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## A Brief Synopsis of the History of Kendo

Alexander Bennett [See Profile](#)

International Research Centre for Japanese Studies

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### The Meiji Restoration and Kendo

It is common knowledge that the modern art of kendo now practised by millions of people in Japan and around the world evolved from tried and tested battlefield techniques. With the advancement of tenka taihei, or 'peace throughout the realm' during the Tokugawa period (1603-1867), the martial arts took on a new meaning and role for the ruling samurai class. With no more wars per se, the military arts were studied as methods for self-development, with increasing emphasis placed on aesthetic and spiritual value rather than just as a means to maim and kill. The Tokugawa period saw the martial arts flourish with unprecedented popularity, and during the ensuing 250 years of peace, martial schools (bugei-ryuha) increased in number exponentially with some estimates at over 700 schools.

Japan's respect for the traditional martial arts was brought to an abrupt end with the arrival of Commodore Perry's 'Black Ships' in Japanese waters in 1853. After centuries of self-imposed isolation (sakoku), Japan found itself outdated, outgunned, and out of its depth with the Western nations. Although the seclusion from the rest of the world had given the Japanese martial arts time to develop into fascinating martial antiques, rich in ritualistic symbolism and spiritualism, they were no match for the devastating firepower of Western nations snooping around its shores demanding special rights and privileges. Commodore Perry's arrival woke the Japanese out of their false sense of security, and with the Meiji Restoration, they set about rebuilding the nation by drawing on the latest technology and ideas the West had to offer.

This essentially meant that traditional Japanese martial arts such as kenjutsu fell into obscurity due to a lack of perceived practical application. Guns, cannons, and a new conscript army were the order of the day if Japan was to catch up with the rest of the world. The era abounded with catch phrases such as wakon-yosai (Japanese spirit-Western technology) as they strove to educate the masses, arm the nation, and match the West in terms of a new modern civil society.

Kenjutsu, along with the other martial arts, was considered symbolic of the now outdated feudal

hierarchy which placed the minority bushi above all other classes, and was thus relegated to the realms of archaic nonsense with no practical use to the newly emerging modern society. With the abolishment of the Bakufu's military academy the Kobusho in 1866, and the dissolution of han (feudal domains) and the bushi controlled hanko (domain schools) in 1871, martial arts were no longer included as part of the educational curriculum, which was redesigned on western models to educate the masses rather than the privileged few.

Bushi rapidly lost all of their special privileges, and the final nail in the coffin was the edict denying them the right to wear the item considered the embodiment of their very soul, the katana. Many of those from bushi stock were cast into a world of unemployment and poverty. Apart from a number of high-ranking bushi who were endowed with positions of authority in the organs of Japan's new government, many others found themselves without status, employment, or income, and a significant number were reduced to utter destitution. In the midst of this social upheaval, those hit particularly hard were the bujutsu instructors in the employ of the Bakufu or domains, or who managed their own private dojo in the cities. With no stipends any more, and no students in their dojo, many subsisted from one day to the next not knowing where their next meal would come from.

### Sakakibara Kenkichi and Gekiken Kogyo

One such bushi was a man called Sakakibara Kenkichi. A proud man of hatamoto status, he lamented the decline in traditional swordsmanship and other martial arts. Being a man of action rather than words, he set about rekindling popular interest in the martial arts. The results of his initiative were a series of public demonstration matches performed by renowned martial artists known as gekiken kogyo (gekiken or gekken=kendo, kogyo=performance.) The first of these curious martial circuses was held in Asakusa for 10 days commencing April 11th 1873, and any member of the public regardless of age or sex was welcome to witness the spectacle as long as they paid the entrance fee. Spectators were also encouraged to participate in matches if they thought they were up to the challenge.

