Religion, Sport, and Cultural (Mis)understanding: Japan and the United States in Religio-Imperialist Rivalry

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Abstract:

In the 1930s and 1940s, American authorities surveilled members of the Dai Nippon Butokukai in the United States. Upon the outbreak of war with Japan, the FBI and other American agencies began arresting Butokukai members as religious subversives and even enemy informants. Operating under Enlightenment assumptions of a hard divide between the secular and the sacred, the Americans could not make sense of the Butokukai, which was predicated upon different, non-Enlightenment views of society and religion. Drawing on recent research about the nature of pre-Enlightenment societies in the West, in this paper I argue that the Dai Nippon Butokukai was caught up in a much broader misunderstanding between Japan and the United States over religion, society, and the role of the individual in relation to the wartime state.

Keywords: Enlightenment, *bushidō*, *budō*, martial spirit, Butokuden, *Yamato damashii*, Ashizawa Hirozumi, Lt. Col. P.K. Roest, Gen. Douglas MacArthur, René Descartes, King St. Louis IX, Torinoumi Kōki

Introduction

As tensions with Japan mounted in the late 1930s and early 1940s and war in the Pacific looked increasingly inevitable, the United States government, certain that its imperial rival was a threat both at home and abroad, was deeply suspicious of Japanese Americans and Japanese immigrants living in the United States. Since the earliest period of Japanese immigration to North America, after all, Washington—and many American citizens—had viewed the Japanese in their midst with a mixture of wariness and respect. But as both Japan and the United States moved to a war footing and began girding for a showdown to decide control of the Asia-Pacific region, Americans and their government became ever more certain that the Japanese, both in Japan and in the U.S., were dangerous. Particularly perilous were the many Japanese and Japanese American groups which the American authorities saw as quasi-religious.

For example, in the late 1930s, Americans such as Cedrick Shimo and his father, Tamori Shimo, were placed under FBI surveillance.[1] As Shirley Castelnuovo writes in *Soldiers of Conscience: Japanese American Military Resisters in World War II*, "[Cedrick] Shimo's father was suspect

because he was a Buddhist and the secretary of the Dai Nippon Butoku Kai, a martial arts organization that, according to the FBI, was a subversive organization which had intimate connections to the Imperial Japanese government." But that was not all. The Dai Nippon Butoku Kai, Castelnuovo continues:

> had also been under observation by ONI [Office of Naval Intelligence]. ONI had identified the club as a 'Military Virtue Society', and it was thought to be one of the organizations most actively involved in subversive activities. [...] The organization [also] appeared suspect [to the FBI because] the Japanese Consul in Los Angeles was its honorary president, its headquarters was in Japan, and its stated goal was the development of the Japanese warrior spirit in its members (Castelnuovo 2008, 32-33, citing FBI File #280, 654).

The United States government in the run-up to the Pacific War was thus wary about both the nefarious intentions of the Japanese and the nature of the Dai Nippon Butokukai 大日本武徳会 as an organization aimed at putting those intentions into action (see Williams 2019). The government was further uneasy that the Dai Nippon Butokukai may be linked to religion — in some sense Buddhist, as the FBI insinuated in its report against the Shimos, and in other ways martially spiritual, as the Office of Naval Intelligence surmised, charged with developing "the Japanese warrior spirit in its members."

But were these assessments accurate? Was there really a secret plot afoot in the U.S. spearheaded by the "Military Virtue Society," and was the impetus a too-heavy dose of "martial spirit," threatening America's carefully cultivated separation of church and state?[2] What do these suspicions reveal about the relationship between Japan and the United States, changing assumptions about religion and society, and the uneasy linking of new traditions with old as nation-states sought legitimacy amidst social, cultural, and political change? Was the Dai Nippon Butokukai a religious organization, in other words, and what does the question mean for understanding modern Japan?

In this essay, I argue that differences in the understanding of "religion" and "religious" between the United States and Japan, exacerbated by broad cultural stereotypes and an increasingly tense geopolitical rivalry which exploded into outright war in late 1941, led American authorities and military leaders to fundamentally misunderstand Japan in general, Japanese religion more narrowly, and, specifically, the Dai Nippon Butokukai.[3] This misunderstanding colored the Pacific War and its aftermath, leading to calls to eradicate Japanese civilization as fanatically devoted to religious war. A closer look at the Dai Nippon Butokukai, however, reveals much more ambiguity and even uncertainty than the American caricature could admit.

