katana*) were completely bent; the blades were so chipped that they looked like saws, and they were totally exhausted. I see this as exposing a huge gap between those who have learned *kendō* properly, and those who have not. This is something that I admonish all primary school *kendō* teachers to consider carefully.⁹⁴

How could this kind of combat skill realistically be imparted through *kendō* instruction in schools? Ishida Ichirō, a school inspector in Tokyo suggested that *kendō* must be treated as *bujutsu* (martial techniques). “Students must be made to comprehend the notion that they are facing each other with swords, and be constantly attacking.” Through the tension generated through such an engagement, spiritual strength is born, and the student will learn to “appreciate and handle a *nihontō* properly.” In terms of the practical side of combat, students would learn the “fighting interval (*maai*), and master the various techniques” giving *kendō* an important sense of realism.⁹⁵ This was the premise, but how exactly was this de-civilising process to be instigated on a national scale?

6. Sengika (Militarisation) and Total State Control of Kendō

The zenith of *kendō*'s de-civilising came in the third stage of *kendō*'s facistisation from 1942–1945, an era of unprecedented policies aimed at militarising (*sengika*) martial arts education. The government again commissioned an investigation to explore the abovementioned plan to incorporate all *budō* organisations under one state-governed umbrella. In December 1941, the Budō Shinkō Iinkai was restructured as the “Renbu-ka” (Budō Training Division) of the Kōseishō's Population Bureau (Jinkō-kyoku, originally Kokumin Tairyoku Shingikai or National Physical Strength Council) for this purpose. The Renbu-ka was further renamed the “Tanren-ka” (Discipline

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ishida Ichirō (Tokyo School Inspector) “Kokumin gakkō tairēnka budō (*kendō*) ni tsuite” (Kendō classes in National Peoples' schools), *KK* Vol. 9 (January–February, 1941), p. 132

Division) a year later in 1942, and it administered all *budō* activities in the community except for university clubs.⁹⁶ Their influence will be investigated below.

6a. Organisational Consolidation

The National Physical Strength Council created a subcommittee headed by General Nara Takeji (1868–1962) and thirteen other officials. They recommended that an “all-encompassing extra-governmental organisation” be formed between the five ministries to encourage the *budō* arts in all walks of society.⁹⁷ Nara stated, “We have reached a consensus to restructure the Dai-Nippon Butokukai, a registered society that has contributed to the advancement of *budō* for many years, and incorporate it into the organs of government.”⁹⁸

Accordingly, on March 21, 1942, retaining the same name, the Dai-Nippon Butokukai was reorganised under the patronage of the five ministries of Kōseishō (Health and Welfare), Mombushō (Education), Rikugunshō (Army), Kaigunshō (Navy), and the Naimushō (Home). The Butokukai’s headquarters was situated inside the Kōseishō’s office in Tokyo, and its original Kyoto base was designated as a regional branch. The Kōseishō’s “Student Physical Education Promotion Committee” became a division inside the Butokukai, and its role was to oversee the five *budō* arts of *kendō* (including *naginata*), *jūdō*, *kyūdō*, *jūkendō* (the way of the bayonet), and *shagekidō* (the way of marksmanship). Other private associations such as the Kōdōkan (*jūdō*), Nippon Kobudō Shinkōkai (Classical Martial Arts Promotion Society), Shiseikai and Dai-Nippon Kendōkai (private *kendō* societies) were also placed under the supervision of the Butokukai.⁹⁹ Kimura Tokutarō (1886–1982) was appointed head of the *kendō* section. The following declaration made the state’s motivations abundantly clear:

⁹⁶ Nakamura Tamio, Op. Cit., p. 241

⁹⁷ Quoted in Harasono Mitsunori, *Kendō no Fukkatsu* (*Kendō* revival), p. 40

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 40

⁹⁹ The “Shiseikai” was a group of dedicated young *kendō* enthusiasts that was launched in December 1940. The president was Kimura Tokutarō, who was later to become the president of the All Japan Kendo Federation. Many of its members also became officials in the AJKF in the post-war period. In the group’s publication, *Shisei*, Kimura writes of his concerns for the growing militarism seen in *kendō*, and how “*kendō* techniques must be studied together with the *kendō* heart.” AJKF, *Zen-Nihon Kendō Renmei Gojū-nen Shi*, p. 156. (Kimura was also *kendō-bu* (Kendō Division) president in the Butokukai when Japan lost the war.) The Dai-Nippon Kendōkai was another group formed by a small number of *kendō* enthusiasts in March, 1943, separately to the Butokukai. The All Japan Students’ Kendo Federation was absorbed into it, but it was at odds with the Butokukai, and disappeared without actually achieving anything. Takano Sasaburō and Kimura Tokutarō were appointed as vice presidents.

Subjects of the Japanese empire must study *budō* to cultivate loyalty, bravery and heroism in order to bolster the spirit of the nation, while developing principles of devotion and honour. The essence of *budō* must be embodied in the lifestyle of the nation, and when danger threatens, each must not falter in laying down their life showing their obligation to the emperor.¹⁰⁰

The process of the Butokukai's induction into the militaristic government was reported in detail in SCAP documents concerning the post-war purge of officials associated with ultra-nationalism and militarism:

It appears that a critical phase in the society's change into a militaristic organ took place under government pressure. This pressure was said to have been exercised by the army every [sic] since the Manchurian incident but the conservative element in the society was able to resist until 1942 when the organization was finally forced to change its rules to the effect that the prime minister was to be its president ex-officio and the ministers of the army, navy, education welfare and home ex-officio vice presidents. For this reason General Senjuro Hayashi resigned on March 5, 1942, and on 21 March when the new by-laws were put into force General Tojo as Premier and Minister of War assumed the presidency. This ended an eleven year struggle (according to these government spokesmen) in which the army had consistently tried to infiltrate army methods of judo, kendo, and kyudo as against the conservative purely athletic method which was taught by the organization since its inception...¹⁰¹

It seems the conversion of the Butokukai into a government organisation was not without controversy. “[I]t was only after repeated strong directions from the national office that the reorganization was brought about... It took 20 months to complete the reorganization of the prefectural branches.”¹⁰² This may have been due to antagonism against the state by some popular nationalists, or due to the logistic difficulties in taking control of a nationwide organisation that boasted millions of members.

Nevertheless, in 1943 the newly established Dai-Nippon Butokukai issued guidelines on how *kendō* training was to be conducted thereafter. It listed practical considerations at the forefront of the document.

¹⁰⁰ Dai-Nippon Butokukai, “Zaidan Hōjin Dai-Nippon Butokukai”, April 1, 1942 (The day the Butokukai was established as a government body), *SKK*, p. 77

¹⁰¹ HBP, No. 2-10 “Information on the Dai Nippon Butoku Kai, 26 Nov. 1946”

¹⁰² HBP, No. 2-24, “Statement regarding the general state of activities of the branches of the Dai Nippon Butoku Kai (association of military virtue) in ‘To’ ‘Do’ ‘Fu’ and ‘Ken’ and the authorities and functions of the officials thereof.”

1. It is expected that a reasonable understanding of sword usage (*tōhō*) is acquired. This includes the execution of basic cuts and thrusts, and correct *kirikaeshi* (repetitive striking practice).
2. Ample training should be conducted outdoors. The clothes worn will consist of trousers, wrap-around leggings and shoes so that attacks can be practised while running.
3. The length of the *shinai* will be regulated. *Shinai* shall be no longer than 3-*shaku* 6-*sun* (109cm). The *tsuka* (hilt) should be less than 1-*shaku* (30.3cm) with 9-*sun* (27.2cm) under the *tsuba* (hand guard).
4. Matches against a variety of weapons should be encouraged. Sword versus sword; Sword versus *jūken* (rifle and bayonet); sword versus short-sword; one person versus multiple opponents; group matches.
5. Test cutting (*tameshi-giri*) should be encouraged.
6. *Kendō* instructors should also study *jūkendō*, and instruct it at a basic level.¹⁰³

Now the conditions were ripe for the final stage in *kendō*'s de-civilisation. The new rules and guidelines were to set the tone for the introduction of *senji* (militarised) *kendō* in which the sole objective was to teach the skill to kill while not being afraid of being killed in the process.

6b. The Mombushō's Efforts to Militarise Budō

Even with the Butokukai coming under the administrative wing of several ministries, the Mombushō and the Kōseishō continued to run their own programs utilising *kendō* and the other martial arts. As the war effort intensified, the Mombushō implemented “*senji budō*” (militarised *budō*) for university and vocational school students from 1943 with the promulgation of the “Guidelines for Wartime Physical Education Training Implementation for Students” (*Senji Gakuto Taiiku Kunren Jisshi Yōkō*). This was solely designed to promote combat capabilities and preparedness to complement student mobilisation initiated in the same year.

Kendō training was included in the basic training section. Towards the end of the war, the Mombushō's “Important Aims for Preparing Citizen Combat Capability” (*Kokumin Tōryoku Rensei Yōkō*) were devised mainly by Ōtani Takeichi, a professor at the Tōkyō Specialist College of Physical Education (later amalgamated with the Tokyo University of Education at the end of the war). The following translation is from the preamble.

¹⁰³ Quoted in Nakamura Tamio, Op. Cit., p. 261

The war situation has become dire and a corner of our sacred empire has been defiled by the callous enemy. The time has come for the people of our nation to rise to their feet in defence of the homeland. In order to carry out this heavy burden of responsibility, the citizens of Japan must first of all be armed, and with a vigorous fighting spirit, they must master the fundamentals of combat. Through the combination of these two facets, then can the people reach a high level of military preparedness. How can we achieve this combat readiness? The purpose of the items outlined herein are to increase the fighting capacity of the Japanese people. Combat readiness can only be realised by putting into action the “Important Aims for Preparing Citizen Combat Capability”. Now, it is the duty of each and every Japanese national to dutifully engage in the training defined herein. Each person must strive to build their bodies for the highest level of combat aptitude, and give themselves to fighting bravely in defence of the empire.¹⁰⁴

The text reveals a degree of desperateness as the war worsened for the Japanese, especially considering that the threat of foreign invasion was steadily approaching reality. It was expected that each and every Japanese citizen would fight to the last in the face of allied forces landing in Japan.¹⁰⁵

The next section in the text outlines the type of training that citizens would be subjected to.

People must be proficient in two aspects of combat. The first is to aim for manoeuvrability through walking and running exercises, and the other is learning actual fighting skills. This involves training in empty-handed combat, and with weapons. The weapons that one can choose to train with are wooden staves (*katana*), bamboo spears (bayonet), and rocks (grenades). These represent the essential techniques for combat, and they are simple to learn and apply. Nurturing the fighting spirit, an important element of combat, can be accomplished individually through rigorous training in the techniques of combat.¹⁰⁶

The actual syllabus consisted of the following exercises that sought to improve fitness, and

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in Harasono Mitsunori, Op. Cit., p. 52

¹⁰⁵ Some considered this to be a ludicrous idea. For example, Sakakida Yaeko, a pioneer in the development of modern *naginata* was called to a meeting of officials at the Mombushō regarding her plans for a unified style of the martial art to teach in schools across the country. The following excerpt is from an interview with Sakakida published in the *Kendō Nihon Monthly*, June and July, 1982. “There was a fellow named Onitsuka from the armed forces, a colonel I think. He said, ‘What’s the story with Naginata these days. Wouldn’t it be better to train in how to use a bamboo spear?’ I just about burst when I heard him say that! I felt the blood surging through my veins, and snapped back at this Colonel Onitsuka, ‘I beg your pardon!’ I heard afterwards that I even thumped the desk and had a frightful scowl on my face. ‘Are you saying that we should make *naginata* training and spear training the same?! I will have you know that *naginata* is authorized by the MOE as a form of education for girls, and is not meant to be taught as a way to kill people! If it gets to the stage where *naginata* has to go to war, then Japan is already beyond help!’”

¹⁰⁶ Harasono Mitsunori, Op. Cit., pp. 52-53

hone basic skills of self-defence.

Militarised budō teaching content (Mombuhō)

Topic (Males)	Content
1. <i>Hosō</i> (running)	1. 1-2km dash
2. <i>Taiatari</i> (body blow)	1. Punches, kicks 2. Throws 3. Holds
3. <i>Zantotsu</i> (Cuts and thrusts)	1. <i>Tanren-zangeki</i> (cut training) 2. <i>Kihon-zantotsu</i> (fundamental cutting and thrusting, including bayonet practice) 3. Vertical and horizontal cutting practice
4. <i>Tōteki</i> (Throwing)	1. Catch ball 2. Short-staff throwing
Females	
1. <i>Hosō</i> (running)	1. 1km dash or 2km fast walking
2. <i>Goshin</i> (Self-defence)	1. Punches 2. Kicks
3. <i>Tōteki</i>	1. Catch ball 2. Short-staff throwing

In the *zantotsu* section, the objective was to “cultivate an indomitable martial spirit and learn to execute a decisive cut with the sword.”¹⁰⁷ *Tanren-zangeki* involved repeatedly striking bundled sticks on a stand “for at least one-hundred times” with vigour and strength “to forge body and mind”. This method is probably connected with the classical school of swordsmanship known as the Jigen-ryū.¹⁰⁸ The instruction content goes into technical detail for correct cutting technique, and in particular it emphasises the importance of “correct trajectory (*hasuji*) of the blade”, “steady posture”, and “*zanshin*” (continued physical and mental vigilance after the cuts).

Apart from smashing a stand with staffs or sticks, students also engaged in matches wearing protective armour. For the sake of combat realism, much of the training was conducted outdoors while wearing shoes. The *shinai* used in matches was shortened to 3-*shaku* 6-*sun* (109cm), and bouts were conducted in rectangular areas 20m in length so competitors had to charge at each other,

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p53

¹⁰⁸ “The Jigen-ryū was called the ‘secret sword of Satsuma’ because of the remote region where it was located. It developed from the Taisha-ryū, an offshoot of the Shintō-ryū and the Shinkage-ryū, and was famous for its peculiar stance called ‘*tombo*’ (dragonfly) and the shrill screams that adepts made when attacking relentlessly. In their practice, the students of the school entered a frenzied state as they hacked furiously at bundled tree branches or wooden poles ‘three-thousand times in the morning and eight-thousand strikes at night.’ Although trainees were strongly discouraged from fighting, once cornered they would attack fiercely in a murderous flurry of screaming and slashing.” Quoted from *Budō: The Martial Ways of Japan*, Nippon Budokan (Edited and translated by Alexander Bennett), p. 96

or with everybody in a circle so that when one person lost, another would rush in to challenge.¹⁰⁹

6c. The Kōseishō's Initiatives to Militarise Budō

The Kōseishō also implemented a similar *sengika* policy in 1943 for *shakai taiiku* (social or community physical education) which included *kendō*, *jūkendō* and *shagekidō*. Back in 1938, the Kōseishō created the “Physical Fitness Badge Test” for males aged 15 to 25 years of age.¹¹⁰ They started a similar system for the martial arts in 1943 (*Budō-shō kentei*) in which badges, not unlike those awarded by the Boy Scouts, were issued to individuals who successfully achieved a series of tasks designed to enhance combat ability.¹¹¹

In March of 1944, the Kōseishō issued a more comprehensive outline for national participation in *sengi-budō*, but the policies were unable to be sufficiently implemented before the end of the war. These included the following changes and applications: the modification of *kendō* rules to make it more combat-like; an increase in *koryū* (classical martial arts) and *iaijutsu* practice; staging *nojiai* (outdoor matches conducted in large groups) with an increased militaristic tone; sprinting outside with *katana* in hand; and *tameshi-giri*.

The Kōseishō's textbook *Kokumin Sengi Budō Kihon Kunren Yōkō* (National military *budō* fundamentals training manual) published in 1944 provided guidelines for drilling citizens in effective combat techniques based on traditional and modern martial skills. The booklet outlined the four combat arts of *jūkendō*, *kendō*, *shagekidō*, and *jūdō*, and starts with the following statement of intent:

The conditions are becoming increasingly dire as we enter the third year of the Greater East Asian War. When the time comes for all the people of our nation to be deployed for battle, as imperial subjects, we must be imbued with the traditional spirit of *budō* of our empire. Now is the time to acquire the fundamentals of combat by devoting ourselves daily to *budō* training. This guideline was established for *budō* training with the purpose of volunteering body and soul to destroy the enemy.¹¹²

In Article 3, the symbolic and national significance of the martial arts is outlined as follows, and a

¹⁰⁹ Harasono Mitsunori, *Op. Cit.*, p. 55

¹¹⁰ Abe Ikuo (et al.), *Op. Cit.*, p. 18

¹¹¹ Nakamura Tamio, *Op. Cit.*, p. 258

¹¹² Quoted in Harasono Mitsunori, *Op. Cit.*, p. 49

clear link between the “spirit of *budō*” and the sacred Japanese empire is emphasised.

Important considerations in *budō* are reverence of the *kami* and veneration of our ancestors, and the spirit of loyalty and patriotism based on all of one’s might... An essential aspect of *budō* training is repetition, and embodying the essence of martial virtue (*butoku*) at all times.¹¹³

The syllabus for *kendō* was more comprehensive than that defined in the Mombushō’s guidelines, and it was highly pragmatic. Although *reihō* (forms of etiquette) were still included, it did away with traditional forms which involved squatting down (*sonkyo*) as a sign of respect, in place of the battle-ready standing bow (*ritsurei*). “The equipment used can be *bokutō* (or a wooden staff the same length as a *bokutō* at 3-*shaku* 6-*sun* – 109cm), or a *shinai*.”¹¹⁴ Sword usage was also extremely practical as the following table shows.¹¹⁵

Militarised budō teaching content (Kōseishō)

Topic	Content
1. <i>Reihō</i> (etiquette protocols)	<i>Ritsurei</i> (standing bow)
2. <i>Kamae</i> (fighting posture or stance)	<i>Taitō</i> (sword in the sheathed position) <i>Kamae-tō</i> (sword in the ready position)
3. Application of the sword	Vertical cut, right (left) diagonal cut, right (left) diagonal cut from below, right (left) horizontal cut, <i>tsuki</i> (thrust)
4. <i>Zantotsu</i> (cutting and thrusting)	<i>Men-no-zangeki</i> (cutting to the head); Left (right) <i>men-no-zangeki</i> ; <i>dō-no-zangeki</i> (cutting the torso area); <i>tsuki</i> (thrust to the throat or chest)
5. <i>Aikiri</i> (continuous cutting)	Left (right) continuous striking to <i>men</i> (head area)
6. <i>Totsunyū-zangeki</i> (rushing in to cut)	<i>Totsunyū-men-zangeki</i> (charging in to cut <i>men</i>); <i>totsunyū-hidari-kesa-zangeki</i> (running in to cut the left diagonal); <i>totsunyū-tsuki</i> (running in to thrust)
7. <i>Chōsoku</i>	Prolonged respiration

These techniques will seem totally unfamiliar to the modern kendoist. In *kendō* today, practitioners do not “run in” to strike. Instead they lunge forward from the optimal *maai* (interval) and ideally attack “with one step and one strike”. The idea of “*totsunyū*” (charging in) is to storm the enemy

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 50

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 51

¹¹⁵ Table reproduced from Harasono Mitsunori, Op. Cit., p. 51

from any spatial interval and unleash a crude but effective barrage of cuts, rather than the refined strike that is sought in modern *kendō*.

Another important point here is that the terminology used is deliberately militaristic. “*Zantotsu*” (斬突 cut and thrust) use the *kanji* denoting an actual “cut” as opposed to the previous and currently used term “*datotsu*” (打突 strike and thrust). The actual physical techniques were strikes, but students were encouraged to maintain a mind-set, that even though the sword or stick was wooden, they were training to use a live blade.

Furthermore, many of the techniques outlined in the syllabus were executed with one hand rather than the standard two-handed style of fencing that was the norm until then, and is now. This is due to the practical issue of maintaining balance whilerunning and wielding a sword at the same time, which would be extremely difficult if the sword was held with two hands in front of the body. It is also advised that when cutting with the right hand, the right foot should be forward (the opposite was the case when cutting with the left hand). This method was encouraged because the sword was usually held with the right hand, and having the right foot forward was a safety measure in case the swipe at the opponent missed. If the left foot was forward, the wielder put himself in danger of cutting his own leg on the follow through.

In short, *sengi-kendō* was not intended to be fencing *per se*, but rather as preparation for practical combat using a sword. Although it was called *kendō*, it was essentially a reversion back to *kenjutsu*. There were target areas, but the objective was not to score points; rather, it was to learn how to wield a sword effectively while cutting along various trajectories that were never employed in standard *kendō*.

7. The Immediate Post-war Aftermath

The Butokukai was not dissolved immediately after the war despite the widely recognised role that it played in the promotion of *kendō* and other martial arts for overtly militaristic purposes, initially as an private society, and then as an organ of government. Disbandment involved an extended process with the Japanese government showing little contrition. It was inevitable that the Butokukai be disbanded. *Kendō* was also banned and was on hiatus before being revived several years later as a democratic sport with efforts to re-civilise it once again. This section will consider the manner in

which the Butokukai was dismantled, and how *kendō* was removed from schools.

7a. The Butokukai Purge

Officially titled the “Removal and Exclusion of Undesirable Personnel from Public Office”, the “Purge” directives contained in SCAPIN¹¹⁶ 548 (Removal of Ultrationalists) dictated that “ultra-nationalistic or militaristic social, political, professional and commercial societies and institutions will be dissolved and prohibited.”¹¹⁷ The other directive often quoted with regards to the Butokukai is SCAPIN 550 (Removal and Exclusion of Undesirable Personnel from Public Office) which states, “Persons who have been active exponents of militarism and militant nationalism will be removed and excluded from public office and from any positions of public or substantial private responsibility.”¹¹⁸

Thus, with a proposed memorandum to the Chief of Staff, “Dissolution of Dai Nippon Butokukai by order to the Imperial Japanese Government is recommended in accordance with the provisions of SCAPIN 548 Paragraph If on the grounds that this is an organization ‘affording military or quasi-military training’ and which provides for the ‘perpetuation of militarism’ or a martial spirit in Japan.”¹¹⁹ Interestingly, however, this memorandum was not enacted, nor was a subsequent memorandum prepared for the Imperial Government issued. Had it been issued, the Butokukai and its officers’ fates would have been clear under Paragraph “C” of the purge directive categories, meaning that all would have been purged without question.

Instead, Hans Baerwald reports the content of the memorandums were relayed verbally because of “assurance by officials of the Imperial Japanese Government that verbal orders would be sufficient...”¹²⁰ Nevertheless, in the immediate post-war period, the organisation set about immediately creating what one may term cynically a façade of repentance.

Immediately after the war, *jūkendō* and *shagekidō* were removed from the Butokukai’s curriculum leaving *kendō*, *jūdō*, and *kyūdō*. Nakayama Hakudō was appointed as the head of the *kendō* division

¹¹⁶ “SCAP Index”. SCAP is used in reference to the Supreme Command Allied Powers which included GHQ in Tokyo and related administrative agencies, and also to the Supreme Commander i.e., General MacArthur.

¹¹⁷ SCAP, *Political Reorientation of Japan: September 1945 to September 1948 report of Government Section, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers* (Reprinted edition by the Scholarly Press, 1968), Volume 2, p. 479

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 482

¹¹⁹ Memo for the Chief of Staff “Dissolution of the Dai Nippon Butokukai”, August 13, 1946. Quoted in an initial draft of “History of the purge” by Hans Baerwald, April 1, 1948, p. 3

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4

early in 1946, and the Butokukai sought ways of raising funds to gain independence from any government backing. A SCAP report outlined this process as follows:

The society rid itself of all its characteristics as an auxiliary organ of the government in March this year. Since then it has become a purely people's corporation, changing its system and organization along democratic lines, and endeavouring to regenerate and develop fencing, judo and archery as national sports for the establishment of a peaceful and well-cultured Japan. But in view of circumstances and with the object of fully attaining the abovementioned intentions, it was found suitable to throw away all connections, create fresh atmosphere all over the country, and form new autonomous organizations for every branch of the sports. Thus on Sept. 13 [1946], a meeting of the directors was held and the liquidation of the society was decided upon.¹²¹

Negotiations were held between the Japanese government and SCAP regarding its continued operation, and the degree to which the society would be subject to the purge. The main point of contention was whether or not the Butokukai could be classed as "ultra-nationalistic" or "militaristic" since its time of inception (1895), or after it was appropriated by the government in 1942. General Willoughby recommended to Government Section (GS) in November 1946 that if the Butokukai were to be included under the provisions stipulated in SCAPIN 550, "the beginning date should not be earlier than January 1942 and the ending date not later than September 2, 1945, for any of its important officials."¹²² He also relays his concern that if the Butokukai was to come under the axe and all officers purged without question, this would have an adverse effect on the current government in that "three members of the [Yoshida Shigeru] Cabinet and the Director of the Bureau of Public Safety of the Home Ministry" would be ousted from their posts, destabilising the government in a critical time before the introduction of the new constitution.¹²³

Other SCAP officials took a similar, almost sympathetic stance. Of particular note was the GS's Political Affairs Division Chief, P.K. Roest who wrote in a report, "At no time did the Butoku Kai have a special section or group in charge of 'spiritual' training. The 'spiritual' counterpart of the sports taught had been an integral element of the teaching itself for every one of these sports. It was reiterated that until the out-break of the Pacific War these so-called military arts were practiced as

¹²¹ HBP, "Report regarding the procedure for the liquidation of the Dai-Nippon Butoku Kai No. 2-5"

¹²² Hans Baerwald, "The Dai Nippon Butokukai and the Purge", unpublished paper presented at the University of California, Los Angeles in February 1982. p. 6

¹²³ Ibid.

athletics, a physical training only, which at the same time developed worthy moral qualities.”¹²⁴ He also tried to justify the role played by military elites in the Butokukai as a passive one, and that it was even opposed to military and governmental interference. “The generals who headed the national organization had usually cooperated fully with the civilian members to maintain the society’s independent character and were themselves, as a rule, opposed to the intrusion of army methods and the fighting arts of shooting and bayonet practice.”

He concludes his report with the following statement: “From the material submitted by the Home Ministry it appears that the Butoku Kai could not be considered as an instrument of ultra-nationalism and militarism until the beginning of 1942, unless the athletics taught by the organization in connection with the Samurai code are in themselves considered as evil. If that extreme position is taken the organization stands condemned from its inception in 1895.”¹²⁵

Hans Baerwald, who was there in an official capacity to chronicle the Butokukai’s situation, and witnessed their gradual escape off the proverbial hook, viewed this light-handed treatment with a certain amount of scepticism. “In retrospect, it seems obvious that the Home Ministry bureaucrats had undertaken a concerted campaign to influence various well-placed SCAP officials to insure that if the Butokukai were to be included in the Purge criteria, the latter would be drawn and narrowly as possible.”¹²⁶

Meanwhile, the Japanese ministries colluded to dissolve the society. The president of the Butokukai, Fujinuma Shōhei (1883–1962), sent a report to SCAP’s Civil Intelligence Section outlining their decision to disband. Fujinuma explained that the society had broken away from governmental control in March of 1946 to serve as an “independent society” operated in a “democratic manner” to contribute to “the rebuilding of a culturally peaceful Japan by striving to develop the national sports of *kendō*, *jūdō* and *kyūdō* for the welfare of the public.” However, it was decided at a director’s meeting convened on September 13, that it was better for the society to be dissolved and that independent organisations of enthusiasts be encouraged to “establish their own democratic societies to promote their sports.”¹²⁷

¹²⁴ HBP No. 2-10, General Headquarters Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers Government Section Memorandum for the Record, “Information on the Dai Nippon Butoku Kai”, 26 November, 1946

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Hans Baerwald, “The Dai Nippon Butokukai and the Purge”, p. 7

¹²⁷ Dai-Nippon Butokukai, “Dai-Nippon Butokukai kaisan tetsuzuki ni kansuru hōkokusho”, September 28, 1946. Reproduced in Watanabe Ichirō (ed.), “Budō sōgō dantai Dai-Nippon Butokukai no setsuritsu to sono

An application for dissolution was lodged to the Mombushō on November 2, and it was ratified by the ministry on November 7 with a directive to clearly stipulate what measures it intended to take regarding its assets.¹²⁸ The dissolution was finalised with the issuance of “Naimushō Directive No. 45” by the Home Ministry on November 9, 1946. Apart from officially announcing the dissolution of the Dai-Nippon Butokukai and its related branches, the directive also stated that the Butokuden in Kyoto (the main *dōjō* of the Butokukai built in 1899) would be released to the citizens for use as a venue for cultural and sporting activities to help “attain the peaceful mission” of the post-war rebuilding process.¹²⁹

Baerwald claims that the Government Section of SCAP was not aware of this occurrence until later in January, 1947, and was interpreted by Baerwald as “a subterfuge designed to avoid the society’s inclusion in the Purge criteria.”¹³⁰ According to Baerwald, after the issuance of repeated “verbal reminders” asking the Japanese government to add the Butokukai to the purge, the Minister of Home Affairs, Uehara Etsujirō, sent a petition to General Courtney Whitney on February 24, 1947 “once again emphasizing that the Butokukai was solely concerned with the propagation of sports, but conceding that government control had forced it to engage in coordinating military arts and... the advancement of bayonet drill and shooting.”¹³¹ In response to Uehara’s appeal, Whitney issued the following reply:

1. I have carefully considered your memorandum concerning the status of the Great Japan Military Virtue Association (Dai Nippon Butoku Kai). This association was dissolved and its funds and other property seized under a Home Ministry Ordinance dated 8 November 1946 because during the war the association became an instrument of the militarists.
2. I am advising State Minister Kanamori that in the administration of Imperial Ordinance No. 1, dated 4 January 1947, all influential members of this association or any branch thereof within the period 6 December 1941 and 2 September 1945 will be treated as falling within the provisions of Category “G”, Appendix “A” SCAPIN 550, in the absence of satisfactory proof to the contrary.¹³²

kaisan”, *KBKS II*, p. 64

¹²⁸ Mombushō, “Zaidan-hōjin kaisan no ken”, November 2, 1946. Reproduced in *KBKS II*, p. 66

¹²⁹ Naimushō, “Zaidan-hōjin Dai-Nippon Butokukai kaisan (Naimushō) rei”, November 9, 1946. Reproduced in *KBKS II*, p. 67

¹³⁰ HBP, “The Dai Nippon Butokukai and the Purge”, p. 8

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Hans Baerwald Papers No. 2-11 “Memorandum for the Minister of Home Affairs – 13 March, 1947”

Category “G”, as opposed to “C”, meant that the criteria for the purge and who would be subject to it were vague, and involved a time consuming process of individual assessment. Once the case of the Butokukai had reached this point, both the GS and the Naimushō engaged in the judgment process. But as Baerwald concedes, it was in fact the bureaucrats in the Naimushō (especially the police) who stood to be adversely affected, thereby providing the impetus for the ministry to “protect their own”.¹³³ In the final analysis, only the local *shibu-chō* (branch chiefs) were declared to subjects of the purge. Baerwald describes this result as a “substantial victory” for the Naimushō, and rather wryly states that “no other example better illustrates the pervasive influence of the Japanese bureaucracy in being able to influence policy so as to shield its own personnel from the Purge.”¹³⁴

In essence, the purge criteria for the Butokukai was not finalised until August, 1947. Whereas “every one” of the career officers in the army were labelled as “purgees” immediately after the war, the Butokukai purge took over two years for implementation; and of the 2,073 (of around three-million members in 1942), “1,312 (63.3) were barred or removed, 657 (31.6%) were passed and 104 (5.1%) had died.”¹³⁵ This totalled a miniscule 0.6% of the total number of Japanese officials (210,288)¹³⁶ designated as “purgees”.

Butokukai Purge Statistics¹³⁷

	Passed	Removed	Barred, Prov. Desig.	Previously Designated	Deceased	Total
National HQ officials	5	4	19	21	10	59
Prefectural officials: Chiefs	3	--	55	62	4	124
Vice chiefs and chief directors	64	40	127	--	13	244
Directors and chiefs of sections	169	8	128	--	21	326
Chiefs of sub-branches	416	381	462	5	56	1,320
TOTALS	657	433	791	88	104	2,073

In summary, when one takes into consideration the role it played inculcating a nationalistic spirit and training the populace in preparation for war from 1942, and arguably before, it could be said that the Butokukai officials were sentenced rather lightly after the war. Although the following

¹³³ HBP, “The Dai Nippon Butokukai and the Purge”, p. 9

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 10

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 15

¹³⁶ SCAP, *Political Reorientation of Japan: September 1945 to September 1948 report of Government Section, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers* (Reprinted edition by the Scholarly Press, 1968), Vol. 2, p. 553

¹³⁷ Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 72

quote from Baerwald's analysis is long, it best sums up the way in which SCAP was coerced by a virtually unrepentant Butokukai and government officials with regards to their function in the "militarisation" of the martial arts. The following six points show how the Butokukai escaped ruthless purging compared to other ultra-nationalistic societies and military affiliated organisations.