Sakakibara's innovation was received extremely well. During the Edo period, bujutsu was primarily the cultural monopoly of the bushi, but now everybody was given the opportunity to see the country's top swordsmen in action. Despite the pricey admission fee, the arena was packed to capacity. The success of Sakakibara's first meet inspired similar demonstrations throughout the country giving rise to a gekiken kogyo boom conducted by newly set-up troupes of travelling martial artists.

Providing a number of destitute bujutsu experts with a means of income, the events were a popular success. However, even more significant to modern practitioners of kendo was the role gekiken kogyo played in ensuring the survival of the traditional martial arts. A few years after the commencement of the Meiji Restoration, the martial arts were all but forgotten. However, gekiken kogyo brought them back into view. It is no exaggeration to say that if it weren't for the gekiken kogyo and the efforts made by Sakakibara Kenkichi in getting them started, kendo may not have survived the period. His timing was at the eleventh hour for kenjutsu and the other arts, but it was enough to see them through to their next stage of development, as opposed to extinction.

Nevertheless, there was also a much discussed downside to the effects of the gekiken kogyo. To many

critics, it was lamentable to see the once proud bushi selling their souls and prostituting their martial skills for a quick buck. Also, in the name of entertainment many of the shows were laced with sensational but hardly practical techniques and sound effects, just as one would expect to see at a pro-wrestling event today. This was seen as detracting from the true spirit of the martial arts, and to the disgust of many traditional hardliners also contributed to the subsequent sportified bastardization of the arts. Nonetheless, the historical importance of the gekiken kogyo cannot be denied, and in many ways it is thanks to this chapter in history that we still have kendo today.

### Keishicho Kendo

Many of the highest ranking kendo exponents in Japan today have some connection with the police. The relationship between the police force and kendo goes right back to the initial stages of the police system's development. When Sakakibara organised the first demonstrations, word soon spread and troupes formed after receiving official permission in various regions to operate demonstrations. After seeing initial success, the authorities then banned the demonstrations in fear of subversive bujutsu experts congregating and conspiring. However, their legality was reinstated after a few years, and the demonstrations quickly regained popularity.

The main difference was that this time they were not just for the enjoyment of spectators, but served as an important venue for cross-training amongst the exponents. Furthermore, they became a recruitment ground for the newly formed police force. What Japan needed during these volatile times after the Satsuma Rebellion<sup>1</sup> was brought to an end were effective police constables, and the government was looking at ways to greatly strengthen their police force.

Then Police Commissioner Kawaji Toshiyoshi had developed great respect for the Battotai division, who armed only with swords had performed magnificently in the battle at Taharazaka. He subsequently rediscovered the true value and potential of traditional bujutsu, in particular kenjutsu. Before making a trip to inspect police forces overseas in 1879, he published his thoughts in an essay titled Kendo Saikoron (Reviving Kendo) on the value of the traditional martial arts, and the importance of always being well-trained and prepared just as the swordsmen of old had always been. He asserted that any constables of the force must be in good shape for self-defence and also to apprehend evildoers. This essentially provided impetus to employ renowned kenjutsu exponents in the police force to serve as instructors and train the recruits.

On January 19th 1880, Police Academy guidelines were established and it was stipulated that all cadets were to be instructed in kenjutsu. Because of such developments, the gekiken demonstrations once again in full swing around the country after the temporary ban became the target of scouts who went in search of likely candidates to teach kenjutsu to the police. The swordsmen ranking at the top of the programs were well aware of the opportunities that awaited them if they performed well, and one by one the creme de la creme found themselves with cushy careers working as kenjutsu instructors mainly for the Keishicho (the police force of Tokyo prefecture.)

This was a great turn in fortune for some swordsmen, but it essentially spelled the end of gekiken kogyo. As the stars of the show found gainful employment in the police force, the talent in the troupes became depleted, and so too did the interest of the general public. Apart from a few troupes such as that led by

Satake Kanryusai who travelled the provinces, all the others died a natural death, thus signifying the end of an era.