Clash of Religions, or Clash of Religiosities?

When the FBI raided Cedrick and Tamori Shimo's home in the late 1930s, the FBI thought that the organization to which the Shimos belonged, the Dai Nippon Butokukai, was a "subversive" organization, a front for religious war.[4] According to various chapters and branches

of the Dai Nippon Butoku Kai's own documents and practices, however, the California and other American chapters of the Dai Nippon Butokukai did not fit the FBI's description of religious, or even subversive.[5] To give just one example, a Dai Nippon Butokukai booklet published in 1898 in Japan provides detailed instructions, complete with illustrations, on the gentlemanly art of the steeplechase. No mention of anything that might be considered religious is made among pages of instructions in riding, jumping, and caring for horses (Dai Nippon Butokukai 1898). Even publications that go beyond the technical aspects of various sports and martial disciplines reveal very little that could be deemed "religious".[6] A Dai Nippon Butokukai booklet issued in 1927 teaches that the fundamental principle of butoku is fidelity to the sovereign and love of country, admonishing practitioners to avoid shameful behavior, preserve their honor, and see to it that the esprit de corps of the Japanese people as a whole is advanced (Dai Nippon Butokukai 1927, 1-2). The butoku curriculum recommended in the 1927 volume includes both martial arts and classroom work—subjects such as morality, ethics, grammar, writing, history, and so forth were to be taught to budding pupils of martial virtue—but there was not a trace of anything hearkening to a metaphysics beyond patriotic sentiment (Dai Nippon Butokukai 1927, 7-9). No Zen meditation, no morning chapel, no evening prayer, not even grace before meals or readings from scriptures were part of the butoku student's prescribed daily routine.

Despite the lack of what many would recognize as objective religious content, many of the groups and individuals under prewar surveillance by the American authorities were aware that their activities were being interpreted as fanaticism and took preventive action to fend off suspicion. For example, Federal Bureau of Investigation File No. 100-6868, "North American Dai Nippon Butoku Kai, also known as Southern California Kendo Association and Kendo Association of America," is a report made at Los Angeles on 3 June 1942, for 19 and 20 April 1942. In the report is a translation of Butokukai records which reads, in part, "[...] we [that is, the Butoku Branch] are afraid that we may be investigated by the FBI. For this reason we had a committee meeting on the 17th of August [presumably 1941] and we agreed to change the name to NANKA KENDO KYOKAI (Southern California Sword Association) and we reformed our constitution in a very simple way. On the 22nd of August the manager of BUTOKU KAI visited an authority of the American government with the new constitution and explained the trust state of business of the BUTOKU KAI. [...] The authority who had deep understanding said, 'You should try to make Americans understand who have previously also misunderstood KENDO.'" But as the report's "Synopsis of Facts" (partially redacted) bluntly states, the outcome of the meeting was: "All known alien members of subject organization taken into custody as enemy aliens." Those under surveillance for association with the Butokukai and other "subversive" groups could not expect much from their efforts to reach out to American authorities, even when trying to convince the FBI and other entities that martial virtue had nothing to do with any creed or sect.

The gap between the Butokukai's anodyne activities and the intensity of the American

authorities' suspicions raises the question of why the United States government tended to see the Butokukai was a "subversive" or even religious organization. The issue is in part one of definition. Jason Ananda Josephson argues that "religion" as a category is itself a recent invention and adaptation in Japan. I agree, and think that this ambiguity complicated the tangle between Japan and the United States over whether the Dai Nippon Butokukai was a "religious" organization (Josephson 2012).[7] Definitional and categorical slippage also belie cultural and ideological gaps. As Jolyon Baraka Thomas shows in *Faking Liberties: Religious Freedom in American-Occupied Japan*, the American authorities used the ideology of exporting "religious freedom" to Japan in order to justify, in part, the Pacific War and the unconditional-surrender policy that had drawn it out at the cost of hundreds of thousands of lives. But this retroactively applied ideological marker was not only historically false—Thomas concludes that the Japanese had had a robust freedom of religious belief and practice since at least the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution—but also culturally myopic. The Americans were operating on a high Enlightenment understanding of "religion" as distinct, and easily distinguishable, from "the secular," a category which included the state. Japanese culture absorbed some Enlightenment thinking prior to World War II, but not the Enlightenment root-to-branch. The line between what in the United States would be categorized as "religious" and "secular" was not as distinct in Japan, and in some places the line simply wasn't there. Many Americans failed to understand religion in Japan, and among Japanese and Japanese Americans in the U.S., in large part because "religion," and the array of cultural and ideological referenda which the term connotes, simply meant very different things depending upon whether one was from Tokyo or Washington, DC (Thomas 2019).[8]

