




A DILEMMA CONCERNING THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF KENDO AS *BUDO* – JAPANESE *ZAN-SHIN* AND KOREAN *JON-SHIM*

UM DILEMA ACERCA DA INTERNACIONALIZAÇÃO DO KENDO COMO *BUDO* – *ZAN-SHIN* JAPONÊS E *JON-SHIM* COREANO 

UN DILEMA SOBRE LA INTERNACIONALIZACIÓN DEL KENDO COMO *BUDO* – *ZAN-SHIN* JAPONÉS Y *JON-SHIM* COREANO 

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 **Yoshiko Oda*** <odayo@hosei.ac.jp>

 **Kevin Krein**** <kjkrein@alaska.edu>

* Faculty of Sports & Health Studies, Hosei University. Machida City, Tokyo, Japan.

** University of Alaska Southeast (UAS). Juneau, AK, United States.

Abstract: While kendo practitioners outside of Japan, especially in South Korea, have advocated the inclusion of kendo as an Olympic sport, Japanese kendo organizations have resisted. We argue that if kendo were to take the form of an international Olympic-type sport, its value as a cultural art form would be reduced. Kendo, in its rules and formal structures, embodies traditional Japanese culture and ideas. We can see this when we consider the meaning of the Japanese term “zan-shin”, which plays a significant role in the judging of kendo, and its Korean translation as “jon-shim”. While “jon-shim” captures some of the practical and most observable aspects of “zan-shin”, it does not have the same cultural history and meaning. This results different attitudes toward the activity and different behavior in competition. We conclude that, while international competition is good for kendo, the Japanese concept of “zan-shin” must be maintained both in competition and in training.

Keywords: Sport. Martial Arts. Kendo. Budo.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Since the mid twentieth century there has been a high level of global interest in martial arts. As a result, martial art forms that have traditionally been maintained by ethnic groups have become internationally popular. In many parts of the world, one can now study kung fu, muay Thai, capoeira, and many other martial arts previously passed down within in particular ethnic groups. As such activities spread, we can also expect that they will change in order to meet the needs and interests of a wider global audience. In some cases, this change takes place in the context of martial arts becoming Olympic sports such as judo and taekwondo.

Here we look, in particular, at the dilemma facing Japanese *kendo*. As *kendo* has become popular internationally, there has been movement toward it becoming an Olympic event. Here, we argue that doing so would result in a significant change from the core values and culture of the activity (Shioiri, 1992; Bennett, 2007; Oda; Kondo, 2012; Oda, 2017).

We begin with a very general overview of *kendo*, but move to a close examination of the concept of *zan-shin*. While the term “*zan-shin*” is common to many of the Japanese arts, in *kendo* it refers to a state of attention, focus, and attitude that must be demonstrated in order for one to score points in a match. We will discuss both the role of *zan-shin* in the formal rules of *kendo* and its history and development as a concept. (Oda; Kondo, 2012; Oda, 2017)

From here, we will turn to *kumdo*. *Kumdo* is a Korean martial art, developed from *kendo*. *Kumdo* competitors compete in international *kendo* competition. Japan and Korea often face each other in the highest levels of international competition. We provide a general overview of the development of *kumdo*, but focus on the role of *jon-shim* (存心), the Korean counterpart to Japan’s *zan-shin* (残心).

We conclude by analyzing differences between *jon-shim* and *zan-shin* in order to better understand the implications of pushing for *kendo* to be included as an Olympic sport. It also helps to explain the hesitation within Japan of making *kendo* an Olympic sport while international groups such as the Korean Kumdo Association favor the adoption of *kumdo/kendo* as an Olympic sport.¹ (Oda, 2017)

If *kendo* is to maintain its cultural value as a Japanese martial art, it will be by recognizing which aspects are fundamental to that value and maintaining them within *kendo* practice and competition. We argue that *zan-shin* (残心) is one of those core concepts that should be understood and upheld.