First, competing characterizations of the society's basic nature created an aura of ambiguity. Second SCAP officials obtained contradictory information from Japanese Government officials. Third, there was a growing lack of consensus inside SCAP, especially after General Willoughby changed his mind. Fourth, both SCAP and Japanese Government officials began to give precedence to the impact that the Butokukai's inclusion in the Purge might have on incumbent holders of high office, instead of being primarily concerned with the implementation of basic Occupation policy. Fifth, SCAP's decision to exercise its control through the existing structure of the Japanese Government provided the bureaucracy – especially the Home Ministry – an opportunity to protect its career officials. Sixth, the Japanese Government's tactics of delay and obfuscation resulted in the Butokukai's purge being implemented during the period when basic Occupation policy began to shift from reform to recovery.¹³⁸

7b. The Eradication of *Kendō* in Schools

Before the Butokukai was abolished, all *budō* education in schools was ceased with the following proclamation on November 6, 1945: "Budo (military arts) and martial games to be eliminated. Special consideration to be given to budo instructors to teach other subjects (if fully qualified)."¹³⁹ This not only included classes, but extracurricular club activities and the use of school facilities for training by community members.

The Mombushō had no intention of enforcing a full-scale ban on *kendō* (and *budō*) and continued to negotiate with the Civil Informational and Education Section (CIE), but had to comply with a ban on *tairen-ka* classes in schools from November, 1945. According to the ordinance titled "The thorough removal of issues related to school *tairen-ka*" (*Gakkō tairen-ka kankei jikō no shori tettei ni kansuru ken*, December 26, 1945), all aspects of military training were to be expunged from teaching in and outside schools, all military training equipment was to be

¹³⁸ Hans Baerwald, "The Dai Nippon Butokukai and the Purge", pp. 16–17

¹³⁹ "Hatsu Tai" No. 80 (Digest), "Notification from Chief of Bureau of Physical Education to Prefectural Governors; Heads of Normal Schools, Higher Schools, and Colleges" concerning "Postwar Course in Physical Education". Quoted in SCAP, "Education in the New Japan Volume 2", General Headquarters – Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers Civil Information and Education Section, Education Division, Tokyo, May 1948, p.148

destroyed, and no *budō* was allowed to be practised in school buildings.¹⁴⁰ This meant that all *kendō* was prohibited not only in school classes, but also among private groups who were forbidden from using school halls, and no equipment was even allowed to be stored there. Sets of armour were taken into the school yards and burned, and even books related to the martial arts were removed from school libraries and destroyed.

For the most part, all martial arts, *kendō* in particular, came under a comprehensive ban. The current president of the All Japan Kendo Federation, the governing body of *kendō* in Japan today, remarked how this represented “a lack of understanding of Japanese culture and *budō*”,¹⁴¹ but really it was an inevitable course of action given the intention of overhauling the entire education system and teaching content to remove any aspect of nationalistic or militaristic credo. As Hurst observes “the martial arts had been so closely identified with militarism that the very term *budō* was anathema to the Occupation authorities.”¹⁴²

Furthermore, in 1947, SCAP released a directive that sought to completely rid Japan of any militaristic sentiment in schools.

In all educational organizations, the teaching of military curriculum must be forbidden. The wearing of student military uniforms must also be forbidden. Traditional activities like kendo, which foster the fighting spirit, must be abolished, too. Physical education must no longer be linked to “spiritual education.” You must put more emphasis upon purely physical exercise; games that are not military training, and recreational activities. If instructors wearing military-type uniforms are employed as physical education instructors or engage in sports and physical education activities, they must have their qualifications examined.¹⁴³

This meant that many of the graduates of the Budō Vocational School, Tokyo Higher Normal School, Kokushikan and various other educational institutions who held national teaching qualifications for the martial arts were left without jobs in their field of expertise. Their fortunes, however, were to change in less than a decade after the *budō* arts were reinstated as democratised sports. *Kendō*'s return came after the reinstatement of other *budō* as it was viewed with the most

¹⁴⁰ Inoue Kazuo, Op. Cit., p. 140

¹⁴¹ AJKF (ed.), *Zaidan Hōjin Zen Nihon Kendō Renmei Gojūnen-shi* (Fifty-year history of the AJKF), p. 13

¹⁴² Cameron G. Hurst, Op. Cit., p. 166

¹⁴³ “Revision of the Japanese Education System” (March 27, 1947) in Edward R. Beauchamp, James M. Vardaman, Jr., (ed.), *Japanese Education Since 1945: A Documentary Study*, p. 99

suspicion by the Occupation authorities. The process in which *kendō* was revived will be analysed in the next chapter.

8. Conclusion

To summarise this chapter, *kendō* gained a significant following of enthusiasts after its introduction into the school system in the final years of the Meiji period and early Taishō period. From the time the first petitioners lobbied the government, the process of affording the martial arts an official place in the national curriculum took over three decades to materialise. Although there were government officials championing the cause in collaboration with educators and martial arts experts, the thrust of this movement can be described as falling under the rubric of popular nationalism in an effort to evoke more “Japaneseness” in the education system. The following martial arts procured could be described as “a strong counter-force of anti-Westernism” and that it demonstrated how “ethnic nationalism began to rise to the fore of the populist movement” in modernising Japan.¹⁴⁴

The state was certainly not disinterested in utilising *kendō* in some way, but given the time it took to elevate the martial arts to official curriculum status, one can only surmise that it had not quite formulated a vision for the role that *kendō* and *budō* could play in the grand imperial scheme. To be sure, the idea of transferring the cultural capital of the *bushi* onto Japanese citizens certainly held a certain degree of appeal to statist, but it was the popular nationalists through organisations such as the Dai-Nippon Butokukai (or the Kōdōkan in the case of *jūdō*) that really directed this capital flow.

However, as “officialdom authorizes and legitimates the meanings of culture”,¹⁴⁵ the promotion of *kendō* into the education system through authorisation by the Momushō, was a major triumph for popular nationalists, but it was also the beginning of *kendō*'s appropriation by the state that was to reverse the direction of “civilisational” swing of the evolutionary pendulum.

At the same time as *kendō* was becoming popular among the masses, Western sports were also being taken up enthusiastically, especially among students who had a fondness for the thrill of competition. To the lament of pedants for tradition, *kendō* also started to take on the overtly

¹⁴⁴ Kevin Doak, *A History of Nationalism in Modern Japan: Placing the People*, p. 192

¹⁴⁵ Brian J. McVeigh, *Op. Cit.*, p. 190

competitive characteristics of Western sports where winning matches for the sake of personal glory, and the corruption of techniques to do so, became widespread during the Taishō period.

At the height of the so-called era of “Taishō Democracy”, the government was becoming increasingly concerned with the adoption of liberal ideologies by youth, and for the first time looked to physical exercise as a way of thwarting antisocial tendencies, and instilling discipline and a sense of “state-ness”. Now the time was ripe for the gradual inclusion of *kendō* into the national statist scheme for social control.

After the Manchurian Incident in 1931, often referred to as a launching point in the proliferation of Japanese militarism and ultra-nationalism, *kendō* was re-evaluated, ironically, as a valid means of combat on the modern battlefield. “It has been proven that...the actual combat effectiveness of *kendō* in the theatre of battle far exceeded anyone’s imagination.”¹⁴⁶ It was ironic because the situation seventy years previously when Japan embarked on her mission to modernise, *kenjutsu* and the other martial arts were considered by many to be of little use and temporarily relegated into the realm of obscurity.

Ideal *kendō* was being hyped as a practical means of combat in terms of nurturing a strong body and indomitable fighting spirit, and technically through learning how to use the cherished *nihontō* (Japanese sword). What is more, boosted by ethnocentric rhetoric about the “spirit” of *kendō* being concomitant with *Yamato-damashii*, *bushidō*, and all things that supposedly made Japan a unique if not a superior nation of people on the world stage, both statist and popular nationalists glorified the latent value of *kendō* in furthering Japan’s imperialistic cause. As the phrase “The whole nation, come to *kendō*...The whole nation, return to *kendō*”¹⁴⁷ advocates, this was to be in essence a return to *kenjutsu* where the aim in battle was to kill; and outside of the fray it was to provide the Japanese people with an emotional if not strangely mystical bond to their warrior past, and hence their collective national identity and relationship with the emperor and the state.

As Doak observes, “between 1937 and 1945, the overriding concern of the state and its apologists was to close the gap between nationalism and the state, and to renew the people’s allegiance to the state at a critical moment of war.”¹⁴⁸ This can be seen clearly with the language surrounding *kendō* in government documents and general publications in which the spirit of *kendō* was attached

¹⁴⁶ *Kendō Shingikai Jimusho, Op. Cit., SKK, p. 61*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid., p. 59*

¹⁴⁸ *Kevin Doak, Op. Cit., p. 201*

arbitrarily with terms such as *minzoku* (ethnic nation), *kokka* (state), *kokumin* (nation), and *kōdō* (imperial way). The ‘spirit of *kendō*’ was lauded as epitomising the spiritual and historical adhesive that aligned and held everybody in a common cause.

At least that was the theory. How successful this ideological control through *kendō* was is difficult to ascertain due to the collective barrage of chauvinistic fascist propaganda regarding *budō* that was constantly regurgitated by high-level educators and military and government officials as the war effort intensified. One thing for certain is that, as the ‘fun-and-games’ aspect was eliminated, *kendō* did undergo a distinct de-civilising process both technically and philosophically, and the techniques and pedagogical methodology focussed almost entirely on encouraging self-sacrificial fighting to the death.

As *kendō* was raised progressively to the position of a compulsory subject in the secondary school curriculum in the 1930s and then in Kokumin Gakkō (primary school level) in 1941 and other school categories thereafter, preparation for war was the only concern. As McVeigh comments, “we may speak of how the state re-nationalizes the educational experience according to the demands of the times.”¹⁴⁹ Indeed, *kendō* was undeniably a contrivance that met political demands and helped the statist cause in a variety of different ways. It was key to the “recurrent renovationist nationalism”, that is “broad, inclusive, and relatively mutable ideology that has been able to bring together a range of official/state/elite movements and nonofficial/societal/popular sentiments.”¹⁵⁰

Wartime *kendō*, either in the combat (*senji*) form devised by the Kōseishō and the Mombushō through the Butokukai, or the regular style called for combat realism. The *shinai* was shortened to the length of a real sword, as was the *tsuka* (handle) of the *shinai* to encourage true cutting action, rather than relying on leverage. Also, regarding terminology, “strikes” (*utsu*) began to be referred to as “cuts” (*kiru*), and matches were decided by *ippon-shōbu* (first valid cut i.e. representing mortal combat). Students were trained to fight to kill. A valid cut was redefined with an emphasis on “vigorous attacking” such that “the cut or thrust must be accurate and conducted in the spirit of true combat. Particular importance is to be placed on posture and attitude.”¹⁵¹ Match time was shortened (*isshun*) to make the fight more aggressive; abbreviated *ritsurei* (standing bows) were conducted rather than the traditional *sonkyo* crouch as a form of respect to the opponent; matches

¹⁴⁹ Brian J. McVeigh, Op. Cit., p. 128

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 11

¹⁵¹ T. Ōtsuka, *Nihon Kendō no Shisō*, p. 146

were also started at six paces apart instead of the usual closer interval. Rather than striking designated areas and subtle techniques, more value was added to powerful aggressive techniques; and traditional apparel of *hakama* and *keiko-gi* were replaced with shirts, trousers and shoes for convenience, simplicity, as well as to enable training outside in more realistic conditions.

As Sakai Toshinobu admits, the “problematic history of kendo and its association with militarism in the early Shōwa period is an awkward subject for kendo enthusiasts. In a sense, many people developed an ‘allergy’ regarding kendo’s recent past, and it is true that some historical occurrences are ignored as if they never happened.”¹⁵² Indeed, detailed research into this period is sparse, and although nobody denies *kendō*’s utilisation in the war effort, or that more than a few of the revered elderly instructors today could well have employed their ‘*kendō* skills’ on enemy soldiers or even innocent civilians, such history is seldom referred to in public.¹⁵³ It is alluded to as a dark period in *kendō*’s history, but was perhaps an unavoidable path given the times. *Kendō* was the perfect tool from symbolic, ethnic, historic, spiritual, and even practical standpoints to reinforce national identity in support of the war effort.

With Japan’s surrender, it was also inevitable that *kendō* was banned by the Occupation authorities. *Nihontō* as a symbol of Japanese militarism and nationalism were confiscated and destroyed in massive numbers in what is referred to as the post-war “*katana-gari*”.¹⁵⁴ Such was the detestation of the weapon that terrorised Allied soldiers during the war, and its perceived representation of the militaristic regime. *Kendō* was treated with the same animosity. The pendulum swing in the direction of de-civilisation stops here; and it started back in the direction of all that was considered malevolent only a generation before – a completely “democratised” form of sports *kendō*. The following chapter will analyse the reintegration of *kendō* into society, the renaissance of traditional sentiments and the contradictions that that entailed, and finally *kendō*’s appropriation by the state yet again, not to reinforce a militaristic regime, but certainly to fortify a sense of “Japaneseness” in the twenty-first century.

¹⁵² T. Sakai (Alexander Bennett Trans.), *A Bilingual Guide to the History of Kendo*, p. 235

¹⁵³ I personally know many such individuals from whom I have received direct *kendō* instruction. I have been party to discussions of exploits with real swords through private conversations, although such instructors are becoming fewer in number as the years progress.

¹⁵⁴ See Fujiki Hisashi’s *Katana-gari*.

Chapter 5

Kendō and Sports – Path of Reason or Cultural Treason?

Refocusing the ‘Spirit of Kendō’ and Guarding ‘Japaneseness’

1. Introduction
2. Post-war Reinstatement
3. The AJKF – The New Gatekeeper of Kendō
4. Penance Complete – Kendō’s Reintroduction into the Education System
5. The Menace of Sportification and the Quest to Return to Traditional Values
6. Conclusion

The time has come for Japan to decide whether she will continue to be controlled by those self-willed militaristic advisers whose unintelligent calculations have brought the Empire of Japan to the threshold of annihilation, or whether she will follow the path of reason.¹

1. Introduction

Japan’s Second World War defeat changed everything for the martial arts. “After the war, for a decade or two Japan entered a period of depressed soul-searching... Japan’s traditional virtues all became vices.”² *Kendō* too was subjected to a painful period of introspection, and in order to be resuscitated from the ashes after rejection as a militaristic contrivance, it embarked on a successful process of “re-civilising” itself. To be accepted back into the education system and mainstream society, *kendō* had to be purged of the violent, vilifying elements of ultra-nationalism and fascism.

This chapter will analyse the re-civilising process which saw *kendō* reinvented as a hybrid sport known as *shinai-kyōgi* (*shinai* sport). This transition enabled *kendō*’s resurrection in educational institutions as “school *kendō*”; and the inauguration of the All Japan Kendo Federation (AJKF) in 1952 as the new gatekeeper of *kendō* ensured that it was effectively disseminated in the community as a “pure sport” suited to a new democratic society. By the 1970s, *kendō* was once again enjoying a boom in popularity, albeit as a highly competitive sport rather than as a medium for imparting

¹ “The Potsdam Proclamation” (26 July 1945). Quoted in *Education in the New Japan Volume 2*, General Headquarters – Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers Civil Information and Education Section, Education Division, Tokyo, May 1948, p. 6

² Harumi Befu, “Nationalism and Nihonjinron”, *Cultural Nationalism in East Asia: Representation and Identity*, p. 124

traditional values, which were quickly falling by the wayside.

It was not long, however, before there was a pendulum shift back to traditional ideals. The propensity of young, athletic *kendōka* resorting to “tricks” to win matches while showing little respect for tradition triggered the AJKF’s promulgation of official *kendō* concepts designed to protect its culture from overt sportification. This action can be viewed as a concerted effort to return *kendō* to the “principles of the sword” and revitalise its primary function as a form of holistic education, drawing a clear distinction between it and Western sports. In other words, *kendō* was to become an epitome of true “Japaneseness”.

The Mombushō (Ministry of Education) also started to redefine *budō*’s (*kendō*) role in the education system, and has now become philosophically identical with the ideals purported by the AJKF in terms of holistic, psychosomatic development, and supporting the process of defining what it means to be Japanese: that is, an appreciation of traditional Japanese culture and conduct in a global era.

Following a chronological outline of *kendō*’s post-war development, the questions addressed in this chapter are as follows: what was the process through which *kendō* was “re-civilised”? What were the differing conceptual motivations for the supervising organisations (Mombushō and AJKF), and in what way did their gradual philosophical fusion evolve to promote a sense of “Japaneseness”? What were the contradictions that arose through promoting “*kendō* as a sport” and “*kendō* as a traditional vehicle for self-cultivation”? Namely, how, if at all, is *kendō* different from a sport? And, what is the link between the philosophical concepts of *kendō* and Japaneseness? How are these notions of Japaneseness manifest in the education system? What insight does this give us into the role of *kendō* in the sponsorship of nationalism at the state and popular level in Japan today?

Finally, any discussion of Japanese nationalism and culture must inevitably touch on the subject of “Nihonjinron”. Befu describes Nihonjinron as representing a type of nationalism of the “discursive variety”. “It is a doctrine and a myth about the constitution of Japanese culture, people, and history, constructed particularly to prove – at least to the satisfaction of the producers of this genre – Japan’s difference from the West, if not from the rest of the world.”³ Given the other issues addressed in this chapter, the final question should answer itself: Can *kendō* be referred to as a ‘psychosomatic Nihonjinron’? Specifically, more than a theory about Japanese uniqueness espoused

³ Ibid., p. 126

in publications written by Japanese academics, nationalists, and non-Japanese apologists, does *kendō* represent an accepted participatory-based physical and ideological expression of Japaneseness?

2. Post-war Reinstatement

Tairen-ka budō (wartime martial arts education in schools) was officially stopped on November 6, 1945.⁴ With regards to *budō* and *kendō* in the wider community, the Kōseishō (Ministry of Health and Welfare) sought to promote the martial arts as democratic sports in a move away from wartime state *budō*. However, in June 1946, after all physical education jurisdiction had been transferred from the Kōseishō to the Mombushō, the Civil Information and Education Section (CIE) of SCAP demanded strict control of *budō* activities; and in August 25 that year, another notification was issued by the Mombushō stating that the collective term “*budō*” would no longer be permitted because of the “militaristic inference contained in the word.”⁵ This section will examine what was needed for *kendō* to be re-established as an acceptable sporting activity.

2a. Re-evaluating *Kendō*’s Suitability in Post-war Society

Contrary to popular belief, *kendō* did not completely disappear in the immediate post-war period. Participation by the police was not initially prohibited, and many small private groups of enthusiasts continued training away from the watchful eye of the occupying authorities. In fact, the police held a *kendō* tournament in 1946, and all police *kendō* instructors such as the legendary Saimura Gorō (1887–1969) and Mochida Moriji (1885–1974) were allowed to retain their posts.

In December 1947, however, the Naimushō (Home Ministry) was abolished, and the national police system was modified, resulting in a temporary ban on police participation in *kendō* in 1949. It was reinstated later in the same year, but according to the American *kendō* pioneer, Benjamin Hazard (1920–2011), who trained with the Tokyo police at the time, “when practice resumed, those elements in *kendō* which were clearly associated with a real sword, such as the slicing movement after the cut, [were missing], nor were blows delivered with as much strength as they had been prior to the ban.”⁶

⁴ “Mombushō Hattai (ordinance) No. 80, Nov. 6, 1945”, *Kindai Nihon Kyōiku Seido Shiryō* Vol. 25, p. 544

⁵ “Shakai taiiku to shite no *kendō* no tori-atsukai ni tsuite” (How to treat *kendō* as a community sport), reproduced in *Kindai Nihon Kyōiku Seido Shiryō* Vol. 27, pp. 554–557

⁶ Retrieved from the All United States Kendo Federation homepage (www.auskf.info/newsletter/vol5no1.pdf)

After the banning of *kendō* in schools and the dissolution of the Dai-Nippon Butokukai, next on the agenda was dealing with *kendō* in the community. The extent to which members of the general public were permitted to practice *kendō* in any given area depended largely on the military overseer in charge of that particular locale. Some regions were relatively lax in the enforcement of restrictions, whereas others were stricter. There was considerable variation, and small private *kendō* groups were able to operate throughout the country, although the scale of their activities was extremely limited, and is not well documented.

Sasamori Junzō (1886–1976), Upper House member and prominent *kendō* practitioner, petitioned GHQ not to instigate a cover ban on *kendō*. He was successful in retaining the right for individuals to manage private *dōjō* and clubs. The authorities certainly did not condone *kendō* participation, but at the same time it was not prohibited outright.

It is considered advisable that in the future those who like fencing, judo, archery etc. should locally form new organizations on a democratic and autonomic basis in order to develop these sports as cheerful and liberal national ones. Accordingly, the system and structure of these organizations should be free from any tendency towards centralization, while any one imbued with militarism and ultra-nationalism should be absolutely disqualified for leaders.⁷

The *budō* arts were seen as potentially dangerous by SCAP and repentant Japanese educators. The spiritual aspects that had been hailed for so long were now considered to be a potential driving force behind subversive intent. The question being asked around the country was whether or not the martial arts could be revived at all, and if so, what aspects of their technical and theoretical makeup could be “purified”? For example, the following excerpt is illustrative of the debates that occurred in official circles.

A representative from Gunma Prefecture asked if, in the opinion of the Physical Education officer, the games should be purified. Major Norviel stated that the question was difficult to answer, because although one might understand the peaceful appearance of the sports, it is difficult to tell what is going on in the mind of the individual participating. The danger is not in the budo games alone, but rather in the spirit of combat and conquest that has been put into them. If we knew that this

on August 5, 2011

⁷ HBP, “Report regarding the procedure for the liquidation of the Dai-Nippon Butoku Kai No. 2-5”

attitude could be completely changed, we could feel sure that there was no harm in the sports themselves. But that big a transformation cannot be done overnight, by edict or order. A philosophy cannot be eliminated by legislation.⁸

Although there was significant opposition among Japanese educators and officialdom to resuscitating the martial arts, enthusiasts persevered to find ways of reviving *kendō*. The following passage from a discussion held between Japanese and American officials indicates that the Occupation authorities were not as adamantly opposed to citizens' participation in the *budō* arts as they are usually portrayed. Of course, there was a substantial element of scepticism shown by SCAP, but there were people on both sides of the debate among the Japanese as well.

The Japanese again questioned the differences in prefectures concerning permission to practice budo socially. Major Norviel: That is not too hard to explain. When there are different commanders in different areas, there will be some differences in interpretation... My suggestion, – if you feel that it is not militaristic, endeavor to prove to your local MG officer, that it is not. After all they are in charge and you have to get along with them. A Japanese ventured to guess that kendo could not be cleaned up and made a good sport... A Japanese suggested that kendo and kyudo were similar, but to consider such games as a military activity in scientific and atomic age was foolish. It is when some individual with evil intent inserts the idea of 'dying for old Japan' and the spirit involved, into the games, that the bad influence begins.⁹

It was clear was that there was a certain degree of leeway regarding the restoration of *kendō*, but it would have to be “purged” of all militaristic associations, and any hint of ultra-nationalism and teachings of this nature would need to be vigilantly eradicated. Nevertheless, a modified version of *kendō* was possible as American physical education consultant Wm. Neufeld advised in 1948: “Kendo – A questionable activity due to the opportunity for injuries. If war cries are eliminated, it would possibly be on the same level with our foils, sabre, and epee. This sport might possibly be suitable for men at the university and college level.”¹⁰

Kendō had to be completely sanitised in both form and thought, and until an acceptable

⁸ HBP, “General meeting of the Directors, Secretaries and Instructors of Butoku Kai, concerning dissolution of the society No. 2-6” 30 October, 1946

⁹ HBP, “Butoku Kai meeting of Directors and Branch Managers No. 2-7” 30 October, 1946

¹⁰ “Memo to Mr. M. T. Orr, Chief, Education Division, 18 August 1948 (From: Mr. Wm. Neufeld, Physical Education Consultant)”, retrieved from http://ejmas.com/jcs/jcsart_svinth_1202.htm (January 5, 2009)

alternative to the wartime version was devised, teaching it in schools was considered to be out of the question, even if it was tolerated in the community. It would require being subjected to a “civilising process” to disarm its combative nature and be reborn as a sport considered suitable for a “modern democratic society”. The first step in this metamorphosis was achieved with the conception of a hybrid version of *kendō* crossed superficially with Western fencing known as *shinai-kyōgi*. This try-out was in essence a form of self-flagellation that is now, by and large, looked back upon with contempt by *kendō* traditionalists. Most young kendoists have never even heard of it.

2b. Shinai-kyōgi and Re-civilising Kendō Culture

In 1946, alumni from various university and vocational school *kendō* clubs in Tokyo came together and created a group called the Nijūnichi-kai (Twentieth-day Society) and the Tokyo Kendō Club. They congregated on the twentieth day of each month to discuss what could be done to promote *kendō* in the community. Their meetings culminated in the formation of the “Tokyo Kendō Sport Union” (Tōkyō Kendō Kyōgi Rengō-kai). The inauguration of the society was marked by holding *kendō* tournaments.¹¹ They considered various approaches to revive *kendō* in the community and schools, changed the rules and style of *kendō*, and engaged with CIE in order to convince the Occupation authorities to permit their activities. In October 30, 1949, they sponsored the “First National Kendō Sport Championship Tournament” in Tokyo, and formed the All Japan Kendō Sport Federation (Zen-Nihon Kendō Kyōgi Renmei) on March 5, 1950. However, CIE was opposed to the use of the term “*kendō*” and the federation had no choice but to change the name to “*shinai-kyōgi*”.¹² The hybrid sport called “*shinai-kyōgi*” was developed in which *fukuro-shinai* (bamboo sheathed in leather) were used with armour resembling that used in Western fencing.

The All Japan Kendō Sport Federation was changed in name to the All Japan Shinai-kyōgi Federation, and it promoted *shinai-kyōgi* as a way of circumventing Occupation imposed restrictions by retaining certain elements of *kendō*, while nevertheless making it closer to a “pure” sport that could ultimately be introduced into schools. Not long after the federation’s inception, there were 32 affiliated groups nationwide with a total membership of over 20,300 people.¹³

¹¹ Konishi Yasuhiro, *Kendō to Shinai-kyōgi (Kendō and shinai-kyōgi)*, p. 103

¹² AJKF (ed.), *Kendō no Rekishi*, p. 216

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 216

According to the manual published by the All Japan Shinai-kyōgi Federation,¹⁴ the sport had the following characteristics: first of all, the match area was a rectangle measuring 7m in length by 6m in width, and was marked by white line tape. (Match courts were not defined in pre-war *kendō* competitions.) Also, the apparel worn by practitioners consisted of a “durable material top and trousers” which could be “any colour other than black.” It seems that most practitioners chose to wear white, and shoes were permitted for outdoor events.¹⁵

The *shinai* used was 1.5m in length consisting of four slats of bamboo joined at the hilt, which were split into eight and then into sixteen slats at the top third, and covered by a leather sheath. The *shinai* was not dissimilar to the early *fukuro-shinai* used by the classical school of swordsmanship, the Yagyū Shinkage-ryū. They were considerably more pliable and lighter than the standard *shinai* used in *kendō*, weighing from 300g up to 450g.

The protective equipment was particularly distinctive and closely resembled Western fencing. This design was undoubtedly made with the purpose of appealing to SCAP authorities, attempting to highlight the conscious move away from traditional *kendō* to a modern democratic sport.

Another important aspect of the match rules that differed from pre-war *kendō* was the instigation of a designated time limit for bouts. Although *kendō* matches in the pre-war era usually lasted for around four or five minutes, match suspension depended on the whim of the referee, who would keep the match going for as long as he saw it appropriate. Also, instead of one referee, as was formerly the case, *shinai-kyōgi* instigated a system in which three referees adjudicated each match, all with equal judicial power. Matches were not decided by *ippon-shōbu* (first point scored wins) or *sanbon-shōbu* (best of three points) as is the case in *kendō* today. Instead, each competitor vied to score as many valid points as possible within the time limit, and the one who accrued the most points at the end of time was deemed the winner. The target areas for striking were the head, both wrists, torso, and thrusts to the throat were also permitted.

Shinai-kyōgi rules also indicate a conscious shift away from the overt aggressiveness that previously exemplified *kendō*. Any vocalisation (*hassei* or *kake-goe*) other than a natural grunt when striking was prohibited, as were foot trips (*ashi-garami*) and body clashes (*taiatari*), all of which were

¹⁴ Zen-Nihon Shinai Kyōgi Renmei, *Shinai-kyōgi: Kitei no Kaisetsu to Kihon (Shinai-kyōgi: An explanation of the rules and the basics)*.

¹⁵ This may sound slightly odd to the modern practitioner of *kendō*, but it must be remembered that there were comparatively few gymnasiums in the post-war era, and often groups wishing to hold competitions had little choice but to conduct matches outdoors.

features of pre-war and wartime *kendō*. In an appeal by Sasamori Junzō to have *shinai-kyōgi* included in the National Sports Meet,¹⁶ he outlined in a handwritten letter (in rather strained English) the benefits to be gained from the sport which he translated as “Pliant Staff Play”, and defined as not being “Kendo nor Occidental Fencing.” (English left as original.)

Pliant Staff Play has many advantages; that will be able to play irrespective of climate, weather, age, sex, physique, place, in or out of building or length of time. This is a rationalistic healthy physical culture and interesting elegant amusement of ever changing active personal adversary play...¹⁷

He continues to summarise the “meritorious qualities” which justified *shinai-kyōgi* as a legitimate sport conducive to the improvement of health and wellbeing among practitioners, particularly children, but ultimately for people of all ages. (English left in original.)

- a. Physical Qualities: Viewing from the standpoint of physical development, it calls for much leg movement of considerable tempo, contraction and expansion of the breast, and varied use of the arm muscles, all which is extremely effective in developing the lungs and the chest, at the same time helping to build a strong heart, not to speak of its contribution to muscular development of the limbs.
- b. Mental Training: Accomplishment in this sport is more dependent upon the psychological reaction and power of concentration of the individual rather than upon the physical differences of the participants. The exercise develops powers of concentration and decision and trains the mind to react without hesitation. It inculcates [sic] the ability to change perception into action instantaneously.
- c. Qualities Favorable to Health: Although it calls for a considerable amount of instantaneous bodily movement, such movement are not necessarily continuous, there being frequent natural intermittences of action which, therefore, makes it a sport with the following favorable health qualities. Both sexes of all ages, from about eight years old to about eighty years of age, can engage in the sport.¹⁸

Unsurprisingly, we find absolutely no mention of “Japanese spirit” or “traditional Japanese culture”

¹⁶ The “Kokumin Taiiku Taikai” or “National Sports Meet” is commonly referred to as “Kokutai”. It began in 1946 as one of the representative amateur sports events in Japan for many different sporting disciplines. It is jointly sponsored by the Japan Amateur Sports Association, MEXT, and the local government of the prefecture where it takes place each year.

¹⁷ “Letter to C.I.E. of G.H.Q., March 29, 1950” by Sasamori Junzō requesting the inclusion of *shinai-kyōgi* in the National Sports Meet, retrieved from http://ejmas.com/jcs/jcsart_svinth_1202.htm (Retrieved on January 5, 2009)

¹⁸ Ibid.

as was typically the case with reference to the physical and mental benefits of *kendō* previously. Furthermore, no allusion is made to *reibō*, or protocols of etiquette that feature in similar explanations of the values of *kendō*. A revolutionary aspect of his explanation was view that *shinai-kyōgi* was suitable for men and women of all ages. Women had never been openly encouraged to participate in Japanese fencing before, and this symbolised a clear paradigm shift probably as an appeal to modern and foreign sporting sensibilities. Also, the elimination of “unnecessary and seemingly intimidating vocal exclamations”, in addition to the prohibition of “unnecessary roughness or use of purposed violence” enforced by “the imposition of penalties” represents a significant first move in “civilising” *kendō* in the post-war period. The following table is an outline of the events and processes that lead to the nationwide dissemination of *shinai-kyōgi*.

Development of *shinai-kyōgi* up until its inclusion in the national school curriculum¹⁹

Date	Event
April 1950	<i>Shinai-kyōgi</i> seminar is held. Meetings convened by regional block federations in Hokkaidō, Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, Yamaguchi, and Fukuoka.
June 25	The first Federation Trustees meeting is held at the Itō Railway Meeting Hall. Match regulations are decided.
August 10	Public demonstration is held in Maruyama Park in Kyoto.
August 20	1 st Kantō <i>Shinai-kyōgi</i> tournament is held.
Oct. 28	<i>Shinai-kyōgi</i> technical committee and equipment committee is convened in Nagoya.
Oct. 29	The 1 st All-Japan <i>Shinai-kyōgi</i> Tournament is held at the 5 th National Sports Meet (Kokutai) in Nagoya City. The Gifu Prefecture Team wins.
Nov. 1	1 st Tournament Research Meeting is convened in Tokyo.
Nov. 12	Several members of the United States Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, and SCAP's CIE Education Chief and others observe a demonstration of <i>shinai-kyōgi</i> and offer criticisms and comments.
Nov. 22	<i>Shinai-kyōgi</i> is introduced to regional education board officials at a national convention sponsored by the MOE.
Nov. 25	A meeting for the Kyūshū regional block and a public demonstration is held in Fukuoka City.
Feb. 18, '51	Kansai <i>Shinai-kyōgi</i> Tournament is held at Asahi Shimbun's Shinkōdō Hall.
March 25	Further discussions are held by regional representatives regarding the modification of match rules.
May 4	Mainichi Shimbun sponsors the 1 st Invitation National <i>Shinai-kyōgi</i> Team Tournament at the Hibiya Kōkaidō in Tokyo. The team representing Hyōgo Prefecture wins.
May 5	Trustees' meeting is convened.
June 24	The 1 st <i>Shinai-kyōgi</i> Referee's Seminar is held in Kyoto, and is attended by 150 representatives of regional federations. Regulations are decided for official referees.
July 8	Seminars are convened nationwide by all of the regional federations.
Sept. 5	Hokkaidō Tournament and seminar is held in Sapporo City.
Oct. 10	The Technical Committee investigates ways of utilising <i>shinai-kyōgi</i> in PE classes in schools.
Nov. 22	Sports reporters from major newspapers in Tokyo participate in a conference on <i>shinai-kyōgi</i> .
Nov. 24	Chūbu Nippon Shimbun sponsors the National Prefectural Representative <i>Shinai-kyōgi</i> Competition.
Nov. 25	The 2 nd All-Japan <i>Shinai-kyōgi</i> Tournament is held at the Kudan High School gymnasium in Tokyo. The 5 th National Sports Meet (Kokutai) in Nagoya City is held. The Kyoto Prefecture Team wins. The individual competition is won by Sekigawa of Waseda Univ. (men's) and Takano Hatsue of Kangawa Prefecture (women's).
Dec. 4	The MOE convenes a meeting attended by forty officials related to tertiary and secondary education, and physical education to discuss the introduction of <i>shinai-kyōgi</i> into the school curriculum. All agree to the proposal.
Dec. 18	National Pref. Health and PE Delegate Meeting decide that <i>shinai-kyōgi</i> will be included in PE classes.