In many ways, the confusion in the United States about the Dai Nippon Butokukai and the affiliated and spin-off organizations elsewhere in Asia and in Hawai'i, California, and other places in the West, stems from a cultural amnesia over pre-Enlightenment modes of religious belief and practice. By and large, Americans had forgotten that it was once possible in Christendom to practice "martial virtue" without connotations of religious or political subversion. Andrew Willard Jones argues in *Before Church and State* that the reign of King St. Louis IX (1214-1270) was typified by what Henri de Lubac (1896-1991) would much later term a "complete act," a wholeness of endeavor which did not presuppose any Cartesian divide between mind and body, soul and statecraft, or "religion" and "the secular" (both modern categories used to describe Cartesian society) (Jones 2017, 5, n. 1).[9] Jones writes:

> To us moderns, the secular is fundamental. [...] In such an approach, 'religion' is a category that functions *within* the secular. [...] I argue that thirteenth-century France [...] *was* Christian, fundamentally. There was no State lurking beneath the kingdom's religious trappings. There was no State at all, but a Christian kingdom. In this kingdom, neither the 'secular' nor the 'religious' existed. Neither did 'sovereignty'. I do not mean that the religious was everywhere and that the secular had not yet emerged from under it. I mean *they did not exist at all*" (Jones 2017, 3, 18. Emphases in original).

While the Japanese leaders were not medieval Ludovican kings, and while the Frankish society of synonymousness between sacred and secular is not a stand-in for Japan in the 1930s and 40s, the assessment by Jones of St. Louis IX's world, and the distance between it and the world of the "moderns," helps us to understand why there was such confusion among the very modern Americans over the status of the Dai Nippon Butokukai. The American authorities, conditioned to operate under categorical divisions between the religious and the non-religious, were talking past their Japanese counterparts, who largely understood the question of religion and state to be much more Lubacian, or non-Cartesian. The Butokukai and related organizations did not see themselves as "subversive," but rather as constructive of a healthy patriotism and spiritual strength cultivated by means of bodily training: "martial virtue". Butokukai practitioners were cultivating martial virtue, not as a religion and not for revolution, but as a "complete act" of the human person, neither wholly secular nor wholly religious.

I am not arguing here that there was a mind-body non-dualism in Japan, or that a peculiarly Eastern or Orientalist "holism" was the reason for the confusion between the Americans and the Japanese. I mean that the American authorities imposed categories of "religious" and "secular" in ways that their Japanese counterparts, for the most part, did not.[10] Indeed, it was the lack of specific religiosity—the vague penumbra of "martial virtue"—that seems to have troubled the American government the most. It was not enough that the Dai Nippon Butokukai be ostensibly non-sectarian or even openly agnostic. The blanket indictment of Tamori Shimo's Buddhism by the FBI notwithstanding, it was ultimately the quasi-religious nature of the Japanese polity itself, and the Dai Nippon Butokukai's connection to it, that provoked the ire of the U.S. authorities. The easy merger of martial virtue and imperial patriotism in Japan seemed almost calculated to raise the suspicions of liberal-Enlightenment Americans. In the final analysis, the U.S. government could not understand the Dai Nippon Butokukai because it could not understand, in historico-cultural *longue durée*, the emerging nation of Japan that underlay it. The Butokukai was such a perplexing challenge to the American authorities for the same reason that Japan itself befuddled those who tried to apply Western socio-cultural categories to a state which was increasingly rejecting liberalism in its entirety. This very modern anti-modernity was the root cause of the tension between the Butokukai and the FBI, and between Japan and the United States.