2 KENDO AND ZAN-SHIN

In *kendo*, opponents face each other with bamboo swords and armour, and attempt to strike each other in specific target areas. *Kendo* (剣道) literally “the way of

¹ Oda and Kondo (2012) argued that *kendo*, as a traditional martial art of Japan characterized by respect for form and propriety contrasts with modern internationalized sports. Oda and Kondo (2014) examined the concept of *yuko-datotsu*, which defines a point scoring strike in *kendo* and included formal and aesthetic aspects (including characteristics of *zan-shin*). This article builds on that work.

the sword” has a long history and developed as a traditional Japanese martial art or *budo* (武道).

The International Kendo Federation (FIK) was established under the auspices of the All Japan Kendo Federation in 1970. That same year, the first World Kendo Championship (WKC) was held in Japan with participants from seventeen countries. Currently, 62 countries are represented by participants in the FIK.²

While it is true that *kendo* has become a modern international sport. It has also maintained many aspects of its roots in traditional Japanese culture. In Japan, *kendo* practice sessions are referred to as *keiko* (稽古 literally: think about the ancients), which is normally used to refer to learning or practicing traditional performing and martial arts, or to studying classical texts. The place where *kendo* is practiced is a *dojo* (道場 literally: place to train in the “way”) where “*do* (道)” refers to a proper way of being a person or spiritual path.³ Rather than seeing *kendo* simply as a competitive sport, Japanese practitioners comprehend it as a means of character building and for attaining the way. Throughout their lives, they devote themselves to their art and pursue value in the embodiment of spirituality that is the background to transcending the world of wins and losses. In other words, what we see here is a way of thinking of a “discipline” for mastering one’s conduct rather than “learning” that pursues *waza* (技) or skills (Nishihira, 2019). Using Martinkova’s terminology, on this characterization, it may be better to refer to *kendo* as a “martial path” rather than a sport (Martinkova; Parry, 2016).

The cultural ideology of *kendo* is also deeply embedded in the rules that govern matches. A successful strike in *kendo*, *yuko-datotsu* (有効打突) is defined in Article 12 of the Kendo Shiai and Shinpan (審判: judge) Regulations as:

An accurate strike or thrust made onto designated targets (*datotsu-bui*) of the opponent’s *kendo-gu*. The strike or thrust must be executed in high spirits with correct posture, using the striking section (*datotsu-bu*) of the shinai with the correct angle (*hasuji*), and followed by *zanshin*. (International Kendo Federation, 2017, p. 5).

In other words, in addition to accurately striking the target, the strike must be executed in high spirits and, after the strike, the competitor must maintain an attitude of *zan-shin*. When making judgments of *yuko-datotsu*, all facets of the entire process, from the preparatory to the main stage, culminating in the final stage subsequent to the *datotsu*, are subject to judgment. We will return to *zan-shin* in detail; at this point suffice it to say that *zan-shin* (残心) refers minimally to an attitude of focus and readiness in preparation for further attacks.

If we compare this to the Western sport of fencing, which we might expect to be similar as a sword-based competitive activity, it looks very different. In fencing, strikes are indicated by the use of electronic sensors triggered by contact. If a competitor makes contact, a point is scored. *Kendo* is very different. Because importance is

2 International Kendo Federation (FIK) Affiliated Organizations: <https://www.kendo-fik.org/ja/organization/affiliate> (Accessed 14 Feb. 2024)

3 The term “do” is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese “tao” and its use in Japanese to refer to a life path or spiritual path.

placed on process, form, and attitude, it would be impossible to make any judgments electronically.

But while qualities such as form and posture are central to *kendo*, it is still very different from aesthetic sports such as gymnastics and figure skating. In *kendo*, no points are scored from completing a very difficult or beautiful movement. The strike must contact the opponent with force and in the appropriate place *and* it must follow the appropriate form *and* be completed with the proper attitude.

Further, *yuko-datotsu* is not recognized unless the striking competitor calls out the intended target as a strike to the head (面: *men*), wrist (小手: *kote*) or body (胴: *do*) or a thrust to the throat (突き: *tsuki*) together with a vigorous vocal gesture, strikes the intended target (打突部位: *datotsu bui*), maintains correct posture, and then maintains *zan-shin* after the *datotsu*.

