

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPORTS IN JAPANESE AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS: FROM THE 1920s TO THE 1930s

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Preface

It was in the 1920s that the word "sports" became popular in Japanese society. Till then the differences that distinguish sports from physical education were not clear among ordinary people. In Japan athletics, various types of ball games and other sports which had originated from western culture developed under a strong influence of the government-controlled education system. So these activities were generally called not sports but physical education (*taiiku*) or physical exercise (*taiiku-undō*). The popularization of the word "sports" during the 20s was brought from the development of international or domestic athletic events, urbanization of society, pressure of western influence, democratic movements and their trends and the like. Though sports men, their organizers and physical educators, did not always follow the striving forces of democratic movements, which demanded universal suffrage, disarmament, elevation of living standard and civil liberty, democratic trends and thoughts gradually influenced them. Not only popularization of the word sports but also doing-sports were closely connected with the growth of democracy in society. But in the 30s, Japanese society was changing into war structure and fascist order. Most of sports men expected the development of sports in the policy of the nation, or had to take an expectant attitude towards fascistization of sports.

Generally speaking, tradition is the most important factor in a conflict with growing foreign influences. Tradition played the most important role to disunite national culture from foreign one, when it is carried too far. In Japan, the government encouraged martial arts (*budō*) such as *kendō* (japanese fencing), *sumō*-wrestling and *jūdō* to emphasize traditional virtues in order to inspire national exclusionism in the 30s. In this process, sports tended to lose both western influence and liberal, democratic element.

In this research, we analyze the thought and behavior of young people in the Japanese countryside, because the countryside was not only the most important base of the society and important source of wage-laborers and soldiers, but also a district least influenced by the modern civilization like movies and sports. If we want to know real phases of sports history, it is necessary to look into the movement of it in countryside. We can summarize above mentioned arguments as follows: First, the popularization of sports in Japanese countryside and the problem it brought forth. Secondly, the meaning of the attempt of "sports reformation" promoted by the young people in countryside in the 30s. Thirdly, the limit of the "sports reformation" and its relation to the fascistization of sports.

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I *Coming of the "Sports Age" in Rural Society*

Before discussing about sports, it may be better to give a brief résumé about the condition of Japanese rural society of the 1920s.

In Japan, peasants were emancipated from feudal regime, and the private ownership of land was legalized after the Meiji Restoration. But actually, this reform including agrarian settlement, brought out the dispossession of the peasantry and the accompanying concentration of land in the hands of the landlord class under the new heavy tax and price fluctuations. Compared with England, in which the number of dispossessed peasantry were forced to leave the land and migrate to cities with their families in the 18th century, Japanese peasants were forced to remain on the land as tenants or part tenants, in spite of expropriation of lands. There were no highly developed industries in cities to absorb them at that time. Therefore they had to pursue agricultural work under the tenant-landlord relations with excessively high rent and minute-scale farming. Large landlords invested the rent not in agriculture but in industry which began to develop under strong support of the government and strengthened their parasitic character. The effect of high rent and the pressure of over-population suppressed the development of pure capitalist relations in agriculture, and forced to continue semifeudal customary tenant-landlord relation in the countryside. Under such social conditions, young peasants, in particular daughters, worked away from home to assist the poor family. Because of the high rent and potential surplus population, Japanese landlordism was profitable for the landlord class and capitalists.¹ From about the 1890s, it began to develop into an economical and political backbone of the Japanese Empire system.

With the development of industry and increase of city population, important changes began to break out in countryside. During 1914-19, total product had been thrice multiplied, and gross industrial product exceeded the agricultural. Cultivated acreage began to decrease gradually, after the peak in 1921. Though the increase of city population enlarged the demands for agricultural product, the minute-scale farming based on landlordism began to face the chronic crisis, which resulted from collapse of economic independence and price differences between agriculture and industry. In this critical process, a large number of tenants, part-tenants or proprietors of extremely small farms declined though the middle peasant proprietors comparatively increased and formed the middle class of rural societies. Because of high rents and the minute-scale cultivation, it was impossible to extend production and to attempt mechanization in technique, which was needed to overcome the agricultural crisis. Demanding a reduction of rent and the right of cultivation, agrarian movements spread and were encouraged under such circumstances.