Once kenjutsu was adopted into the police force, it continued to develop and became an integral part of the lifestyles of the constables. Apart from holding competitions, the Keishicho were actively involved in the refinement of kenjutsu by creating kata (set forms), and also a basic system of ranking. As far as the Keishicho kata is concerned, it is difficult to establish exactly when they were created, but records of a demonstration of various kata by the Keishicho administrators at the 1886 Keishicho Bujutsu Taikai (martial arts tournament) suggest that they were finalised around this time and named Keishicho-ryu, a tradition that is still practised by some members of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police today.

The Keishicho also instigated their own grading system in 1885. Gradings were held to assess the technical level of the officer to whom they awarded an appropriate kyu grade. The Dai Nihon Butokukai (see below) later also created a grading system based on dan for kendo and judo in March of 1917, but the Keishicho still continued with its own system. When Keishicho kendo was reinstated on May 11th 1953 after the SCAP-imposed ban of several years following Japan's defeat in WWII, the system was abolished for the newly formed All Japan Kendo Federation's system of shogo and grades. At that instant, all Keishicho grades were abolished after over 70 years of use.

### Kendo in Education

The road to make kendo accepted into the school curriculum was long and complicated. In the 1870s there were a number of government officials who voiced their inhibitions about totally westernising the education system, and at least wanted to retain certain aspects of 'Japaneseness' in the curriculum. This was especially the case with the physical education curriculum which was centred heavily on Western gymnastics. Some raised the question of why it was not possible to develop a PE curriculum based on the traditional Japanese bujutsu arts. Then again, there were many who were cautious about utilising the martial arts for such purposes.

To investigate the potential benefits and dangers of bujutsu in schools, the Ministry of Education instigated a number of official investigations. Of particular note was the 1883 survey done by the National Institute of Gymnastics (Taiso Denshujo), and then the 1896 investigation carried out by the School Health Advisors Board (Gakko Eisei Komonkai).

The 1883 investigation bore the following conclusions;

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

The dangers were as follows;

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 was 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 jujutsu 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 clean and hygienic.

Thus, the conclusion that was finally reached was that it would be inappropriate to introduce bujutsu into the school curriculum. On the one hand, it was recognised that as bujutsu could be customarily participated in, it could be beneficial in complementing the knowledge-oriented school system with its emphasis on spiritual development. On the other, it was deemed to run counter to the medical or physiological benefits expected from physical education activities. It was thought to be detrimental to balanced physical development, encouraged violence, antagonistic competition, dangerous, difficult to find the common medium between styles to coach, expensive, and unclean.

The investigation of the latter group resulted in similar findings, but they did suggest that bujutsu could be taught in schools as an extra-curricular activity for boys over the age of 16 who are in good health.

Another major problem was the fact that there was no established method for teaching students in a group. Traditionally, martial arts had always been taught one to one and knowledge passed on from teacher to students on an individual basis. In the modern educational environment this was impossible. Thus, there had to be a revolutionary new way to address this particular issue. The first concerted effort to do so resulted in the creation of 'bujutsu taiso,' or callisthenics.

In 1894 and 1895, during and after the Sino-Japanese war, a number of educators attempted to solve these problems by developing a form of gymnastics utilising martial techniques. The idea soon took on, and before long many schools throughout Japan allowed students to participate in newly developed callisthenic exercises using bokuto or naginata.

One of the main instigators of the system was Ozawa Unosuke. He stated that the purpose of developing bujutsu callisthenics was not only as a tool for education, but also to be utilised by members of the public to "nurture a nation of people with physiques by no means inferior to the people of Western nations." He also outlined the many problems faced by the current system of gymnastics such as the difficulty in procuring equipment and suitable facilities could be overcome by introducing bujutsu into the system. As a curricular activity, the bujutsu-derived exercises would be an effective means of nurturing physical adeptness, and as an extra-curricular activity it would be a great form of recreational exercise or games that encourage discipline and overall physical wellbeing.