Before turning to a more detailed discussion of *zan-shin*, it is worth attempting to explain the emphasis on form within *kendo*. The idea is that, in Japanese *kendo*, one's movements and attacks should embody the philosophy that underlies the art form. We can say that appreciating this requires sensing the beauty of possessing form within the form. What is meant by this can be seen in other traditional arts. In the case of *kado* (華道: traditional flower arrangement), for example, rather than simply inserting flowers into a vase, the flowers are given life, and the arrangement is given meaning, by its representation of philosophical elements such as heaven, earth and man. *Sado* (茶道: tea ceremony) is also not just a matter of drinking and savoring tea; the ultimate goal for the participants is the embodiment of the spirit that flows therein through the formal observation of proprieties. (Hoshikawa, 1985; Hoshikawa; Edo; Oda, 2014) The actions that embody philosophical, cultural, and spiritual forms, in the case of *kendo*, have been passed on, and recognized as, correct posture or accurate *datotsu*. In this sense, formal beauty is sought within movement and action. The embodied cultural meanings within Japanese traditional arts cannot be separated from those arts without devaluing them. And this is why the traditional arts are such valuable parts of cultural heritage. (Oda; Kondo, 2012; Ilundáin-Agurruza, 2014a; 2014b).⁴

The ability to appreciate this may not be possible on a purely intellectual level. Eighth dan Korean *kendo-ka* Park Dong-Chull contends that the aesthetics of *kendo* consists in integrating “sport as art” and philosophical education of “*gyo*” (行: action). Aesthetic experience within *kendo* is based on the uniformity of one's mind, sword, and body. It is not only effective physical movements that matter. As Park explains, the beauty sought in *Kendo* is the aesthetic experience of action composed of artistic forms and Eastern philosophical elements. In pursuing excellence in the art, one acquires through physical training the ability to experience the bodily awareness of philosophical forms. He furthermore adds that the judge, *shinpan*, who is the person who assesses the degree of attainment of that beauty, must inevitably be a practitioner who has acquired this bodily awareness. (Park, 2001)

⁴ We will not argue the point here, but some would argue that all sports embody philosophical values. For example, Krein argues that Western purposive sports, as ways of worldmaking, replicate and reinforce cultural ideas, norms, and values (Krein, 2008). See also Krein (2019 – chapters 5 and 6).

With this general understanding in mind, we turn specifically to *zan-shin* (残心). The literal translation of the Chinese characters (漢字) is ‘remaining mind’. It is a term used in both traditional arts and martial arts. In general terms, *zan-shin* refers to an attitude of alert awareness, focus, or being mentally prepared.

Zan-shin has also been associated with the concept of *yoin* (余韻: lingering reverberations) or reverberations remaining after an action or event. The concept is referred to in Li Naosuke’s (井伊直弼) influential 1857 work on the tea ceremony, *Chanoyu Ichieshu* (茶湯一会集: Collection on the Oneness of the Tea Ceremony). Li explains that the highest point of the tea ceremony is after the guests have left, when the master is alone. Immediately after seeing the guests off, he returns to the tea-ceremony room and, while placing importance on the *yoin* of the place as *zan-shin*, he sits alone and reflects as *yojyo-zanshin* (余情残心) on the *ichigo-ichie* (一期一会) of the day. (Li, 1988; Toda, 2012)

While the event is over, there is something, perhaps the spirit of the event, that remains, that reverberates. *Ichigo-ichie* (literally, a once in a lifetime encounter) refers to the fact that each moment, each meeting, happens only once. While the martial arts are very different from arts such as *sado* (tea ceremony) they are also deeply linked. Li Naosuke emphasizes being in the correct state of mind for the tea ceremony, but also remaining in that state of mind to sense and appreciate the *yoin* following an event. Many would argue that this frame of mind, *zan-shin*, is shared by those participating in martial arts.

While *zan-shin* might be generally interpreted as a mental state, it is more accurately described as a body/mind state. It will be helpful here to consider two more concepts associated with *zan-shin*: *kigamae* and *migamae*.