¹⁹ This table was made from information contained in Konishi Yasuhiro's *Kendō to Shinai-kyōgi*, pp. 103-107.

At the meeting convened by the Mombushō on December 18, 1951, the explanation for the proposal to introduce *shinai-kyōgi* was announced by Mombushō Secondary Education Bureau Secretary Sasaki as follows:

Recently, *shinai-kyōgi* has been widely disseminated throughout the country, and following a request by the Japan Shinai-kyōgi Federation, a meeting was held on December 4 at the Mombushō attended by approximately forty representatives from university, high and middle schools, physical education administrators and instructors, and representatives from the Shinai-kyōgi Federation. A discussion was conducted in which all present agreed at the meeting of certain conditions, “*shinai-kyōgi* would be suitable for inclusion in school PE classes.” Therefore, in this meeting, the following items need to be discussed: 1. Should *shinai-kyōgi* be considered a separate new sport distinct from *kendō*, or as a new style of *kendō*? 2. Should *shinai-kyōgi* be taught in schools? 3. Opinions concerning the introduction of *shinai-kyōgi* into schools.²⁰

Following this introductory statement, representative members proceeded to offer their thoughts on the matter. For example, the Saitama Prefecture chief administrator of physical education’s comment was representative of the general sentiment.

There seem to be two trains of thought of either treating *shinai-kyōgi* as new *kendō*, or as a completely new sport. This suggests that there will be some confrontation or confusion in the future. However, I am of the belief that in the course of change in sports, some aspects need to be deconstructed and then rebuilt. Thus, I see *shinai-kyōgi* as a part of the process of *kendō*’s transition, and it will become one entity again in the future without any clash. Considering the current situation of *kendō*, I am in support of including *shinai-kyōgi* in school physical education programs.²¹

Although some participants cautioned that vigilance was needed to ensure that “the good aspects of *kendō* are retained but all elements of militarism be eliminated”,²² the chairman concluded at the end of the meeting that “the Mombushō must conduct adequate research to ensure that *shinai-kyōgi* enhances the value of physical education in schools.”²³ All present agreed without objection.

The Mombushō did just that, and in a notification published in April 10, 1952, the ministry announced that *shinai-kyōgi* was to “fill a gap” in the physical education curriculum, but with the

²⁰ “Shinai-kyōgi kankei shiryō” (Documents related to *shinai-kyōgi*), *SKK*, p. 206

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 207

²² *Ibid.*, p. 209 (the representative from Saitama Prefecture).

²³ *Ibid.*

condition that instructors were to undergo training at official federation or Mombushō seminars, just as was the case with *kyūdō* and *jūdō* which had already been reinstated.²⁴

The introduction of strict rules to curb violent inclinations, the policy of including girls, as well as various other implementations were to have a profound effect on the future development of conventional *kendō* as a modern sport. The formulation of *shinai-kyōgi* demonstrates a concise example of the civilising process of a sport over a very short span of time.

3. The AJKF – The New Gatekeeper of Kendō

After the signing of the San Francisco Treaty in 1951, the All Japan Kendo Federation (Zen Nihon Kendō Renmei) was established in 1952 and the Shinai-Kyōgi Federation was amalgamated into it in March, 1954. Subsequent to the eventual full resurrection of *kendō*, *shinai-kyōgi* was replaced as an event in the 10th National Sports Meet (Kokutai) from 1955. This essentially spelled the end of the hybrid version except for in junior high schools where *shinai-kyōgi* continued to be taught until May 20, 1957. After this, it was combined with *kendō* to create “*gakkō kendō*” (school *kendō*) – a topic that will be investigated in section 4. This section will scrutinise the creation of the new gatekeeper of *kendō* several years after the dissolution of the Butokukai.

3a. National Amalgamation

As some members of the *kendō* fraternity were creating a hybrid form of *kendō*, others were persevering furtively with traditional *kendō* in the hope of eventually reinstating it under the auspices of a national governing body. There were two groups in Tokyo that formed the core of this movement – the Shiseikai (思齊会) and the Dōshikai (同士会). The former was created before the war in 1940 as the Tengūkai, a small society with membership consisting of young *kendō* enthusiasts from all walks of life including educators, police, and military personnel. After their second monthly congregation in February 1941, Kimura Tokutarō (1886–1982) was appointed president, and its name was changed to Shiseikai.²⁵

²⁴ “Gakkō ni okeru shinai-kyōgi no jisshi ni tsuite”, reproduced in SKK, p. 210

²⁵ Kimura Tokutarō (1886–1982) was a graduate of Tokyo Imperial University’s Law Department. He started *kendō* at the university’s club, and became a registered lawyer after graduation in 1911. Even after graduation

The designated objective of the Shinseikai was to meet regularly to practise and discuss *kendō*, produce related publications, and travel to other localities to engage in training with other groups in an exercise they called *musha-shugyō*.²⁶ This was an elite group of practitioners that would prove to be the mainstay for the post-war revival of *kendō* in terms of experience, knowledge, and most of all, enthusiasm.

The Dōshikai was headed by prominent *kendō* instructor Shibata Bansaku. He was joined by other well-known practitioners such as Saimura Gorō, Nakano Yasoji, Morishima Tateo, and Haga Jun'ichi. Police participation in *kendō* was not prohibited in the immediate post-war period until 1949, so this group trained together in the Waseda and Totsuka Police Departments until then. Even following the temporary banning of *kendō* in the police force, the Dōshikai still continued meeting at private *dōjō* such as the Shōdōkan in Tokyo.

Other groups were also practising *kendō* throughout Japan. For example, enthusiasts in Ibaraki Prefecture were very active, and held a celebrated *kendō* tournament at the Nikkō Tōshōgū Shrine. In the Kansai region, the Osaka Kendō Club became a key organisation established in 1950. The club also arranged tournament events such as the Akō Gishi Festival Tournament in December 1950, and the Nishinomiya Kendō Tournament in March the following year.²⁷ Small *kendō* assemblages also materialised throughout most prefectures in central Japan, Shikoku, and Kyūshū.

After the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1951, local federations started to form without any restriction. Tokyo had 43 *kendō* groups which amalgamated to become the Tokyo Kendō Federation in May of 1951.²⁸ In March that year, the Osaka Federation joined forces with the Kyoto and Hyogo federations to create the Kinki Kendō Federation. These two federations became the hub for linking other local groups spread around the country.

The first discussions to launch a national governing body for *kendō* were held at the Nikkō Tōshōgū Shrine. This was a stronghold for *kendō* before the war, and after the Butokuden branch was built there in 1930, a popular annual tournament was held every summer. This tournament was

he remained heavily involved with student *kendō*, and was eventually appointed president of the Kendō Division of the Dai-Nippon Butokukai in 1942, and vice president of the Dai-Nippon Kendō-kai which was formed in 1943. After the war he held several influential posts in government including Minister of Law in the Shidehara and Yoshida Cabinets. He became the first president of the All Japan Kendo Federation when it was established in 1952, and remained in this position until 1972. In this capacity, he was at the forefront of *kendō*'s development in the post-war period.

²⁶ AJKF (ed.), *Op. Cit.*, p. 215

²⁷ Shōji Munemitsu, *Kendō Hyakunen (Kendō century)*, p. 221

²⁸ *Ibid.*

revived as the Nikkō Tournament in August 1951.

Before long, momentum to build a national governing body increased with the goal of restarting it as a “new sport” albeit revived it in its “conventional form”, “retaining its fundamental essence, but in a way that suited the new age.”²⁹

A meeting was held on October 13 and 14, 1952, with the above groups present to discuss the creation of a national federation. The All Japan Kendo Federation was officially launched on October 14 with Kimura Tokutarō appointed as its first president. The new gatekeeper for post-war *kendō* was born.

3b. The AJKF's Stated Objectives and the Continuing Civilising Process

In a conscious appeal to separate *kendō* from the stigma of militarism, it was announced by the AJKF that “*Kendō* would commence again as a form of physical education and sports”, and in order to achieve this, a complete overhaul of competition and referee rules was required.³⁰ As Guttman states, “new rules are invented and old ones discarded whenever the participants decide that ludic convenience outweighs the inertia of convention.”³¹ This was certainly a constant theme in the history of *kendō*, particularly the post-war period, as match rules were modified constantly. At this juncture they were changed to accentuate *kendō*'s identity as a modern sport. Conversely, this was to change in the 1970s onwards as *kendō* authorities sought to thwart sportification and maintain its cultural and traditional integrity as a “way for personal cultivation”, a theme looked at in section 5.

At this stage though, as the governing body of *kendō* had resolved to promote the art in the post-war period as a “sport”, there was an urgent need to revise and reformulate the competition rules to encourage wider participation. New match and referee regulations were established in March of 1953. The main differences between these and the pre-war rules were as follows:

1. A court area was defined, and penalties were given to any player who stepped out-of-bounds.
2. Limits on the permissible length and weight of *shinai* were established.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Nakamura Tamio, *Kendō Jiten*, p. 272

³¹ Allen Guttman, “From Ritual to Record”, *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sport*, pp. 115–55, Contained in Dunning, Eric, Malcolm, Dominic, (ed.), *Sport: Critical Concepts in Sociology* Vol. 1, p. 24

3. Match time limits were specified, and if a bout was not decided within the stipulated time, extra time (*enchō*) or a draw could be called.
4. Excessive body clashes (*taiatari*), violent behaviour, and foot-tripping became sanctionable offences.
5. In principle, three referees (*shinpan*) were to preside over matches, each with equal authority, and their decisions indicated by raising either a red or white flag.

Many more changes were made over time, but the implementation of the fourth change to competition rules was probably the most noteworthy factor in taming the violent pre-war nature of *kendō*.³² A quick comparison with the rules that were implemented by the All Japan Shinai-kyōgi Federation show that, in spite of censorious attitudes by traditionalists towards *shinai-kyōgi* and its proponents, the new era of *kendō* was greatly influenced by *shinai-kyōgi*'s innovative scheme to create a new hybrid sport. Clearly, *shinai-kyōgi* provided a blueprint for the reinstatement of *kendō* proper, and it should be acknowledged as the nexus for pre-war to post-war *kendō*. Many people, however, do not agree. For example, the current president of the AJKF, Takeyasu Yoshimistu, states quite unequivocally that the creation of *shinai-kyōgi* “shows impatience and a lack of ability to read the era.”³³

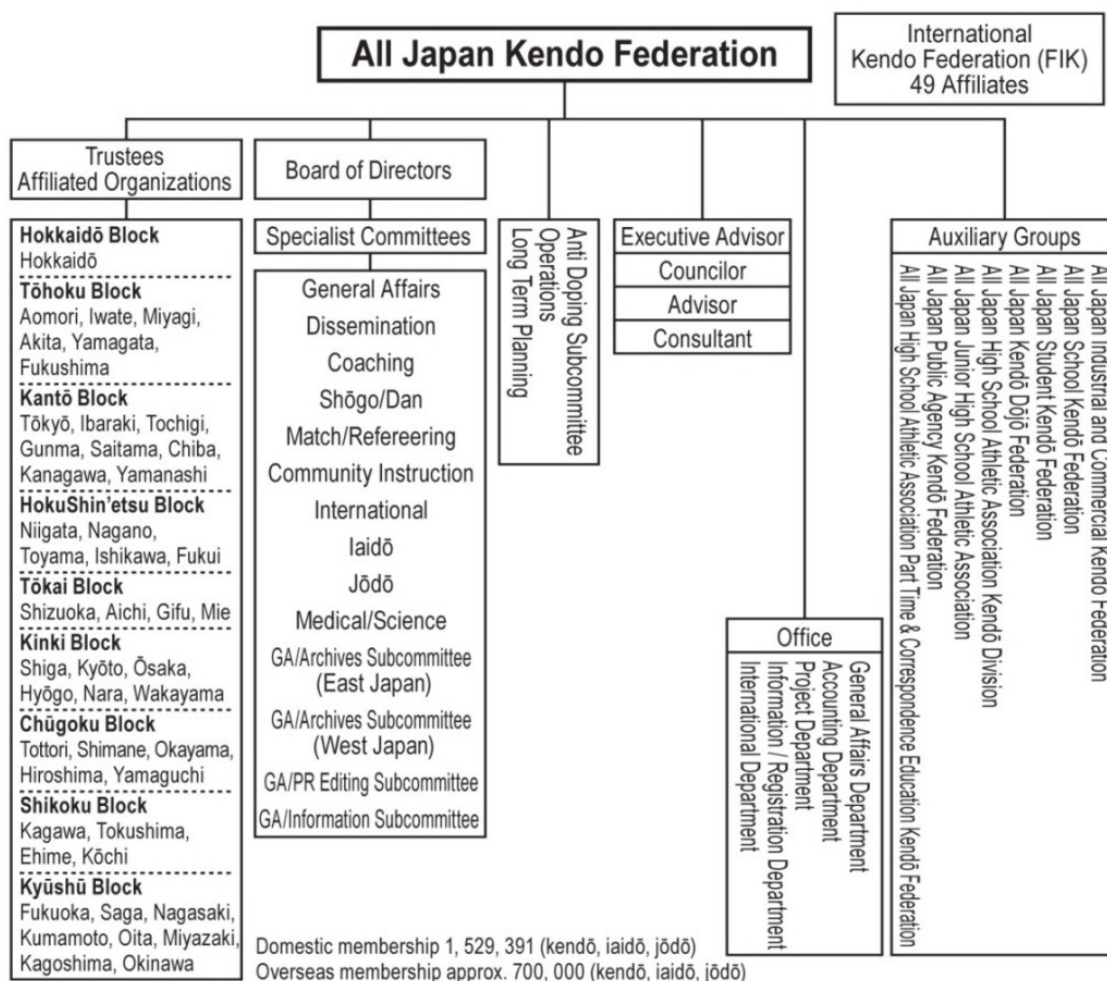
Following the creation of the AJKF, numerous sub-organisations representing various groups in society such as the All Japan Students' Kendo Federation and the All Japan Workers Kendo Federation were also established. There was a certain degree of internal factionalism within the AJKF between officials affiliated with the police, and educators (mainly university academics). This rivalry still exists to a certain extent today, but it never hampered the AJKF's efforts to popularise *kendō*. What officials in the AJKF tasked with bringing *kendō* back into the mainstream were

³² Another modification made with the resurrection of post-war *kendō* was the revamping of the rank system, in particular *shōgō* and *dan* grades. Initially, it was decided in 1953 that the pre-war system of *shōdan* through to *godan*, followed by the *shōgō* titles of *renshi*, *kyōshi*, and *hanshi* were to be continued. However, this system underwent a significant change in 1957 when it was decided by the All Japan Kendo Federation that it would follow the system 10-*dan* structure utilised in *jūdō*. This was possibly due to dissatisfaction in the police fraternity where both *jūdō* and *kendō* were widely practised, but there were differences in prestige and perceived seniority between based on a higher *dan* grade. The question remained though, of what to do with *shōgō*. This point was deliberated on at length eventually resulting in the concurrent adoption of both but with clarified definitions of what he differences were. *Shōgō* were defined as signifying “character, technical mastery, knowledge, and efforts made to promote the Way of *kendō*.” *Dan* ranks, on the other hand, represented “skill level”. *Renshi* was attainable after passing the grade of 6-*dan*, *kyōshi* after 7-*dan*, and *hanshi* after 8-*dan*. See AJKF (ed.), *Zen-Nihon Kendō Renmei Gojū-nen shi*, p. 19.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 14

hampered by were the remnants of “wartime arrogance in which advocates haughtily expounded on the superiority of *kendō* over other sports, and sought special privileges.”³⁴ This eventuated in considerable negativity and distrust of *kendō* in the post-war sporting world, and was one of the reasons why it took much longer to be revived compared to other martial arts.³⁵

Chart outlining the structure and auxiliary organisations of the AJKF³⁶



4. Penance Complete – Kendō’s Reintroduction into the Education System

Soon after the AJKF was established, the organisation began to lobby the Mombushō to reinstate *kendō* in schools. *Jūdō* had already resumed with the following announcement in 1950:

³⁴ AJKF (ed.), *Kendō no Rekishi*, p. 219

³⁵ Ibid., p. 219

³⁶ Taken from Alexander Bennett (ed. and trans.), *Budō: The Martial Ways of Japan*, Nippon Budokan, p. 154

No objection is offered to the reinstatement of judo in the physical education and sports activities of all educational institutions, as defined in the letter from the Minister of Education, dated 12 May, 1950, entitled “Request for Restoration of School judo.”³⁷

Kendō's re-establishment in schools, however, was a drawn out process, and due to the relatively high degree of mistrust that lingered compared to the other martial arts, its reintroduction into the curriculum did not eventuate until several years after *jūdō* found its way back into the school system. The Mombushō conducted numerous meetings to discuss *kendō*'s inclusion in the national curriculum. The main points that required clarification before this option could be seriously considered were as follows: 1) The AJKF needed to elucidate *kendō*'s characteristics as a sport; 2) There needed to be a suitable competitive method and content to facilitate growth in pupils; 3) It had to be propagated widely among youth; and 4), the AJKF had to prove that it was purely a sports organisation that was administered democratically. Once these criteria had been satisfied, *kendō* was able to make a full comeback, albeit in a thoroughly re-civilised form. This section will scrutinise the course of *kendō*'s post-war evolution in the community and the school system.

4a. Evolving Educational Objectives as a Backdrop to *Kendō*'s Educational Role

Before investigating how the teaching objectives of *kendō* in schools changed in the post-war period, it is useful to clarify the periodical modifications that were made to the “School Course Guidelines”³⁸ that dictated the role and form *kendō* would take in the school curriculum.

Since the new “School Course Guidelines” were implemented in the Japanese school system from 1947, the content has been periodically reassessed and modified once each decade. Broadly speaking, the three main changes to the content of physical education can be summarised as: 1. “New PE objectives”; 2. “Building stronger bodies”; 3. “Making sports fun”.³⁹ The first period of change corresponds to changes made in 1947, 1949, and 1953, and the focus of PE moved away from

³⁷ “AG 000.8 (13 May 50) CIE”, contained in Kindai Budō Kenkyū-kai (ed.), *Budō no Ayumi 90-nen*, p. 80

³⁸ The *Gakushū Shidō Yōryō* were the basic guidelines affirming the content, objectives and teaching methodology for each subject taught in Japanese schools at each year level. The Mombushō first announced them in 1947 as a complete overhaul of prewar education, and they continue to be revised at approximately every decade to keep in touch with current needs.

³⁹ Takahashi Takeo (et al.), *Introduction to Sport Pedagogy*, p. 31

“education of physical activities” to “education through physical activities” where the point of the classes was not just physical training, but also to enhance the ability of students to solve problems through participation in sports.

The second period of change includes modifications made in 1958 and 1968 which concentrated on building “stronger bodies” and improving overall sporting ability. This was in part a response to Japan’s poor sporting performances after returning to the international sporting arena, and the changing lifestyle of the Japanese.⁴⁰

The third period encompasses changes implemented in 1977, 1988, 1998, and more recently in 2008. In particular, lifestyle changes resulting from Japan’s post-war industrial boom triggered significant vicissitudes in social attitudes and aspirations. Japan looked to reassess the role of sports in society and decided to introduce the “sports-for-all” movement that was prevalent in Europe. This catalysed the idea of “education in movement: education in sport” with particular emphasis placed on the three pillars of “technical objectives”, “physical objectives”, and “social objectives”.⁴¹

These objectives continued until 1988 when the Mombushō promoted cultivating the “attitude to participate in lifelong sports”. In 1998, the ideal of “mind and body as one” became the main objective for PE. Furthermore in 2008, previous objectives were retained, but clarified with the enactment of the three categories of “Technique”, “Attitude”, and “Cognitive Ability / Decisiveness / Expression”.⁴²

4b. First Steps Back into the Mainstream – Redefining Kendō as Sport

Kendō was acknowledged as a “social sport” (*shakai taiiku*) at a meeting of physical education officials on May 1, 1953.

It is a fact that *kendō* training was used during the war to teach effective use of the sword as a [battlefield] weapon. As such, we must now expediently eliminate any militaristic elements... All public and private organisations must positively engage in teaching *kendō* in its original form... Efforts must also be made to research ways in which *kendō* can be steered in the same direction as other sports.⁴³

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 32

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 33

⁴² Ibid., p. 33

⁴³ “Shakai taiiku to shite no kendō no tori-atsukai ni tsuite”, reproduced in *Kindai Nihon Kyōiku Seido Shiryō* Vol. 27, pp. 554-557

Following this statement, on July 7, 1953, the Mombushō sent a notification to all of the regional education boards lifting the ban on *kendō* in schools with the announcement that *kendō* could be practised in high schools or universities just as any other sport, but with a preference for starting *kendō* as an extra-curricular club activity first.⁴⁴

A specialist group called the “School *Kendō* Research Society” (Gakkō *Kendō* Kenkyū-kai) was assembled to investigate options for teaching *kendō* in schools as a part of the curriculum, “not as *budō* in the conventional sense, but in the same form as other sports and physical education, which can be participated in by pupils in secondary schools or higher.”⁴⁵ The group was made up of educators, with approximately half of them being totally unconnected to *kendō*.⁴⁶ They analysed previous problematic issues regarding *kendō* in schools, and attempted to establish a new procedure suitable for teaching in the nation’s educational institutions to “benefit the physical and mental development of students, with the objective of cultivating individuals rich in humanity.”⁴⁷

The Mombushō initially published a basic guidebook for *kendō* instruction in high schools in 1953 called the *Gakkō Kendō no Shidō Tebiki* (Instructional handbook for school *kendō*). In it, the characteristics of so-called “new *kendō*” (*atarashii kendō*) were described in the following terms:

The first criterion for school *kendō* is that it must be organised as a combat sport (*kakugi*). *Kendō* as a sport is not the same as *kendō* as a means for fighting. Even if it takes the form of combat, the relationship between both competitors is not to assault or obliterate the other, but to affirm each other’s existence, and recognise a common humanity. In other words, both competitors are conjoining with each other to engage in *kendō*. The objective in this engagement is to mutually improve technical skills. Namely, participating in *kendō* should be enjoyable, and participants should be passionate about improving their ability. In this way, the basis for *kendō* as a sport is the cooperative relationship between the players. So long as this basis is observed, feelings of respect and fair deportment should manifest as a matter of course. So, even if the exercise looks combative, desirable human relationships are always preserved.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ “Mombu Jimu-jikan Hatsu – Gakkō *kendō* ni okeru *kendō* no jisshi ni tsuite” (Implementing *kendō* in schools), *Gendai Nihon Kyōiku Seido Shiryō* Vol. 4, p. 234

⁴⁵ AJKF, *Gakkō Kendō no Shidō: Shidō no Tebiki Kaisetsu* (School *kendō* instruction: an explanation of the [MOE] instructional guidebook), p. 17

⁴⁶ Shōji Munemitsu, *Op. Cit.*, p. 229

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ MOE, *Gakkō Kendō no Shidō Tebiki* (School *kendō* instruction guidebook, 1953), p. 2

In this sense, the characteristics were deemed to be no different to *jūdō* and *shinai-kyōgi* which were already being taught in schools. The benefits of its study were categorised into five instructional objectives. First, “Physical Development” included “straightening” the body and encouraging a good attitude and posture, while maintaining healthy internal and sensory organs to facilitate operative bodily functions such as “respiration, circulation, digestion, and excretion.” Other fundamental goals were to promote “elasticity of muscles, joint movement, development of instantaneous muscle power, and endurance, facilitates neuromuscular coordination, and [create] a resolute body in which movements are precise, prompt, dexterous, and accomplished with a sense rhythm.”

Second, for “Intellectual and Emotional Development”, it was intended that pupils would improve their “ability to judge the opponent’s movements calmly, swiftly and accurately, to enable appropriate response[s] and develop the capacity to act decisively.” They would also acquire the ability to react to any situation with a “stable emotional response.”

Third, in terms of “Social Development”, it was intended that pupils would learn to avoid being “dragged along by the opponent or others”, and to take a position of leadership, being able to operate “independently”. Ideally, pupils would ultimately learn to respect the position of peers and opponents, adhere to protocols of etiquette, and abide by “correct authority”, do their absolute best at all times in cultivating an attitude of “fairness to compete magnificently.”

Fourth, being aware of “Safety” issues, it was expected that pupils and instructors alike would learn to avoid “hazardous situations”; and fifth, as a “Leisure-time Activity”, pupils would be able to spend their free time “productively, and develop their enjoyment of *kendō*” through the acquisition of general *kendō* knowledge and skills.⁴⁹

Thus, the Mombushō demonstrated considerable thoroughness in advocating objectives based purely on the development of attributes beneficial for maintaining physical health. They attempted to afford pupils a chance to hone their sensibilities which would serve them well as individual members of a modern democratic society. Understandably, the content was directed at the wellbeing of the individual, and although this would ultimately be of benefit to the state and society at large, such motivations were not pointed out explicitly. Nor was the connection between *kendō* and “Japaneseness” alluded to in the slightest.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 3-4

Although the objectives were comprehensively listed, the actual teaching content and methodology outlined in the Mombushō's handbook was vague. In the same year, 1953, the *Gakkō Kendō: Shidō no Tebiki Kaisetsu* (School *kendō*: an explanation of the "Instruction Handbook") was published by the AJKF. In the opening statement the authors mention that "school *kendō* represents the fruits of considerable efforts made since the end of the war by *kendō* experts..." "However," it continues, "teachers lament the lack of technical direction as the handbook focusses mainly on the basic objectives for teaching it." In other words, seminar participants desired more tangible teaching content, and the AJKF was solicited by the Mombushō to supplement the handbook.

The resulting publication was a comprehensive volume which outlined the history of *kendō* from the medieval period through to the present day, and also quoted numerous Western authorities on physical education and sports to give the text an air of scientific legitimacy, as well as to help detach *kendō* from its tainted wartime image.

In the foreword it states, "Comprehensive theoretical studies have been conducted in the post-war period which have resulted in the discovery of a new way for *kendō* education in schools as a part of the PE curriculum..." The text explains that the redirection of *kendō* necessitated that it be re-packaged as a "sport" while retaining some intrinsic cultural attributes that would make it conducive to "human growth". By necessity, the authors went to considerable lengths to establish *kendō's* position within the realm of modern sport, and tone down its ascetic image, especially as a form of harsh training in the militaristic sense.

When *kendō* is utilised as a means for actual combat, the opponent is attacked and exterminated. Those who practised *kendō* with this as their primary objective were intent on killing their adversary at all costs, and *kendō* provided but one means to accomplish this task. Nevertheless, there is a multitude of ways in which this can be achieved other than through *kendō* as the medium for destruction. Combat-oriented *kendō* constitutes no more than one method. When *kendō* was promoted as a form of military training (*kunren*) [in schools during the war] pupils had no choice other than to participate. They were coerced into taking part in training sessions with no recourse to abstain. *Kendō* as combat training was controlled in accordance with external [state] agendas... Should sports *kendō* be considered in the same light?⁵⁰

This rhetorical question provided the platform to expound in great depth how "*kendō* as a sport"

⁵⁰ AJKF, *Gakkō Kendō: Shidō no Tebiki Kaisetsu* (1953), pp. 6-7

was fundamentally at odds with previous wartime motivations. “Individuals take part in sporting activities for personal enjoyment... The same can be said of those who engage in *kendō* as a sport. They do it because they like it...”⁵¹ According to the authors, “the point is to do *kendō* for no other reason than for the sake of *kendō* itself...”⁵² And, even though there happened to be some benefits gleaned through participation in terms of mental or spiritual growth, this was not the main intention for practice. Instead, “people who take up *kendō* as a sport enjoy the path of learning, and strive to improve their technical skill and ability. Facing off against their training partners with this goal in mind, all participants are essentially cooperating with each other in the quest for [technical] improvement. The relationship between the protagonists is one of affirmative collaboration.”⁵³

The key concern, according to the AJKF’s narrative, was enjoyment of participation rather than training for training’s sake. Nor did they view it as a way to temper one’s body and mind for combat preparedness. “In previous eras when *kendō* was used as a form of [military] training, if one was to declare ‘I am doing *kendō* only because I enjoy it’, such a statement would surely have earned the wrath of the instructor. *Kendō* was for the emperor, for country, and for spiritual growth (*shūyō*) as a subject, and for imparting manners and discipline. Therefore, when pupils were coerced into doing *kendō*, the matter of enjoyment was of no consequence whatsoever.”⁵⁴

The first section of the book continued in this vein and sketches the scientific value of physical education in rational (Western) terms. The remainder consists of detailed explanations of *kendō* techniques to be taught in schools, and recommended course structures.

The foundations had now been well and truly established for wide-scale proliferation of *gakkō-kendō* in Japan’s high schools, obviously without the perspicuous spiritual and nationalistic rhetoric. Essentially it was a compromise, but a necessary one to get *kendō* accepted in mainstream society again. As Bourdieu noted, “The school, the site of *skhole*, leisure, is the place where practices endowed with social functions and integrated into the collective calendar are converted into *bodily exercises*, activities which are an end in themselves, a sort of physical art for art’s sake, governed by specific rules, increasingly irreducible to any functional necessity, and inserted into a specific

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 7

⁵² Ibid., p. 8

⁵³ Ibid., p. 11

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 18

calendar.”⁵⁵ *Kendō* had been reduced, or elevated, depending on one’s point of view, into a leisure activity for the purpose of self-satisfaction. Through achieving the stated goals of physical education, participants were to learn about the enjoyment of sport – nothing more, and nothing less.

However, *kendō*’s revival raised the problem of whether or not *shinai-kyōgi* and *kendō* should be continued as separate sports, or combined. This issue required a swift resolution as it was connected to the pressing matter of *kendō*’s pending application to the Japan Amateur Sports Association (JASA)⁵⁶ and hence entry as a contested event at the National Sports Meet. Both Federations held negotiations, and on March 14, 1954, they amalgamated into one body as the All Japan Kendo Federation (AJKF). The AJKF affiliated with JASA (1955) and made its debut as an official event at the National Sports Meet in the same year. So, at an organisational level, the two sports were combined, but *shinai-kyōgi* and *kendō* continued to be taught as separate subjects in schools; high schools, could teach either, but junior high schools were restricted to offering only *shinai-kyōgi* to their students.

The introduction of “school *kendō*” in junior high schools came later as *shinai-kyōgi* was already being taught as an independent sport. The Mombushō eventually acknowledged the amalgamation of *kendō* and *shinai-kyōgi* into a single form of “school *kendō*” in junior high schools in 1957. In amendments made to the junior and senior high school “School Course Guidelines” for physical education, it was announced that, “*Shinai-kyōgi* currently being taught at junior and senior high schools, and *kendō* being taught at senior high schools will be reworked and combined for teaching at both levels. Furthermore, for *gakkō-kendo* to be implemented appropriately, a teaching manual will be published in the near future, and government-sponsored seminars for instructor training will be held.”⁵⁷ Furthermore, the term *kakugi* (格技= combative sports) was coined as a collective appellation for the martial arts in schools in place of “*budō*”, a point to which will be elaborated on in section 4c.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, “Sport and Social Class”, *Social Science Information* 16 (6) pp. 819–840, Contained in Dunning et al. (ed.), *Sport: Critical Concepts in Sociology* Vol. 1, p. 289

⁵⁶ The “Nihon Taiiku Kyōkai” is the national body governing the regulation, promotion, and funding of amateur sports. It was originally founded in the 1911 in preparation for Japan’s first participation in the Olympics. The first chairman was Kanō Jigorō.

⁵⁷ “Mombu Jimu-jikan Hatsu – Gakkō *kendō* no jisshi ni tsuite, May 20, 1957”, *Gendai Nihon Kyōiku Seido Shiryō* Vol. 12, pp. 477–479

⁵⁸ *Kakugi* translates as “combative sports” but is usually written with the character 拵 which means to grapple. The former was chosen as it also includes “striking” or “hitting the target” as is the case with *kendō* and *kyūdō*. *Kakugi* was used until May 15, 1989, when the Mombushō reinstated the term “*budō*” in schools

However, the latent nature of *kendō*'s significance as a symbol of nationalistic sentiment was far from eradicated. Judging from the vantage point of history, it was merely put on hold. As Maruyama Masao explains of Japan in the immediate post-war period, "The spiritual structure of past nationalism did not become extinct, nor did it undergo a qualitative change; rather it would be correct to say that the change was quantitative: nationalist feelings were atomized, disappearing from the political surface and becoming embedded in the lower strata of national life."⁵⁹

In the case of *kendō*, the re-civilising process was successful in expunging its previously powerful militaristic symbolism. As for its connection with national identity, however, the bond between *kendō* and "Japaneseness" could never be completely removed. It was the "spiritual sport" that epitomised the continued reverence of samurai culture, and it was this imagery that was to later represent the stoic recovery of Japan's economy and society in the aftermath of the war. Nationalistic propensities, both popular and state varieties, relied on this imagery of virtue and strength and it merely went into a short period of hibernation.