Sports and traditional martial arts (*budō*) such as *kendō*, including its successor *jūdō*, were introduced from cities into countryside through schools. Those who introduced them were teachers and old boys who had experienced higher education. Also reservists belonging to Reservist's Association in villages contributed to the popularization of the bayonet exercise and *kendō*.

¹ For a more expanded discussion, see Norman, E.H., *Japan's Emergence as a Modern State—Political and Economic Problems of the Meiji Period* (International Secretariat, Institute of Pacific Relations, New York, 1940).

Since the first instructions of the central government in September 1915, which encouraged to reconstruct local youth organizations to national ones, Young Men's Associations (*seinendan*), such exercises as athletics, gymnastics and *budō* became important activities of country youths.² In May 1918, in order to indicate more concrete organized activities, the second instructions were given to prefectural offices. According to this instructions, not only for peace but also preparing for war, youths were required to improve vital power of the state through the training of their bodies.³ The former instructions were given by strong desire of the Ministry of Army (*Rikugunshō*) which had made a research over youth organizations in the warring countries during the early years of World War I. Though Japan was then an enemy country of Germany, specially the Jungdeutschlandbund was referred to.⁴

The Ministry of Education (*Monbushō*) and the Ministry of Home Affairs (*Naimushō*) supported strongly the Young Men's Association. The former hoped them to realize educational need of youths with cheap public expenses, the latter on the other hand, wished to bring up reconstruction of agricultural districts which were going to collapse gradually with the invasion of capitalistic influences into villages. Under the leadership of the government, those organizations were changing into nationalistic, semi-governmental organizations as links to unite the compulsory education system with the military service. The youths from the age of a graduation of elementary school to the conscription age were regarded automatically as the members by the sole reason of being inhabitants in several administrative districts. This was a peculiar form never found outside Japan.

On the forming stage of government-directed youth organization, athletics and other similar physical exercises played an important role. In 1917, Toyama Military Institute (*Rikugun Toyamagakkō*) edited two books for the Young Men's Association (*seinendan*), that is, *the Gymnastics for the Young Men's Association (Seinendan Taisō)* and *the Athletics for the Young Men's Association (Seinendan Kyōgi)*. The latter was based on *the Draft of the Text Book of the Military Gymnastics* (1916) which had introduced athletics and simple games intentionally to the Army for the first time. Since about 1916, local athletic meets had begun to be held in order to unite countries or prefectures as the bases of village-wide athletic meetings or some programs for physical training. Later on, since 1924 the national athletic meeting called *Meijijingū Kyōgi Taikai* (Meiji Shrine Athletic Meeting) was begun under the auspices of the Ministry of Home Affairs (From 1926 until 1938, its sponcer changed to semiofficial body, established for the Meeting, and its name changed to Meijijingū Taiikutaikai. From 1938 it was sponcered again by the government under the war structure). This was held with the object of venerating the "Meiji Empire's virtue."⁵ So that it was not only a physical fitness movement, but also a sort of nationalistic one, counteracting democratic or socialistic feeling. After the beginning of this meet, every local athletic meet was linked up with nation-wide network.

In the early 20s, the *kendō*, *sumō* wrestling, gymnastics and field and track events were

² *Kanpō (The Official Gazette)*, No. 937 (Sept. 15th, 1915).

³ *Ibid.*, No. 1723 (May 3rd, 1918).

⁴ See Tanaka, G., *Shakaiteki Kokumin Kyōiku (Nationalization through Youth Organizations)*, 1915, pp. 1-10.