Kigamae (気構え literally: spirit-stance) refers to being in a state in which one is mentally prepared. It is considered to be:

[...] the state of mind in which the competitor comprehends the mental and physical moves of the opponent prior to *datotsu* and stimulates thorough awareness internally so as to be prepared to respond at any time. (All Japan Kendo Federation, 2008, p.158).

On the other hand, *migamae* (身構え literally: body-stance) means to “assume a posture in which the player extends his/her awareness throughout the body and is able to respond immediately to the opponent” (All Japan Kendo Federation, 2008, p. 166).

Both of these must be present for *zan-shin*. If one strikes effectively with high spirits and correct posture and is prepared in both their mind and body to respond to their opponent, there should be no possibility of successful counterattack. Only in these conditions will the *shinpan* declare a *yuko-datotsu* in accordance with the regulations.

The rules and practices relating to *zan-shin* require *kendo* competitors to act in a way that demonstrates particular attitudes of attention and respect for other competitors and for *kendo* itself. In this way, the martial art maintains, encourages, and embodies traditional elements of Japanese culture.

The Subsidiary Rules Article 24 of the *Kendo Shiai and Shinpan Regulations*,⁵ stipulates *zan-shin* as one of the conditions for a *yuko-datotsu* judgment and, furthermore, points out the possibility of *yuko-datotsu* cancellation in cases in which proper respect for one's opponent is not shown:⁶ (International Kendo Federation, p.14, 2017)

1. When *shiai-sha* who has made *yuko-datotsu* is not alert in spirit and/or posture to a possible counterattack by the opponent; or
2. When *shiai-sha* who has made *yuko-datotsu* makes exaggerated gestures of surplus power or validity of *datotsu*.

After a *yuko-datotsu* one is required to remain focused on one's opponent in a formal stance, ready to defend against possible counter attack, either from the opponent or from others. *Hikiage* (弓|揚げ: drawing back or retreating) is also prohibited – one must remain poised. As well, rather than expressions of victory such as pumping one's fist or making loud exclamations, the focus is on facing one's opponent, ready to respond. In doing so, one also demonstrates respect for one's opponent.

It is worth noting that, in kendo, the aesthetics of restraint is also demanded of the spectators. Although applause is permitted at tournaments, cheering or shouting is not. Though not clearly pointed out in the rules for matches, there is an implicit understanding that applies to tournaments. If spectators become noisy, announcements will generally be made to ensure that everyone is aware that silence must be maintained at tournaments.

3 KUMDO AND JON-SHIM

Kendo, in its contemporary form, is generally understood to have been introduced into Korea during Japan's occupation from 1910-1945. It continued to flourish after the Japanese left Korea in 1945 and has advanced remarkably. International competition began when the FIK was established in 1970.

The World Kendo Championships are held every three years and Koreans have consistently competed at the top levels of competition. Between 1988 and 2003 Japan and Korea met in the finals of the World Kendo Championships six times. Japan won each of these matches. In the 2006 men's team semi-final, the United States beat Japan for the first time, and Korea beat the USA in the final. Since 2009, Japan has faced Korea in the men's final of every world championship. In addition to the men's team, the Korean women's team as well opposed Japan in the finals in seven championships in succession beginning with the 12th championships in 2003.

Korea's competitive strength makes them Japan's most prominent international rival. Korea's success has also led to their boosted *kendo*'s growth in Korea and has led to Korea being influential in FIK. (Oda; Kondo, 2012; Oda, 2017)

⁵ Article 24 of the subsidiary rules accompanies and clarifies regulation 27 which specifies the cancelation of *yuko-datotsu*.

⁶ Hideki Nishimura asserts that Kendo alone officially acknowledges a prohibition on ostentatious exhibits by winners and shouting displays, and that an aesthetic of restraint is required even in competition (Nishimura, 2009, p. 86-9).

By both international rules and domestic rules in Korea, the standard for a judgment of *yuko-datotsu* is designed to be the same as in Japan. The Korean term for “*yuko-datotsu* (有効打突)” is “*yuhyo gyeogja* (有効撃刺)” and the Korean term for “*zan-shin*” is “*jon-shim*”. In Japan, without *zan-shin* there can be no *yuko-datotsu*. In Korea, without *jon-shim* there can be no *yuhyo gyeogja*. But complex terms carrying significant cultural meaning do not always translate easily or directly.