4c. Measured Elevation to a Special Position in Japanese Education

The Gakkō Kendō Kenkyū-kai (School Kendō Research Society) published another explanatory booklet for the Mombushō's teaching manual on May 5, 1958. In the foreword section, Miyahata Torahiko, school inspector for the Mombushō, states what seemed to be the standard cautious policy of the ministry. "I hope that the readers of this text will be able to view *kendō* in its naked form. That is, to see *kendō* as an exercise in which people strike each other (*uchi-ai*), and discard the traditional and spiritual aspects." Miyahata stresses that this is the only way to gauge *kendō*'s true worth regarding the physical development of children. It was a test to see how they responded to competing in accordance with the stipulated rules, and how they are able to interact through *kendō*. "Only then will we truly be able to ascertain the benefits of *kendō* as a subject in PE, and as a sport."⁶⁰

Interestingly though, the bulk of the content takes a much stronger stance with regards to *kendō*'s "special qualities" indicating a clear difference in approach between the AJKF and the Mombushō.

as "Japan's unique culture."

⁵⁹ Maruyama Masao; quoted in Ivan Morris, *Nationalism and the Right-Wing in Japan: A Study of Post-war Trends*, p. 40

⁶⁰ AJKF, *Gakkō Kendō no Shidō: Shidō no Tebiki Kaisetsu* (School *kendō* instruction: an explanation of the instruction guidebook, 1958)

For example, in the explanatory section of *kendō*'s history and role in society, the AJKF authors make the following familiar claim: "As a competitive sport, *kendō* has specific characteristics and benefits which are difficult to experience in other sports."⁶¹ The first such characteristic concerns *kendō*'s "history and tradition".

Kendō was made by our ancestors, and has been a part of the long history of the Japanese people (*Nihon minzoku*), and along with the experiences of the Japanese people, *kendō* has also progressed in its own peculiar way. Therefore, within *kendō*, the blood of the Japanese people flows uninterrupted, and both spiritually and technically, *kendō* is suited to the original national traits (*kokuminsei*) of the Japanese people. This is one of the characteristics of *kendō*.⁶²

This statement runs counter to the controlled rhetoric of the Mombushō, and the overall tone of the first such book published by the AJKF in 1953. That fact that this was still authorised by the ministry indicates a desire to assert the connection between "Japaneseness" and *kendō*; a desire that contrary to the formerly restrained approach shown by the Mombushō, was starting to reappear. Another section concerns the issue of how to teach the inherent values of *kendō* to pupils in the limited time available for classes.

At first, the *kendō* lessons should be fun and pleasant, making sure that the training is not so exacting as to cause any suffering. However, increase the intensity as pupils improve, and encourage them to enjoy tougher trainings. Finally, the instructor must make pupils relish the harshness, reaching a level in which they cannot wait to train.⁶³

In 1966, the Mombushō published yet another instructional manual for teaching *kendō* in schools.⁶⁴ What made this manual different from previous ones was that it laid considerably more emphasis on class planning and explanations of the techniques. With further amendments to the School Course Guidelines for junior and senior high schools in 1969 and 1970, *kendō* became an integral component in the curriculum designed for "physical strengthening" in PE classes.

In 1977 and 1978 the School Course Guidelines were renewed again, and the focus on physical

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 10

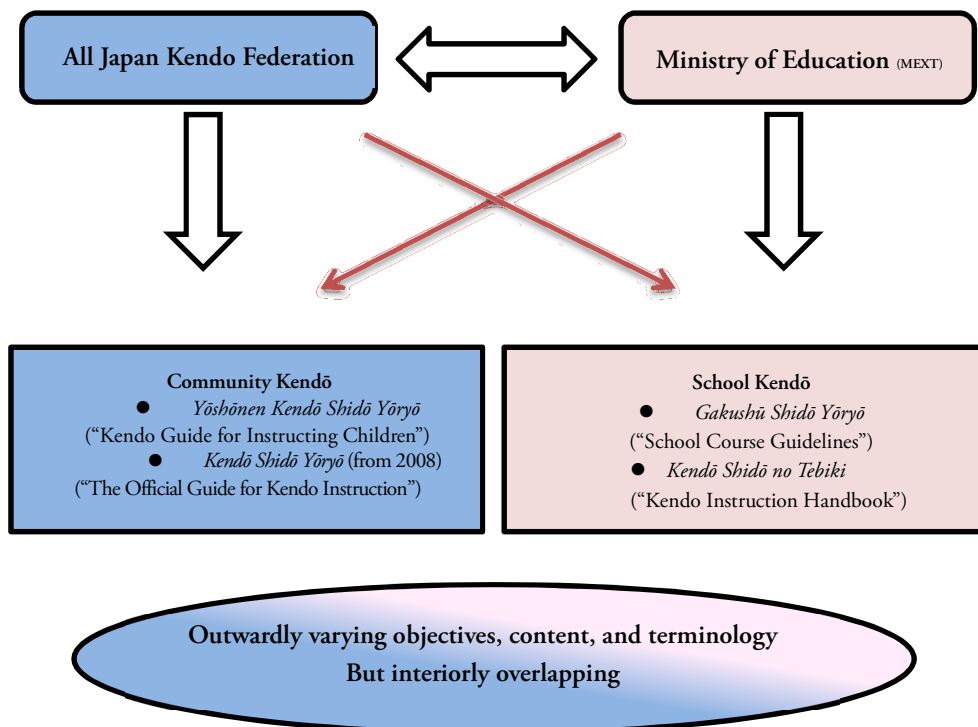
⁶² Ibid., p. 10

⁶³ Ibid., p. 52

⁶⁴ MOE, *Gakkō ni okeru Kendō Shidō no Tebiki* (Instruction guidebook for *kendō* in schools, 1966)

education became oriented towards sporting activities that were “enjoyable” and “enhanced one’s lifestyle”. In other words, *kendō* was redefined in schools as a means for encouraging expression of individuality rather than technical conformity. For the first time in government guidelines in the post-war period, *kendō* in the education system was once more acknowledged as being more than just a simple sport, but rather as a cultural pursuit that had the potential to nurture spiritual growth in the individual. In this sense, more freedom was given to instructors signifying a major paradigm shift in attitudes towards *kendō* and its application in education.

This was an important transitional period in the post-war development of *kendō*. Nevertheless, although school regulations pertaining to teaching content were becoming less focussed on technical acquisition, and more open to its potential to impart traditional cultural values, there still remained a strong degree of regulation. The AJKF, however, began to take a pointedly more proactive stance in its dissemination policies, strongly advocating *kendō*’s goals of “character development” (*ningen-keisei*) as outlined in its official teaching guide for *kendō* instruction for children in the community, *Yōshōnen Kendō Shidō Yōryō* (Guidelines for teaching *kendō* to children, 1977) *vis-à-vis* the content outlined in the School Course Guidelines and related textbooks.



Depiction of the relationship between the MOE and AJKF

Even though the two organisations seemed to be at odds with the degree in which they promoted the holistic and moralistic benefits of *kendō*, close inspection of the relationship reveals the existence of an orchestrated symbiotic system between the state and a non-central authority through which *kendō* was promoted in schools. It was achieved with conservative prudence demonstrated by the Mombushō, but bolstered by the AJKF in the community who were allowed (even encouraged) to be more openly aggressive in their philosophical dissemination. As McVeigh notes, “Non-official or popular cultural nationalism overlaps in some senses with state-promoted cultural nationalism, but it includes more than just aesthetic themes, being concerned with explaining or legitimating behavior by grounding it in the values, social structures, or heritage of a national community.”⁶⁵ The AJKF fed off the Mombushō, who in turn relied on the AJKF to enact their veiled cultural policy in what could be described as a marriage of convenience.

The two organisations became openly more philosophically closer with modifications made to the School Course Guidelines in 1989, in which the term “*kakugi*” was officially replaced with “*budō*”.

The term *kakugi* was introduced in the School Course Guidelines after the war as the designation for martial arts education as a field of exercise from 1958. However, today *budō* is recognised throughout the world as Japan’s traditional physical culture. Taking into consideration that the Japanese Academy of Budō (Nihon Budō Gakkai) and the Nippon Budōkan also utilise the word *budō*, this demonstrates that it is now a socially and academically acceptable word.⁶⁶

The motivation for this seemingly insignificant semantic reversion was based on the announcement by the government in December 1988 that education policy would henceforth focus on “nurturing people with rich minds who are able to adapt to the changes in society as the 21st century approaches.”⁶⁷ This was to be achieved by “Deepening international understanding, and concentrating on cultivating an attitude of respect towards Japanese culture and tradition.”⁶⁸

The traditional martial arts of Japan were highly suitable for this objective, and in this sense were

⁶⁵ Brian J. McVeigh, *Nationalisms of Japan: Managing and Mystifying Identity*, p. 19

⁶⁶ MOE, *Kendō Shidō no Tebiki* (Instruction guidebook for *kendō*, 1993), p. 1

⁶⁷ “Gakushū Shidō Yōryō Kaitei no Keii” (History of changes made to the School Course Guidelines), on MEXT’s homepage, accessed on November, 2011.

http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/chukyo/chukyo3/011/siryō/04070801/005.htm

⁶⁸ Ibid.

now officially recognised as playing a role in children's education that exceeded that of other physical education activities and sports. Thus, the stigma attached to the word "*budō*" which had been banned in the post-war education system was removed, and in many ways, the martial arts were almost fully returned to their former pre-war glory in schools, although the tone was not so palpably nationalistic, and certainly not militaristic. Still, it is possible to detect a clear inference that *budō* was unique in the world, and as such, offered students a chance to access their "Japaneseness" once more, as the following passage from a Mombushō *kendō* textbook (1993) insinuates.

Today there are many sports being played around the world. Within these sports are contained the "ways of thinking" and "modes of conduct" of the people from where the sports arose. For example, the end of a rugby match is declared "no side" in which there are no enemies or allies. This can be said to represent the "way of thinking" and "conduct" of the English people. Similarly, the way of thinking and conduct of the Japanese people is instilled in the physical culture of *budō*. As traditional physical culture of Japan, *budō* is valued as an educational subject in our schools. An appreciation of the culture and traditions of our country is important, but it is also significant for fostering Japanese who can make their way in the world as the pace of internationalisation intensifies.⁶⁹

What is striking about this particular Mombushō publication is that for the first time it actually promotes the exact same message of "*ningen-keisei*" as the AJKF in the same terms, signifying a decisive joining of philosophical objectives (see section 5). Given the cautious approach that the Mombushō demonstrated while surreptitiously tiptoeing around this ideological periphery for almost four decades after the war, the following statement of intent is extremely meaningful in that it is emblematic of *kendō*'s elevated role in Japan's educational institutions. The passage is also ostensibly elitist in its assumptions of *budō*'s potential as a source for personal cultivation compared to Western sports.

Budō and sports have many things in common, but differ from the perspective of character development (*ningen-keisei*). Certainly in *budō*, it is traditional to value mental aspects, and compared to sports which developed in the West, *budō* contains a stronger bent for spiritual cultivation (*shūyō*) or hard training (*tanren*) [to forge body

⁶⁹ MOE, *Kendō Shidō no Tebiki* (1993), p. 2

and mind].⁷⁰

In further amendments made to the School Course Guidelines for junior and senior high schools in 1998 and 1999 respectively, the purpose of education was stipulated as being to “cultivate the ‘zest for life’ (*ikiru chikara*) by learning and thinking independently” so that each individual could be “rich in humanity, and strong in body.” With regards to PE, it was announced that emphasis would be placed on encouraging children to enjoy sports, and on making them want to continue participating throughout their lives. And, as a form of “unique Japanese culture” *budō* would fulfil the goal of forming the required “basic physical strength” to excel in the rigours of daily life, and afford students an opportunity to experience, understand and respect the traditions, culture, and forms of etiquette of their country.

4d. Compulsory Budō Education Once More

In 2006, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)⁷¹ modified the “Basic Act on Education” for the first time since 1947. In it, specification of the aims and principles of education were stated as being: “The full development of character and [the] nurturing of citizens, sound in mind and body, who are imbued with the qualities necessary to form a peaceful and democratic state and society...” This was to be achieved through, among other things, “Attainment of wide-ranging knowledge and culture, cultivation of a rich sensibility and sense of morality, and development of a healthy body”, and “Fostering an attitude of respecting our traditions and culture, loving the country and region that nurtured them, respecting other countries, and contributing to world peace and the development of the international community.”⁷²

The basic ideas behind the revisions were to “cultivate the ‘zest for life’”, the balancing of “attainment of knowledge and skill with thinking capacity / decisiveness / expression”, cultivation of “a rich and wholesome heart and body through solid moral and physical education”, and “enhancement of cultural/traditional education”. It was with these revisions that it was decided to make *budō* a compulsory part of all children’s education for first and second year pupils in all junior

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ The MOE was changed to MEXT in 2001.

⁷² Retrieved from MEXT’s official homepage (www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/kihon/data/07080117.htm) on June 20, 2011

high schools from 2012.

The School Course Guidelines were also amended to accommodate these updated objectives, and the course of study for “Health and Physical Education” was stipulated as follows:

To enable students, through an understanding of physical activity, health and safety, engaging in physical activity sensibly, and by considering physical and mental aspects in an integrated manner, to develop qualities and abilities to enjoy physical exercise throughout their lives and to help them cultivate abilities for the maintenance and improvement of health and improvement of physical fitness, and cultivate an appropriate attitude towards leading a happy and fulfilling life.⁷³

Former Mombushō bureaucrat and authority on *budō* in schools, Motomura Kiyoto, asserts that as *budō* involves directly attacking one’s opponent, it requires an attitude of respect and understanding of traditional conduct. He maintains that apparatus gymnastics, athletics, and swimming are “individual sports” in which there is no physical contact made with opponents. In ball sports, for example, “penalties are given if contact is made with the opponent, and each side attempts to score goals to accumulate points.”

On the other hand, *budō* exponents physically assail each other in matches and training, demanding respect for the opponent represented by traditional conduct taught as etiquette (*reihō*). “If there is no feeling of respect for the opponent, then the exercise is simply fighting.”

He summarises this adherence to *reihō* as symbolising “self-discipline” and the fundamental ideals for traditional conduct, which in its highest form manifests as “*michi*” or a “Way of life”. He proposes that this aspect of traditional Japanese culture will be introduced to Japanese school pupils as traditional thought and conduct through PE theory and *budō* classes from 2012.⁷⁴

The three main pillars of this education as outlined in the School Course Guidelines are developing “Skills”, “Attitude”, and “Knowledge, Thinking, and Judgment”. “Skills” in the case of *kendō* refers to acquiring the same standard techniques as those outlined in the Introduction of this thesis. The other two pillars as they regard to *kendō* classes are as follows:⁷⁵

⁷³ Retrieved from MEXT’s official homepage on July 6, 2011 (www.mext.go.jp/component/a_menu/education/micro_detail/___icsFiles/afieldfile/2011/04/11/1298356_8.pdf)

⁷⁴ Motomura Kiyoto, “‘Dentō ya bunka’ wa ‘budō’ de dō uketomeru no ka” (How to catch tradition and culture in *budō*), *Taiikuka Kyōiku*, May 2008, p. 5

⁷⁵ AJKF, *Chūgakkō Budō no Hisshūka wo Fumaeta Kendō Jugyō no Tenkai*, p. 6

The ‘pillars’ of kendō education

“Chishiki, Shikō, Handan” (Knowledge, Thinking, Judgement)

Knowledge Thinking Judgement <small>(知識・思考・判断)</small>	Learning		Characteristics of <i>kendō</i> , history, <i>katana</i> , how to use <i>shinai</i> and <i>bokutō</i>
	Utilising		Traditional ways of thinking and movement, improving strength
	Searching		Names of techniques and execution, practice methods, using equipment
			Devising practice methods according to themes, ways of observing exercise

“Taïdo” (Attitude)

Attitude <small>(態度)</small>	Reverence, fairness	Correct manners and reverence for the opponent. Showing respect.
		Abiding by the rules, and competing fairly.
	Cooperation, autonomy	Create objectives and systematically practice in accordance with these.
		Consider reasons for winning and losing and cooperate with the training partner.
	Health, safety	Do not do forbidden or dangerous actions.
		Ensure that training equipment and environment is safe and clean.
	Lifelong physical ed.	Cultivate the will to spontaneously and autonomously do <i>kendō</i> throughout one’s lifetime.

MEXT allocated a significant budget to introduce martial arts education into junior high schools as a compulsory subject including 44.73 billion yen to build martial arts training halls and suitable facilities for classes; 4.94 billion yen to train teachers; 3.58 billion yen for regional sports support, and around 600,000 yen per year for the approximately ten-thousand junior schools to purchase and maintain equipment. Nevertheless, one cannot help but think that the introduction of *budō* as a compulsory subject for the first time in the post-war period has not been at all well thought out by the government. Money has been allocated for building facilities, but there is still a distinct shortage of qualified instructors. It is estimated that between 70–80 per cent of schools will opt to introduce *jūdō* as there is no need to buy expensive equipment, and it is easier to teach.

It is precisely this attitude that will cause problems later. A remarkably little known fact in Japan is the number of deaths at schools through *jūdō* in the last three decades. In an article published in the *Japan Times*, “Over the 27-year period between 1983 and 2009, 108 students aged 12 to 17 died as a result of judo accidents in Japanese schools, an average of four a year,” which is “more than five times higher than in any other sport. About 65 per cent of these fatalities came from brain injuries. This is clear evidence of a dangerous trend in Japanese schools.”⁷⁶ Apart from the

⁷⁶ *Japan Times*, “108 school judo class deaths but no charges, only silence”, August 26, 2010

horrendous number of deaths of young people, the fact that not a single person has been held responsible by the law in any of the fatalities is astounding. It is also astonishing that despite this serious situation, there was very little opposition to the decision to make *budō* compulsory in schools from any quarters, even the notoriously left-wing teacher's union (JTU).

5. The Menace of Sportification and the Quest to Return to Traditional Values

Approximately two decades after *kendō*'s resurrection as a "sport", growing concern emerged about the overtly competitive direction *kendō* was taking, which ran counter to the "traditions of *budō*" as a form of "character development". To return *kendō* to its "correct" course, the AJKF established a committee to formulate the official "Concept of Kendo" in 1971. By 1972, the committee announced their intention of promulgating the "Concept of Kendo" and the "Principles of Instruction" to guide *kendō* enthusiasts in the ideal way in which they trained, instructed, and understood the values of *kendō* as an integral part of traditional Japanese culture. The final draft was sanctioned in 1975. There has always been, and still is, vehement opposition by *kendō* practitioners to the idea that *kendō* is a sport. This section will probe the reasons behind this aversion, and how *kendō* exists in a dichotomy of idealistic interpretation.

5a. Conceptual Consolidation

The Olympic Games held in Tokyo in 1964 were a significant turning point in the post-war resurrection of *kendō*. *Kendō* was featured as a demonstration sport at the newly built Nippon Budokan, a specialist martial arts hall erected in Tokyo to serve as the venue for *jūdō*'s debut as an official Olympic event. Shōriki Matsutarō (1885–1969 – prominent politician, businessman, and first president of the Nippon Budokan) stressed three points in regards to the Budokan's objectives and future role in Japanese society:

1. To promote the spirit of *budō* as the basis for the Japanese national character.
2. To popularise *budō* among the Japanese people, especially for the purpose of nurturing healthy youth.

3. To help elevate *kendō*, *jūdō* and other *budō* to compulsory subjects in the school curriculum.⁷⁷

Jūdō's inclusion in the Olympics signified the start of a period of reacceptance for the *budō* arts, *kendō* being one of the most popular in terms of the domestic practitioner population. Apart from simply a venue, the Budokan also serves as a kind of umbrella organisation to support and connect the various martial art federations that formed in the post-war period, but should in no way be considered as a post-war reincarnation of the Dai-Nippon Butokukai.

The *kendō* population continued to grow after the Tokyo Olympics, and from the 1970s, there was a significant increase in the number of both female and student practitioners. Although it was being taught as a PE subject in an ever-increasing number of schools, extra-curricular clubs were also booming. Parents urged their children to do *kendō* because it had become widely recognised as a valid means for instilling discipline and teaching etiquette, and community and police *dōjō* in the late 1960s and 1970s found it difficult to accommodate the large numbers of hopeful parents who queued up to register their children in beginner's courses.

For most children, however, the motivation to continue came from the competitive aspects of *kendō* rather than the desire to have the ideals of discipline and mutual respect forced upon them by zealous instructors and parents. As Günther Lüschen observed, "exposure of children to competitive sport will cause these children to become achievement-oriented; the earlier this exposure occurs, the more achievement oriented they become."⁷⁸ Although elite *kendō* athletes competing at high school or university level could never hope to enjoy the life of a celebrity professional sportsman like their peers who excelled in baseball (the most popular sport in Japan then and now), successful tournament results could open doors for a career in the police force, as a PE teacher, or even in the multitude of companies with in-house *kendō* teams.

Even before entering the workforce, successful tournament results can help a child gain entry into prestigious schools or universities on the basis of their sporting prowess. It should also be mentioned that *dōjō* or schools that perform well in competitions bring considerable prestige to the instructors. Although most preach the various holistic benefits of doing *kendō* to their students, they are certainly not averse to teaching strategies and ploys to help win matches.

⁷⁷ Alexander Bennett (ed. and trans.), *Budō: The Martial Ways of Japan*, Nippon Budokan, p. 72

⁷⁸ Günther Lüschen, "The Interdependence of Sport and Culture", *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 2 (1967), pp. 127-139, SCCS, Vol. 4, p. 129

In other words, although teaching the values of *kendō* as a vehicle for personal development was stressed by the AJKF and the Mombushō to varying degrees, the reality for young people who engaged in *kendō* was that winning matches was of primary importance, and the number of tournaments held throughout the country proliferated significantly to meet the thirst for competition.

The growing enthusiasm for *kendō* and its successful dissemination was a great achievement for the AJKF. However, it also proved to be a double-edged sword, and a cause of great concern for the *kendō* gatekeeper, especially considering a perceived growing “obsession with adopting tricks to win competitions”, something viewed as a “deviation from proper *kendō* in favour of a ‘win at all costs’ approach in order to obtain good results in tournaments.”⁷⁹ Furthermore, the *shinai* (bamboo practice sword) was seen to have become disassociated with traditional concepts of the *nihontō* (Japanese sword), and to the unending dismay of traditionalists, it had transformed into nothing more than a piece of sporting equipment used to score points – an inclination considered “contrary to the principles of true *kendō*, negating its potential as a way for cultivating the self.”⁸⁰

In an attempt to rectify this perceived decay of *kendō*’s traditional values, the AJKF convened a committee in December 1971 tasked with formulating an official guiding concept to ensure *kendō*’s integrity for future generations of practitioners. The result was the promulgation of the “Concept of Kendō” which was, in essence, a guide as to what *kendō* should be.⁸¹ An appendage called “The Purpose of Practising Kendō” was also added in the hope that *kendō* teachers and students would reconsider the objectives of *kendō* as way for self-cultivation, and as a serious form of traditional culture based on the “principles of the sword”. The following “Concept” and the “Purpose” were officially announced in 1975, and have remained the official guiding principle of *kendō* to this day.

The Concept of Kendō⁸²

The concept of *kendō* is to discipline the human character through the application of the principles of the *katana*.

The Purpose of Practicing Kendō

The purpose of practicing *kendō* is:

⁷⁹ Alexander Bennett (ed. and trans.), *Budō: The Martial Ways of Japan*, Nippon Budokan, p. 150

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 151

⁸² <http://www.kendo-fik.org/english-page/english-page2/concept-of-Kendo.htm>

To mould the mind and body,
To cultivate a vigorous spirit,
And through correct and rigid training,
To strive for improvement in the art of *kendō*,
To hold in esteem human courtesy and honour,
To associate with others with sincerity,
And to forever pursue the cultivation of oneself.
This will make one be able:
To love his/her country and society,
To contribute to the development of culture
And to promote peace and prosperity among all peoples.⁸³

More recently, the AJKF organised a working group in 2003 to consider critical issues facing the continued integrity of *kendō* culture.⁸⁴ They were tasked with “planning the *kendō* of tomorrow” and recommending policies to protect its intrinsic values.⁸⁵ The matters that the committee addressed were centred on clarifying the “essence of *kendō*” with particular reference to the “Concept”, domestic organisational issues, international considerations on how to facilitate foreign *kendō* practitioners’ “understanding of the connection between *kendō* and *bushidō*”, the “Olympic problem”, and other topics such as the unification of *kendō* terminology and rank promotion etc.⁸⁶

With regards to the “Concept”, it was claimed that foreign practitioners and younger generations of Japanese did not understand the ostensibly abstract content of *kendō*’s official guiding philosophies of “*ken-no-rihō*” (principles of the sword), and “*ningen-keisei*” (character development).

To reiterate, the “Concept” was created to curb the “degeneration (*midare*) of *kendō* and its techniques” due to overt sportification, however, there was no proper explanation as to why this should be considered detrimental, or why it should not be seen as a legitimate evolution of “correct *kendō*”.⁸⁷ With this point in mind, the committee came to an understanding that although the “Concept” was certainly a great cause for confusion among young Japanese practitioners and the foreign *kendō* community who had not witnessed the dramatic social changes in Japan in the post-war period, and hence the way in which *kendō* transformed, the “Concept” should not be

⁸³ The committee members were Chairman Matsumoto Toshio, Horiguchi Kiyoshi, Ogawa Chūtarō, Tamari Yoshiaki, Nakano Yasoji, Yuno Masanori, Ōshima Isao, Inoue Masataka, Ogawa Masayuki, Hiromitsu Hidekuni, Kasahara Toshiaki.

⁸⁴ I was fortunate to be allowed to attend these meetings from 2006 as an observer.

⁸⁵ Kagaya Shin’ichi “Chōki kōsō kikaku kaigi hōkoku: *kendō* no kokoro-gamae ni tsuite (1)” (Report of the long-term planning committee: Regarding the mind-set of *kendō*), *Kensō* (December 2006), p. 18

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

changed or discarded with something more self-explanatory. Instead, it was decided that it should be supplemented with another more detailed conceptual guideline specifically aimed at the new generation of young Japanese instructors and foreigners to help them understand the “Concept”.

In April 2006, the final draft for the “Mindset of Kendō Instruction” was completed for utilisation as “guiding principles” for *kendō* instructors as an extension of the already established “Concept” and “Purpose”.

The Mindset of Kendō Instruction (The Significance of the Shinai)⁸⁸

For the correct transmission and development of *kendō*, efforts should be made to teach the correct way of handling the *shinai* in accordance with the principles of the sword.

Reihō - (Etiquette)

When instructing, emphasis should be placed on etiquette to encourage respect for partners, and nurture people with a dignified and humane character.

Lifelong Kendō

While providing instruction, students should be encouraged to apply the full measure of care to issues of safety and health, and to devote themselves to the development of their character throughout their lives.

The first article seeks to address the problematic notion that the *shinai* represents a sword, and should be treated and used in accordance with the nebulous idea of the “principles of the sword” (*ken-no-rihō*). From the perspective of the modern *kendō* practitioner who has probably never even held a real *katana* let alone engaged in battle with one, to be expected to try and follow theoretical principles gleaned from the gravity of mortal combat, while also trying to score points against an opponent in the modern sporting sense, is challenging to say the least.

How is one supposed to use the *shinai* as a sword? How is one supposed to “cut” with an implement that was designed to strike with? What is wrong with relying on athletic dexterity (i.e. striking from unorthodox positions and posture), and tricks to defeat an opponent in a match, just because it is thought to clash with the vague but sacred principles of *ken-no-rihō*? The

⁸⁸ The English version was published on March 14, 2007 by the All Japan Kendo Federation as a translation of “*Kendo Shidō no Kokoro-gamae* (The Mindset of Kendo Instruction)” and its supplementary explanations. I was given the task of rendering the original Japanese into English as the official translation. The text is accessible at www.kendo-fik.org/english-page/english-page2/concept-of-Kendo.htm

double-standards surrounding the sword and the *shinai* is perceived as the core issue of whether *kendō* should be considered a traditional *budō* or a sport. Perhaps the dilemma is best summed up by Kagaya Shin'ichi, standing director of the AJKF, in his report to members regarding the "Mindset":

Now *shinai-kendō* is prevalent, and the *nihontō* which forms the antecedent of the *shinai* is almost non-existent in people's memory. Valid cuts and thrusts with a live blade are different to those executed with a *shinai*, and it is peculiar to call a *shinai* a *nihontō*. Nevertheless, great *kendō* masters such as Mochida Moriji and Saimura Gorō stated wholeheartedly to "use the *shinai* as if it were a sword (*shinken*)", and "do not strike excessively or unnecessarily." This remains an important theme in *kendō* today. It indicates to us what a crucial matter it is in a *kendō* bout to do one's utmost to "get the first cut in (*shodachi*)". The battle of the minds and the clash of *ki* before unleashing the strike is what make encounters so impassioned. The profundity of *shin-ki-ryoku-itchi* (unification of mind, spirit and technique)⁸⁹ not only makes *kendō* something that can be practised throughout one's lifetime, but is the link between fighting with real swords and *shinai-kendō*, bringing forth the inextricable link between the *katana* and the *shinai*.⁹⁰

In an attempt to avoid confusion and make possible a higher level of comprehension of the "Mindset of *Kendō* Instruction" the authors decided to add explanatory notes to each clause. "The Significance of the *Shinai*" is clarified with the following explanation:

Kendō is a way where one cultivates one's mind (the self) by aiming for *shin-ki-ryoku-itchi* utilising the *shinai*. The "*shinai*-sword" should be not only directed at one's opponent but also at the self. Thus, the primary aim of instruction is to encourage the unification of mind, body and *shinai* through training in this discipline.

The "Mindset of Instruction" is still highly abstract in its conceptuality, but intangibility cannot be totally avoided; it was not considered necessary to entirely surrender the mysticism of *kendō* for the sake of Western rationality as this is the aesthetic that defines its perceived Japanese essence.

⁸⁹ "A phrase which expresses the essential point one should keep in mind when engaging in offence and defence. *Shin-ki-ryoku-itchi* is the teaching that when one intuitively perceives a stimulus from the opponent, all three elements of *shin* (mind), *ki* (outward action based upon the judgment of the mind) and *ryoku* (action) must be expressed instantaneously in the form of a *waza*." Quoted from AJKF (Alexander Bennett trans.), *The Official Guide for Kendo Instruction*, 2011.

⁹⁰ Kagaya Shin'ichi "Chōki kōsō kikaku kaigi hōkoku: *kendō* no kokoro-gamae ni tsuite- *shinai* to iu ken – ippon no shisō (4)" (Report of the long-term planning committee: Regarding the mind-set of *kendō*, - the *shinai*-sword), *Kensō* (March 2007), p. 20

However, there is a clear attempt to connect the ideal of the sword with the *shinai* by unpretentiously referring to it as the “*shinai-sword*” (*shinai to iu ken*).

A point worthy of mention is the notion that the “‘*shinai-sword*’ should not only be directed at the opponent but also at the self” is a concept that stems from the “殺人刀 *setsunin-tō*” (death-dealing blade) and “活人剣 *katsunin-ken*” (life-giving sword) philosophy of the Yagyū Shinkage-ryū (see Chapter 2). Here, the sword (剣 *ken*) is double-edged, with cutting edges directed both towards the opponent and the self. The inference is that although one tries to cut the opponent with the outward facing blade, one is also seeking self-improvement through the on-going act of self-castigation represented metaphorically by the inward facing cutting edge. In this sense, the original English translation of the “Concept” is conceptually mistaken in stating “刀 *katana*” – a single edged sword. In any case, for the modern *kendō* athlete, such notions are fanciful and irrelevant in the quest to win matches, but this is precisely the set of values the AJKF is trying to salvage and promote.

Given the apparent brutality of the act of beating the opponent with the “*shinai-sword*”, a fundamental aspect to the study of *kendō* (indeed all of the Japanese martial arts) is the “*reihō*” (etiquette or respect) component. In the second clause of the “Mindset”, this point is elaborated on in the following way.

Even in competitive matches, importance is placed on upholding etiquette in *kendō*. The primary emphasis should thus be placed on instruction in the spirit and forms of *reihō* (etiquette) so that the practitioner can develop a modest attitude to life, and realise the ideal of *kōken-chiai* (the desire to achieve mutual understanding and the betterment of humanity through *kendō*.)