⁵ *Naimushō, 1st Meijijingū Kyōgitaikai Hōkokusho (The Report on the 1st Meiji Shrine Athletic Meeting)*, 1925, p. 1.

popular among country youths, under the leadership of school-teachers, riservists, policemen and village-officers.⁶ The government and ruling classes hoped that youths improve physical strength and mental power as wartime soldiers. But in the late 20s, with increasing influences of western civilization, urbicultur and democratic tendency, thought and tastes of youths were changing. Youths were no more satisfied with only a traditional culture such as *kendō*, *sumō* wrestling and *jūdō*, because of its moralistic strictness.⁷

A government's report on amusements of countryside published in 1931 pointed out subsistences of many traditional amusements. This report said as follows. "Compared with the decline of traditional, local amusements, modern and urban ones are going to flourish. This tendency is obvious especially in rural-urban fringes. For example, athletics were more dominative than other modern amusements on country side, and particularly imported sports such as baseball now appears as if they were originated in rural-urban fringes."⁸

Table 1 shows findings of the government's research based on the questionnaire on local amusements in 1932. According to this table, we know both movies and folk dances were the most favorable. In rural-urban fringe, such new forms of amusements as movies,

TABLE 1. POPULARIZED AMUSEMENTS IN AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS; 1932

	(percent)		
	Rural-urban Fringe	Countryside	Mountain Village
Movies	23.5	19.5	13.4
Theatergoing	8.4	5.7	5.8
Theatricals	3.2	5.1	7.6
Folk dance	14.2	18.4	21.9
The <i>naniwa-bushi</i> reciting	1.9	1.8	1.4
Folk song	1.8	1.8	1.7
The game 'Go' or Japanese chess	11.8	11.4	9.7
<i>Sumo</i> wrestling	5.0	7.4	8.4
Sports	8.8	4.7	4.6
Athletic events	1.0	1.7	1.7
Worshipping assembly	5.3	8.7	8.2
Festival	3.0	5.0	6.6
Fraternity 'kō'	1.6	2.3	1.6

Source: *Monbushō, Minshū Goraku Chōsashiryō (Data for the Investigation of Popular Amusements)*, Vol. 6, 1934.

Note: The percentage shows the popularity of each amusement by calculating the questionnaires re-
ceived from every local office. In the questionnaires, athletics, ball games of various types and field sports
were generally included in sports, and were distinguished from athletic events.

⁶ *Monbushō, Zenkoku Seinendan no Kunren to Taiiku (Discipline and Physical Education of Young Men's Associations in Japan)*, 1920, pp. 81-83.

⁷ *Shimin (Journal of Chūō Hōtoku Kai)*, Vol. 18, No. 5, May 1923, p. 75, *Ibid.*, Vol. 18, No. 8, Aug. 1923, p. 61.

⁸ *Monbushō, Minshū Goraku Chōsashiryō (Data for the Investigation of Popular Amusements)* Vol. 1, 1931, pp. 3-4.

theatergoings, the *naniwabushi* reciting and sports were more popular than in rural or mountain villages. In the latter districts, such traditional ones as folk dances, *sumō*-wrestling, festivals were preferred.

As seen in Table 2, which shows prefectural differences of the popularity of sports by ranking them from the above mentioned questionnaires, sports were popular in industrialized prefectures (Tokyo, Kyoto, Kanagawa, Nara, Hukuoka) and in prefectures where rural industry prevailed (Saitama, Gunma, Nagano, Gifu). Considering from agricultural point of view, it appears that sports gained popularity in prefectures in which the number of large landlords was under par, therefore middle peasant proprietors, part tenants and part owners thrive comparatively (Hukui, Nagano, Gifu, Gunma, Shizuoka, etc.).

Thus the "golden age" of sports had come in the early 30s, in Japan. The number of establishments of major athletic fields and facilities had the climax of popularity in the early 30s (Table 3). And historical phases of local physical education or sports organizations which demonstrate the most important driving force for popularization, show the same tendency. During the Depression, these two indices suggesting the popularization of sports began to decline. And this tendency continued under the war structure. Though many people became enthusiastic about sports in the first half of the 30s, it was the time that sports displayed their conflicting phases plainly.