Although the Hangul writing system is normally used in Korea, Korea also used Chinese characters (漢字: phonetically *kanji* in Japanese and *hanja* in Korean) like Japan. The same Chinese characters are used in both Japanese and Korean for many terms, including *kendo* and *kumdo* which are both written as 剣道. Given that this is the case, one would expect that “*zan-shin*,” which plays such an important role in Japanese *kendo*, and its counterpart “*jon-shim*,” in *kumdo* would use the same Chinese characters. However, this is not the case. *Zan-shin* (残心) and *jon-shim* (存心: 존심) are different terms.

The *Shogakukan and Kumsung Korean-Japanese Dictionary* indicates that *jon-shim* has the following definitions: “(1) bearing in mind and not forgetting and (2) mind, thoughts, innermost thoughts” (p1574). The term *zan-shin* is not listed as part of the meaning. (Shogakukan, 2009)

As for how *jon-shim* is used in Korean Kumdo, Lee Jongrim, former president of the Korean Kumdo Association, provides an explanation of *jon-shim* by opposing it to *ho-shin*:

The word *Ho-shin* (放心) is an antonym of *jon-shim* (存心). *Ho-shin* is a state of inattentiveness in which the mind, blown by the wind, drifts away like a cloud, making it impossible to respond to the opponent. With *jon-shim*, however, the mind is constantly alert and one’s awareness remains sharp. (Lee, 2010).

Lee also claims that *zan-shin* and *jon-shim* are the same:

There is the term *zan-shin* (残心) that is used in Japan. This term does not appear in Japanese language dictionaries, although the meaning is the same as *jon-shim* (放心). That is, it means that, when attacking or after the attack, one remains prepared to deal with the opponent with a stance of *kokorogamae* consistent throughout. *Jon-shim* is also extremely important in a formal sense. (Lee, 2020, p.157).⁷

Besides the claim that “*zan-shin*” is not found in Japanese dictionaries (it appears in the *Shogakukan, 2001, Unabridged Dictionary of the Japanese Language*, among others) Lee’s latter statement seems to capture the practical application of *zan-shin* in *kendo*. In Japanese *kendo*, one must remain prepared and attentive both during and after attacks. The Japanese term *kokorogamae* (心構え) refers to preparedness or readiness, and in this aspect, “*zan-shin*” and “*jon-shim*” are similar in meaning.

As for the claim concerning *zan-shin* and *ho-shin*, in modern Japanese *kendo*, the term “*ho-shin*” (放心) is rarely used. And, *zan-shin* is not understood as an antonym

⁷ Translation by the authors.

of “*ho-shin*.” That said, there are historical uses of the terms that might be seen as related to Lee’s interpretation.

Miyamoto Musashi’s *Heiho Sanjugo-Kajo* (兵法三十五箇条: *Thirty-Five Articles of Military Strategy*, 1641) contains narrative on *zan-shin* and *ho-shin*. Miyamoto wrote, “Holding back the spirit (‘*zan-shin*’) and letting go the spirit (‘*ho-shin*’) should be used appropriately according to the existing objective...” (Article 26). This use of the term makes sense and refers generally to those situations in which one must be careful and precise and those in which one must rely on an abundance of powerful spirit to be successful. Typical of Miyamoto, the key is to know which strategy to apply and how to adapt oneself as required. But this use of “*zan-shin*” and “*ho-shin*” is different from the one that Lee offers.

Turning to Lee’s latter claim, it is true that the states of *zan-shin* and *jon-shim*, are related to being in a state of mental preparedness or readiness – *jon-shim*. *Jon-shim* originates in the teachings of Mencius⁸. From the standpoint of martial arts, after defeating an enemy, it is absolutely imperative to have *zan-shin* in the form of *ki-gamae* or *mi-gamae* (mental and bodily readiness for engagement).