Apart from Ozawa, there were others also experimenting with developing an indigenous system of gymnastic exercises based on bujutsu. Of particular note was Nakajima Kenzo who had studied the

Jikishinkage-ryu naginata 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 throughout the nation with seminars being held in various localities and greeted with considerable enthusiasm. All the same, there were also staunch critics who vehemently opposed the systems. Reasons for opposition were varied, but the most common criticism were that the techniques utilised were unrealistic and ineffective, paying little attention to hasuji (flight or cutting direction of the blade), and too much twisting and turning or ostentatious movement. Many couldn't see the difference between that and another form of popular exercise resembling baton twirling.

After decades of confusion over what should be taught in the school physical education curriculum, the Ministry of Education eventually issued the Syllabus of School Gymnastics (Gakko taiso kyoju yomoku) in 1913. This syllabus prescribed the Lingian approach to gymnastics as was the trend in Great Britain, America, and Scandinavia. This was supplemented with military drill and games (yugi), and each school was supposed to devise its own curriculum following the guidelines set out by the MOE. These new guidelines essentially spelled the end of the bujutsu callisthenics initiatives.

Despite the criticism, bujutsu taiso did prove that bujutsu could be practised or taught in groups quite easily without the need to pair up and without expensive equipment, contrary to previous thought. From this standpoint, it is fair to assert that it had a profound effect on the way instruction methodology for beginners in the budo arts subsequently developed. In this sense, apart from educators such as Ozawa and Nakajima, there were a small number of actual bujutsu exponents who either endorsed them, or tried their hand at developing gymnastic-like systems based around their ryuha techniques and kata as a way to teach beginners. Books of this genre started appearing in the 1890s. Thereafter there was a plethora of books published that were essentially collaborations between educators and martial artists as they learned from each other ways to best adapt bujutsu techniques to suit the goals of the physical education curriculum in schools. It wasn't until 1904-1905 that we see books appearing which were written as bujutsu textbooks (as opposed to taiso) for teaching beginners, but obviously heavily influenced by the taiso style and methodology.

The martial artists avoided referring to what they were doing as bujutsu-taiso but instead preferred to describe their initiatives as "group teaching methodology". In fact, after 1911 when bujutsu was finally accepted into the official school curriculum, albeit as an elective activity, many turned face and rained harsh criticism on the early bujutsu-taiso initiatives as being nothing more than performance exercises with sticks. This was, they asserted haughtily, in no way related to true bujutsu. This criticism is not exactly fair. What is also interesting to note is the influence western gymnastics exerted on the development of bujutsu taiso and then eventually the sought-after unified teaching methodology in budo. This point is particularly fascinating when one takes into consideration the modern rhetoric claiming modern budo to be traditional Japanese culture. One wonders what exactly 'traditional' means in this context.

Dai Nihon Butokukai (Great Japan Martial Virtue Society)

Apart from the abovementioned innovations, undoubtedly the formation of the Dai Nihon Butokukai in 1895 was the major turning point in the attempt to popularise the martial arts in schools, and ensured

their survival into the next century and beyond. By this stage, Japan was forging ahead in its quest to modernise, and was starting to embark on expansionist activities with a nationalistic fervour to match any other colonialist power of the day. The Sino-Japanese war (1894-1895) encouraged a surge of nationalism in Japan which in turn led to an increased interest in budo, as we have seen.

The year 1895 marked the 1100th year of Kyoto becoming the capital of Japan. At that time Emperor Kanmu is said to have constructed the Butokuden (Hall of Martial Virtue) to promote martial spirit and encourage the warriors to further develop their military prowess. Thus, in commemoration of this, and riding a growing wave of nationalism, the Butokukai was established in Kyoto under the authority of the Ministry of Education and with the endorsement of the Meiji Emperor. Its goals were to promote and standardize the plethora of martial disciplines and systems found throughout the nation. In 1899, the Butokuden was rebuilt near the grounds of the newly constructed Heian Shrine in Kyoto.