It is this element of “*rei*” or “*reihō*” in the study of *kendō* which is emphasised from the outset at all levels. Often one hears the maxim “*rei ni hajimari, rei ni owaru*” (beginning with *rei* and ending with *rei*) in the *dōjō*.⁹¹ As Ōya Minoru states, because of the ferocious blows exchanged in the process of learning *kendō*, opponents are expressing sentiments of gratitude and respect to each other through the meticulously prescribed protocols of *reihō*. “They affirm that they are not only

⁹¹ AJKF, *Japanese-English Dictionary of Kendo* (Revised edition 2011, trans. Alexander Bennett), p. 79

opponents trying to defeat each other, but are also cooperating with each other as enthusiasts of the ‘Way’ of *kendō*, and their interaction is beneficial to both as they progress.”⁹² Moreover, in addition to adhering to prescribed conventions such as bowing to each other at an angle of 15 degrees and so on, the internal feeling is essential as this “encourages the practitioner to concentrate and focus, remain calm, and control emotions.”⁹³

Furthermore, as *rei* is said to represent the “moral standards in life for maintaining social order”,⁹⁴ the third article in the “Mindset” advocating “Lifelong Kendō” is supplemented with an explanation of how the continued study of *kendō* throughout one’s lifetime will serve to enhance the lifestyle of the practitioner, and ultimately benefit society at large.

Kendō is a “way of life” that successive generations can learn together. The prime objective of instructing *kendō* is to encourage the practitioner to discover and define their way in life through training in the techniques of *kendō*. Thus, the practitioner will be able to develop a rich outlook on life and be able to put the culture of *kendō* into use, thereby benefitting from its value in their daily lives through increased social vigour.

Although the “Mindset of Kendō Instruction” is short; its purpose is to promote the idea that the *shinai* should not be treated merely as a sporting implement like a tennis racket or baseball bat, but rather with the same reverence as a real sword; and by extension of this, the *shinai* should be viewed as a conduit for cultivating one’s character and human qualities. While the three articles seem excessively intangible and impractical, *kendō* practitioners are urged by the AJKF to seek mastery in the dual ideal of competing to score valid points on each other, but to do so with beauty in form and attitude, always affording every opponent the utmost of respect throughout each encounter.

This is signified by observance of strict protocols of etiquette, never performing victory poses or actively showing one’s disgust upon defeat, or arguing about referees’ decisions. Practitioners are also encouraged at a philosophical level to nurture an appreciation for the notion that victory or defeat is determined by one’s own technical and mental strengths and weaknesses, and that the opponent’s existence is vital in the quest to expunge oneself of inadequacies by nurturing one’s

⁹² Ōya Minoru, “Central Issues in the Instruction of Kendo: With Focus on the Inter-connectedness of Waza and Mind”, in Alexander (ed.), *Budo Perspectives*, p. 184

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ AJKF, *Japanese-English Dictionary of Kendo*, p. 79

humanity through the exchange of *kendō* techniques. In other words, the *kendō* match is not the objective, but merely a step in the path to greater spiritual development.

This also became a central consideration for *kendō* education in schools. The acquisition of correct manners had featured for most of the post-war reinstatement of *kendō*, but this was further emphasised with the restoration of the term “*budō*”. The 1993 MOE textbook defined the importance of *rei* in the following passage in a way that clearly intended to highlight *budō*’s ‘uniqueness’ and importance as a mode for personal cultivation (i.e. moral development).

In the *budō* arts of Japan, the ideal of ‘*rei*’ is different to the patterns of conduct found in other sports. In *budō*, after rigorous exchanges of attack and defence, even when the psychological excitement has not waned, the elation is consciously suppressed and the protocols of etiquette performed in an exact manner. Emphasising ‘*rei*’, and performing it properly [in form and in mind] is a demonstration of self-control, and shows respect for the opponent. Self-control is an integral element of self-cultivation.⁹⁵

Although I have been a devoted practitioner for over two decades, and truly believe in the *potential* the study of *kendō* can afford practitioners, I am extremely wary of the common attitude that you become a ‘good person’ just by doing *kendō*. It is also usually assumed that people with high ranks are morally upright individuals with superior “powers of discernment”. Even the *dan* grades and *shōgō* (teaching titles)⁹⁶ in *kendō* are based on the premise that by virtue of improving technically, you will also mature as a human being. The following are official AJKF explanations for *shōgō* requirements.

- *Renshi* must be accomplished in the principles of *kendō*, and have distinguished powers of discernment.
- *Kyōshi* must be expert in the principles of *kendō*, and have superior powers of discernment.
- *Hanshi* must have mastered the principles of *kendō*, show maturity in character with extraordinary powers of discernment, and be a person of unimpeachable moral demeanour.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ MOE, *Kendō Shidō no Tebiki* (1993), p. 2

⁹⁶ According to the definition offered in the AJKF’s *Japanese English Kendo Dictionary*, *shōgō* is “A title which indicates one’s level of achievement as a kendoist. In kendo, there are three levels of *shōgō*: *renshi*, *kyōshi*, and *hanshi*. These titles are awarded to persons who have been at the sixth *dan*, seventh *dan*, and eighth *dan*, respectively, for the requisite number of years and who satisfy the given qualification standards. *Dan*’ *i* indicate one’s technical level (mental elements included), while *shōgō* signify in addition to technical proficiency, the level of one’s leadership and judgment as a kendoist. The title *hanshi* is conferred on persons at the absolute highest level of authority as kendoists.” (p. 91)

⁹⁷ Alexander Bennett (ed.), *Kendo World* Vol. 5 No. 4 (2011), p. 3

Kendō certainly provides a technical and philosophical framework for physical, psychological, and possibly even moral progression. Whether or not, or how closely practitioners adhere to this framework, or how the framework is interpreted and utilised depends entirely on the individual. It is precisely these kinds of narcissistic assumptions about the exceptional capacity of *kendō* study that earns the wrath of some cynical non-practitioners who see *kendō* as both elitist and unnecessarily treated as special within the education system. This is especially true of some left-wing educators. For example, the following evaluation of *kendō* and its practitioners is blunt, and a sentiment rarely expressed in the public domain, but it is, nevertheless, pertinent and worthy of reflection.

The instructors of *kendō* and [other] *budō* claimed that they have passed through a uniquely Japanese contemplation of humanity, and that it contains features that are not found in any foreign sport. They place emphasis on fighting aspects (*hissatsu-sei*) of *yūkō-datosu* (valid strike) and *zanshin* (continued alertness) and life or death earnestness which is expressed as *shin-gi-tai-no-itchi* (unison of mind, technique and body). They are nationalistic (*kokusui-sei*), and while denying the destructive power of the strike and its usefulness in battle, they also refuse to totally endorse its sportification, claiming its value lies in the spiritual self-forging through the interaction of two exponents using swords engaged in mortal combat. *Kendō*'s lack of militaristic application is conversely the impetus to cultivate spiritualistic aspirations i.e. spiritual pragmatism towards actual battle [and this is why] there is so much spiritualism and irrationality in *budō*'s competitive form and training.⁹⁸

The aura of samurai-like haughtiness that distinguishes senior kendoists in particular is actually something aspired to. As a leading *kendō* instructor today, Satō Nariaki points out that in order to pass the higher grades in *kendō*, the practitioner must be accomplished in the “technical aspects of attacking or defending (including psychological strength)” and also be able to demonstrate “aspects of character development, such as panache (*fūkaku*) and a commanding presence (*kigurai*) that comes with a high level of improvement.”⁹⁹ This is manifest in elegance of movement and a highly confident demeanour inside and ideally outside of the *dōjō*.

These qualities could easily be interpreted as arrogance by non-practitioners. Furthermore, the lofty ideals and concepts espoused by the AJKF and *kendō* practitioners conceivably serve a dual

⁹⁸ Gakkō Taiiku Kenkyū Dōshikai (ed.), *Kokumin Undō Bunka no Sōzō* (Creating national sport culture), p. 100

⁹⁹ Alexander Bennett (ed.), *Kendo World* Vol. 5 No. 3 (2011), p. 8

function: in addition to providing a spiritual or philosophical objective, they could also be construed as a psychological rejoinder to the externally violent nature of *kendō*. This idea is best summed up by Kenneth Sheard when he states, “devotees of violent sports often feel under pressure to counter the accusation of ‘barbarism’ and ‘cruelty’ to which their commitment gives rise and may feel constrained to construct ideological defences and legitimations in order to make their participation possible, that is to make it possible for them to participate without, or with a minimum of, psychic discomfort, and to provide resources to deflect abolitionist movements.”¹⁰⁰

5b. Sports, the Olympic Spector, and Protecting Cultural Values

Is *kendō* a sport? A definition of sport is difficult, as there are many possibilities. For example, Guttmann asserts that “the distinguishing characteristics of modern sports, as contrasted with those of previous eras, are seven in number... secularism – equality of opportunity to compete and in the conditions of competition, specialization of roles, rationalization, bureaucratic organization, quantification, the quest for records.”¹⁰¹ *Kendō* as it is practised today certainly meets these criteria.

Also, if we simply take sport as being a “structured, goal-oriented, competitive, contest-based, ludic, physical activity” in which overseeing bodies “set the rules, goals, and the criteria by which success and failure can be judged”¹⁰² with both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards for participants, then *kendō* is undoubtedly a sport.

Furthermore, David Best defined “purposive sports” as ones in which the purpose or goal “can be specified independently of the means of achieving it as long as it conforms to the limits set by the rules or norms.”¹⁰³ For “purposive sports”, then, goals in a soccer match or tries in rugby are counted points regardless of the manner in which they are scored. In “aesthetic sports”, however, “the aim cannot be specified in isolation from the manner of achieving it.”¹⁰⁴ In other words, in sports such as ice skating and gymnastics, aesthetic form and the manner in which the objective is achieved is also an important consideration. *Kendō* has elements of both, but would predominantly

¹⁰⁰ Kenneth G. Sheard, “Aspects of Boxing in the ‘Civilizing Process’”, *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 32 (1), 1997, pp. 31–57, Contained in Dunning, Eric, Malcolm, Dominic, (ed.), *Sport: Critical Concepts in Sociology* Vol. 1p. 275

¹⁰¹ Allen Guttmann, “From Ritual to Record”, *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sport*, pp. 115–55, Contained in Dunning, Eric, Malcolm, Dominic, (ed.), *Sport: Critical Concepts in Sociology* Vol. 1, p. 5

¹⁰² Timothy Chandler (et al.), *Sport and Physical Education: The Key Concepts*, p. 191

¹⁰³ David Best, *Philosophy and Human Movement*, p. 104

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

be referred to as an “aesthetic sport”.

Moreover, “amateur sport” is conceived as “training in courage and manliness, ‘forming the character’ and inculcating the ‘will to win’ which is the mark of the true leader, but a will to win within the rules. This is ‘fair play’, conceived as an aristocratic disposition utterly opposed to the plebeian pursuit of victory at all costs.”¹⁰⁵ Thus, *kendō* as a sport aligns neatly with the definition of an “amateur-aesthetic sport” in terms of its values. The question of whether it is a sport or not seems rather pointless, but it is nevertheless, in *kendō* circles, a highly debated issue, as can be inferred by the efforts made by the AJKF and the Mombushō outlined above to distinguish traditional *budō* (*kendō*) from Western sports.

Interestingly, many *kendō* practitioners view the post-war revitalisation of *kendō* as a “democratic sport” as the beginning of this debate. This is far from the truth however, as similar disdain for progressive thinking was held by traditionalists during the Tokugawa period with the development of fencing following the creation of protective armour (see Chapter 2). And, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, the Taishō and early Shōwa periods also saw a flourish in the participation in sporting activities among students, resulting in wide scale condemnation of the propensity of young kendoists to practise *kendō* with the sole aim of winning matches. The debate surrounding the difference between *budō* and sports therefore has always been a vibrant one, but the main thrust seems to be disparagement of the idea that *kendō* is ‘fun’ or ‘play’. *Kendō* is supposed to be far more serious than that. For example, prominent Shōwa period *kendō* master Saimura Gorō stated his thoughts on the difference between *kendō* and sports in 1941.

With the popularity of sports, there are some people who view *kendō* as a sport also. To be sure, given that competitive matches are conducted in accordance with set rules, *kendō* does appear to have many similarities with sports. However, those who engage in *kendō* do so to forge themselves as they seek self-perfection. If duty calls, they use their martial skills to wield a real sword throwing their bodies into the fray through their sense of loyalty. So, in contrast to sports, where participants enjoy competing and spectators relish the spectacle, the goal of *kendō* is to travel the path of austere physical and spiritual training (*shugyō*).¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, Op. Cit., p. 290

¹⁰⁶ Saimura Gorō (Kendō Hanshi) “Kendō shugyō no mokuteki” (The purpose of *kendō* training), *KK* Vol. 9 (1941 January–February), p. 47

The inclusion of *jūdō* as an Olympic sport from 1964 was a source of great pride for many Japanese, and symbolised Japan's post-war rebuilding success and much desired world-wide recognition. However, many martial arts enthusiasts now lament the apparent trade-off of *budō* virtues such as respect, modesty, and general courtesy in *jūdō* for importance placed on winning medals by the athletes, media, and general public.¹⁰⁷ Goodger and Goodger observed that *jūdō* "has become increasingly Westernized and oriented towards international competition. The strong competitive ethos, individualism, instrumental views of practice and rational, scientific approaches to training are typical of the wider culture within which judo now flourishes."¹⁰⁸ In Japan too, the perceived Westernisation of Japan's traditional *budō* epitomises the tainting of all that is intrinsically good and noble in the martial arts, and what makes them unique in the world.

The Western influence on *budō* is undeniable to an extent. However, the inference of an unwanted invasion of Western ideals detracting from the purity of *budō* ideals is rarely recognised as being indicative of the obvious lack of ability or foresight demonstrated by the various *budō* organisations to properly understand, articulate and maintain the professed cultural integrity and essence of what they are supposed to be protecting. Often, the blame is simply placed on the unstoppable and undesirable Western cultural influence in the simplistic form of a 'them versus us' argument.

As an extension of this, one of the strange on-going discussions in the *kendō* fraternity is the Spector of Olympism, even though *kendō* never has been, and most likely never will be an Olympic sport. Nevertheless, it is illustrative of the various apprehensions and issues conveyed in numerous discussions of whether or not *kendō* is a sport, and is thus useful in identifying the main points of contention in the '*kendō* versus sport' debate.

Wistful of the way in which *jūdō* has devolved into a mere sport, where champions throw their arms in the air in unrestrained victory poses, losers cry on the mat, traditional techniques are 'bastardised' and executed with physical force rather than grace or beauty, "*budō* courtesy" is non-existent, *tatami* mats and the *jūdō* kit have changed colour, half and quarter points have been introduced, and many other rule changes that are an affront to the good name of *budō*, *kendō*

¹⁰⁷ For example, see D. Matsumoto, "Jūdō ni okeru riidaashippu to kagaku no juyosei- karaa jūdō-gi no mondai" (The need for leadership and science in Judo- The problem of colour *jūdō-gi*), *Budōgaku Kenkyū* Vol. 29, 1997, pp. 44-63.

¹⁰⁸ B.C. and J.M Goodger, "Organization and Cultural Change in Post-War British Judo", *International Review of Sport Sociology*, XV, No. 1 (1980), p. 43

traditionalists fear that their art will suffer the same fate if they relinquish their control to the powerful international influences of Olympism.

It is widely believed that if *kendō* was to be introduced into the Olympics, Japan would lose its position of leadership, as has clearly been the case regarding *jūdō*.¹⁰⁹ It is feared that *kendō* would become un-Japanese. How could this be so? The changes to the rules and method of *kendō* matches that would need to be implemented to meet the IOC's requirements are the most worrying factor for many if *kendō* was to aspire to the grand heights of Olympic participation. In other words, it is believed that the clarification of the nebulous aesthetic criteria for scoring valid strikes (*yūkō-datotsu*) would detract from the beauty of the art. Its all-important Japanese aesthetic would be lost forever if it transformed into a "purposive sport".

Ascertaining points scored in *kendō* is often difficult to understand for the seasoned practitioner, let alone casual spectators of the sport. Several years ago, news reached Japan that a splinter *kendō* group in Korea was trying to develop electrical equipment similar to that used in competitive fencing to simplify the refereeing process. According to the rules for scoring a point in epee fencing, "the target includes the whole of the fencer's body including his clothing and equipment. Thus any point which arrives counts as touch whatever part of the body (trunk, limbs, or head), the clothing or the equipment it touches." Furthermore, "Only the indications of the electrical recording apparatus can be taken into consideration for judging the materiality of touches. In no circumstances can the Referee declare a competitor to be touched unless the touch has been properly registered by the apparatus."¹¹⁰

In contrast to this relatively simple process, the official FIK *Kendo Shiai and Shinpan Regulations* stipulate that a valid strike must consist of the following elements:

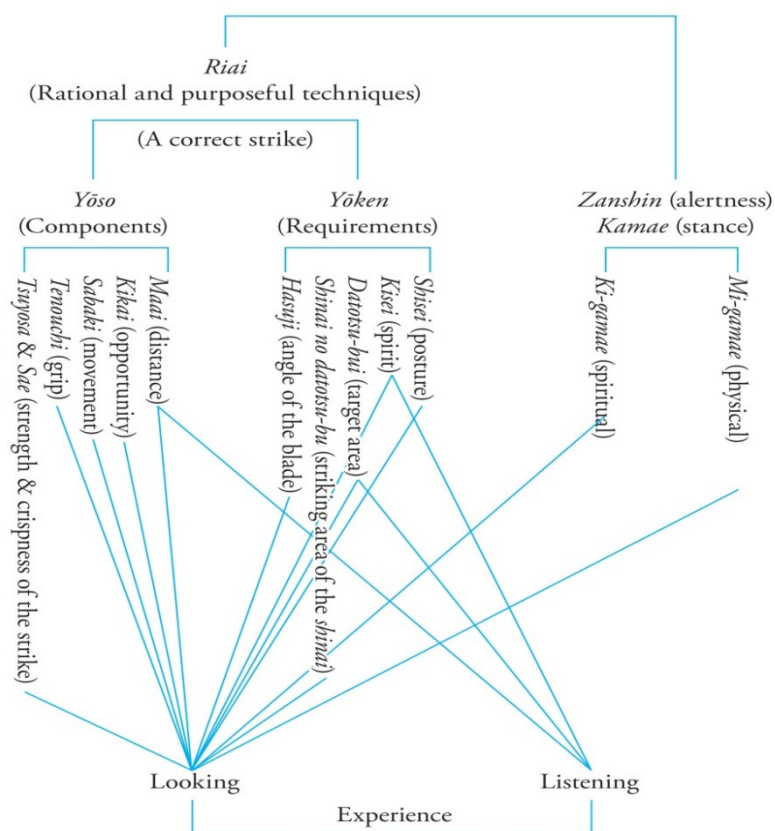
Article 17: *Yūkō-datotsu* is defined as the accurate striking or thrusting made onto *datotsu-bui* of the opponent's *kendō-gu* with *shinai* at its *datotsu-bu* in high spirits and correct posture, and correct angle of the blade (*hasuji*) being followed by *zanshin*.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ As of 2011, although the International Judo Federation boasts an incredible membership of 199 countries and regions, there is not a single Japanese representative in any official capacity within the federation.

¹¹⁰ Fencing Rules 2000 Edition, United States Fencing Association, <http://www.usfencing.org/Forms/Rules99.pdf>, p. 27

¹¹¹ *The Regulations of Kendo Shiai: The Subsidiary Rules of Kendo Shiai and Shinpan*, (Revised 2006), International Kendo Federation.

There are many factors that need to be taken into consideration, and it is not just a simple matter of whether or not the *shinai* touches the opponent's body. To interpret the rulebook definition of a *yūkō-datotsu*, first there are the stipulated “requirements” which include *datotsu-bui* (accurately striking the target), *datotsu-bu* (with correct part of the *shinai*), *hasuji* (correct direction of the cutting edge), *kyōdo* (adequate strength of the strike), *sae* (crispness of the strike), *ki-ken-tai-itchi* (unity of sword, body and spirit), and *zanshin* (continued physical and mental alertness). Then, there are other “components” that need to be taken into consideration. These are *shisei* (correct posture), *kiai* (vocalisation), *maai* (spatial interval, i.e. not too deep or too shallow), *tai-sabaki* (footwork and body movement), *kikai* (apposite striking opportunities rather than random striking), and *tenouchi* (use of the hands and grip to get the right amount of resonance and crispness in the strike).



*Considerations for referees in judging valid strikes in kendo*¹¹²

¹¹² AJKF (Alexander Bennett trans.), *The Official Guide for Kendo Instruction*, p. 185

Even though the *shinai* may look to be connecting with the target, the technique may not be deemed valid in *kendō* if one or more of the aforementioned criteria are not satisfied. This aspect of *kendō* is difficult to comprehend for casual observers not versed in the teachings of *ki-ken-tai-itchi*, and all the elements of the strike or thrust that are required to make it valid. In fact, this is often a point of confusion even for experienced *kendō* exponents, and mistaken referee decisions are a common occurrence in *kendō* bouts.

In *kendō*, aesthetic form starting with the application of pressure to create an opening, selection of an appropriate technique, timing and execution, precision, and continued psychological and physical readiness (*zanshin*) after the fact – i.e. the entire process from start to finish – is being judged, not just the point of impact. As Bourdieu states, “A postural norm such as uprightness (‘stand up straight’) has, like a direct gaze or a close haircut, the function of symbolizing a whole set of moral ‘virtues’ – rectitude, straightforwardness, dignity (face to face confrontation as a demand for respect) – and also physical ones – vigour, strength, health.” This observation is entirely true when determining the validity of a strike in *kendō*.¹¹³

However, one essential feature of any Olympic sport is its accessibility to spectators who have never participated in the sport. If *kendō* was to become an Olympic sport, issues such as the difficulty in judging or understanding a point (*ippon*) would have to be simplified with drastic rule changes. One of the foreseeable changes would be the oversimplification of what constitutes or is judged as a point.

It is the convoluted process of scoring that symbolises the aesthetic principles of *kendō*. The common consensus in Japan is that the criteria for scoring a point must be retained at all costs, even if this means casual observers are unable to follow match procedure. In its current form, it would be close to impossible for *kendō* to become an official Olympic sport. The irony of this opposition is that the Olympic Games have also transformed from an event encouraging sportsmanship and holistic development through sports to a massive economic undertaking in which sponsorship deals and elitism prevails. A glance at the ideals stated in the Olympic Charter suggests that the explicit values seem to be at great odds with the reality of the Games now, but very much in tune with the *kendō* concepts introduced in the previous section.

¹¹³ Pierre Bourdieu, Op. Cit., p. 298

Olympism is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole, the qualities of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy found in effort, the educational value of good example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles.¹¹⁴

Even though aspirations for induction into the Olympic family is generally opposed by most *kendō* enthusiasts in Japan, affiliation with the IOC through joining the General Association of Sports Federations (GAISF now SportAccord)¹¹⁵ was supported by many small *kendō* federations around the world, especially those affiliated with the Europe Kendo Federation (EKF). The reason was simple: it would enhance the standing of *kendō* as a minority sport versus mainstream sports, thereby increasing possibilities for receiving funding from governments.

At the FIK Board of Directors meetings held in at the Santa Clara World Kendo Championships in 2000 and the Glasgow World Kendo Championships held in 2003, a number of European federations expressed their desire to become affiliated with GAISF for this reason.¹¹⁶

Belonging to GAISF does not mean that the sport in question is necessarily an Olympic sport, but it does mean inclusion in the Olympic movement. The affiliated organisation is considered the official international representative (IF) of that sport, and is allowed to vie for admission as an official Olympic sport if so desired. The Japanese governing body was reluctant to venture down this slippery slope at first, but realised that, as the suzerain *kendō* nation, if they did not take the initiative, perhaps an organisation from another country (namely Korea) could seek inclusion first. The threat of this happening forced Japan's hand, and in April 2006, the FIK became affiliated with GAISF making it officially recognised as the international organisation for overseeing *kendō* after a failed attempt for acceptance the year before. As the FIK is based in Japan, this was seen as a temporary victory in asserting Japanese ownership of *kendō* as it started gaining more exposure in the West.

¹¹⁴ See *Olympic Charter*, (July 2003) http://multimedia.olympic.org/pdf/en_report_122.pdf p. 9

¹¹⁵ GAISF, founded in 1967, groups together the international sports federations and various associations with the aim of defending worldwide sport, keeping the representative bodies informed, and cooperating and coordinating their activities. GAISF, along with other IOC affiliated groups such as the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF), the Association of International Winter Sports Federations (AIWF), and the Association of IOC Recognized International Sports Federations (ARISF) look after the interests of the affiliated sports federations.

¹¹⁶ Abe Tetsushi, "Ōshū kara mita kendo no kokusaika" (The internationalisation of *kendō* seen from Europe) in *Kendō Nippon* (November 2003), p. 53.

Guttman claims that the spread of the Japanese martial arts to the West has been accompanied “by their modernization, by their transformation in accordance with Western assumptions about the nature of sports.”¹¹⁷ In the case of *kendō*, however, the modernisation and transformation have actually been in accordance with Japanese assumptions, or prejudices about the nature of sports.

What Guttman is alluding to here is Western “cultural imperialism” with regards to sporting norms and morality, but the same kind of cultural imperialism is detectable in the way in which *kendō* been promoted in the international community by the AJKF, FIK, and the Japanese government as a valuable ‘gift to the world’, one that supersedes the capacity of other sports to enhance the lives of practitioners, and even contributes to international peace and understanding, as long as it is done the “Japanese way”. McVeigh asserts that “nationalism often hides behind its opposite: ‘internationalism’ (an ironic form of official as well as popular nationalism).”¹¹⁸ As *kendō* becomes increasingly popular and of a higher level internationally, the urgency to maintain this position of suzerainty and protect the cultural capital of *kendō* is intensifying. This concern will be examined in detail in the final chapter.

6. Conclusion

This chapter has plotted the post-war reestablishment of *kendō* as a “pure democratic sport” after a period of prohibition. There were two main players controlling the way in which *kendō* was transformed and promoted. The All Japan Kendo Federation was created in 1952 as the surrogate governing body of *kendō* after the dissolution of the Butokukai. The AJKF then inherited the responsibility of maintaining the philosophical culture of traditional *kendō*. As a public organisation, the AJKF became the gatekeeper of the “Way” of *kendō* as a vehicle for “personal-cultivation”.

The government’s role was certainly not eliminated. The Mombushō continued to hold considerable sway in the way *kendō* was transformed. A crucial part of *kendō*’s wider popularisation was affording the opportunity for children to learn it at school. Just as it had been before the war, *kendō* was introduced into the school system, but in a form that initially downplayed the spiritual

¹¹⁷ Allen Guttman, “The Diffusion of Sports and the Problem of Cultural Imperialism”, E. Dunning, J. Maguire, R. Pearton (eds.), *The Sports Process: A Comparative and Developmental Approach*, 1993, pp. 125–137. Contained in Dunning, Eric, Malcolm, Dominic, (ed.), *SCCS Vol. 1*, p. 353

¹¹⁸ Brian J. McVeigh, *Nationalisms of Japan: Managing and Mystifying Identity*, p. 20

and moralistic benefits gleaned from its practise. Also, it was completely expunged of any unnecessarily violent practices, and the competitive, sportive aspects were accentuated. *Kendō* was taught in schools not as means for forging the body and mind, but simply for “fun”. The Mombushō set the rules of what form *kendō* was to take in education, but they depended on the AJKF to ensure that the teaching content was appropriate.

The Mombushō controlled “school-*kendō*”, but the AJKF was afforded leeway (encouraged) to highlight the inherent cultural and moralistic aspects, and the tradition of *kendō* as a way to develop character for practitioners in the wider community was continued. It appeared on the surface that the two organisations, although co-operative, were at odds philosophically. This was to change over a period of three decades. The School Course Guidelines governing the teaching content in schools have been modified in approximately ten-year cycles to keep up with social change and societal needs. The education system began to stress the importance of understanding traditional Japanese culture, and developing a sense of “Japaneseness” to thrive in the international community. *Kendō* and the other martial arts were considered an effective means to achieve this objective.

The idea of “*ningen-keisei*” (personal-cultivation) is concomitant with development as a Japanese, and the cultivation of unique Japanese traits. This is where the ideologies espoused by the AJKF and MEXT (MOE) began to juxtapose with particular vigour after modifications made to the School Course Guidelines in 1989, and the word “*budō*” was completely reinstated in the education system after its long post-war hiatus. This may seem simply a matter of semantics, but the symbolism represented by this reversion to traditional terminology is significant.

As McVeigh observes, “the central state bears down on the local level from more than one institutional angle, with the result that its projects of building nation-ness resonate with and mutually reinforce each other in every corner of Japan.”¹¹⁹ This is a good summary of the way in which the Mombushō and the AJKF’s philosophical positions gradually combined in the common mission to highlight a sense of pride in Japan, and in being Japanese, through *kendō*.

However, as has been shown, the initial process of reintroducing *kendō* back into the mainstream though the re-civilising process was not without its pitfalls. *Kendō* as a “sport” was seen as contradictory to *kendō* as a form of traditional holistic culture. Two decades after it was resurrected under the auspices of the All Japan Kendo Federation, the spiritual gatekeeper of *kendō* in the

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 190

post-war era, this contradiction brought about a reassessment of *kendō*'s fundamental ideals in the early 1970s.

The resulting conceptual definition of *kendō* as a vehicle for “personal-cultivation” through observing the “principles of the sword” was designed to refocus *kendō*'s waning spirituality, and also assert its uniqueness, and by implication, its superiority to Western sports.

The government's role in the propagation of *kendō* ideals continues to gain momentum through its prescribed educational objectives which even dictate that all Japanese children in the first and second year of junior high school must learn *budō* in PE from 2012. This physical education, however, is not only meant to create stronger bodies, but also inculcate “traditional conduct” in pupils.

Finally, Befu maintains that Nihonjinron is an ideology that “not merely ‘describes’ the constructed world view, but prescribes what is normatively right and therefore how one should conduct oneself.”¹²⁰ Nihonjinron serve a dual purpose of propagating the idea of “Japaneseness” in Japan and satisfying the need for Japanese to define themselves and their culture *vis-à-vis* the rest of the world, while also convincing the rest of the world that Japan is indeed unique.¹²¹ That is precisely the role which *kendō* has been groomed for in the post-war period, and why expectations continue to run high in official and popular circles. Thus, in conclusion, these objectives make the teaching of *budō* (*kendō*) in schools analogous to a kind of ‘mind-body Nihonjinron’.

¹²⁰ H. Befu (ed.), *Cultural Nationalism in East Asia: Representation and Identity*, p. 126

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 120

Chapter 6

The International Diffusion of Kendō Culture

1. Introduction
2. Kendō Migration to the East and West
3. The Complexities of Kendō's International Consolidation
4. Conclusion

1. Introduction

Westerners were introduced to the wonders of the “oriental” martial arts, namely *jūjutsu* (unarmed grappling) during the Meiji period (1868–1912) when Japanese wrestlers who were small in stature defeated much bigger opponents in public matches held in music halls throughout Europe. Some Japanese *jūjutsu* exponents even displayed their tricks in circus shows to the amazement of onlookers.

Japanese martial culture gained a cult following of sorts in the West especially after the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905. It seemed so remarkable that Japan could defeat Russia, that American President Theodore Roosevelt felt compelled to buy dozens of copies of Nitobe Inazō's book *Bushidō* to give to his friends, and even asked Kanō Jigorō to send a *jūdō* instructor (Yamashita Yoshitsugu) to teach him the art in a makeshift *dōjō* in the White House.¹ Examples in other parts of the world include Ms. Sarala Devi Ghoshal who sought to import the Japanese warrior spirit into India by opening “a martial arts academy in Calcutta, exhorting Bengali youth to learn ‘how to use the staff, the fist, the sword, and the gun.’”²

The international spread of *kendō* has come in waves over the last century, its most accelerated proliferation occurring during the 1970s and 1980s. The actual number of international kendo practitioners pales in comparison to other *budō* arts such as *jūdō* and *karate*. Nevertheless, international *kendō* is expanding, and the International Kendo Federation (FIK) now has fifty registered affiliates as of 2012. In addition to officially affiliated nations, the art is also currently

¹ Murata Naoki, *Jūdō no Kokusaika*, p. 60

² Steven G. Marks, “‘Bravo, Brave Tiger of the East!’ the Russo-Japanese War and the Rise of Nationalism in British Egypt and India”, in John W. Steinberg (et al.), *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero*, p. 623

being practised in numerous non-affiliated countries. The World Kendo Championships (WKC) are contested every three years, and the overall level of the non-Japanese competitors continues to improve.

As the ideological renaissance of *kendō* (see previous chapter) took place in Japan during the 1970s, the popularity of *kendō* around the world steadily increased. Successful international propagation was initially welcomed as signalling a kind of redemption for Japan's wartime past. However, it was to ultimately drive the owners of this cultural capital to deepen their resolve to act as evangelistic, highly protective 'keepers of the Way', and the on-going process of dissemination reveals strong tendencies of cultural imperialism. The 'Way' of *kendō* refers to the religio-mystical dimension of the art, the teaching of which, according to many Japanese *kendō* authorities "can only be achieved by Japanese, and is what many *kendō* aficionados around the world desire."³

This chapter will outline the main trends in the migration of *kendō* culture starting from the end of the Meiji period. It will analyse the motivations and tribulations experienced by the Japanese in facilitating its spread outside of Japan. It falls beyond the scope of this thesis to offer an extensive historical exploration of how *kendō* burgeoned in each country and region around the world, so discussion will be limited broadly to the three geographical areas of Europe, the Americas, and Korea.