For the purpose of making such situations clearer, we take the case of Yamaguchi prefecture, where agricultural population was yet dominant in number, but where industry exceeded agriculture in product after 1929. Both athletic meetings and village festivals in the slack seasons were the most popular amusements among youths.⁹ "Popularization" of sports came into question among them from the late 20s as in other prefectures.

TABLE 2. POPULARITY OF SPORTS IN RURAL-URBAN FRINGES; 1932
(Prefectural Differences)

Order	Prefectures
1st	Miyagi, Kyoto
2nd	Saitama, Tokyo, Hukui, Nagano, Gifu, Shizuoka, Hiroshima
3rd	Iwate, Gunma, Nara, Miyazaki*, Kanagawa
4th	Aomori, Tochigi, Yamanashi, Wakayama, Kochi, Hukuoka, Saga*, Kumamoto, Kagoshima*
5th	Hokkaido, Yamagata, Niigata, Toyama, Okayama, Yamaguchi, Nagasaki
6th ~	Akita, Fukushima, Ibaragi, Chiba, Ishikawa, Aichi, Mie, Shiga, Osaka, Hyogo, Tottori, Shimane, Tokushima, Kagawa, Ehime, Oita, Okinawa

Source: same as Table 1.

Note: The order signifies the ranking of popularity of sports among amusements. Those marked with * were reported not as sports but as athletic events in the questionnaires of prefectural offices.

⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, 1933, p. 68.

TABLE 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF MAJOR ATHLETIC FIELDS, FACILITIES (1910-33)
AND LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS OF SPORTS AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION (1910-36)

Year	Fields & Facilities			Local Organizations		
	Sports	<i>Budō</i>	Total	Sports & Physical Education	<i>Budō</i>	Total
1910	7	20	27	7	13	20
1911	2	2	4	0	0	0
1912	3	2	5	1	1	2
1913	10	3	13	1	1	2
1914	7	0	7	1	0	1
1915	3	0	3	2	0	2
1916	6	1	7	6	0	6
1917	7	0	7	3	1	4
1918	3	1	4	8	0	8
1919	7	2	9	10	0	10
1920	1	5	6	13	2	15
1921	19	4	23	18	4	22
1922	14	0	14	24	4	28
1923	22	0	22	39	1	40
1924	42	1	43	35	6	41
1925	22	7	29	35	5	40
1926	39	5	44	51	15	66
1927	47	1	48	65	6	71
1928	48	1	49	86	15	101
1929	56	5	61	70	9	79
1930	80	5	85	107	9	116
1931	59	6	65	154	18	172
1932	39	2	41	112	10	122
1933	13	0	13	102	13	115
1934				64	8	72
1935				36	1	37
1936				9	1	10

Source: Monbushō, *Honpō Ippanshakai ni okeru Omonaru Taiikuundōjō Shirabe* (Research on Major Sports Fields and Facilities in Japan), 1933, *Honpō ni okeru Taiikuundō-dantai ni kansuru Chōsa* (Research on Organizations of Sports and Physical Education in Japan), 1932 and 1936.

Note: The numbers in schools, factories and over-sea colonies are not included.

II Sympathy and Scepticism of Sports

Before the 20s of this century, most of country youths, except sons of the landlord classes, could not enjoy higher education. For the sake of sustaining economic condition of family, the eldest son inherited the land and farming occupation, so that most of the children had

to move into cities and become wage-labourers. Before the 20s, asceticism, frugality and hard working were seen everywhere in villages. And they were accustomed to such time-honoured customs.