In 1902, an awards system was created to acknowledge individuals who had worked hard for the promotion of budo. In 1905, a division was established to train bujutsu instructors. The system was improved and revised a number of times and in 1911 the Butoku Gakko (School of Martial Virtue) was formed. This became known as the Bujutsu Senmon Gakko (Bujutsu Specialist School) in 1912, and then the Budo Senmon Gakko in 1919 when the term 'bujutsu' was officially replaced with 'budo' to emphasise the martial 'way' or spiritual aspects of the martial arts.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the Butokukai was instrumental in the promotion of budo through rewarding prominent individuals, training teachers, holding special events and tournaments. The Budo Senmon Gakko (or Busen as it became known) together with the Tokyo Koto Shihan Gakko (Tokyo Higher Normal School) led the way in producing young instructors who would be posted to schools throughout the country to teach children the arts.

#### Creation of a Unified Set of Kata

Still, there were many problems that had to be overcome before successful national popularisation was realised. In an attempt to unify the many kenjutsu traditions and their techniques into something that transcended affiliation to a specific group or classical tradition, the Butokukai decided to develop a universal set of kata which could be practised by anybody regardless of martial arts background. This was thought to be the best way to popularise the art and assert control over its national dissemination.

Watanabe Noboru chaired the first committee that was formed to accomplish this task. In 1906, they presented the culmination of their efforts in the form of 3 kata: Jodan (ten=heaven), Chudan (chi=earth), and Gedan (jin=human). However, there was much opposition to this set of 3 kata and they were eventually laid by the wayside without seeing the national circulation they were designed for. The matter became even more urgent when it was decided that kenjutsu would be included as a part of the physical education curriculum in 1911.

The Butokukai once again set up a committee to develop a set of kata which would enable effective and unified dissemination. The 5 kenjutsu masters from various ryuha tasked with this responsibility were Negishi Shingoro, Tsuji Shimpei, Naito Takaharu, Monna Tadashi, and Takano Sasaburo. In 1912, they presented the Dai Nippon Teikoku Kendo Kata (Great Japan Imperial Kendo Kata) which consisted of 7 kata of tachi versus tachi, and 3 kata of tachi versus kodachi. There were numerous changes and

amendments made to the original version in the following years, but it essentially constituted what modern exponents still practise as Nihon Kendo Kata. These kata contributed greatly to the spread of kenjutsu, and provided the means to teach a unified style in the schools of Japan.

### Budo and Nationalism

Nevertheless, bujutsu was not to become elevated to a compulsory subject in the physical education curriculum until 1931. The 1930s were an era of militarism in Japan. As early as 1928, the Minister of Education announced that “all imported ideas were to be thoroughly ‘Japanized’, abnormal thought was to be purged, and educators must firmly support the kokutai (National polity) and truly understand its meaning.”

In January 1931, in the midst of the “Manchurian Incident”, middle school regulations were revised again to make kendo and judo compulsory subjects due to being “recognised as useful in nurturing a resolute, determined patriotic spirit and training both the mind and the body.” Kyudo followed suit in 1933.

By the mid-1930s Japan’s government was for the most part controlled by the military. Of course militaristic thought also thoroughly permeated the schools, which were ordered to stress patriotism and seishin kunren, or ‘spiritual training.’ This trend intensified with the onset of the Pacific War, and taiso (gymnastics) was changed in name to tairen (physical discipline) in 1941. By 1942, the government had banned participation in most western sports, and even greater emphasis was placed on the martial arts. In March 1942, physical education classes in schools now focused on kendo, kyudo, judo, naginata (for girls) and rifle practice. The method of training in these arts was harsh with combat application in mind. Kendo was adapted during this time as well, and emphasis on making one devastating sacrificial cut was idealised rather than technical dexterity which might facilitate in winning bouts. In the name of battlefield realism, matches were made ippon-shobu, or the first person to get a point was the winner as opposed to the best of 3. The shinai was also shortened to resemble the length of a real sword. Grappling from close quarters was also encouraged.