The impetuses for *kendō*'s establishment in these regions differ greatly, and an examination will provide a useful basis for highlighting the undercurrent of nationalistic tendencies associated with *kendō*. These tendencies are manifest in the evangelistic motivations of individual Japanese *kendō* enthusiasts at the grassroots level, and are exemplified by the efforts of organisations such as the AJKF and the Japanese government to promote and simultaneously protect the culture of *kendō*. What are the Japanese objectives for conveying *kendō* to the world? How do major international events such as the World Kendo Championships affect the perception and direction of *kendō*'s international spread? What ideological constructs are applied to assert and justify the cultural proprietorship of *kendō*? And finally, is the impetus behind 'internationalisation' conversely an indication of nationalisation? These are the questions that will be addressed in this chapter.

³ Abe Tetsushi (et al.), *Nippon Kendō Sekai e* (Japanese *kendō*, to the world), p. 91

2. Kendō Migration to the East and West

Most of *kendō*'s international dissemination took place in the post-war period. Nevertheless, in some regions of the world, it had a solid following from around the time it became mainstream in Japan from the 1920s onwards. This section will outline three noteworthy trends in *kendō*'s pre-war international migration. First, *kendō* was introduced to Europe on a very small scale by a handful European Japonophiles who developed an interest in the mystique of Japan, and its spiritual and sporting culture while they resided there. Second, *kendō*'s passage to North and South America was facilitated by Japanese immigrants as a “cultural artefact that connected students, expatriate businessmen, immigrants, and their families to traditional Japanese culture and values.”⁴ The third main migration was to Korea and Taiwan. This section will focus on the results of forced participation in Korea which eventuated in cultural revisionism by Koreans who created their own version of *kendō* as traditional Korean culture.

2a. The Spread of Kendō in Pre-war Europe

European experiences with Japanese swordsmanship began in the later Meiji era. For example, Thomas McClatchie (1852–1886) entered the world of Japanese swordsmanship under the tutelage of Sakakibara Kenkichi (1830–1894).

One day, the young brash McClatchie stomped into Sakakibara's training hall, then located where the Ueno City Office is presently found, walked onto the training area without removing his footwear and challenged one and all to a duel. The Japanese were not very impressed with this invasion of their privacy and abuse of their sacred customs and promptly accepted this challenge. McClatchie was soundly defeated and not being totally ignorant of his infringement on Japanese customs and tradition begged forgiveness and for the opportunity to join the school.⁵

Another Englishman by the name of Francis James Norman (1855–1926) was probably the most accomplished in *kenjutsu*. His book *The Fighting Man of Japan* (1905) offers some marvellous insights into Japanese society in the late Meiji period from his extended residency there, and is also a fascinating first-hand account of the nature of *kendō* (*kenjutsu*) at the end of the nineteenth

⁴ Joseph R. Svinth, “Kendo in North America, 1885-1955” in Svinth, J. and Green, Thomas A. (eds.) *Martial Arts in the Modern World*, p. 149

⁵ “Thomas Russell Hillier McClatchie (1852–1886)” by Laszlo Abel, published online. <http://www.aikidojournal.com/article?articleID=710>. Accessed on November 4, 2011.

century. As Norman himself suggests, he was probably the first Western exponent of traditional Japanese swordsmanship to make a detailed study of the art.⁶

While acting in that country as an instructor in some of the leading colleges, both military and civilian, the author has had what are, perhaps, unrivalled opportunities for making a thorough and systematic study of the two “noble sciences” of *kenjutsu* and *jiujitsu*. The author is, so far as he is aware, the first Occidental who has gone at all deeply into these two branches of Japanese education.⁷

This observation is also reflected in the comments of another well-known Western martial artist. Englishman, Ernest John Harrison, a *jūdō* expert who spent twenty years in Japan as a journalist from 1897 (roughly overlapping with the end of Norman’s sojourn) praised Norman for his achievements in the art of *kenjutsu*.

Perhaps the only foreigner who ever took up *kenjutsu* seriously is Mr. F.J. Norman, late of the Indian Army, a cavalry officer, and expert in both rapier and sabre play. Norman was for some years engaged as a teacher at the Etajima Naval College, and while there devoted his attention to the Japanese style to such good purpose that he speedily won an enviable reputation among the Japanese, and engaged in many a hard-fought encounter. Some few other foreigners have practised, and doubtless do practice *kenjutsu* for the sake of exercise, but I am not aware that any one of them has won distinction in Japanese eyes.⁸

There were a small number of other Westerners who studied *kenjutsu* during the Meiji period, but Norman’s study of Japanese swordsmanship was considerably more in-depth than any other foreigner who showed a passing interest. He not only excelled in the technical side of *kenjutsu*, but was able to make astute observations about the spirit in which it was practised. He states in his introduction that the benefits gleaned from studying *kenjutsu* “has led him to believe that much advantage might accrue to his native country from the introduction of exercises so admirably calculated to improve the physique and also the morale of its youth and manhood.”⁹

He also compared the “favourite games of young England”, probably being cricket, rugby and

⁶ For a detailed account of F.J. Norman’s life, refer to my article “The FJ Norman Saga – The Final Chapter” in *Kendo World* Vol. 3 No. 3, pp. 6-15

⁷ F.J. Norman, *The Fighting Man of Japan: The Training and Exercises of the Samurai*, p. xxv

⁸ E.J. Harrison, *The Fighting Spirit of Japan*, p.103

⁹ F.J. Norman, *Op. Cit.*, p. xxv

football, stating they were necessarily restricted to the upper classes because of the expense of equipment, time, and facilities. “Lookers on, it is said, see most of the game; but neither morale nor physique are thereby greatly benefited, and looking on is apt to degenerate into a dull pastime unless relieved by betting.” With *kenjutsu* and *jūjutsu*, he maintained “all can participate, without risk or danger to life, purse, or limb, but with great benefit both to body and spirit.”¹⁰

Being such a proponent of *kenjutsu*, one would assume that after his return to England in 1905, his enthusiasm for the art may have resulted in the establishment of a group of eager non-Japanese practitioners to match the growing popularity of *jūjutsu* in Britain. This, however, was not to be. The following excerpt from *The Times* in October 1905 clearly demonstrates that the dissemination of *kendō* in Europe was premature.

Ken-jitsu, sword play with the Japanese two-handed sword, was illustrated by Mr. Norman and Mr. Miyake to the great amusement of the spectators – for etiquette seems to ordain that the Japanese swordsman should bark like a dog over the attack, and crow like a cock when he gets a blow home. Mr. Norman also tried a bout with Sergeant-Major Betts, who used a single-stick against his sword, with the result that the sergeant-major was metaphorically bisected once or twice and that Mr. Norman got some shrewd blows. But the impression produced was that Ken-jitsu is not really or nearly so important an exercise as Ju-jitsu.¹¹

Nevertheless, it seems that a little over a decade later *kendō* was introduced at the newly formed martial arts club, the London Budokwai. At the inaugural committee meeting of the Budokwai held on November 19, 1919, the rules of the organisation were established, and it was declared that “The object of this Society is to study Budo (ways of Knighthood) inclusive of Judo, Kendo (fencing) and kindred arts.” Practice sessions were held daily, but there is no indication of the number of *kendō* practitioners, other than that Mr. Nabubuta was the instructor, and other practising members included “Mr. Brinkley, “Mr. Ashida”, and “Mr. Matsuyama”.¹² *Jūjutsu* was considerably more popular.

Jūjutsu, and later Kōdōkan Jūdō, made significant inroads in Britain, France, and Germany during the Taishō (1912–1926) and early Shōwa (1926–1989) periods due to practical applications,

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ *The Times*, October 19, 1905

¹² Quoted from the “London Budokwai Minutes” in the Richard Bowen Collection stored in the University of Bath archives.

aided by the fervent evangelistic efforts of Kanō Jigorō (1868–1938). *Kendō*, however, seems have been limited to a tiny group of aficionados, and was performed at *jūjutsu* displays mainly because of its novelty value.

It appears that the Budokwai was probably the first society offering *kendō* instruction in Europe. Despite its unconventional look, the benefits of its study were still advertised to the public. For example, the following synopsis of a newspaper report is from the Budokwai's minutes, and concerns a speech given by career diplomat Hayashi Tadasu (1850–1913) at the annual Budokwai martial arts demonstration held at the Stadium Club in London on January 7, 1926:

There was a lot of talk, continued Baron Hayashi, about the alleged “flabbiness” of modern young men. He did not know how much truth there was in what was being said on this subject, but so far as the Budokwai was concerned, it was certainly not true. Their Society was doing good work among young Japanese and young Englishmen by training their minds and bodies to be strong and active. In these difficult times every nation needed a virile youthful generation, and the Budokwai, by teaching its members how to acquire and apply the strength developed in the practice of Judo and Kendo, was assisting Great Britain and Japan in developing sturdy manhood among the rising generation. Their work was being carried out only on a small scale, but he was sure it was good work, and was greatly appreciated by all who knew of it.¹³

Kendō never really took root in Europe until after the Second World War. France and Britain were among the first European countries in which *kendō* developed a modest following as early as the 1950s, but most other countries created national federations in the 1980s and 1990s, with the first European Kendo Championships being held in 1974. Now, *kendō* is practised at a relatively high level in countries such as France, Germany, Hungary, and Italy, and national federations have been formed in most of the nations throughout Europe. However, the history of *kendō* in the Americas is more substantial primarily due to two factors: widespread participation by Japanese immigrants (Nikkei)¹⁴ throughout North and South America; and, the establishment of Dai-Nippon Butokukai branches in the region in the 1930s.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ “Nikkei” is the generic term for people with Japanese heritage who reside overseas. The terms “Issei”, “Nisei” and “Sansei” refer to first, second, and third generations of Nikkei respectively.

2b. Pre-war Kendō in the Americas

The first *kendō dōjō* to be formed in the United States was in Honolulu in 1890.¹⁵ The oldest recorded *kendō* demonstration in the United States took place on March 1905, in commemoration of the opening of the football stadium at Washington University in Seattle.¹⁶

According to the Baerwald documents regarding the dissolution of the Dai-Nippon Butokukai in post-war Japan, the only activity outside Japan in which the Butokukai was officially engaged was “the Mission to Manchuria in 1941” in celebration of the tenth anniversary of the establishment of Manchukuo. The document also mentions that individual members were sometimes invited to travel abroad by Japanese immigrants. For example, “twice some members went to the West Coast of the United States at the invitation of Nisei [second generation Japanese immigrants] and one went to South America in 1939 on a similar invitation.”¹⁷

The documents state that branch societies were formed in Japanese occupied territories, “but these were never recognized by their home society since they disagreed on the strict standards maintained by the Japanese organization.”¹⁸ This is not necessarily an accurate account as the Butokukai branches formed in Taiwan, Korean, Manchuria, and the United States were recorded in the organisation’s official membership. In all cases, the membership was almost entirely made up of Japanese nationals, first generation immigrants (Issei), or Nisei. For Nikkei, belonging to societies such as the Butokukai or community *dōjō* enabled them to maintain links with their Japanese heritage. This was a significant factor behind the early organisation of *kendō* in the Americas as opposed to Europe, where the few Japanese communities that did exist were much smaller and fragmented.

Even so, there were various issues that hindered *kendō*’s spread among the early Japanese immigrants including a lack of time and money for recreational activities, a shortage of qualified teachers, and prejudice. According to Joseph Svinth, “Visions of Japanese agricultural workers attacking their overseers with sticks set off waves of Yellow Peril paranoia, and consequently early community leaders often downplayed Japanese martial traditions.”¹⁹ This was to change in the

¹⁵ Joseph R. Svinth, Op. Cit., pp. 149-150

¹⁶ Momii Ikken, *Cyclopedia of the Japanese Kendō Societies in North America pre-1939*, (A 2001 reprint of the *Hokubei Kendō Taikan*), p. 7

¹⁷ HBP No. 2-10 “Information on the Dai Nippon Butoku Kai, 26 Nov. 1946”, National Archives of Japan

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Joseph R. Svinth, Op. Cit., p. 149

1920s when Nikkei community leaders overcame their early inhibitions and brought high level professional instructors from Japan to the United States.

The Butokukai subsequently gained many members, especially on the West Coast where many Japanese immigrants settled. A Nikkei American by the name of Bill Fukuda recalls his experiences doing *kendō* before the Second World War in Seattle:

I took kendo lessons [at the Seattle Butokukai]. The dojo [exercise hall] was at the Seattle Baptist Church up on First Hill. So I used to walk all the distance once a week. I remember going to *kangeiko* [midwinter training] in winter at five o'clock in the morning. We used to go to *keiko* [practice] for two weeks, every morning. It was cold! The instructors were all ex-soldiers of Japan. In a way they treated us like they were in a military camp... They taught us a lot of manners, *reigi-tadashii* [be polite]. Certainly they taught you that there was a pecking order. You know exactly where you are in the pecking order.²⁰

With the start of the Pacific War, leaders of martial arts clubs were to become the target of FBI investigations as suspects of subversive activities. As Gary Okihiro reports, by 1941 the FBI created a list containing over 2,000 Japanese living in the United States, which included people from all walks of life including martial arts instructors, and designated them into “A, B, and C categories” based on their level of perceived danger.²¹ North American Butokukai membership logs (*Hokubei Kendō Taikan*, 1939) threatened to be a useful source of information for the FBI, and copies were hastily burned by members to avoid identification after Pearl Harbour.

Svinth makes an interesting observation regarding the difference in the Japanese-American and Japanese-Canadian perception of *kendō* during the war, after they had been incarcerated in internment camps. Until the Second World War, the growth and attitude towards *kendō* in both countries was similar. However, a clear distinction arose with the induction of interned volunteers into the armed forces. Japanese-Americans were allowed to volunteer to fight for the United States military from early in 1943. Although there was displeasure shown by some interned Japanese-Americans, volunteers were encouraged for the most part, and towards the end of the war anything closely connected to Japanese militarism, such as *kendō*, was shunned as unpatriotic. The Japanese-Canadians on the other hand were not permitted to enlist until 1945, and consequently “they came to view kendo as a form of passive (and almost patriotic) resistance to racial prejudice

²⁰ Quoted in Yasuko I. Takezawa, *Breaking the Silence: Redress and Japanese American Ethnicity*, p. 68

²¹ Gary Y. Okihiro, *Whispered Silences: Japanese Americans and World War II*, p. 160

and wartime hysteria.”²²

Just as was the case with the United States and Canada in North America, South American countries such as Brazil, which received a large number of Japanese immigrants from around the end of the Meiji and Taishō eras, also saw the early establishment of *kendō* groups. In the case of Brazil for example, *kendō* exponents were also on-board the Kasato-Marū when it transported the first round of Japanese immigrants to the city of Santos, on June 18, 1908. From modest beginnings with a few dedicated fencers, *kendō* soon started to take root in the Japanese community there. In 1921, a local newspaper known as the *Gazeta do Povo*, reported on a *kendō* performance that seemed to cause quite a stir.

‘Gékkeu’ [sic] -- (fencing) was joined by many Japanese. The competitors wore iron masks on their faces and rubber plates on their chests, held sticks in their hands and started beating and hitting each other with no mercy... This performance was appreciated by the audience, who wanted to take part in it, and a massive brawl erupted ‘just for fun’... Many people left with broken hats and others with lumps on their heads, including our photographer, Juvencio Mayer, who left the camera aside to join the drubbing, as if he was Japanese.²³

In spite of the rambunctious nature of *kendō* that seemed to appeal to the locals, it was publicised as a way of promoting morality, and as therefore something more serious than a sport in which the objective was solely obtaining victory in matches, as it was in Japan at the time. Luiz Kobayashi located a 1935 interview demonstrating how one of the earliest societies dedicated to the promotion of Japanese martial arts in Brazil, the Hakkoku Jūkendō Renmei, was an enthusiastic promoter of the Japanese way.

The main goal of Hakkoku Jūkendō Renmei has been from the outset to be a responsible association to promote moral development... We must avoid at all costs focusing our attention on techniques, thereby forgetting the most important thing, which is the spirit... To believe that *budō* is limited to techniques is a blasphemy to the spirit of *budō*... If someone is a member of our association, then he or she is expected to have an unassailable integrity of character... Wins and losses are entirely secondary. *Budō* is alive only when we live with such spirit in our society, in our jobs

²² Joseph R. Svinth, Op. Cit., p. 165

²³ Quoted in Luiz Kobayashi, “A Brief Overview of Pre-WWII Kendo in Brazil”, *Kendo World* Vol. 5 No. 2 (2010), p. 27

and at our homes. Martial arts devoid of this virtuous spirit are nothing but acrobatics and legerdemain. Alas, martial arts reduced to such a state are totally worthless.²⁴

But for many, the “spirit of *budō*” and the cultivation of a virtuous character were not the only attractions; the link that could be maintained with Japan was also of paramount importance. This was, and still is, true of the thousands of Nikkei people who study *kendō* in Japanese diaspora located in Canada, the United States, Hawaii, Brazil, and other countries. From the earliest days of Japanese migration, Issei interest in Japanese martial arts as a means for Nisei education in Japaneseness was high. As Azuma Eichirō asserts, “Not only would these traditional ‘sports,’ such as judo and kendo, keep youths away from undesirable activities, they would steer the boys and girls toward ‘exploring the spiritual aspect of Japanese life’ in a most practical way.”²⁵

Of course, there were some notable non-Japanese practitioners who started *kendō* in these communities such as well-known pioneers Gordon Warner (1912–2010) and Benjamin Hazard (1920–2011). They were an extreme minority who maintained an interest in the Japanese martial arts and culture in general, but were not linked by ‘blood’, something Nikkei practitioners took such pride in. As such, the connection with Japan through the study of *kendō* can be seen as a form of trans-national nationalism, or an expression of the gratification in one’s Japanese roots and heritage among immigrants. The extent of this connection and consciousness of Japaneseness in recent generations of Nikkei is a fascinating subject in need of further investigation, but it falls outside the purview of this thesis. Suffice it to say, the vast majority of highly ranked practitioners in the Americas are Nikkei.

2c. Kumdo and Korean Revisionism

In contrast to the Nikkei experience, although the Koreans undertook *kendō* with a similar passion, their motivations for practising the art were very different. For the vast Korean *kendō* population, trying to break the cultural connection with Japan has been an on-going challenge.

Koreans still remember with disdain the Japanese occupation of their country from 1910 until the end of the Second World War. Assimilation policies introduced by the Japanese colonial government were designed to force Koreans to discard their own culture and language in place of

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Azuma Eiichirō, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America*, p. 251

Japanese. As has been detailed in previous chapters, *kendō* and other *budō* arts were eventually made compulsory subjects in schools in Japan and utilised by the government to encourage fighting spirit, instil nationalistic fervour, and nurture pride in Japan's noble warrior past in the 1930s. The Japanese colonies of Taiwan and Korea were also urged to participate in these activities.²⁶ Even when the war ended and the Republic of Korea was established, groups of Koreans maintained a commitment to *kendō* that persists to this day, evident in the high level of proficiency – and large number – of Korean *kendō* enthusiasts.²⁷

Taiwan also maintains a healthy number of *kendō* practitioners, and is considered to be one of the powerhouses in world *kendō*, although not as strong as Korea. The main difference between the two countries lies in their general attitudes to Japan's colonial intrusion. Compared to Korea, Taiwan maintains a favourable attitude to Japan and Japanese culture in general. In Korea, in many ways the old wounds of the Japanese occupation have still not healed, and taking an overtly revisionist stance, numerous Koreans refuse to acknowledge that *kendō*'s origins lie in Japan. This is why Korea is the focus of this section rather than Taiwan. Guttmann points out that “one must expect that the diffusion of sports, like that of any other aspect of culture, will be accompanied by nationalistic resistance to what some will feel to be cultural imperialism.”²⁸ Korea's answer to Japanese cultural imperialism is the claim that “*kumdo*” originated in Korea.²⁹

As explained in Chapter 3, the Chinese (and Korean) influence on the philosophical and intellectual development of Japanese swordsmanship is undeniable. The Chinese and the Koreans also had their own ‘styles’ of swordsmanship within martial systems, but they had no effect on the way medieval Japanese swordsmanship developed. During the Chungjo era (1776–1800), the military text *Sok Pyungjang Tosul* (武芸図譜通志) (Revised illustrated manual of military training and tactics) included sword techniques among the twenty-four martial arts recorded. In addition to Korean forms of swordsmanship, Japanese *kenjutsu* is introduced in illustrations depicting two adepts of the Yagyū Shinkage-ryū. This demonstrates that Japanese swordsmanship was acknowledged as being distinctive by the Koreans at the time.

²⁶ Thomas A. Green (ed.), *Martial Arts of the World*, pp. 295, 597

²⁷ The KKA boasts 400,000 members compared to Japan with 1,288,000 members.

²⁸ Allen Guttmann, “The Diffusion of Sports and the Problem of Cultural Imperialism”, E. Dunning, J. Maguire, R. Pearton (eds.), *The Sports Process: A Comparative and Developmental Approach*, 1993, pp. 125-137. Contained in Dunning et al. (ed.), *Sport: Critical Concepts in Sociology* Vol. 1, p. 344

²⁹ Although the pronunciation is different, both use the same characters “劍道”.

Now, however, such texts are often referred to in order to qualify claims that Korea had its own swordsmanship styles, and it is from these that *kumdo* originated, not Japanese *kendō*. Korea undoubtedly had its own forms of swordsmanship, and in recent years, some of the traditional *kata* explained in historical Korean martial arts texts have been revived and incorporated into the corpus of study to accentuate this link.

It is interesting to note that for the most part, the development of modern *kendō* in Korea followed a similar path to that of Japan. Training in swordsmanship was introduced into the national military academy and in the police force from around 1891.³⁰ Li divides the proliferation of *kendō* in Korea into the three periods of “educational integration” (1910–1919) in which *kendō* was introduced into schools; “cultural integration” (1919–1937) in which *kendō* became an established form of exercise like other sports; and “militarisation” extending from 1937–1945, as was the case with “*sengika-budō*” in Japan (see previous chapter).³¹

Korea’s close association with the modern form of *kendō* in light of Japan’s influence cannot be denied. Despite this, claims by Koreans that *kumdo* arose out of Korean culture rather than Japanese is a constant cause of friction with the Japanese. Korean scholar Na Young-il reports that in 1977, an official called Li Ho-am made a proposal to the president of the Korean Kumdo Association regarding the use of Japanese *hakama* (split skirt). “While advocating arguments for the use of *paji* (Korean trousers) rather than the Japanese pleated culottes (*hakama*) during *gumdo* (*kumdo*) training, he stated ‘in order to respect the creation of “beauty”, the ultimate objective of physical education, not the traditional and narrow-minded [view of] Japanese beauty, [we should] aspire to pursue a universal beauty for all humankind’, and went on to say that present-day kendoists sought a form of ‘international kendo’ not a ‘Japanese-centric form.’”³²

As the number of Korean immigrants settling in other parts of the world continues to increase, *kumdo* clubs have sprouted up in Korean diaspora just as *kendō* did in Nikkei communities. *Kumdo* and *kendō* are essentially the same, save for a few superficial differences. Koreans use their native language in the sport, have changed the colour of the scoring flags (blue and white as opposed to

³⁰ M. Li, “Kendō ni okeru ‘ippon’ no gainen: Nikkan kendō bunka hikaku-ron” (The concept of ‘ippon’ in *kendō*: A comparison of Japanese and Korean *kendō* culture), International Budo University unpublished Master’s Thesis (2009), p32

³¹ Ibid.

³² Na Young-il, “Confusion in the Concept of Budō in South Korean Society” in Alexander Bennett (ed.), *Budo Perspectives*, p. 183

red and white), and have abandoned the squatting bow (*sonkyo*) and certain other forms of Japanese etiquette considered important aspects by Japanese fencers. There was also a successful movement to use “Korean-style” *hakama* that have no *koshi-ita* (board that sits in the lower-back) and are secured with Velcro straps. This was argued as being more practical, but its implementation is viewed more as a protest against the Japanese dictation of norms than of anything else.³³

Nevertheless, a casual observer would be hard pressed to find many differences between *kendō* and *kumdo*. The targets are exactly the same: *men* (K. *mori* = head), *dō* (K. *gap* = torso), *kote* (K. *ho-wan* = wrists), *tsuki* (K. *mok* = throat); the same protective equipment, *bōgu* (K. *hogoo*), is utilised, and the stomping lunge (*fumikomi-ashi*) is employed when striking with the same criteria for scoring valid points.

In both countries, regional and national tournaments are hotly contested at all levels, and the metaphysical aspects including meditation before and after training, ritualised bowing and prescribed forms of etiquette are adhered to. Character development is also highlighted as an important goal for training. In fact, in many countries around the world *kumdo* and *kendō* coexist side-by-side, and apart from a few differences in terminology and technical style, most people accept that they are for all intents and purposes doing the same thing, and train and compete in the same environment.

As Guttman observes with regards to modern sports and their international diffusion, they may become so “thoroughly naturalized that the borrowers feel that it is *their* game, an expression of their unique national character, but the transmission of a sport is certainly a complicated matter in which intrinsic ludic³⁴ properties are jumbled together with extrinsic cultural associations in ways not easy to untangle.”³⁵ This is very much the case with *kumdo/kendō* in Korea. The matter is complicated by the past humiliation of Japanese colonisation, and also by the belief that the ideals of swordsmanship in Korea predate Japan’s at an historical and philosophical level.

Although there are elements of truth to these claims, the modern form of *kendō* was created and evolved in Japan. However, this has become a highly emotional point of contention for enthusiasts

³³ Katō Jun’ichi, “Current Circumstances in the Korean Kumdo Association”, *Kendo World* Vol. 5 No. 3, (2010), pp. 79-82

³⁴ In the philosophical sense of “play as an act of self-definition”.

³⁵ Allen Guttman, *Op. Cit.*, p. 344

in both countries as they claim rightful ownership of the culture.³⁶ The fact that Korea is extremely competitive at the World Kendo Championships, and nearly always comes close to defeating Japan in the finals, makes the situation of cultural ownership even more tense for both sides with much at stake in terms of national pride.

Koreans have been vociferous in their criticism of the “hypocrisy” of the internationalisation of Japan-centred *kendō*. For example, a Korean scholar and *kendō* instructor, S. Shin, published a scathing critique of the 12th WKC held in Glasgow (2003). Among his criticisms, he points out the “impartiality of the referees” with 41.5 per cent being Japanese. This increases to 58.5 per cent if Nikkei (from the United States, Canada, Brazil etc.) are included in the figures. He also laments that although the Japanese promote *kendō* as an activity with “universal benefits”, the fact that they continue to stress the importance of *kendō*’s cultural aspects is contradictory to this claim, and actually impedes the international growth of *kendō* as a “universal sport”.³⁷ The Koreans are more inclined to promote *kumdo* simply as a competitive sport which aids in character development. “Korean-ness” is rarely accentuated, unless it is specifically in regards to Japan.

3. The Complexities of *Kendō*’s International Consolidation

The facilitation of international *kendō* has both positive and negative aspects to the Japanese. On one hand, in order to place Japan in a better light and appeal its propensity as a soft power, it is considered desirable to promote traditional Japanese culture overseas. This, the rhetoric maintains, is the basis of providing the world with a ‘unique’ culture (*koyū bunka*) laced with universal concepts to enhance personal cultivation, mutual understanding and respect, and ultimately contribute to world peace. On the other hand, and somewhat paradoxically, the more *kendō* is successfully promoted outside Japan, the more perceived vulnerability there is in Japan that it may lose its position of leadership (in the case of Korea), or that the techniques and spirit of *kendō* will be tainted by foreign cultural influences. This section will define the complexities of the international consolidation of *kendō* by looking at the process in which the international body was formed, the evangelistic tendencies of Japanese kendoists overseas, and the nationalistic tension

³⁶ Although it is slightly dated now, refer to my article “Kendo or Kumdo: The Internationalization of Kendo and the Olympic Problem”, Alexander Bennett (ed.), *Budo Perspectives*, pp. 329-353

³⁷ S. Shin, “Kendō no sekai-ka, fuhēn-ka imada tōshi” (*Kendō* is still not a world or universal sport), *Gekkan Budō* (November, 2003), pp. 156-157

induced by the World Kendo Championships. The final issue to be addressed pertains to the contradictions inherent in what is touted as “correct *kendō*”, and how the inconsistencies are manifest in the international *kendō* community.

3a. Formation of an International Body

Following the showcasing of *kendō* as a demonstration sport at the Olympic Games in Tokyo in 1964, the first International Kendo Shakaijin Friendship Tournament was held in Taipei in November, 1965. This was the first important event in the consolidation of international *kendō* in the post-war period, even though the world’s *kendō* population was still very small, and the countries with any significant number of practitioners were mainly limited to Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and those with sizeable Nikkei communities.

In October 1967, the International Kendo Friendship Tournament sponsored by the AJKF was held at the Nippon Budokan in Tokyo. Representatives from the thirteen countries and territories of the United States, Canada, Brazil, United Kingdom, West Germany, Switzerland, Australia, South Korea, Taiwan, South Vietnam and Japan were in attendance. In addition, even though they were technically territories of the United States, Hawaii and Okinawa also entered their own teams into the tournament which was witnessed by the emperor and empress. It was at this gathering that participants formerly discussed creating the International Kendo Federation.

The international body was eventually inaugurated in April 1970, and the 1st World Kendo Championships were held in the two cities of Tokyo (team event) and Osaka (individual event) to commemorate the federation’s founding. The first full affiliates were Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, France, West Germany, United Kingdom, Korea, Morocco, Netherlands, Republic of China, Sweden, Switzerland, United States, and Japan. (Hawaii and Okinawa were also inducted at a special meeting.)

Kimura Tokutarō was appointed as the first president of the IKF (now referred to as FIK). At the time, he was also the AJKF’s president, and since then the incumbent AJKF president has continued to serve concurrently as the president of the international body.

As of 2012, there are fifty affiliates in the FIK, and a general assembly is convened every three years, just before commencement of the World Kendo Championships. The Board of Directors consists of nineteen directors, including the president, four vice presidents, and two supervisors.

The balance of officials has been maintained in favour of Japanese voting power since its inception, but this condition could change as the number of European affiliates increases.

The growth of *kendō* internationally has been steady since the international body's launch, but it is difficult to estimate the total number of practitioners with any precision. Currently, it is projected that there are 400,000 practitioners in Korea, making it the largest *kendō* group outside Japan (1.5 million). France is said to have 8,000 members, and there are around 5,000 registered enthusiasts in the United States. There may be up to 600,000 practitioners outside Japan if non-affiliated countries are included in the count, but *kendō* will never be as popular as *karate*, with its practical applications, and *jūdō* which is an Olympic sport. The cost of equipment, the shortage of highly ranked international instructors, and the overall difficulty of learning and understanding the complicated aesthetic concepts of *kendō* will keep it in the minority sport category outside of Japan for years to come.

3b. The Mission – Conveying Japanese Kendō to the World

Although at one level it is generally considered desirable in Japan that *kendō* amasses a far-reaching international following, the AJKF (which fundamentally administers the FIK) is becoming increasingly cautious about how the art is disseminated, and by whom. The federation is in effect trying to protect the cultural integrity of *kendō* overseas, i.e. they are endeavouring to keep *kendō* as purely Japanese as possible in the face of the perceived corrosiveness of globalisation to traditional culture. Roy Starrs contends that “globalization threatens a loss of national cultural identity” in the view of Japanese – both political right-wing nationalists and the “gentle cultural nationalists”, who “simply value national traditions.”³⁸ This has become an urgent issue for Japanese kendoists in recent times, especially considering the growing rivalry with Korea.

For this purpose, the AJKF has been active for several decades in providing foreign *kendō* enthusiasts with opportunities to learn “Japanese *kendō*”. In 1975, the first Foreign Kendō Leader's Summer Seminar was held in Katsuura City, Chiba Prefecture for ten days of intensive training under some of Japan's most celebrated instructors. The following year, the second seminar was held at the Gedatsukai headquarters in Kitamoto city, Saitama Prefecture, where it has continued to be held annually ever since.

³⁸ Roy Starrs (ed.), *Japanese Cultural Nationalism: At Home and in the Pacific*, p. 2

The AJKF also began sending instructor delegations overseas from 1973, with sponsorship from the Japan Foundation. The AJKF now allocates an annual budget of 50-million yen to sponsor international seminars in which groups of high-level Japanese instructors travel to foreign destinations to pass on their *kendō* knowledge. This budget has also been used in recent times to publish teaching materials in English such as *Nippon Kendo Kata Instruction Manual* (2005), *Training Method for Fundamental Kendo Techniques with a Bokuto* (2008), *The Official Guide for Kendo Instruction* (2011), and the *Japanese-English Dictionary of Kendo* (2011).³⁹ The AJKF has also generously donated thousands of second-hand sets of *bōgu* to countries trying to establish *kendō* there.

It is important to point out that the AJKF is not the only organisation that has been actively involved in the promotion of *kendō* internationally. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is a special public corporation established to promote international cooperation through the provision of overseas development assistance.⁴⁰ Since its launch in 1974, it has sent over sixty specialist *kendō* volunteers to developing countries to help in technical instruction. The typical term of tenure in this program is two years. Also, the police, in particular the Keishichō (Tokyo Metropolitan Police), have dispatched young instructors overseas for up to six months at a time through private arrangements made with foreign federations.

Perhaps the most significant contributors to the international propagation of *kendō*, however, are the literally tens of thousands of individual Japanese who have travelled overseas with their *kendō* armour in tow as immigrants, businessmen, students, and tourists. Depending on the location, even low-ranking Japanese visitors are looked up to as ‘couriers of the genuine article’, and are usually treated as special guests for the time they are there.