But before the end of the 20s, especially at the 30s, the thought and behaviour of country youths began to change. They asked themselves why there was no good amusement in village, why they could not have hope in future, and what was the best planning of agricultural reform. Generally, country youths who were obliged to give up the idea of moving into cities or entering school of higher grade, began to yearn earnestly to make up their own personality and creative life. Youths who took a leading part in this movement were chiefly sons of upper peasant class in village, that is, successors of the backbone of peasant proprietors. Most of them sought to establish a creative life, so that they felt within themselves a sort of infinite power in the active efforts to carry this out. In this atmosphere, arts, literature, and sports stood for the creative life to the most of country youths.

By way of illustration we would like to give an example of one youth as a typical country youth of those days. He was born in May, 1908, as an eldest son of a peasant proprietary in Yamaguchi Prefecture.¹⁰ He was destined to inherit his ancestral farm. Desiring a creative life and selfexpression, he deplored his poor circumstance and suppressed his needs for leisure. But in August in 1929, that is to say, the previous year in which the strong waves of financial crisis struck his village, he wrote in his diary as follows.

“If we exert ourselves we can get everything. The destruction of the living is due to idleness.”

“Don’t grieve at our universal poverty, but regret the insufficiency of our efforts.”¹¹

When he arrived at this conclusion and enlarged the object of his activities from labour to every possible work of self-enlightenment, his thought had got strength.

“Doing one’s best is as beautiful as a tree in full bloom. We are deeply moved by an athlete who does his best. Doing one’s best is valuable and beautiful.”¹²

Of course the exertion in the case of this youth, meant agricultural labour. When he believed that the purpose of his life is a “creation” which originated from his life, many hopes gushed out for developing himself to the best of his ability. In this way he learned art and literature, and the world of sports. In sports, he found out full bloom of human ability, beauty, excitement, dignity. For him, sports is a creation of a new human existence, one of the expression of his objective activities, hope for change and reform.

There were two main social factors conditioning such a new atmosphere. One was an increase of desires which originated from the development of the productive power, though

¹⁰ In Yamaguchi prefecture, in 1929, the number of total households engaged in agriculture was 125,424. And 38 per cent of the total households cultivated less than 5 ares, 37 per cent had land of 5 to 10 ares, 21 per cent cultivated lands from 10 to 20 ares, and only 3 per cent of it had more than 20 ares. The number could be also categorized such as cultivator-owner households (37%), part tenant part owner households (44%) and tenant households (19%). His household cultivated nearly 10 ares. He was a young leader of Young Men’s Association in his village, and was a wellknown contributor to the magazine of Yamaguchi Young People’s Association, called *Yamaguchiken Seinen* (*Journal of Yamaguchi Y.P.A.*).

¹¹ *Yamaguchiken Seinen*, Vol. 4, No. 10, Dec. 1929, p. 29.

¹² *Ibid.*

the heavy tax, low productivity and low price which ran far behind the capitalistic development of industry were economically destroying the poor in the village. Of course villages had to buy consumables and other productive means from cities. Under the unbalanced development of the productive power between industry and agriculture, economic social and cultural crises of villages were in progress. In spite of such crises, the increase of desires to promote living standards which was symbolized in urbiculture had much continuous influence over agricultural districts. This is the reason why the desire for a creative life was born among country youths.

The other social factor conditioning the desires of country youths was a democratic movement and its tendency which had developed rapidly since the World War I, under the slogan of universal suffrage and antimilitarism. Of course this slogan was based on needs of many people who had strived to establish civil liberties and right to live. The driving force of such a movement and tendency was of the movement of intelligentsia, middle classes in cities, especially of the labour movement and the movement of farmers' union. The country youths, especially belonging to middle classes in villages began to hold strong desires for social equality and criticised the conservative tradition under the influence of the democratic movement. Though they showed interest in universal suffrage which was one of the main slogan of that democratic movement, they could hardly take part in a political movement as a means of realizing their desires.