### Budo Ban

After Japan’s WWII defeat, martial arts were banned by the Occupation Forces. Here, I would like to leave the explanation of what happened to the actual people who instigated the ban. The following is a SCAP report<sup>3</sup> concerning the role of the Butokukai (hence martial arts) in the instillation of nationalistic fervour in youth, and thus the reasons for the ensuing post-war ban on budo.

“With the gradual ascendancy of the military as the dominant controlling factor in Japanese politics culminating in the appointment of Tojo as Prime Minister in 1941, the Butokukai increasingly became a means of inculcating the militaristic spirit among the masses of Japan. Ashida Hitoshi, who as Welfare Minister in the Yoshida cabinet, was interviewed concerning this society stated: “With the ascendancy of the Konoye regime in 1939, there was a tendency to amalgamate the society with the Tenno [emperor] Rule System, but not until after the outbreak of the war did the organization come under the control of the government. Premier Tojo automatically became the national president, who directed the activities. The organization was transformed for military purposes. Juken-jitsu (bayonet practice) and

shageki (rifle marksmanship) were included in the program.” Going further into the wartime activities of the Butokukai, Watanabe Toshio, post-surrender business manager, stated that: “The organization was placed under the influence of five Ministries: Home Affairs, Education, Welfare, Army and Navy. A subsidy was granted by the government to the society for additional operating expenses. Militant nationalism was stressed. The March 1941 statistics revealed a total membership of 3,178,000.”

The report continues to outline the post surrender activities of the Butokukai.

“Following the surrender, officials of the Dai Nippon Butokukai, possibly fearing that the Occupation authorities would order them to dissolve, reorganized to their pre-1942 status. This step was taken by the society to cover up its war-time record and to continue its activities under the camouflage of democratic reorganization. The reorganization which took place was superficial and designed to replace those officials who had been apprehended as war criminals, or who, having fallen under the purge directive, might discredit the society in the eyes of the Occupation were they to remain at their posts. The Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, in recommending dissolution of the organization stated: “The official purpose of the organization has not been changed, so far as its charter reveals, and this is ‘to promote military arts and to contribute to the training of the people’.” In fact, Shimura Hisaku, prominent Butokukai leader in Ibaragi, said at this time: “We wish to introduce to the general public the real nature of military arts by continuous meetings in various places, and to propagandize the reason why we should absorb the real spirit of military arts in order to rebuild a peaceful Japan. We want to have the people acknowledge that the military arts are obviously not the tools for war, but for peace, and are really the national arts of Japan.” The contradiction inherent in such rationalization should have been obvious but the Japanese Government hesitated to add the Butokukai to the list of proscribed organizations since to do so would render its officials subject to the purge.”

Not surprisingly, the Butokukai was ordered dissolved by GHQ.

“On the basis of such facts as these, the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, recommended in a memorandum to the Chief of Staff that: “Dissolution of Dai Nippon Butokukai by order to the Imperial Japanese Government is recommended in accordance with the provisions of SCAPIN 548, paragraph I f, 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’.” Paragraph I f of SCAPIN 548 states: “You will prohibit the formation of any political party, association, society, or other organization and any activity on the part of any of them or of any individual or group whose purpose, or the effect of whose activity is affording military or quasi-military training.” Pursuant to this memorandum, the Japanese Government was orally instructed to add the Dai Nippon Butokukai to the list of organizations in appendix A of SCAPIN 548 and to dissolve the organization together with all its branches and any organizations which it controlled or with which it was affiliated. It is interesting to note that in 1943 the Attorney General’s Office of the United States Government listed the branches of the Butokukai existing in America among a group of subversive organizations which also included that notorious arm of politics by terrorism, the Kokuryu Kai or Black Dragon Society.”