But, when compared to *zan-shin*, what is missing from Lee’s explanation, and from the general meaning of *jon-shim*, is the rich cultural context of the traditional Japanese arts that inform *zan-shin*. *Zan-shin* is a state of focus and readiness, but it is also a state of self-control, respect, and appreciation. This colours the tone of *kendo* in Japan. While it is competitive, one cannot be successful in technique alone, or rather, technique itself must embody traditional philosophical ideas and attitudes – not only physical movements. This is not to say that many *kumdo* practitioners do not do the same (or that they do not have self-control, or are disrespectful). But, the emphasis on *zan-shin* and its cultural philosophy in Japan is central to the art form, which is recognized as a way of preserving and continuing Japanese cultural values.

4 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Kendo continues to expand worldwide. And, as with most competitive sports, there has been a push from some in the *kendo* community for *kendo* to become an Olympic sport. This push has come from South Korea especially (Bennett, 2007; Oda, 2012). This is understandable considering the popularity of *kumdo* in South Korea and the Korean success in international competition. However, it is very unlikely that *kendo* will be adopted in the Olympic Games at any point in the near future. This is because there is opposition to this from inside of Japan. (Benesch, 2020)

This opposition is, in part, due to the development in judo after it became an international competitive sport. Judo was adopted as an Olympic sport in 1964. Since that time, many have argued that judo’s value as a Japanese cultural asset has become diluted or lost altogether. (Nagaki, 2008; Murata, 2011) One of the important reasons

⁸ According to Mencius, *sonshin* 存心 refers to preserving one’s heart and cultivating one’s true nature. As he says, “The reason why a wise man is different from others is because he preserves his heart.” And “A wise man preserves his heart with benevolence, and preserves his heart with propriety.” (Shirakawa, Shizuka. *Jitsu*. Heibonsha, Tokyo.)

people in Japan learn *kendo* is because it embodies Japanese cultural aspects and ideas. The argument is that, it would be very difficult to maintain this aspect of *kendo* because it is inconsistent with international competitive formats. (Shioiri, 1992)

In 1899, judo's founder Jigoro Kano, was involved in the preparation of Judo Shiai Judging Rules. He stated that "Judo matches should not be judged only on the relative merits of *waza* [techniques]. Rather, it is necessary to make judgments by strictly comparing the mental movement of the two opponents." He further stated that Judo has three elements: *shobu* (winning or losing), *taiiku* (physical exercise) and *shushin* (cultivation of wisdom and virtue) and judgments are especially important from the perspective of *shushin*. The "educational value of martial arts" as espoused by Kano has had considerable effect on subsequent views of *budo*, martial arts, matches and match judgment rules up to the present. (Nagaki, 2008)

When match judging rules were formulated for *kendo* in 1927, prohibitions on *hikiage*, *zan-shin* and other characteristic rules were included from the standpoint of an "educational view of matches" (Nakamura, 2007).

But since it has been an international and Olympic sport, judo has gone through a cultural transformation. Japanese athletes, along with those from other countries, brandish their fists in the air when they win a match and can be seen jumping for joy on the tatami mats. Even Kano's "educational view of matches" is gradually being disregarded. Within the context of advancing international competition, it is very difficult to maintain the unique sense of morality, etiquette, and philosophy of Japan. (Nagaki, 2008)

One explanation for this is the fact that, in international Olympic style competition, fairness is paramount. This being the case, the aspects on which competitors are judged must be observable to all. The conditions for *yuko-datotsu* that depend on *zan-shin* include aspects that are straightforwardly observable and, simultaneously, a mentality or spirituality that require very subtle and wholistic assessment from experienced judges. These difficult to observe factors are those that embody the deepest aspects of Japanese culture, philosophy, and spirituality.

Of course, there is another side to this. In addition to embodying aspects of Japanese culture, *kendo* claims a universal appeal and educational value for the development of human beings, not just of Japanese. And, the fact that *kendo*'s incorporation into Japanese education during the Meiji era contributed to an attitude toward, and an attraction to, militarization cannot, and should not, be overlooked. This is particularly true given that the introduction of *kendo* into Korea was carried out forcibly through cultural imperialism accompanying the Japanese occupation. As Hidenori Tomozoe points out:

[...] martial arts or *Kendo* taught in school has had a relationship of affinity with warfare and militarism and martial arts and the spirit of *budo*, which are linked at times to narrow-minded nationalism and were used as a mechanism for disseminating imperial system ideology. (Tomozoe, 2009)