Under such social conditions as this many country youths were interested in sports. Nevertheless their attitude toward sports was complicated—on the one hand with sympathy; on the other with scepticism. Though they were interested in sports and wished to practice, it was difficult for them to train organically and systematically without coach and enough leisure. Therefore they were interested in competitions of games. But they were inclined to deny victory or feat, skill and achievement. They limited the significance of sports within physical and mental training. For example the youth whom we mentioned above, said in October, in 1931 as follows.

“The harvest time has come. It is also the season of athletic meetings for country youths and the young men's association. Originally athletic meetings are planned for the purpose of physical education. But it has changed to be actually the scramble for the championship flag. It is sad that they forgot it's original purpose. Indeed athletic meetings were held for the benefit of a few representative players at the expence of the other country youths.”¹³

Indeed a most important factor to populalize sports on countryside was in the competitive racing for championship. But except a few skillful player, many country youths were obliged to be spectators and could not take part in it. The problem was the disunion between doing and seeing, élite and mass.

The other important aspect which was closely connected with his scepticism about sports was his inclination and anti-civilization, anti-urbanization and anti-consumption. It had strengthened itself since the economic panic of the 30s, in what we call “*Shōwa Kyōkō*.”

“If we seek for such dissipated amusements as cafés or movies, we will unconsciously fall into the decadance. So we must be free from such influences of urban environment.”¹⁴

¹³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 6, No. 10, Oct. 1931, p. 19.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, No. 12, Dec. 1930, p. 19.

Later on, he came to attack "sea-bathing of townfolks in summer" because he thought it to be a "bourgeois culture."¹⁵ Along with the process of the current depression of the 30s, the atmosphere in villages and country youths' behaviours rapidly changed. While interested in urbiculture, they began to repress the desire for "success in life," and doubted the mode of living in a city which was a "material civilization" and "egoistic desire." This tendency grew more violent and spread rapidly. Under the world-wide depression country-sides in Japan were damaged miserably and the depression meant not only economic crisis but also social and cultural crisis. Under such conditions, it was impossible to secure their living standard by individual effort so that they thought the crisis of living to be the crisis of their agricultural community, that is, their native place. Then an aggressive attitude toward "the source of the disaster" and what was called "traditional thought" grew rapidly among country youths. It is no wonder that they thought the material civilization, the urbiculture, and invasion of industrial goods to be "the cursed source." Seeing from the viewpoint of the country youths, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat had come out of the same origin, that is, "modern civilization." Moreover they found that "success in life" was a symbol of the free competition, social inequality and modern capitalistic society. It seemed that their attack was concentrated in capitalism as well as in liberalism and proletariat and socialism. Then they refused the labour movement and the movement of a farmers' union which had been the main driving force of the previous democratic movement.¹⁶

"Sports" had much to do with such criticism. "Sports" was criticized too, as a pleasure-seeking liberalistic culture and a symbol of social inequality, because "sports" aroused consumptive pleasure and based on a few representative players who did not participate enough with the mass. For example one country youth emotionally said, "It had no meaning if we finish first or second in a short-distance racing."¹⁷ In such comments not only the negation of the urban and privileged character of "sports" was expressed, but it also meant the negation of its *raison d'être* was immanent.

III *Toward the Reformation*

The criticism against the "privileged sports" was not an originality of country youths. Both country youth and authorities and local governments noticed the problems of "sports" of only the privileged, and warned of it. There were two points which the central government and local offices wished to reform, making full use of such a criticism among country youths and masses, in carrying out their intention to raise chauvinistic nationalism through sports and "*budō*." And the attitude of the youths against "sports" changed as well. One point was an emphasis upon the popularization of physical and mental training by means of sports. The other one was the emphasis upon the traditional martial arts such as *kendō* (japanese fencing), *jūdō*, *sumō*-wrestling, which called "*budō*" in Japan.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, No. 9, Sept. 1933, p. 20.