Post-war Kendo

For a few years, the sound of grinding bamboo strikes and blood curdling kiai could hardly be heard in Japan. There were undoubtedly trainings still being held in secret, but officially kendo and the other budo arts were banned. Still, there were enough diehards left to instigate a movement to get kendo reinstated and legal again. In May 1948 a fencing and kendo demonstration was held in Tokyo. The following year in September 1949, the Tokyo Collegiate Kendo Federation alumni formed the Tokyo Kendo Club and set about looking at ways to revive kendo as a 'sport' suitable for a post war democratic society. What they came up with was a plan for shinai kyogi (shinai sport). As the name suggests, the sporting aspect of kendo was stressed, and the combative applications from before and during the war were consciously removed.

The shinai used in shinai kyogi was different to the conventional instrument of 4 slats. The top third was divided into 32 slats, the middle third 16 slats, and the end closest to the grip was 8 slats. These slats were encased in a leather sheath resembling the fukuro-shinai of the 18th century. The protective equipment resembled that of western fencing, and was produced with cost effectiveness in mind. Exponents did not wear traditional keiko-gi and hakama, but shirts and trousers. Matches were conducted in a defined court, and a time limit was instigated in which the player who scored the most points by the end was deemed the victor. There were also penalties given for foul play, no body clashes (tai-atari) were permitted, and the utterance of anything more than a grunt was prohibited. Three referees presided over matches as is the case with kendo now.

With the formulation of the new sport shinai kyogi, the All Japan Shinai Kyogi Federation was inaugurated in 1950, and this organisation continued to propagate and refine the rules and methodology of this new sporting creation. In 1952, shinai kyogi was permitted by authorities as an elective subject in middle and high schools. In the same year, the All Japan Kendo Federation was formed, and conventional kendo was once again permitted, albeit in a far less violent form than a decade earlier. At this time shinai kyogi and kendo co-existed, although there was much opposition against the former. In 1957 shinai kyogi was combined with kendo to become 'gakko kendo' (school kendo). At this point the All Japan Shinai Kyogi Federation was dissolved. Despite the criticisms aimed at shinai kyogi, it cannot be denied that it was the instrumental factor in the reinstatement of kendo, and also had a profound effect on how post-war kendo developed, especially in regards to match rules. It is interesting that barely a paragraph is dedicated to shinai kyogi in the recently published 625 page Kendo no Rekishi (History of Kendo) compiled by the All Japan Kendo Federation.

Following the inauguration of the All Japan Kendo Federation in 1952, the 1st All Japan Kendo Championships were held in 1953, the All Japan Collegiate Kendo Federation was formed in the same year, the All Japan Company Kendo Federation in 1957, and the All Japan School Kendo Federation in 1961.

The year 1964 was a turning point for budo with the inclusion of judo in the Tokyo Olympics. At this time, the Nippon Budokan was built in central Tokyo, and kendo, kyudo, and sumo were performed as demonstration sports at the venue. This international exposure to kendo culminated in the formation of the International Kendo Federation in 1970. The International Kendo Federation was formed at a meeting in Tokyo attended by 17 countries and regions with the aim of cultivating goodwill through the international propagation of kendo (including iaido and jodo). The IKF is responsible for holding the

World Kendo Championships every 3 years, international seminars, assistance in developing federation infrastructure in kendo developing countries, and information exchange.

Kendo saw an unprecedented boom and growth in numbers from the mid-1960s. This popularity sparked many debates, in particular, the issue of whether kendo is a form of traditional culture or a sport still fuels heated discussions, often without a suitable definition for either. This is mainly due to the undoubted emphasis placed on kendo competition, particularly at high school and university level. This is deemed by more conservative exponents as being in discordance with the true 'way' or essence of budo where issues of victory or defeat detract from the more important goal of character development.

It was with this in mind that the All Japan Kendo Federation decided to put on paper what kendo was 'ideally' supposed to be. In 1975, they created the official Concept of Kendo, and Purpose of Practicing:

### The Concept of Kendo

The concept of Kendo is to discipline the human character through the application of the principles of the Katana (sword).