From my observations over two decades, such individual Japanese kendoists visiting foreign *dōjō* often see themselves (and are seen) as representatives of Japanese *kendō* and its culture and spirit, and usually relish the responsibility and opportunity to instruct. A *kendō* practitioner from Australia commented on a common occurrence in which Japanese kendoists are “put on a pedestal in the dojo simply by virtue of being Japanese. Because they came from Japan, it often seemed to be assumed, their kendo was automatically more authentic and technically developed – sometimes in

³⁹ The last three in this list were translated by me.

⁴⁰ JICA's activities are managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries; and the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI).

instances when it actually wasn't."⁴¹ Even low-ranking Japanese visitors to foreign *dōjō* seem to believe that they possess valuable knowledge, and feel a sense of intense pride in being able to convey this to the hankering locals. They could be described as taking on the role of a cultural evangelist of sorts, and very much fit with the AJKF's design to keep *kendō* overseas as Japanese as possible.

The stated purpose of the FIK (and hence the international activities of the AJKF) is to "popularise *kendō* internationally and increase the number of countries and regions in which *kendō* is practised."⁴² According to the current FIK and AJKF president, Takeyasu Yoshimitsu, these activities are also conducted to afford Japanese enthusiasts the opportunity to interact with people from other countries through the promotion of *kendō* as Japanese culture as a form of "grassroots diplomacy".⁴³ The promotion of Japanese culture, Takeyasu maintains, "will serve to promote Japan's prosperity in the international arena."⁴⁴

This admission falls neatly in line with Wolf Mendl's assessment of Japan's governmental policies and efforts to introduce Japanese culture to the world. "Their purpose is clearly to promote greater knowledge and sympathetic understanding of Japan and to win friends for the country and thus to extend Japanese influence in the world at large."⁴⁵ This is often validated in *budō* circles by referring to the ideal of "world peace". In other words, the subtle implication seems to be that the spirit of *budō* (*kendō*) is Japan's gift to the world, and if all people were to share the same kind of respect and mutual understanding that is invoked through ascetic training in the martial arts, then paradoxically, there would be no more conflict, and everybody in the world would be able to coexist in harmony.

This interpretation may seem overly cynical. However, through experiences as the official interpreter / translator for the Nippon Budokan, the International Naginata Federation, and the All Japan Kendo Federation, I can attest to the fact that this sentiment is persistent and fundamental to the international propagation of *budō*. For example, the following passage is the official "Philosophy of Budō" created by the Japanese Budō Association in 2010 concludes with that very idea.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Lockie Jackson, "Unlocking Japan", *Kendo World* Vol. 6.1 (2011), p. 43

⁴² AJKF (ed.), *Zen-Nihon Kendō Renmei Gojū-nen Shi*, p. 53

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Wolf Mendl, *Japan's Asia Policy: Regional Security and Global Interests*, p. 133

⁴⁶ On April 23, 1977, the nine martial arts federations for *jūdō*, *kendō*, *kyūdō*, *sumō*, *karatedō*, *aikidō*, *shōrinji*

Budō, the martial ways of Japan, have their origins in the traditions of *bushidō*—the way of the warrior. *Budō* is a time-honoured form of physical culture comprising of *jūdō*, *kendō*, *kyūdō*, *sumō*, *karatedō*, *aikidō*, *shōrinji kempō*, *naginata* and *jūkendō*. The practitioner studies the skills while striving to unify mind, technique and body; develop his or her character; enhance their sense of morality; and to cultivate a respectful and courteous demeanour. Practised steadfastly, these admirable traits become intrinsic to the character of the practitioner. The *budō* arts serve as a path to self-perfection. This elevation of the human spirit will contribute to social prosperity and harmony, and ultimately, benefit the people of the world.⁴⁷

To use McVeigh's words, this brand of rhetoric corresponds to a kind of "peace nationalism" which acts as a "counterweight to the strong orthodox (and even ultra-orthodox, Japan-centric) inclinations of certain circles".⁴⁸ The contribution that *kendō* can make in the world by promoting peace and respect is affirmation of a unique kind of Japanese soft-power, and is an aspect of *budō* culture that is frequently accentuated in governmental and popular cultural propaganda.

Related to this logic, although *kendō* is perceived by Japanese as a gift from Japan to the world, its form and spirit (*seishin*) should not be compromised in any way by foreign influence. The AJKF is averse to using the word "*kokusaika*" (internationalisation) to describe their efforts in spreading *kendō*. Again, in Takeyasu's words, "The term 'internationalisation' applied in economics and society implies adapting to conditions overseas by changing domestic circumstances. However, from the purview of *kendō*, we do not consider changing the way *kendō* is conducted to facilitate international propagation... Our responsibility is to further extend *kendō*'s role as a form of traditional Japanese culture, and to unpretentiously promote the true form of *kendō* internationally."⁴⁹

The idea of internationalisation also implies that the culture of *kendō* may be adapted to suit the social and cultural milieu in the countries it takes root. This is unacceptable to the Japanese, but

kempō, *naginata*, and *jūkendō* met with the Nippon Budokan to inaugurate the Japanese Budō Association (Nippon Budō Kyōgikai) – a union of recognised *budō* governing bodies "to facilitate contact between the affiliated organisations, to promote the spirit of each art, and ultimately to benefit the physical and mental wellbeing of the nation's people. The education of youth is considered particularly essential for building a healthy country, through which contributions to the stability and prosperity of the world can be made." Refer to Alexander Bennett (trans./ ed.), *Budō: The Martial Ways of Japan*, pp. 264–269

⁴⁷ The "Philosophy of Budō" was established on 10 October, 2008, by the Japanese Budō Association (Nippon Budō Kyōgikai). The official English translation was completed by Alexander Bennett and approved on May 1, 2009.

⁴⁸ Brian J. McVeigh, *Nationalisms of Japan: Managing and Mystifying Identity*, p. 210

⁴⁹ AJKF (ed.), Op. Cit., p. 54

“international diffusion” (*kokusai fukyū*) is tolerable, so long as it is “correct Japanese *kendō*”.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the former AJKF Managing Director, Takeuchi Jun, stated that *kendō* must be spread “not simply as a competitive sport. The ‘heart’ of *kendō* as a form of Japanese culture – *kendō* as a way for personal development (*ningen keisei*) – is what we aim to diffuse to the rest of the world.”⁵¹

As Dunning (et al.) maintain, “Western people generally appear to regard the culture of small Asian countries and perhaps particularly Japan, located in the Far East, as ‘specialized’ and to view it as a mysterious, almost incomprehensible phenomenon.”⁵² The ideals of *kendō* in the “Concept” and “Mindset” (see previous chapter), and much of the official and unofficial literature, imparts a distinct air of spiritualistic mystique. This is certainly one of the attractions of *kendō* from the perspective of non-Japanese practitioners in lieu of the lack of its practical applications. In the international sense, fascination shown by non-Japanese with the spiritual side of *kendō* is also how Japan is able to maintain its jurisdiction over it as its inimitable cultural capital.

Commenting on the appeal of the martial arts in the West, Guttmann states that philosophers such as the German Eugen Herrigel (1884–1955) who was “fascinated by Zen in the art of archery, are few compared to the modern missionaries of physical education who venture forth from Europe and North America to convert the world to the gospel of modern sports.”⁵³ This is certainly not the case with *kendō*; it is the cultural aspects that provide considerable appeal to hoards of non-Japanese practitioners.

Takeuchi cautions that with the “problem” of *kendō*’s international dissemination it is dangerous to judge success only on the basis of increased number of FIK affiliated countries, or by the improved technical proficiency seen in recent years. According to Takeuchi, the sporting and technical aspect of *kendō* is important, but should not be overrated.⁵⁴ In other words, no matter how “technically” proficient non-Japanese practitioners are becoming, this is not complete (correct) *kendō* without an understanding of the highly nebulous spiritual and philosophical traits, which by inference, only Japanese can fully understand.

⁵⁰ Nippon Budokan (ed.), *Report of the 22nd International Seminar of Budo Culture* (2010), comments made by Ajiro Tadahiro regarding the international spread of *kendō*.

⁵¹ AJKF (ed.), Op. Cit., p. 108

⁵² Eric Dunning, Dominic Malcolm, and Ivan Waddington, eds., *Sport Histories: Figurational Studies in the Development of Modern Sport*, p. 154

⁵³ Allen Guttmann, Op. Cit., p. 353

⁵⁴ AJKF (ed.), Op. Cit., p. 108

Even though the often quoted link between *kendō* and *bushidō* is tenuous in many respects, Takeuchi stresses that “the spirit of the *bushi* needs to be conveyed to the world, and only through encouraging an understanding of this, can true cross-cultural interaction through *kendō* be achieved.”⁵⁵ The perceived connection between *kendō* and *bushidō* is vitally important to the maintenance of Japanese domination over the art. *Bushidō* is widely hailed as representing Japan’s highest level of morality and ideals. Even if non-Japanese become highly skilled in *kendō*, as many are becoming, only the Japanese can lay claim to the traditions of *bushidō*. Furthermore, as Befu reflects, “discourses are more likely to be successfully adopted if they possess a certain prestige or status, as is the case of norms associated with a powerful class or elite *in that society*, even though the ways of that group may be ‘of another world entirely’.”⁵⁶ The culture of the *bushi* is precisely the source of the spiritual mysticism that appeals to many Japanese and non-Japanese practitioners; the common contention is that it is owned by the Japanese, and can only be emulated by foreigners.

To demonstrate this point, Abe Tetsushi, a respected Japanese scholar who has taught *kendō* in Hungary for nearly two decades, relays that when he practised in a foreign country for the first time as a student, “I felt intensely the danger that if it was to continue spreading overseas this way, one day foreigners would change the essence of *kendō*.”⁵⁷ Although he admits his first impressions were premature, he suggests that there are fundamental differences in the way in which Westerners and Japanese approach the study of *kendō*. “Europeans place more emphasis on the body (*shintai*) in sports and *budō*, but do not pay so much attention to the spiritual (*kokoro*) side. In other words, to Europeans ‘technique’ (*gijutsu*) = ‘body movement’ (*shintai no ugoki*); whereas, to Japanese ‘technique’ = ‘body movement’ + ‘mental movement’ (*kokoro no ugoki*).”⁵⁸

Abe also suggests that due to the long spiritual history and development of these ideals, people born in the Japanese cultural sphere naturally understand the connection between mind and body as a part of their “genetic makeup”.⁵⁹ He poses the question, if the Western dualist view of mind and body identified by Descartes is applied to *kendō*, can it really be called Japanese *kendō* or Japanese culture, or is it merely copying Japanese culture in form only?⁶⁰ He suggests that it is very

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 106

⁵⁶ H. Befu, *Japan: An Anthropological Introduction*, p. 52

⁵⁷ Abe Tetsushi, Op. Cit., p. 79

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 82

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 83

difficult, if not impossible to fully appreciate *kendō* from the typical Western Cartesian approach of Dualism.

Abe's comments and ideas are far from radical ones. If anything, they typify general attitudes regarding the issue in Japan, which "needs to demonstrate to the world a model for the sporting side of *kendō*, but at the same time, it is also important to enlighten non-Japanese of the values of *kendō* as Japanese culture in an accessible way."⁶¹ Such sentiment demonstrates perfectly the evangelistic tendencies of Japanese with regards to *kendō*'s propagation overseas.

3c. The Burden of the World *Kendō* Championships

The improving technical level of world *kendō* has presented Japan with the reality that it could lose its status as the unchallengeable leader of *kendō*. This has been the case with other *budō* such as *karate* and *jūdō* for decades now as Japanese competitors are frequently defeated in international competitions. As a case in point, even at an organisational level there is not a single Japanese national who occupies an official post in the International Judo Federation as of 2012.

Thus, the gradual improvement of non-Japanese *kendō* is seen as a potential factor chipping away at Japan's hegemony over its own cultural capital. Perhaps in anticipation of the downside of promoting *kendō* too successfully – the 'double-edged sword' of sharing it with the international community – the following opinion emanating from Japan has been pushed with increasing verve in recent years: "Competition is one aspect of *kendō*, but it would be mistaken to apply too much value to competitiveness."⁶²

John Hughson (et al.) observes that sporting nationalism is "popularly perceived as an innocuous collective identity, but it too has xenophobic psycho-cultural roots."⁶³ For non-Japanese competitors who participate at the World Kendo Championships, Japanese team members are held in awe as veritable superstars. Even Korean players revere their Japanese opponents, but their determination to beat them knows no bounds. There is much at stake in terms of patriotic pride motivated by xenophobic psycho-cultural roots in the Japanese, and determination as the main challengers for cultural suzerainty of *kendō* by the Koreans. The reality is that winning is everything at the international competitive level, in spite of the usual rhetoric that *kendō* is far more important than

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 91

⁶² AJKF (ed.), Op. Cit., p. 106

⁶³ John Hughson, David Inglis, Marcus Free, *The Uses of Sport: A Critical Study*, p. 124

tournament results.

Hughson notes that “the way in which national sporting contests are conducted, in terms of nation against nation, arouses the perception for participants and spectators of battle being waged against an imagined enemy.”⁶⁴ Michael Billig also considers sport to be a facet of “banal nationalism” when he avows, “[i]nternational matches seem so much more important than domestic ones: there is an extra thrill of competition, with something indefinable at stake.”⁶⁵ Despite the importance placed on respecting one’s opponent at all times, self-restraint, and fastidious adherence to protocols of etiquette, international *kendō* competition is not immune to heated nationalistic agitation either.

There have been several incidents in past WKC involving Japan and Korea in which accepted decorum was brazenly disregarded. For example, the 7th WKC in Seoul (1988) resulted in soft drink cans being tossed onto the match area from above by disgusted spectators when the Koreans were defeated in the final by the Japanese team. The Japanese players and officials needed protection as they vacated the floor.

In order to diminish such highly negative nationalistic emotion in *kendō*, the FIK interestingly decided to cease playing the national anthem and raising the flag of the winner from the 11th WKC in Glasgow, and instead, the national anthem of the host nation is played each morning before the matches commence.⁶⁶ However, at the same WKC, the Korean manager broke the manager’s appeal flag in two, and the Korean team were extremely tardy in lining up for the final mutual bow after they were beaten again by the Japanese by one point in the final. These incidents may seem trivial compared to antics commonly witnessed in other international sports, but they are taken extremely seriously in *kendō*. They serve to reinforce Japanese resolve that too much international success diminishes the purity of *kendō* as a vehicle for self-cultivation and nurturing respect.

Inspection of the table of WKC winners reveals one glitch (as far as the Japanese are concerned) in the history of the championships so far. Although it has not been uncommon for Japanese players to be beaten by their non-Japanese opponents in individual matches, ultimately one of the Japanese players has invariably won the individual competition (in every tournament so far), while the Japanese team has also invariably won the coveted men’s team event, with one exception.

At the 13th WKC held in Taiwan, the inconceivable happened, when Japan was defeated by the

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ M. Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, p. 125

⁶⁶ AJKF (ed.), *Ibid.*, p. 106

American team in the semi-finals, setting the way for a final between Korea and the United States. Korea subsequently won the WKC for the first time, although they would undoubtedly have preferred to triumph over Japan in the final for the title of World Kendo Champions.⁶⁷

World Kendō Championships Results

WKC	Year	Country	City	Team Placings
1 st WKC	1970	Japan	Tokyo, Osaka	1 st Japan, 2 nd Chinese Taipei 3 rd Brazil, Okinawa
2 nd WKC	1973	America	LA, San Francisco	1 st Japan, 2 nd Canada 3 rd USA, Hawaii
3 rd WKC	1976	United Kingdom	Milton Keynes	1 st Japan, 2 nd Canada 3 rd USA, Chinese Taipei
4 th WKC	1979	Japan	Sapporo	1 st Japan, 2 nd Korea 3 rd USA, Hawaii
5 th WKC	1982	Brazil	Sao Paulo	1 st Japan, 2 nd Brazil 3 rd USA, Korea
6 th WKC	1985	France	Paris	1 st Japan, 2 nd Brazil 3 rd Korea, USA
7 th WKC	1988	Korea	Seoul	1 st Japan, 2 nd Korea 3 rd Canada, Brazil
8 th WKC	1991	Canada	Toronto	1 st Japan, 2 nd Korea 3 rd Chinese Taipei, Canada
9 th WKC	1994	France	Paris	1 st Japan, 2 nd Korea 3 rd Chinese Taipei, Canada
10 th WKC	1997	Japan	Kyoto	1 st Japan, 2 nd Korea 3 rd Brazil, Chinese Taipei
11 th WKC	2000	America	Santa Clara	1 st Japan, 2 nd Korea 3 rd Canada, Brazil <i>(First Women's Championships)</i>
12 th WKC	2003	United Kingdom	Glasgow	1 st Japan, 2 nd Korea 3 rd USA, Italy
13 th WKC	2006	Taiwan	Taipei	1 st Korea, 2 nd USA 3 rd Chinese Taipei, Japan
14 th WKC	2009	Brazil	Sao Paulo	1 st Japan, 2 nd USA 3 rd Korea, Brazil
15 th WKC	2012	Italy	Novara	1 st Japan, 2 nd Korea, 3 rd Hungary, USA

Predictably, the reaction in Japan was one of shock, and the head coach (Kakehashi Masaharu) and captain (Seike Kōichi) officially expressed their apologies to Japan for the “loss of honour”, taking the brunt of the responsibility on their own shoulders in the AJKF’s monthly newsletter *Kensō*.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ *Kendō Nippon* (February, 2007), p. 60

⁶⁸ AJKF (ed.), *Kensō* (February, 2007), pp. 23–24

Having already left his post in the AJKF, Takeuchi Jun criticised the federation for the “forcing” of this public apology as akin to “a general making his soldiers apologise for losing the war.”⁶⁹

Of course, such upsets are not uncommon in the world of sports, or in Japan’s domestic *kendō* competition circuit. Even in the history of sports in Japan, a comparable incident occurred 110 years before the 13th WKC when students of the elite preparatory school in Tokyo, Ichikō, defeated an American team, the Yokohama Athletic Club, at a game of baseball (29-4) on May 23, 1896. As Guttmann states, “the ‘borrowers’ had succeeded in humiliating the game’s ‘owners’, in a moment of ‘sweet satisfaction’ in the history of Japanese sports.”⁷⁰ My comments regarding Japan’s defeat in Taiwan were reported in the *Asahi Newspaper*: “At least now we can really call the tournament a real World Championship.”⁷¹ However, it was more than a simple loss in a competition. As the “game’s owner”, Japan’s *kendō* defeat was a matter of national pride, and was an epochal moment in *kendō*’s history.

3d. Proprietorship and the Ambiguity of ‘Correct’ Culture

The Agency for Cultural Affairs acknowledges in a 2003 report titled “About the Future Promotion of International Cultural Exchange” that “there is a need to rethink the notion that the Japanese are the only bearers of Japanese culture.”⁷² This seems at odds with the aforementioned reluctance to fully accept non-Japanese aptitude in Japanese cultural pursuits. The report was formulated through concerns that young Japanese were neglecting their own traditions, which is recognised even by non-Japanese as being “an intimate part of Japan’s spiritual and cultural essence.”⁷³ Pointing out that non-Japanese are able to appreciate, even convey Japanese culture, is intended to encourage Japanese people to reevaluate their own culture, and nurture a sense of pride in its universal values. Nevertheless, the mere fact that the following statement appears in the report is indicative of the general attitude that non-Japanese are usually not recognised as conveyers of traditional Japanese culture.

⁶⁹ Personal correspondence, April 2007.

⁷⁰ Allen Guttmann, *Op. Cit.*, p. 346

⁷¹ *Asahi Shinbun* (December 13, 2006), “Kendō Nippon, 13 Renpa Narazu”

⁷² Agency of Cultural Affairs, “About the Future Promotion of International Exchange”, p. 10
<http://www.bunka.go.jp/english/pdf/gattaiban.pdf> (Accessed January, 2012)

⁷³ *Ibid.*

We should assume a posture that culture incubated in Japan is the shared property of people in the wider world. This goes for the tea ceremony, flower arranging and other everyday elements of Japanese culture as well as for judo, karate, aikido and other martial arts, all of which enjoy a large number of admirers and practitioners throughout the world... It will be necessary to create an environment in which all people who cross Japan's borders to participate in cultural activities are considered to be the bearers of Japanese culture irrespective of their nationality.⁷⁴

The reality is, however, that non-Japanese who do excel in a traditional Japanese art are often seen as an anomaly at best, or a potential threat at worst. McVeigh makes the following observation about non-Japanese “who perform a traditional art, write *haiku*, practice martial arts, make pottery, admire kimono, or are somehow acting ‘traditionally’ Japanese.”⁷⁵

Japan's newspaper and other media frequently focus on these individuals who are remarkably “out of place”, having transgressed (or trespassed, as the case might be) a highly symbolic, almost sacred, boundary between Japaneseness and non-Japaneseness.⁷⁶

The merits and demerits of the international spread of *budō* were listed in a 1983 report by the Japanese Budō Association. Among the benefits, the report's authors state that *budō* can “promote mutual understanding and accord between countries.” On the other hand, as an example of the downside of internationalisation, “There is a danger that there will be a move away from the spirit of *budō*. This trend is already visible in its commercialisation for profit [overseas].”⁷⁷ In a sense, this protectionist attitude could be considered as a manifestation cultural elitism, i.e. “the binary opposite to cultural populism with connotations of high-cultural preference and superior powers of discrimination.”⁷⁸ As McVeigh notes, “The ‘Japan culture industry’, despite its proclaimed aim of mutual understanding, often seems to place impenetrable walls between Japan and the rest of the world.”⁷⁹

Guttmann maintains that sport embraced from another country “may be perceived as foreign and

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ McVeigh, Op. Cit., p. 191

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Japanese Association of Budō, Nippon Budokan, “Gendai Budō Report” (Archives of the Budō Charter Creation Committee), 1983

⁷⁸ Jim McGuigan, *Rethinking Cultural Policy*, p. 144

⁷⁹ Brian J. McVeigh, Op. Cit., p. 210

may be prized for its cultural rather than for its intrinsically ludic characteristics, but the borrowers are quite liable to interpret the sport in their own way.”⁸⁰ After witnessing the astonishing international popularity of other martial arts such as *jūdō* and *karate*, the ensuing transformation in the rules and traditional *modus operandi*, and the perceived attenuation of the all-important “*budō* spirit”, authorities have demonstrated an obsession with preserving *kendō*’s technical and spiritual veracity, and conveying it ‘correctly’. This has resulted in a reluctance to promote competition-oriented *kendō* overseas, with more emphasis placed on nebulous cultural and ascetic properties through teaching fundamental rather than advanced technical skills.

Nevertheless, Kashiwazaki (et al.) argues that as the number of FIK affiliates increases, and with it the frequency of tournaments being conducted overseas, the concept of *kendō* as an ascetic practice for character development is becoming diluted.

Competitive *kendō* has become the focus of intent, and emphasis is placed on the doctrine that winning is everything. The concept of “*ippon*” (one point) and how it is interpreted, and the standards for the way *yūkō-datotsu* (valid strike) is judged, shared understanding and interpretation of terminology, the deportment of players in tournaments, and the manners of spectators, are all serious problems in need of deliberation to correctly convey Japanese cultural properties that underlie the qualities of *kendō*.⁸¹

Obsession with the term “correct” (*tadashii*) is a distinguishing feature of *kendō* literature. “Correct *kendō*” in Japan infers technically and aesthetically orthodox *kendō* with a focus on human education in accordance with the principles of the sword, without deteriorating into deceitful techniques and strategies for the sake of winning matches, as seen in Western sports. “Correct” *kendō* is, in essence, referring to the upholding of Japaneseness, and arguably contains the insinuation that generally only Japanese can gain an understanding into the true spirit of *kendō*. Foreigners may become technically adept, as they have already shown, but the heart of *kendō* is, by implication, a mystical Japanese cultural realm that can only be accessed by Japanese, or a miniscule group of select non-Japanese.

A major problem with this preconception is that many Japanese practitioners also demonstrate a

⁸⁰ Allen Guttmann, Op. Cit., p. 348

⁸¹ Kashiwazaki Katsuhiko (et al.), “Various Problems in Modern Budō – The Internationalization of Budō III”, *Budō Sports Science Research* No. 15, International Budo University (pp. 1-27), p. 9

propensity to stray from correct *kendō* for the sake of competition glory. Ōtsuka Tadayoshi points to the inherent dichotomy of what he called “strong *kendō*” (technically adept and skilled at winning matches) *vis-à-vis* officially sanctioned “correct *kendō*”.⁸² According to Ōtsuka, “strong *kendō*” wins matches by whatever means possible, often testing the rules to the limit. “Correct *kendō*” conducted in the spirit of fair play is scrupulous, and stringently adheres to the rules and fundamental protocols, without concern for results. Kendoists in all countries demonstrate a conflicting proclivity to perform “strong *kendō*” in competitions, but “correct *kendō*” in promotion examinations. Ideally, being strong through correctness is what *kendō* practitioners are urged to aspire to, but reality dictates that the majority are caught somewhere between the two extremes depending on the situation.

Other authorities suggest that the quandary of sport *kendō* versus correct *kendō* can only be reconciled by popularising two types of *kendō*. The first type would be traditional Japanese “剣道” (use of kanji) which upholds the Japanese way based on the principles of the sword. The other would be “KENDO” – a mixture of Japanese and Western ideals in which sporting aspects would be encouraged, and even Olympic inclusion aimed for.⁸³ This conception is taken from a similar debate regarding traditional *jūdō* versus Olympic *jūdō* (柔道 *vis-à-vis* JUDO).⁸⁴ Uehara Kichio laments that “even Japanese are showing a tendency to view *kendō* as a ‘Japanese sport’ [rather than *budō*]. If traditional Japanese culture and spirituality (*seishin-sei*) can no longer be evoked in *kendō*, it may just become KENDO.”⁸⁵

To avoid such a degeneration and protect the cultural integrity of *kendō* i.e., its Japaneseness, Tanaka Mamoru asserts that “*kendō* should not be propagated as a competitive sport, but rather as an embodiment of Japanese culture, otherwise it is not *kendō*.”⁸⁶ However, a major cultural barrier in place for non-Japanese practitioners is the perceived inability to understand the most important aspect of *kendō* – the complicated process and finer cultural nuances in scoring *yūkō-datotsu* (valid strike or thrust).⁸⁷ According to Abe, “because Westerners do not ‘feel’ the *yūkō-datotsu*, but need to

⁸² T. Ōtsuka, *Nihon Kendō no Shisō*, p. 211

⁸³ F. Murakami, M. Sakudō, “A Study on the Internationalization of Kendo”, *Osaka Research Journal of Budō* Vol. 11. No. 1, March 2002, p. 35

⁸⁴ S. Sekine, *Zen Nihon Jūdō Renmei 50-Nenshi 1949-1999* (Fifty-year history of the AJJF), p. 258

⁸⁵ Japanese Academy of Budō (ed.), *Kendō wo Shiru Jiten* (Dictionary for understanding *kendō*), p. 175

⁸⁶ Tanaka Mamoru, *Budō: Kako, Genzai, Mirai* (Budō: past, present, future), p. 106

⁸⁷ See the introduction of this thesis for an outline of what the striking process entails in *kendō*.

‘rationalise’ its components”⁸⁸ it is virtually impossible to gain a full appreciation of the cultural value of *kendō*. Therefore, Abe contends, the internationalisation of *kendō* must focus on making “foreigners’ feeling (*kansei*) of *kendō* Japanised (*nihonka*).”⁸⁹

The common perception is that it is easier for Westerners to “understand *kendō* as a competitive sport rather than as [Japanese] culture.”⁹⁰ This means, according to Abe’s analysis, that Westerners typically only comprehend *kendō* superficially as a sport, thereby misunderstanding *kendō*’s deeper meaning or essence. The problem he identifies here is that people who possess only a shallow understanding of *kendō* become leaders of local and regional federations, and wield a disproportionate amount of influence in the way *kendō* is governed internationally.⁹¹ Each affiliate in the FIK is theoretically on even footing, so Japan with its hundreds of thousands of members has the same voting power as a country with a hundred members.⁹²

The potential risk to *kendō* if Japanese hegemony is compromised by a more egalitarian approach to international administration is described by Tanaka as a conflict between “*tatami* logic” (*ronri*) versus “table logic”. The former refers to the traditional Japanese hierarchical way of learning and running organisations by adhering to the teachings and guidance of seniors and teachers. The latter is the Western practice of deciding matters in an open democratic forum.⁹³ Wary of how rules and conventions in *jūdō* have been progressively altered through non-Japanese influence to its ultimate detriment in cultural terms, Tanaka advocates that Japanese should step back and reassert the absolute value of the “*ippon*” (*yūkō-datotsu*), and promote “educational” *kendō* over “sports” *kendō*.⁹⁴ In order to achieve this, “it is vital that ‘*tatami* theory’ controls the ‘table’ so that *budō* for the sake of education based on correct technical principles (*jutsuri*) can be maintained.”⁹⁵

The Japanese government’s and the AJKF’s “cultural policies” – that is “deliberate action in the cultural field”⁹⁶ to control the diffusion of *kendō* culture – demonstrate numerous overlapping nationalistic tendencies in its domestic and international dissemination. According to McVeigh,

⁸⁸ Abe Tetsushi, Op. Cit., p. 102

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 103

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 90

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., p. 89

⁹³ Tanaka Mamoru, Op. Cit., pp. 98-99

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 100

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 101

⁹⁶ Jim McGuigan, *Rethinking Cultural Policy*, p. 144

“State cultural policy often promotes a ‘proprietary theory of nationalism.’”⁹⁷ So-called “proprietary nationalism” is the perception that a certain group of people own certain cultural capital. “The Japanese people, by virtue of being Japanese, own certain items of material culture, artistic expressions, language, and religions. Arguably, such a notion of proprietorship is a form of political mysticism, permitted by a conflation of two different definitions of culture: ‘culture as art appreciated by anybody’ and ‘culture as an exclusive to one group’.”⁹⁸

On one hand, *kendō* is promoted as a form of culture in which all the people of the world can benefit. Nevertheless, in the final analysis, the benefactors of *kendō* strongly desire to preserve it as the exclusive property of the Japanese. Thus, it could be said that the internationalisation of *kendō* actually fuels its nationalisation. A cynic may quote Ivan Hall on the matter, as he states that this kind of internationalisation “is indeed more a device for continued anxious self-protection than for a fresh outward engagement with the rest of the world.”⁹⁹

On the other hand though, it is important to mention that there are those in Japan, albeit it a minority, who take the opposite stance. They look at internationalisation as a way of countering what they decry as dictatorial and contradictory measures enforced by the governing bodies to control the destiny of *kendō* in Japan. The late Ōtsuka Tadayoshi was a notable non-conformist in this sense, who advocated change in *kendō*'s rules and conventions because of the ambiguities in the way it is promoted as a sport, but at the same time, something ‘greater’ than a mere sport. His view was that *kendō* had become a cultural artefact that has not been allowed to keep up with the times. He was not against tradition, but believed that culture should be constantly revised, and that *kendō* had relied too much on traditional authority to its great detriment in terms of development. “Now is the time where modern *kenshi* throughout the world should become the leaders, and become involved in the reformation of kendo.”¹⁰⁰

4. Conclusion

This chapter examined the process through which the traditional Japanese culture of *kendō* has been

⁹⁷ Brian J. McVeigh, Op. Cit., p. 19

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 165

⁹⁹ Ivan P. Hall, *Cartels of the Mind: Japan's Intellectual Closed Shop*, p. 173

¹⁰⁰ Ōtsuka Tadayoshi, “A proposal for New Regulations and Organisational Reform in Kendo – An Attempt to Make Kendo More Comprehensible for the World”, *Kendo World* Vol. 5 No. 4 (2010), p. 18

disseminated internationally, and the various problems that have arisen with its growing popularity. In the pre-war period, *kendō*'s migration took three routes. In the case of Europe, a small number of European Japanophiles who resided in Japan for varying lengths of time took up the study of traditional swordsmanship as a cultural diversion. When it was introduced to European audiences by individuals such as F.J. Norman, it was viewed as a curiosity with little practical value. Thus, *kendō* in Europe did not take root to any noticeable extent until the post-war period, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s.

The diffusion of *kendō* in the Americas, however, was much faster and on a wider scale. It was introduced into North and South America in the latter Meiji-period by Japanese immigrants who desired to maintain links with their Japanese heritage. It was considered especially useful for educating second generation Japanese immigrants (Nisei) and later whose connection with Japanese cultural norms diminished as they assimilated to the social milieu of their country of birth. *Kendō* was viewed as a useful medium for instilling and maintaining ethnic identity, and this motivation is still evident in Nikkei diaspora today as a form of trans-national nationalism.

The third wave of *kendō* migration analysed in this chapter was to Korea. After Korea's annexation by Japan in 1910, *kendō* there basically developed in parallel with Japan. Thousands of Korean children were introduced to *kendō* in the pre-war education system administered by Japan. Despite bitter feelings towards Japanese treatment of Koreans, a significant number continued to train in *kendō* even after Korea was liberated after Japan's wartime defeat. Nevertheless, these Korean practitioners were reluctant to acknowledge that *kendō* was inherently a component of Japanese culture, and engaged in a process of revisionist reconstruction of the art (*kumdo*) as being tied to traditional Korean culture. Presenting the greatest perceived threat to Japan's cultural ownership of *kendō*, a degree of tension exists between the *kendō* fraternities of both countries.