¹⁶ For example, the same youth mentioned above said in 1931, "I devour my heart because of something lacking and dissatisfaction. . . ., but I can not agree and satisfy with the movement of proletariat (*Ibid.*, Vol. 6, No. 8, Aug. 1931, p. 37.).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, No. 4, Apr. 1930, p.15.

In the early 30s, conforming to some preceding ordinances of the government, local offices began to make the same stands.¹⁸ In Yamaguchi prefectural office issued instructions and a notification to officials intending to promote "youth education" in early 1931.¹⁹ The main contents of this statements were: (1) The important object of youth education was self-discipline and training of their bodies and minds, as well as every other quality of good "citizenship" and "self-government." Such objects were pursued by two organizations. that is, by the Young Men's Training Institute (*Seinen Kunrensho*) and the Young People's Association (*Seinendan* for Men, *Shojokai* for Girls); (2) In order to promote military drills, an entrance to the Youngmen's Training Institute was encouraged; (3) In the Young People's Association cultivation of "local patriotism," "diligence and economy" and "religious sentiment" which seemed to ruling classes and the government to be important contents of the "citizenship" were encouraged; (4) Officers and leaders ought to have reformed athletics based on championship and representative system into popularized physical exercises in which most youths could participate. Of course the prefectural office did not intend to abolish athletic meeting itself. They encouraged a popularization of physical exercises, but at the same time they wished to strengthen a ceremonious feature at the meeting. "For youths and spectators athletic meetings are not only a competition of skills but the best chance of self discipline and cultivation of citizenship," the so-called "virtues" of duty and responsibility.²⁰

Additionally, in May 1931, for the purpose of realizing such orders the prefectural office made public a plan for arousing a moral courage of youths. Asking for devotional services of youths for the Emperor system of Japan, "patriotic and traditional spirit" was emphasized specially in this plan.²¹ And as concrete measures "*budō*," mass gymnastics and military drills were encouraged. In response to such directions of the local offices, the government-directed-reform spread rapidly in many villages.

As we mentioned above, as for the sports reformation of country youths, two points should be stated here. First: to popularize sports or physical exercises and change them from the pleasure-centered to the physical and mental training for the sake of a populariza-

¹⁸ The extraordinary council of education called *Rinji Kyōiku Kaigi* (1917-19), which was established as a consultative body of the Prime Minister, submitted a series of reports such as on the elementary education, on the encouragement of military drills in the secondary school (in Dec. 1917) and on social education (in Dec. 1918). As early as in 1918, athletics were criticized in the report on social education as follows. "It is necessary not only to improve and popularize Physical education outside the school, but also to do away with the evils which have been accompanying those athletics." "Athletics are affected by evils, as a result of thoughtless absorption in competition of games or changing into opportunities to win applause like the entertainment world." (Kaigo, M., *Rinji Kyōiku Kaigi no Kenkyū*, 1960, p. 146.). Later on, in March 1926, the Ministry of Education issued instructions to the school under the direct control and prefectural offices. This statement demands them to take away evils based on representative system in order to popularize physical exercises and physical education among ordinary people.

¹⁹ *Yamaguchi-ken Kōhō* (*The Official Bulletin of Yamaguchi Prefecture*), No. 441, (Jan. 13th, 1931), pp. 3-4., *Ibid.*, No. 448 (Feb. 6th, 1931), pp. 21-24.

²⁰ *Yamaguchiken Seinen*, Vol. 9, No. 10, Oct. 1934, p. 4. We find the nation-wide establishment of such reformations in the 10th Meiji Shrine Athletic Meet in 1935. From this time *Kōseishō* (the Ministry of Health and Welfare) being established in 1933, began to sponsor this meet directly, for the purpose of improving national physical fitness and national spirit which coped with the situation at the prolonged total war. For a more expanded illustration, See, *the Report on the 10th Meiji Shrine Athletic Meet*, edited by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, in 1936.

