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ABSTRACT

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

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Japan, Japanese Martial Arts, Martial Arts Studies, Japanese Martial Arts Studies.

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NEW RESEARCH ON JAPANESE MARTIAL ARTS

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

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

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

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

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

In 'The Dissemination of Japanese Swordsmanship to Korea', Bok-kyu Choi explores the spread of Japanese swordsmanship by analysing a series of manuals (aka fight books) compiled in Korea (the *Muyejebo* [1598], *Muyejebo Beonyeoksokjip* [1610], and *Muyedobotongji* [1790]) to illustrate the influence of Japanese fencing on Korean military training. He argues that Japanese *kage-ryu* was introduced to the Korean military as a form of kata and sword combat pattern training, which featured the 'Koreanisation' of Japanese fencing. During the 18th century, four different Japanese fencing methods were documented in the *Muyedobotongji* – *toyu-ryu*, *ungwang-ryu*, *cheonryu-ryu*, and *yupi-ryu*. Efforts to introduce Japanese fencing continued in modern times, he argues, especially under Japanese rule (1910-1945) when gekiken and kendo were promoted in Korea and spread widely throughout the country. After the liberation, kendo became a target of nationalist and anti-Japanese sentiments. In an attempt to erase its Japanese origins, kendo was transformed into a Korean-style sword art named 'kumdo'. In essence, he argues, if Japanese militarism gave birth to kendo, then Korean nationalism is what transformed it into kumdo.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ABOUT THE JOURNAL

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