It is certainly possible that maintaining an attitude of universality rather than nationalism, might help *kendo* avoid attitudes of imperialism, colonialism, and

nationalism and develop an attitude that follows something more like the Olympic ideals. And, as with any activity that brings people from different cultural backgrounds together, changes in terminology and practice can be positive and developed in a cooperative space. If *kendo* follows a path that emphasizes Olympic style international competition, *zan-shin* will likely be replaced with something more like *jon-shim* since the latter does not depend on the traditional culture of Japan.

In short, it seems that *kendo* must choose between international dissemination as a competitive sport and its historical form as a Japanese cultural practice.

5 A PATH FORWARD

It is undeniable that *kumdo* competitors have attained a level that rivals the best Japanese *kendo* competitors. And, for most sports, internationalization is a good thing (see, for example, Martinkova, 2023). The concern, however, is that international *kendo* competitions will begin to look and feel more like Western-style sports events and that *kendo* will lose its cultural value as a form of Japanese *budo*. Because of this, we recommend that *zan-shin* should remain a condition of *yuko-datosu* in international competition and that it be understood to include the requirements of maintaining readiness after an attack, respecting competitors, and refraining from exaggerated gestures (vocal or physical).

However, the application of *zan-shin* in an international context is not without difficulties. It is often the case that people who have a cultural background characterized by the values of Western sports find it difficult to comprehend physical activities, especially those that include competitive elements, that do not share the same value system. Thus, we will conclude this essay with an explanation of the underlying reasons for emphasizing *zan-shin*.

While *kendo* is a competitive physical practice, and in this sense is a sport, there are aspects that cannot be preserved in the type of competitive space that characterizes Olympic-type sports. In such sports, it is important that the criteria used to determine whether points are awarded or achieved are clearly defined and that the actions or events required to score points are publicly observable.⁹ The reason that observability is so important in Olympic sport is because it is essential that judging be as unbiased as possible and that the person or team who performs the best, scores the most points, etc. is deemed the winner. There is value in this approach to fairness.

But if, as in *kendo*, we judge competitors not only on their technique, but also on their internal mental state (both before and after points are scored), it is difficult to maintain this level of observable unbiased judging. The fact is that, in Japanese *kendo*, the priority has been given to the development of the internal mental states of participants rather than to unbiased judging in competition. This is not to say that judges do not attempt to be unbiased. But, the electronic system of scoring in fencing, for example, is less likely to be influenced by factors such as a competitor's reputation, general level of skill, ranking, and so on, than is a human judge in *kendo*. While this

⁹ See Heather Reid (2009) on this point.

trade-off would be unacceptable for an Olympic sport, it is part of Japanese *kendo*. Participating in competitive matches is an important part of *kendo* training. Doing so provides opportunities to both test one's skills and to develop one's self-control and physical and mental abilities. In order to be meaningful, it is important that competitive matches are judged fairly. But while accurately determining the winners of matches is important in *kendo*, it is not the most important thing. The personal, philosophical, and spiritual development of practitioners is the most important thing.

If *kendo* were adopted as an Olympic sport, it would be forced to adopt a more observable scoring system that is more clearly unbiased, thus prioritizing fairness over the other principles that are more central to *kendo*. While the international popularity of *kendo* is a positive development, we agree with the sentiment that *kendo* should not become an Olympic sport.

To further explain the difference between *kendo* as a traditional Japanese art and Olympic-type sport, we must understand that the kind of personal cultivation that occurs in the Japanese arts is largely developed implicitly, through following prescribed patterns of action, rather than through explicit explanations and descriptions. By strictly observing and repeating formalities and proprieties *kendo*, character traits are cultivated. This leads to proficiency in *kendo*. But the ultimate aim is to transcend these formalities and proprieties and embody the philosophical and spiritual traits that underlie the art form or martial path.¹⁰ In other words, the reason why importance is placed on proprieties and formalities in martial arts, flower arrangement, tea ceremonies and other traditional arts is that they provide a way for practitioners to embody philosophical concepts and ways of being. It is this path to development that is of utmost concern in *kendo*.