²¹ *Yamaguchiken Seinen*, Vol. 9, No. 10, Oct. 1934, p. 4.

tion of physical education and an improvement of collective action. So they attached importance to a participation of large majority instead of the elimination match or championship system. This was the reason why they introduced mass gymnastics, military drills, excursions, physical examination, pleasure-centered simple games without competition etc. Such a sports reformation was obviously based on a strong desire for social equality on one hand. But from the view point of the present day, we can find important mistakes in that reformation. That is to say: (1) Without considering the cultural significance of sports and its human value, they intended only the training of physical fitness, only the discipline of collective action and mentality.; (2) The results of the training and discipline were intended naturally to utilize on behalf of the Emperor system of Japan. Nevertheless most of country youths had not questioned about it. Because of the lack of political freedom and consciousness of national sovereignty, if they had made effort to gain a personal or cultural independence, it could have been difficult to unite such an effort with a struggle for political freedom. This is the reason why they could not doubt for whom their physical or mental fitness were utilized; (3) In the sports reformation the popularization of sports were seemed to be in inevitable contradiction to the high standard of sports. So the reformers chose between the two. Of course, they pursued the former. Further in conjunction with the popularization of sports or another physical exercises, the entire membership or mutual responsibility were emphasized for a lot of participants in sports events. In this way, under the name of the popularization, sports changed into duties without rights.; (4) The reformers lacked a pursuit for autonomous organizations which aims a realization of young people's needs for sports. In most villages sports were practised under the administration or in a subordinate organization of the Young Men's Association. Therefore their sports practises were limited for the benefit of the government-controlled Young Men's Association which was becoming more and more militarized semi-governmental organization along with the process of the 30s depression and the Japanese aggression to Manchuria. Without autonomous sports organizations, it was difficult to concentrate large sporting mass.

Because of such weakpoints which were immanent in that reformation, it was impossible not only to concentrate all possibilities and powers towards a true reformation, but to perceive clearly the fascistization, which neglected the cultural meaning of sports and degraded it into duties and hard labor symbolized in aggressive military drill, and into a method of compulsory homogenization of the nation.

Next we mention the second point of the reformation, which was government-directed and was carried by country youths. That is, encouragement of the Japanese traditional martial arts, "*budō*." From the early stage of the Young Men's Association, *budō* were regarded as an important activity by the organizers or leaders like village headman, school masters and members of the Reservist Association. Among the *budō*, especially *kendō* was attached with much importance. They hoped that country youths might improve the warlike spirit, honours, the spirit of fortitude and manliness through the training of *budō*.

For example, in Yamaguchi since 1931, traditional *budō* was promoted as much as military drills by the prefectural office on a large scale.²² What sort of moral courage was

²² In this period, the central government promoted *kendō* and *jūdō* for men for the purpose of encouraging the "national spirit of fortitude and manliness." In Jan. 1931, the Ministry of Education legislated *kendō* and *jūdō* as required teaching materials in the secondary school and the normal school. This policy was extended to the primary school in May 1939.

expected in that case? It is easy for us to answer this question, when we read the oath of the Yamaguchi Young Men's Association made by prefectural officers in November 1931. It swore, "Loyalty and patriotism are our traditional spirit. By means of which we contribute to the prosperity of the Empire at the risk of our lives."²³

Most leaders of *budō*, specially *kendō*, appreciated the martial spirit originated from feudalistic Loyalty of the warrior class in Japan. Of course, after the Meiji Restoration loyalties to feudal lords were replaced by the Loyalty toward one Emperor. But main contents of it were not changed. Sports, in the modern sense of the word, were later introduced from western countries and had European spirit, but *budō* was originated from Japan and nationalistic traditions. That is the reason why in the 30s, facing a crisis of the state and society, the *budō* was promoted.

The state machinery itself had changed gradually through the aggressive war into the fascistization without strong social movements in the late 30s, and european sports began to be rejected by the government and its cooperators because of the liberal and westernized character.

²³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 6, No. 12, Dec. 1931, pp. 4-5.