Japanese *kendō* authorities were behind the creation of the International Kendo Federation in 1970, and have continued to demonstrate a preoccupation with controlling the way in which *kendō* is taught and disseminated overseas. Furthermore, with the growing popularity and increasing technical level seen in other countries as well, attention has been focussed on ensuring the propagation of 'correct' *kendō*, which means by definition, Japanese *kendō*. This, it is widely assumed, is something that can be emulated by non-Japanese, but can never be fully understood without a deep understanding of Japanese culture and social norms. Thus, even if Japan is

occasionally superseded in the competitive arena, the true essence of *kendō* remains with the Japanese.

There are inconsistencies in the efforts made in the international spread of *kendō* that are difficult to reconcile. Abe Tetsushi's observations epitomise the prevailing paternalistic attitude of Japanese kendoists: "We Japanese should not criticise people doing *kendō* overseas [for their lack of understanding], but it behoves us to provide a guide so that they do not get mistaken ideas of what *kendō* is, and are able to gain even a small understanding of *kendō*'s essence."¹⁰¹

There are many contradictions in this "gentle cultural nationalistic" outlook.¹⁰² Japanese kendoists want to share the culture, and genuinely feel that *kendō* is a vehicle for self-development for all people, but the authoritarian insistence regulating correct *kendō* betrays a sense of paranoia of losing control of their own culture. Although begrudgingly aware that *kendō* is being adopted and adapted to suit different cultural milieus, like baseball did in Japan, many Japanese take solace in the idea that true, correct *kendō* based on centuries of historical development, can only be the cultural domain of Japan. This explains the rationale and the doggedness displayed for promoting *kendō* as "culture" rather than as a "sport" overseas.

With regards to opposition in the 1990s to promoting foreigners to the highest rank of *yokozuna* in professional *sumō* in Japan, Howard Gilbert posed the question "If a domestic sport that is not open for competition internationally is subject to change from outside influences, is it being internationalised or, perhaps, is it being further nationalised through resistance to that change?"¹⁰³ If the same question is asked within the context of *kendō*, although it is certainly open to competition internationally, the outside influences are unquestionably powerful forces that are further nationalising Japanese resolve to safeguard it as hallowed culture. In this sense, the internationalisation of *kendō* is inextricably linked with its nationalisation. In the final analysis, as Uehara admits, the international propagation of *kendō* does at least have a silver lining in that it provides Japanese with a strong incentive to reflect on the state of the art in Japan.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Abe Tetsushi, Op. Cit., p. 104

¹⁰² Roy Starrs (ed.), Op. Cit., p. 2

¹⁰³ Howard Gilbert, "Wrestling with Foreign Yokozuna" in Roy Starrs (ed.), *Japanese Cultural Nationalism: At Home and in the Asia Pacific*, p. 288

¹⁰⁴ Japanese Academy of Budō (ed.), Op. Cit., p. 175

Conclusion

This thesis began with a summary of the historical processes surrounding the emergence of professional warriors in Japan. A reassessment was made of the protocols of early warfare, warrior training, and the function of the sword in medieval warfare. Theories surrounding the formation of distinct martial traditions (*ryūha*) in the fourteenth century, and the symbolic importance of the “sword cult” were also reviewed. From a functional perspective, *bushi* trained in the martial arts as a form of self-defence, and to master the skills to kill. However, warriors simultaneously attained a profound sense of spirituality and religious cognizance through the medium of refined *kenjutsu* techniques, combined with the poignant experience of battle to the death.

Following the emergence of *ryūha*, the culture of *kenjutsu* gradually evolved to encompass aspects of combat “*bujutsu*”, “*bugei*” (martial artistry), and finally to “*budō*” or competitive and educational martial “Ways” underlined with an “ideal of non-lethality”. In this thesis, it was argued that the metamorphic transition of swordsmanship occurring in the Tokugawa period (1600–1868) epitomised a “civilising process”. *Kenjutsu* was essentially tamed, and crystallised into a sophisticated pseudo-religious cultural pursuit for developing mind and body. Its corpus of teaching was intellectualised, commercialised, and ultimately “sportified” with the invention of safety training equipment in the eighteenth century. *Kenjutsu*’s goal of spiritual refinement filled a vacuum in the warrior’s self-identity, and bolstered sentiments of cultural elitism – a sentiment that was to find new expressions from the Meiji period with the creation of the modern nation state.

With the quest to modernise in the Meiji period (1868–1912), traditional modes of combat such as *kenjutsu* experienced a temporary period of decline following the abolition of class distinctions and the complete overhaul of social systems. However, a process of “re-invention” in *kenjutsu* unfolded through exposure at public fencing shows (*gekken-kōgyō*), introduction into the police and military as a form of physical training with some renewed interest in its practical potential, and finally its introduction into the national school system. On the surface, it was promoted as a valid alternative to Western style callisthenics for physical education classes. However, it also served to reinforce sentiments of Japaneseness, and provided Japanese with a direct link to a common cultural heritage as state and popular nationalism started to materialise in various forms.

A central player in in the modernisation of swordsmanship in this period was the private

association known as the Dai-Nippon Butokukai (Greater Japan Society of Martial Virtue). The Butokukai took the role of self-appointed “gatekeeper” in promoting and safeguarding Japan’s traditional martial culture in the modern age. Their astonishing expansion led to diverging ambitions embraced by popular and state nationalists for *kenjutsu* (and other martial arts) as they became increasingly viewed as integral to modern nationalistic aspirations, especially after induction into the school system from the Taishō period (1912–1926).

Following the enclosure of martial arts in modern nationalistic agendas, *kendō* in particular was subjected to aggressive political exploitation in the militaristic 1930s and 1940s. After becoming a compulsory subject, it underwent what was described in this thesis as a process of “de-civilisation”. The techniques, rules, training methodology, and philosophical conceptualisation became increasingly pugnacious focussed on the sole objective of nurturing an indomitable “fighting spirit” among youth, and priming them for war.

Often referred to as a dark one in *kendō*’s history, it was during this period that proprietorship of *kendō* was commandeered by the government to assist the war effort. Total state control led to *kendō*’s prohibition when Japan lost the war, as it was viewed as a dangerous tool for militarists and ultra-nationalists, and as having the potential to arouse undemocratic thoughts and behaviour. It was eventually reinstated in schools and in the community in the 1950s, albeit several years after other martial arts were. *Kendō* underwent a rigorous process of reinvention and re-civilising as a modern “democratic sport”.

With the formation of the All Japan Kendo Federation (AJKF) as the new “gatekeeper” of *kendō* in 1952, *kendō*’s restoration into the mainstream was facilitated by a two-pronged approach under the auspices of the non-governmental AJKF, and the Ministry of Education. Although their agendas seemed to be clearly different at the start, with the MOE being particularly cautious about “decolourising” the form and content of *kendō*, closer inspection reveals that both organisations harboured latent nationalistic tendencies, that actually complemented each other.

Kendō subsequently saw a flourish in popularity from the 1960s as a highly competitive sport, but the traditional notions of *kendō* as a vehicle for personal development became largely disregarded, provoking a renaissance in reaffirming *kendō*’s conceptual uniqueness *vis-à-vis* Western sports. This entailed flagrantly appealing to notions of Japanese cultural and spiritual exclusivity. In this sense, this thesis has argued that *kendō* has come to represent a kind of physical “Nihonjinron” which

contributes to the promotion of sentiments of “Japaneseness” and cultural inimitability.

To highlight this point, the final chapter of this thesis investigated the international propagation of *kendō* in Europe, the Americas, and Korea. For different reasons, each of these regions has well-established *kendō* communities, and they hold diverse views on the values and cultural ownership of *kendō*. The international spread of *kendō* is generally seen by the Japanese authorities as a “double-edged sword” with many benefits, but also a number of pitfalls. At one level, *kendō* is considered by the AJKF and the Japanese government as a gift to world culture, confirming the potential of Japanese “soft power”, and “self-affirmation” of Japanese identity in an age of globalisation.

As such, *kendō*'s international popularity is cause for considerable pride to those directly involved at an individual and organisational level. However, as the level of *kendō* outside Japan improves and it becomes increasingly widespread, there is an inevitable clash of cultural values, and sense of paranoia among Japanese authorities that they will be unable to control the destiny of *kendō*. Here, the intangible spiritual and cultural elements of *kendō* take on even more significance, especially when the questions of “who owns the culture?” or “who can understand it ‘correctly?’” are posed. On one hand, *kendō* is indorsed as a form of universalistic, humanistic, and holistic culture which can benefit anybody, regardless of nationality. In this sense, it is purported that *kendō* can even contribute to world peace. However, the benefactors of *kendō* have demonstrated a voracious need to preserve it as the exclusive property of the Japanese. Thus, it was argued in this thesis that the internationalisation of *kendō* has actually fuelled its nationalisation in Japan.

There are many aspects of *kendō* culture touched on in this thesis that are deserving of in-depth studies in their own right. For example, detailed investigations of *kendō* in Nikkei communities outside Japan, or Korean martial arts revisionism are long overdue. There are other issues facing *kendō* related to cultural proprietorship which were not mentioned in this thesis, but are still relevant and waiting for future research. For example, the disappearance of skilled Japanese craftsmen who make *kendō* equipment due to cheap offshore factories, or gender issues with the increasing number of female practitioners in what is ostensibly a ‘man’s world’, are worthy topics of investigation.

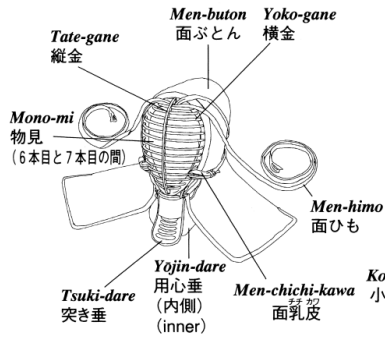
In this thesis, a macroscopic approach was adopted in analysing an example of traditional culture that has largely (and undeservedly) been discounted as a serious field of academic inquiry. Through

applying socio-historical concepts such as Norbert Elias's "civilising process" and Eric Hobsbawm's "invention of tradition", as well as various descriptions of nationalism to the evolution of *kendō*, it was demonstrated how it has continued to maintain a connection with the past, while simultaneously developing into a symbolic and discursive form of traditional culture representing a "cultural ethos" epitomising ideas of "Japaneseness". The traditional Japanese martial art of *kendō*, therefore, provides scholars with a fascinating model for investigating cultural politics, and understanding the role of tradition in the formation and proliferation of cultural nationalistic sentimentalities.

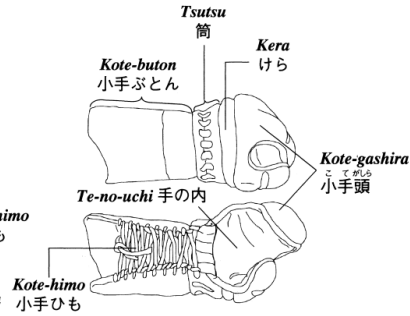
Appendix

Kendo Equipment¹

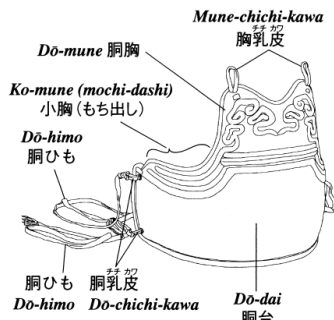
面・Men



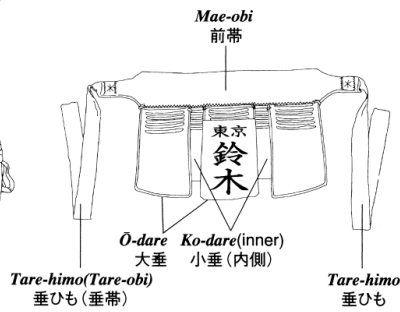
小手・Kote (gloves)



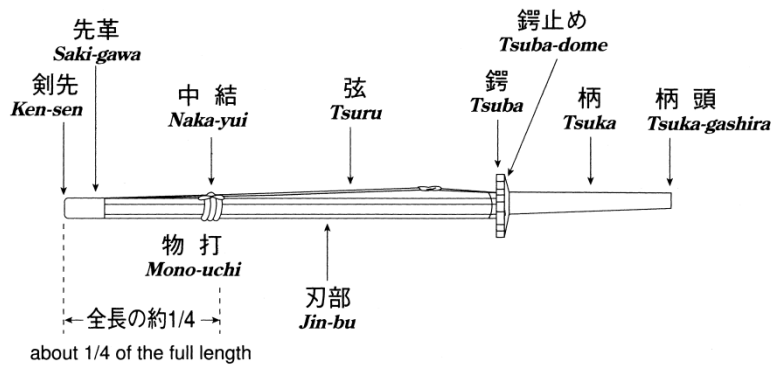
胴・Dō (trunk protector)



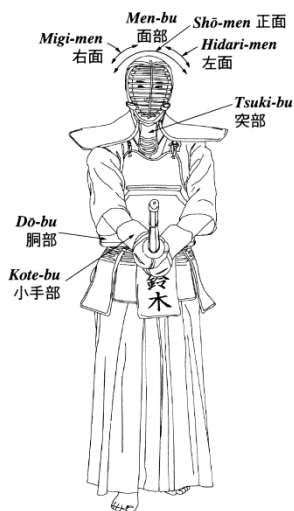
垂・Tare (hip protector)



竹刀各部の名称・Structure of the *Shinai*



¹ AKJE, *Japanese-English Dictionary of Kendo*, Tokyo: AJKF, 2011 (Revised edition, trans. Alexander Bennett), p. 150



Target areas

Chūdan-no-kamae



A photographic depiction of a *men* strike.² The two kendoists face-off in the *chūdan-no-kamae* stance. After identifying an opening in the opponent's stance, the kendoist on the right lunges forward from the right foot while lifting the *shinai* overhead, and then strikes the opponent's head (*men*) while stamping the floor with the right foot at the point of impact (*fumikomi*) with *ki-ken-tai-itchi* (unity of spirit, sword and body). After the strike, the attacker continues to run through showing continued alertness (*zanshin*).

² Photo taken from A. Bennett (ed./trans.) *Budō: The Martial Ways of Japan*, Nippon Budokan, 2010

Glossary of Terms³

A

Ai-uchi (相打ち)

This term is heard frequently in *kendō* and refers to valid strikes made simultaneously by both competitors thereby cancelling each other out as a result.

B

Battō (抜刀)

Drawing the sword. The act of drawing *shinai* out before a *kendō* match is also called *battō*.

Bokutō (木刀)

Wooden sword. *Bokutō* are also referred to as “*kidachi*” and “*bokken*”, and are usually made from Japanese medlar or oak.

Bōgu (防具)

Protective equipment. In *kendō*, *bōgu* consists of the *men* (mask), *kote* (gauntlets), *dō* (body protector), and *tare* (lower body armour).

Budō (武道)

Originally a term denoting the “Way of the warrior” it is now used as a collective appellation for modern martial arts of *kendo*, *jūdō*, *kyūdo* and so on. The primary objective of these “martial ways” is self-perfection (*ningen-keisei*).

Budō Senmon Gakkō (武道専門学校)

The Budō Vocational School that was administered by the Dai-Nippon Butokukai for the purpose of training teachers to teach the martial arts in schools. Based in Kyoto, the school was closed with Japan’s defeat in the Second World War.

Bugei (武芸)

A traditional word for martial arts. The term “*bugei-jūhappan*” refers to the eighteen martial arts considered to be essential training for the samurai during the Tokugawa period.

³ Most of the terms explained in this glossary are taken from *Budō: The Martial Ways of Japan* (Nippon Budokan, 2010) and *Japanese-English Dictionary of Kendo* (AJKF, revised edition, 2011). Both books were officially translated by me. I have included additions where necessary, and some of the explanations have been modified slightly to align with the content of this thesis.

Bujutsu (武術)

Term denoting martial arts before the modern period. *Bujutsu* was replaced with *budō* in the Taishō period.

Bunbu-ryōdō (文武両道)

Bun (literature) and *bu* (martial) as one. It was considered ideal for warriors to excel in both the literary and martial arts.

Bushidō (武士道)

The ethical framework developed by Japan's warrior class. During the Tokugawa period, the Neo-Confucian notion of *chūgi* (loyalty) was considered important to maintain the feudal structure. What is commonly referred to as "*bushidō*" now was usually called "*shidō*". Nitobe Inzō's internationally renowned book *Bushidō: The Soul of Japan* (1900) espoused *bushidō* as forming the core of Japanese morality.

Butokuden (武徳殿)

The Butokuden was built in 1899 within the precinct of the Heian Shrine in Kyōto, and was used as the main *dōjō* for the now defunct Dai-Nippon Butokukai (Great Martial Virtue Society of Japan). The Butokuden still stands today and is the venue for the celebrated annual All Japan Kendō Embu (Demonstration) Taikai held annually in May.

C

Chūdan-no-kamae (中段の構え)

One of the postures; standing upright, the right foot is forward slightly, and the front of the left foot is placed along the line of the right heel. The *shinai* is held with the right hand just below the *tsuba* (sword guard) and with the left hand at the *tsuka-gashira* (end of the *shinai* hilt) while the extension of the *kensen* (tip of the *shinai*) points between the opponent's eyes. This is the basic kendo posture; it is suitable for both attacking and defending. It also used to be called *seigan-no-kamae*. (AJKF)

D

Dai-Nippon Butokukai (大日本武徳会)

Based on Emperor Kanmu's ideals of "*butoku*" or martial virtue that he espoused in ancient times to promote a fighting spirit among his warriors, the Dai-Nippon Butokukai was established inside the precincts of the Heian Shrine in Kyoto in 1895 for the purpose of reviving and promoting Japan's traditional martial arts. Branches of the organisation were launched throughout the country, and the Butokukai actively engaged in the conferment of ranks and titles, conducting the martial arts

festival (Butokusai) and other demonstrations, educating specialist *budō* instructors for the purpose of popularizing the martial arts. The organization was disbanded after the Second World War in 1946. (AJKF)

Dai-Nippon Teikoku Kendō Kata (大日本帝国剣道形)

After it was decided that *gekken* (*kendō*) could be taught as a regular subject in middle and normal schools in 1911 there was a need for a unified teaching methodology. This provided the impetus for the creation of a new set of *kendō kata*. Amendments and additions to the original version were made in 1917 and 1933, after which it was renamed as the Nippon Kendo Kata in the post-war revival of *kendō*. In 1981 the *Nippon Kendō Kata Kaisetsu-sho* was published as the official reference to the *kata* and is the official explanation used today. (AJKF)

Daitō (大刀)

The longer sword or *katana*. In the *Nihon Kendō Kata*, the wooden sword (*bokutō*) is also referred to as the *daitō*.

Dan'i (段位)

A term used to denote one's technical level or grade. In *kendō*, the “*dan*” ranks start at *shodan* (1-*dan*) and go up to the highest grade of *hachidan* (8-*dan*), although previously the system extended up to 10-*dan*.

Dantai-sen (団体戦)

Team matches for three or more competitors. In a five-person team the order of positions is *sempō*, *jihō*, *chūken*, *fukushō* and *taishō* respectively.

Datotsu (打突)

Striking and thrusting.

Datotsu-bui (打突部位)

A term referring to striking targets. These consist of *men* (head), *tsuki* (throat), *kote* (wrist), and *dō* (body)..

Dōjō (道場)

Originally used in reference to places where Buddhism is studied, it is now also used to denote a training hall for the martial arts.

E

Embu (演武)

A *budō* demonstration (not competition), usually consisting of *kata*.

F

Fudōshin (不動心)

Maintaining an “immovable mind” that does not fluctuate, regardless of the situation.

Fukuro-shinai (袋しなひ)

The *fukuro-shinai* was a practice sword made by inserting slats of bamboo into a leather sleeve.

Fumikomi-ashi (踏み込み足)

A type of footwork used in *kendō* by stamping on the floor as a strike is made.

G

Gekken (撃剣)

A term for traditional *kenjutsu* that utilised *kote*, *men*, *dō*, *tare* and *shinai* to engage in full-contact sparring. It was originally devised to complement *kata kenjutsu*, but over time it developed into a competitive form of fencing that forms the roots of modern *kendō*. (AJKF)

Gekken-kōgyō (撃剣興行)

Public *kenjutsu* shows started in 1873 by Sakakibara Kenkichi organized in the same way as popular *sumō* tournaments of the time.

H

Habiki (刃引)

A *katana* made with a blunted blade. *Nihon Kendō Kata* and *iaidō* techniques are usually performed with *habiki* swords for reasons of safety.

Haitō-rei (廃刀令)

A law passed in 1876 which forbade anybody other than police or military personnel in formal attire from wearing swords in public.

Hakama (袴)

Hakama, or split skirts rather than straight legged trousers are worn in *kendō*, *naginata*, *kyūdō*, *aikidō* and other martial arts.

Hassei (発声)

Vocalization. The attacker shouts at the same time as they make an attack. In the case of *kendō*, the name of the target being attacked (*men, kote, dō, tsuki*) is shouted as it is struck.

Hasuji (刃筋)

The direction the blade is facing when cutting with a *katana* or *shinai*.

Heihō (兵法)

The art or science of war. The term was also used to refer to *kenjutsu*. An alternative pronunciation is *hyōhō*.

Heijōshin (平常心)

Always maintaining a placid or calm state of mind as changes occur around you and to not be surprised by anything.

Hin'i (品位) & Hinkaku (品格)

Elegance and excellent demeanour developed through many years of training in the martial arts.

I

Iai (居合)

The art of drawing the sword from the *saya* (scabbard) and defeating imaginary opponents. Also called “*battō-jutsu*”, “*iai-jutsu*”, and “*iaidō*”.

Ippon (一本)

One point. Achieved through the execution of a valid technique on the opponent.

Ippon-gachi (一本勝ち)

In matches for some *budō* arts such as *kendō*, the first person to score two points within the designated time is deemed the winner (*sanbon-shōbu*). However, if only one person scores one point within the time frame, they will be the victor. This is called “*ippon-gachi*” (one-point win).

Ippon-shōbu (一本勝負)

The match method in which the first person to score a valid point is deemed the winner.

Issoku-ittō-no-maai (一足一刀の間合)

A term used in *kendō* to denote the spatial interval of “one step, one strike distance”. This is the

fundamental distance for engagement in *kendō*. Anything closer is referred to as *chika-ma* (close interval), and further away is *tō-ma* (distant interval).

Itsutsu-no-kamae (五つの構え)

The five *kamae* (fighting stances) used in *kendō*. They are *jōdan*, *chūdan*, *gedan*, *hassō*, and *wakigamae*.

J

Ji-geiko (地稽古)

Sparring in *kendō*. This training method is also referred to as *gokaku-geiko*.

Jinbu (刃部)

The cutting edge of the sword blade.

Jo-ha-kyū (序破急)

Jo refers to the novice stage, *ha* to the middle stage, and *kyū* to the advanced stage of one's study of the martial arts. This term is also utilized in other traditional Japanese arts such as *Nō* theatre.

K

Kaiden (皆伝)

A teaching scroll or licence given to the student by the master in classical martial art schools. Also referred to as “*menkyo-kaiden*”.

Kakari-geiko (掛かり稽古)

Attack practice in which the attacker unleashes a barrage of techniques to develop technical skill, stamina, and fighting spirit.

Take-goe (掛け声)

Vocalization used to dishearten the opponent, lift your own spirits, and indicate a successful attack.

Kakugi (格技)

Combat sport. *Kakugi* was the term used to denote martial arts classes in the post-war junior and senior high school physical education curriculum. The term officially became *budō* in changes made to the School Course Guidelines in 1989.

Kamae (構え)

An on guard or fighting stance.

Kan-geiko (寒稽古)

Midwinter training usually held in the early morning over a period of weeks at the coldest time of the year.

Kata (形)

Prescribed patterns or sequences of techniques.

Kata-geiko (形稽古)

Training method in which students learn techniques and the underlying theories of their school or style of *budō* through the repetition of *kata* forms.

Katsunin-ken (活人剣)

Life-giving sword. A term that appears in Yagyū Munenori's *Heihō Kadensho*, *katsunin-ken* is a concept that is held in high esteem in *kendō*. As opposed to the term “*setsunin-tō*” (death-dealing blade), the life-giving sword encourages the student of martial arts to learn combat but use the skills only for a just cause and self-cultivation.

Keiko (稽古)

Literally to think (*kei* 稽) about the past (*ko* 古), this word is used in reference to the study of *budō* and traditional arts.

Keiko-gi (稽古着)

Training top used in *budō*.

Ken (剣)

A double-edged straight sword also called a “*tsuruji*”. This kind of sword has been found in excavations dating back to the early part of the Kofun period and they were used as an implement in religious ceremonies. The sword's cutting edge is not only directed at the enemy but was also thought to be an instrument for cutting away one's own internal impurities. (AJKF)

Kendōka (剣道家)

Kendoist, or *kendō* practitioner.

Kendō-no-rinen (剣道の理念)

The All Japan Kendo Federation examined what *kendō* should be and the goals of *kendō*, and gave the following definition of *kendō* in 1975: “*Kendō* is a way to discipline the human character through the application of the principles of the *katana*.” This continues to be the final goal for those who are learning *kendō*. (AJKF)

Kenjutsu (剣術)

Kenjutsu refers to the combat art using swords to fight enemies and is akin to other martial arts such as archery, spearmanship and grappling. It was also referred to as *kenpō*, *tōjutsu*, *tōhō*, and *heihō*. (AJKF)

Ki (気)

The basic energy or life-force that exists in all things, *ki* is the kinetic energy responsible for perception, awareness, and sense. *Ki* is said to determine the relation between mind and body and is a core element of all *budō* arts.

Kiai (気合)

The act of focussing one’s mind and mounting a challenge. *Kiai* also refers to the vocalizations one produces when attacking.

Ki-gurai (気位)

Strength derived from confidence through many years of training. Elegance or grace.

Ki-ken-tai-itchi (気剣体一致)

A term used in *kendō* describing the act of striking with a unity of energy (*ki*), sword (*ken*), and body (*tai*). Only an attack made with *ki-ken-tai-itchi* is considered valid.

Kirikaeshi (切り返し)

An important basic technique in *kendō* in which the practitioner executes continuous attacks to the *men* while moving forwards and then backwards. Also called “*uchikaeshi*”.

Kobudō (古武道)

Classical *budō* arts that were created mainly during the Tokugawa period. Most of the training in *kobudō* schools consists of *kata* repetition.

Kodachi (小太刀)

A short-sword measuring 60 centimetres or less. Also called the *shōtō*.

Koshi-ita (腰板)

The flat board on the back of the *hakama* that fits into the small of the back.

Kyū (級)

The series of grades that precede *dan* ranks. *Ikkyū* is the grade immediately below *shodan*.

M

Maai (間合)

The spatial distance separating two opponents.

Monouchi (物打ち)

The top one third of the sword or *shinai* which produces the most devastating cut.

Motodachi (元立ち)

The training partner who takes on the role of instructor or receives strikes during sparring or basic exercises.

Musha-shugyō (武者修行)

Ascetic training method engaged in by samurai warriors with the aim of improving combat skills by travelling from place to place and challenging other warriors in duels.

N

Nitō-ryū (二刀流)

A style of swordsmanship which utilizes the short-sword (*shōtō*) and long-sword (*daitō*) simultaneously. When the *shōtō* is held in the right hand, this is referred to as “*sei-nitō-no-kamae*”, and “*gyaku-nitō-no-kamae*” when it is held with the left.

Nihon Kendō Kata (日本剣道形)

The ten *kata* studied by *kendō* practitioners. These forms were first created in 1912 as a way of teaching the basic techniques, *kamae*, and principles of *kendō*.

Nihontō (日本刀)

The term used to designate the characteristic Japanese sword. Swords hung at the side with the

blade facing down were called *tachi*. *Katana* refers to swords inserted in the *obi* (sash) on the left side of the body with the blade facing up.

Nippon Budokan (日本武道館)

Martial arts hall and organisation set up in 1964 to help promote traditional martial arts by coordinating with the various representative federations.

O

Ōdachi (大太刀)

The long-sword, as opposed to the *kodachi*. Also called *daitō*.

R

Rei (礼)

An attitude of respect and thoughtfulness to one's training partners, opponents, and all other people in society.

Reihō (礼法)

Expressing respect to others through bowing and other rituals. Also called *reigi-sabō*.

Riai (理合)

The rational relationship of interactive movements between oneself and the opponent.

Rihō (理法)

Logic or reason behind the various techniques.

Rinen (理念)

An ideology or concept. The “*rinen*” of *budō* is often referred to as the ideal of “personal development”.

Ritsurei (立礼)

Standing bow. A standing bow performed to a training partner or opponent is typically 15°, and 30° to the *shōmen* (altar) of the *dōjō*.

Ryūha (流派)

A traditional school or branch group specialising in the martial arts.

S

Sage-tō (提刀)

The position of holding the sword in the left hand down the side. Also called “*teitō*”.

Sanbon-shōbu (三本勝負)

Match method in which the first person to score two valid points is the winner. Also see “*ippon-shōbu*”.

Seika-tanden (臍下丹田)

The lower abdominal region below the navel where bodily energy (*ki*) is focussed.

Seiza (正坐・正座)

The formal kneeling position.

Seme (攻め)

Applying physical and mental pressure on the opponent to create an opening to attack.

Shihan (師範)

A teacher of *budō* who has reached a high level of technical and spiritual maturity.

Shidachi (仕太刀)

The student or less experienced practitioner who is learning the techniques during *kata* practice. The person who takes the teaching role is called *uchidachi*.

Shikai or Shibyō (四戒・四病)

The four weaknesses of the heart: astonishment, fear, doubt, and hesitation.

Shinai (竹刀)

The practice sword used in *kendō* made up of four slats of bamboo strapped together.

Shinai-kyōgi (撓競技)

Shinai sport. The hybrid form of *kendō* created in the immediate post-war period as the first step in reinstating *kendō* after GHQ imposed ban on participation.

Shin-ki-ryoku-itchi (心気力一致)

Unification of mind, energy, and technique.

Shinogi (鑓)

The raised ridge on a Japanese sword which runs up from the end of the *tsuba* to the tip of the blade, and is located between the *mine* and the blade edge.

Shizentai (自然体)

A stable, balanced, and natural standing position.

Shōgō (称号)

A title indicating a certain status or qualification in addition to *dan* ranks (Renshi, Kyōshi and Hanshi).

Shōmen (正面)

The front face. Also used in reference to the altar of the *dōjō*.

Shōtō (小刀)

The short-sword used in Nitō-ryū. Also called the *kodachi*.

Shugyō (修行・修業)

The process of training one's mind and studying and polishing one's art.

Shu-ha-ri (守破離)

A term which describes the level of study in the martial arts and other traditional arts. *Shu* is the level in which the student loyally obeys the teacher's instructions. In the *ha* stage, the student develops his or her skills further through interaction with students of other schools. *Ri* is the level where the student is able to establish another style on the basis of all the previous knowledge and experience.

Sonkyo (蹲踞)

A squatting posture where one is on one's toes with the backside lowered, the knees opened outward, and the upper body upright.

Sori (反り)

The curvature on a *katana* or *bokutō*.

Sutemi (捨て身)

The state of sacrificing one's all in a match or while executing a technique without thinking about

the outcome.

T

Tachi (太刀)

A type of sword which is curved at the tip, and is worn on the waist with the blade-side down.

Taiatari (体当たり)

The act of colliding into the opponent with the surplus force of a strike to upset the opponent's balance and create another opening.

Tōkyō Kōtō Shihan Gakkō (東京高等師範学校)

The Tokyo Higher Normal School. Established in 1886, the school became a pioneering institution in the promotion of martial arts education, especially when it was presided over by Kanō Jigorō, the founder of Kōdōkan Jūdō. The school was the main rival of the Budō Vocational College administered by the Dai-Nippon Butokukai, and was the precursor to modern day Tsukuba University in Ibaraki Prefecture.

Taisō Denshūsho (体操伝習所)

Established by the Ministry of Education in 1868, the National Institute of Gymnastics was commissioned to investigate the possibility of introducing the martial arts into the school curriculum during the Meiji period.

Tsuba (鐔)

A sword guard which is inserted between the hilt and the blade region of a *katana* or *shinai* to protect the hands.

U

Uchidachi (打太刀)

The practitioner in the position of instructor or senior during *kata* practice.

Uchikomi (打ち込み)

Repetition of basic techniques in *kendō* and *jūdō* training.

Uchikomi keiko-hō (打ち込み稽古法)

Method of full-contact fencing developed during the eighteenth century with the advent of protective training equipment and bamboo practice swords.

W

Waza (わざ・技)

A technique or movement which is based on a standard form and is used to challenge and defeat the opponent.

Y

Yūdansa (有段者)

Practitioners who hold *dan* ranks from *shodan* up to *hachidan* (8-*dan*). There are still some practitioners who hold the rank of *kudan* (9-*dan*) from the old system that extended up to *jūdan*. Those who hold the ranks 6-*dan* and above are referred to as *kōdansa* (high *dan* rank)

Yūkō-datotsu (有効打突)

A valid strike in *kendō*. According to the rule book for *kendō* competitions, a valid strike is “an accurate strike or thrust made onto *datotsu-bui* (targets) of the opponent’s *kendō-gu* (armour) with the *shinai* at its *datotsu-bu* (striking edge) in high spirits and correct posture, being followed by *zanshin* (continued alertness).”

Z

Zanshin (残心・残身)

The state of keeping physically and mentally prepared after making a strike.

Zarei (坐礼)

A seated bow. Also see *ritsurei*.

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