The Advent of the Butokukai

As with many "old" things in Japan, the Dai Nippon Butokukai was of relatively recent vintage (see Nakamura 1985, 27-28, and Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Founded in 1895 by Kyoto tax collector and martial arts devotée Torinoumi Kōki 鳥海弘毅 (1849–1914), the Dai Nippon Butokukai was designed to instill a greater degree of respect for the Imperial Household among average Japanese. As martial arts historian Alexander Bennett writes:

> The construction of the Heian Shrine in Kyoto was scheduled for 1895 to celebrate the 1,100th anniversary of Emperor Kammu's (737–806) creation of the Heian capital (794) (Bennett 2015, 143). [...] Torimi [sic] observed with a cynical eye how celebrations for the Shrine's ground-breaking ceremony were being unsatisfactorily conducted, as were other preparations for the festivities marking such a prestigious occasion. Joining forces with Konishi Shin'emon [...] together they planned a martial arts demonstration to mark the historical event fittingly (Bennett 2015, 144).[11]

The early directors of the Dai Nippon Butokukai thus went to great lengths to imbue their organization with the trappings and spirit of antiquity while incorporating it fully into the Meiji project of re-founding Japan as a modern nation-state along Western models, with a strong central government and a sense among the populace of citizenship in a growing imperial power (Bennett 2015, 143).[12] As Bennett observes:

> The timing [of the Dai Nippon Butokukai's founding] was contemporaneous with the growing sentiments of nationalism, especially with the triumphant war against almighty China. [...] The Japanese as a whole were understandably proud of their country's success, and it was from around this time that a broader appreciation of traditional culture began to flourish. A particular allure was felt to the culture and ideals of the samurai (Bennett 2015, 144-45). [...] The leaders all met for the first time on April 3, 1895, and a general assembly was convened on April 17 where the founding principles of the Dai-Nippon Butokukai were formulated. A proposal to reconstruct the ancient Hall of Martial Virtue (Butokuden) near the Heian Shrine and have it serve as the base *dōjō* was agreed upon, and the Butokukai was officially launched (Bennett 2015, 145.).[13]

A feature of Japan's modernity was that it rejected the break with the past upon which modernity is predicated in the West. Japan refused to refuse its martial heritage, albeit a heritage repackaged for a contemporary milieu. The Americans were suspicious of a belligerent feudalism lying just beneath the surface of Japan's modern, Westernized façade. The Butokukai was, for many Americans, like a buoy on a deep sea marking shoals of anti-modernity below.

The connection with the Butokuden provides a key clue as to why the Americans were so unsettled by the Dai Nippon Butokukai. The Butokuden was built by the Emperor Kanmu 桓武天皇 (735-806) in 794 after he moved the Japanese capital to Heian-kyo (Kyoto).[14] Kanmu, whose reign name includes the character for "martial," 武 was active in recovering and expanding the scope and area of imperial power—a legacy which the Dai Nippon Butokukai founders wished to see emulated by the new Meiji Emperor. In addition to this overt symbolism, many Dai Nippon Butokukai publications emphasized Emperor Kanmu's descent from the first emperor, Jinmu 神武天皇, whose two-character reign name means "spirit/divinity" and "martial." The Dai Nippon Butokukai took advantage of the semantic possibilities of these imperial appellations, for example advocating a philosophy of "unity with [Emperor] Jinmu" that could just as easily be read as "unity of the martial and the spiritual/divine".

Shadows of Modernity in Modern *Budō*

Thus, the Butokukai appeared tied in with the restoration of imperial rule in Japan in a way that did not sufficiently reject, to the satisfaction of the modern American authorities, the interpellation of religious political themes, or ideas of kingship not exclusively secular. To be sure, the restoration of imperial rule in Japan was shoehorned into a very modern scramble for colonial dominance in Asia, and the deployment of *budō* 武道 or *bushidō* 武士道 and the appeal to martial virtue was also inevitably tinged with a contemporary cast.[15] But these things were in many ways responses, however overdetermined, to Western colonialism (see Horne 2004). The irony of the Americans' suspicion of the Dai Nippon Butokukai is that it had been the encounter with Western powers, in particular the United States, that had prompted Japanese authorities to centralize and nationalize various elements of Japanese life. In doing so, those elements were brought closer to the Imperial Household and also systematized from "arts" (*jutsu* 術) into "ways" (*dō* 道) to emphasize the distinction between the West and the rising empire of Japan (see Sakaue 1985, 9-10).[16] These changes carried spiritual connotations (a "way" entails a whole-life approach to a pursuit, a dedication involving the spirit as well as the mind) which caused the Americans to mistake such things as the Dai Nippon Butokukai for religious organizations. But in decrying the confluence of the martial and the spiritual—the political and the religious—in the Dai Nippon Butokukai, the Americans were unwittingly castigating their own long shadow cast over the rest of the modern world.