Culture changes. However, things of value are passed on and are retained. Given *kendo*'s historical links to imperialism, militarism, and Japanese nationalism, serious thought must go into what traits are being developed. Here, the internationalization of *kendo* may be a positive influence. The interaction between Japanese and *kendo* competitors from around the world, in a context that demands respectful treatment of everyone involved, will hopefully lead to attitudes of appreciation, respect and tolerance.

While we see the benefit to the study of *kendo* to be universal, our recommended approach will result in *kendo* remaining Japanese in character, in the sense that aspects of Japanese culture will be meaningfully embodied in the practice. It will also mean that even non-Japanese *kendoka* will have to understand more of Japanese culture to appreciate *kendo*. *Kendo* is well known as a Japanese martial art. Most participants appreciate learning about the culture that created it.

But there is a sense in which *kendo* values are universal as well. While respect for one's opponents, self-control, and focused mental states might be emphasized in Japan, they are not uniquely Japanese. What is Japanese, are the particular ways that the Japanese cultural arts strive to develop and embody these traits. *Kendo* can both remain Japanese and be universal and practiced worldwide.

¹⁰ See Hosikawa 1985 on this point.

We can expect *kendo's* popularity to continue to grow internationally. Part of the attraction of *kendo* is the emphasis on personal and character development through formal training. There are many Olympic-type sports in the world, but fewer ways to develop oneself ethically and spiritually through physical training of the type *kendo* offers.

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Resumo: Enquanto os praticantes de kendo fora do Japão, especialmente na Coreia do Sul, têm defendido sua inclusão como esporte olímpico, as organizações japonesas de kendo têm resistido. Argumentamos que, se o kendo adotasse a forma de um esporte internacional de tipo olímpico, seu valor como forma de arte cultural seria reduzido. O kendo, em suas regras e estruturas formais, encarna a cultura e as ideias tradicionais japonesas. Podemos ver isso ao considerar o significado do termo japonês “zan-shin”, que desempenha um papel significativo na arbitragem do kendo, e sua tradução coreana como “jon-shim”. Embora “jon-shim” capture alguns dos aspectos práticos e mais observáveis de “zan-shin”, ele não tem a mesma história e significado cultural. Isso resulta em atitudes diferentes em relação à atividade e comportamentos distintos na competição. Concluimos que, embora a competição internacional seja benéfica para o kendo, o conceito japonês de “zan-shin” deve ser mantido tanto na competição quanto no treinamento.

Palavras-chave: Esporte. Artes Marciais. Kendo. Budo.

Resumen: Mientras los practicantes de kendo fuera de Japón, especialmente en Corea del Sur, han defendido su inclusión como deporte olímpico, las organizaciones japonesas de kendo se han resistido. Argumentamos que, si el kendo adoptara la forma de un deporte internacional de tipo olímpico, su valor como forma de arte cultural se vería reducido. El kendo, en sus reglas y estructuras formales, encarna la cultura y las ideas tradicionales japonesas. Podemos ver esto al considerar el significado del término japonés “zan-shin”, que desempeña un papel significativo en el arbitraje del kendo, y su traducción coreana como “jon-shim”. Aunque “jon-shim” captura algunos de los aspectos prácticos y más observables de “zan-shin”, no tiene la misma historia y significado cultural. Esto resulta en actitudes diferentes hacia la actividad y comportamientos distintos en la competencia. Concluimos que, aunque la competencia internacional es beneficiosa para el kendo, el concepto japonés de “zan-shin” debe mantenerse tanto en la competencia como en el entrenamiento.

Palabras clave: Deporte. Artes marciales. Kendo. Budo.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that this work involves no conflict of interest.

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EDITORIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Alberto Reinaldo Reppold Filho*, Alex Branco Fraga*, Elisandro Schultz Wittizorecki*, Irena Martínková**, Jim Parry**, Mauro Myskiw*, Raquel da Silveira*

*Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Escola de Educação Física, Fisioterapia e Dança, Porto Alegre, RS, Brazil.

**Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, Charles University, Prague, Czechia Republic.