### The Purpose of Practicing Kendo

The purpose of practicing Kendo is:

To mold the mind and body,  
To cultivate a vigorous spirit,  
And through correct and rigid training,  
To strive for improvement in the art of Kendo,  
To hold in esteem human courtesy and honor,  
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.

### Kendo Now

In 2004, kendo is still a popular activity in Japan and abroad. However, in Japan the number of exponents continues to drop. This can be attributed to a number of factors including the social problem of lowered birth rates, and also the attraction of young people to professional sports such as baseball, and more recently football. There are also other problems which need to be addressed such as, how relevant is the prescribed kendo tradition of character building "through the application of the principles of the katana" to people living in the 21st century? As I have shown in this article, modern kendo is not as old as some would suggest, and many refinements have been made to rules, concepts, and techniques over the last century to facilitate kendo's integration and acceptance as a socially useful and fulfilling activity for the times.

Of course, times change, so how is that being advocated now? What will kendo look like in the future?

Perhaps it would be best to allow the All Japan Kendo Federation to answer these crucial questions to conclude this brief synopsis of the history of modern kendo. The following statement is quoted from the official website of the All Japan Kendo Federation. I leave the statement in its original (English) form to make of what you will.

“The AJKF will engage in the promotion of Kendo or what can be considered as Budo, a culture of Japanese distinction. Promotion of Kendo neither means merely to increase the number of Kendo practitioners, nor to hold more competitions. The AJKF believes that promotion will involve the communication of the “spirit of the Samurai” through everyday training and competition. Kendo should not be promoted just as a competitive sport.

With this in mind, there is one thing that needs to be understood by those engaging in Kendo around the world. And that is, through the harsh training of Kendo, our hope is that you learn not only the technical skills of the sword, but to understand the social and ethical aspects of the Samurai as well as the spirit (mental attitude) of the Samurai. In other words, we hope that you will understand Kendo as Budo and to experience the training of it. A Shinai is a Samurai’s sword. Keiko-gi and Hakama are a Samurai’s formal attire. They should not be considered simply sports-wear. Without understanding this “spirit,” Kendo will merely be another physical exercise. We hope that you will try to understand and appreciate the profundity and cultural values of Kendo.

The AJKF hopes to promote what we believe to be authentic Kendo. We would like to ask for your full support and cooperation to our activities. Thank you for your attention.

Jun Takeuchi- Managing Director, AJKF (In charge of International Affairs).”<sup>4</sup>

There are many other areas which require attention when mapping the development of kendo. For example, in this article I did not give details of waza systemization, the Tenran Shiai matches held in front of the emperor, student contributions to kendo, match and refereeing systems, grading systems, and so on. These are topics I will take up in detail in future articles and the detailed book on the history of kendo which I am finishing now. However, the aim of this article was to give an outline of the overall path kendo has travelled to date. To steer kendo into the future requires an understanding of the past, and I believe that is clearly lacking in kendo communities around the world, including, dare I say it, Japan.

## Endnotes

1. The Satsuma Rebellion, or Seinan Senso was the last major armed uprising against the new Meiji government and its reforms. It was carried out by former bushi of the Satsuma domain (now Kagoshima Prefecture) under the leadership of Saigo Takamori. The rebellion lasted from 29th January to 24th September 1877. Its suppression proved the effectiveness of the government’s new conscript army in modern warfare.
2. It was from this time on that the terms ‘gekiken’ and ‘kenjutsu’ were replaced with ‘kendo’. Guttman & Thompson, p. 155, 156.
3. Political Reorientation of Japan, September 1945 to September 1948; Report. Contributors: Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers. Government Section- Publisher: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., Washington,

DC. 1949.)

4. <http://www.kendo.or.jp/english-page/english-page2/AJKF-Perspective-of-Kendo.htm>, June 20 2004.

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