A further irony lies in the fact that the *bushidō* which the American authorities came to fear was revivified in Japan at first as a Christian hermeneutic device. Many Westerners who are familiar with the concept of the "way of the warrior" received their general instruction in the subject from *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*, a book published by Japanese public intellectual Nitobe Inazō 新渡戸稲造 (1862-1933) in 1900. Nitobe's lionization of *bushidō* was later pressed into service by the Japanese wartime state, but Nitobe—a Quaker—wrote his treatise in a dialectical spirit, not in order to present *bushidō* as uniquely Japanese or to encourage conquest, but in the hopes that a greater appreciation for the dignity of Japanese tradition would effect Japan's conversion to Christianity (Green and Svinth 2010, 480). Likewise, the first book ever to use the word "bushidō" in the title was written by yet another Japanese Christian, Uemura Masahisa 植村正久 (1858-1925), whose *Kirusutokyō to bushidō* appeared in 1894 (Green and Svinth 2010, 479). Similarly to Nitobe, "Uemura argued [that] modern Japanese should rely on Christianity just as warriors" in Japan had earlier relied on Confucianism (Green and Svinth 2010, 479-80). Although Dai Nippon Butokukai founder Torinoumi Kōki positioned the organization as a revival of Japanese culture, the Butokukai was, if anything, a reprisal of a cultural echo, a re-weaving of the tapestry of Japanese history by incorporating a thread of *bushidō* thinking spun largely outside of Japan on the loom of a foreign religion.[17] In positioning *bushidō* as a part of Japan's spiritual essence, the Butokukai was unwittingly incorporating the cultural legacy of *bushidō* as the gateway to the archipelago's Christianization.

Just as *bushidō* was a concept in considerable flux during Japan's early engagement with the West, the Japanese martial arts in general did not enjoy universal approval within Japan. Perhaps most salient opposition to the martial arts came from the Japanese government itself. The Ministry of Education, for example, repeatedly refused to incorporate kendo and judo into the nationwide curriculum, rebuffing requests by self-styled martial arts "traditionalists" in 1883, 1896, and 1905 to have schools teach students how to fence and grapple in the Japanese way (see Gainty 2013, 27 ff).[18] It was only in 1908, after the Japanese Diet overrode the de facto veto of the bureaucracy, that the Ministry of Education yielded and allowed judo and kendo to be part of the curriculum at Japanese middle and high schools (Guttmann and Thompson 2001, 16). What the Americans later saw as evidence of the religious fanaticism of the Japanese state, the same state's own official organs, just a generation earlier, saw as a nuisance not conducive to modern educational needs.

If Japanese bureaucrats were less than enthusiastic about Japanese martial arts, then the Japanese public was often even cooler to the imperial project than is generally recognized today. If there was religious fervor for the Japanese empire in the early twentieth century, it was not shared by more than a tiny minority. For example, while the Dai Nippon Butokukai was founded in part to coordinate a "yearly celebration of a martial arts festival 'for the placating of the [Imperial] soul' (*shinrei wo nagusame tatematsuru koto* 心霊を慰め奉る事)," the fact that the festival had fallen into desuetude for centuries and the palace grounds where it had been held no longer even contained the building that once hosted it is not evidence of widespread public devotion to the imperial cause (Gainty 2013, 40).[19] The founders of the Dai Nippon Butokukai thought their new organization was necessary precisely because so few people seemed properly enthusiastic for the emperor or Japan's emerging imperial prospects. This indifference continued even after the Meiji state began gaining international prominence. Just ten years after the Butokukai's founding, when the Japanese won a war against the powerhouse of czarist Russia but were forced by military, budgetary, and political realities to settle for a subdued peace in the Treaty of Portsmouth (1905), the Japanese public, feeling betrayed by wartime propaganda, ran riot at Hibiya in downtown Tokyo, smashing up symbols of state power and indoctrination such as police boxes and newspapers. Some enterprising rioters even went swimming in the moat around the imperial palace (see Nakamura et al., 1967). All in all, the Dai Nippon Butokukai's founders saw the Japanese population at large as badly lacking in the discipline deemed befitting a rising power.

It was therefore in many ways the modern, Westphalian arrangement of nation-states increasingly moving toward total war that necessitated the founding of an organization such as the Dai Nippon Butokukai. One of the best ways to unite the "one hundred million Japanese" with the 2,600 years of their imperial tradition was through the practice of sports, which, it was hoped, would not only inculcate respect for that tradition and allow practitioners to feel a personal connection to their own nation, but also improve the physical condition of the body politic in preparation for the wars to defend Japan from her colonialist enemies. As Dennis Gainty writes, "The very practice of martial arts was [...] the proper means of honoring the Imperial soul;

and this, through the magic of an eternal and divine Emperor, meant that martial arts was the proper way to honor the very institution of the Emperor and its representatives, past or present" (Gainty 2013, 118).[20] If the Dai Nippon Butokukai was a religious organization, it was only because the Japanese state was grounded in an imperial line that was the antithesis of the Western liberal-democratic polities which largely eschewed religion and tradition in favor of the spread of governmentality and Euro-American-centric mercantilism (see esp. Quigley 1981).

But these arguments do not allow for a full understanding of the Dai Nippon Butokukai and why it was misunderstood by the American authorities to be a religious organization. The secular approach also does not allow us to see how the views of many within Japan regarding the Butokukai changed over time. The Dai Nippon Butokukai was founded as a martial organization with a decidedly imperial cast (see Masuda 2000, 270, Shimamura 1941, 7-8, and Sakaue 2011, 8-9). And yet, it was only very gradually that the Butokukai came under the outright sway of the military—in this way, too, reflecting the overall change in Japanese society throughout the first five decades of the Butokukai's existence, and also mirroring the militarization of the United States (see Yasukōchi, Tomozoe, and Mori 1984, 153-154). In 1917, for example, after the question of martial arts curricula in Japan had been settled by parliamentary fiat in favor of the Butokukai, the Special Council for Education submitted a report to the Ministry of Education exhorting that "[male] students above middle school should be trained to be a soldier with patriotic conformity, martial spirit, obedience, and toughness of mind and body," and the Diet adopted this report in the same year. In 1925 the Ministry of Education "attach[ed] military officers to [...] institutions above middle schools," and the "Army Ministry [sent] inspectors [...] to schools" who reported on whether schools were complying with the Ministry of Education's Syllabus of Military Drill (Abe, Kiyohara, and Nakajima 2000 (no pagination). See also Kōseishō 1942a, 16-22). By 1942, the Dai Nippon Butokukai was headed by members of the military and the organization had been officially co-opted into the wartime effort.

The Dai Nippon Butokukai and Imperial Politics in Asia

While the Dai Nippon Butokukai sent a delegation to Manchukuo in 1941 to mark the tenth anniversary of the Manchurian Incident that brought the territory firmly in the orbit of imperial Japan, the organization as a whole had not taken political positions and its military relationship was more of a formality than a substantial alignment with particular policy decisions (Bennett 2015, 206). More important, there was substantial resistance to the politicization and militarization of the Butokukai from within the society's ranks. Restated in different terms, there were many in the Dai Nippon Butokukai who understood the organization in a way very different from the secularist project of Meiji modernization, and as part of a much older tradition of envisioning the ruling house of Japan as a "complete act" combining the modern categories of the secular and the sacred. The Butokukai was not a religious organization, and was also not a paramilitary group. It was a martial virtue society, just as its name advertised. The rude intervention

of the military into the affairs of an organization devoted to the emperor was grating to the sensibilities of martial arts devotees within the Butokukai. As American Occupation authority and chief of the Political Affairs Division Lt. Col. Pieter Kornelis ("P.K.") Roest (1898-1968) later asserted in SCAP documents:

> The generals who headed the national organization had usually cooperated fully with the civilian members to maintain the society's independent character and were themselves, as a rule, opposed to the intrusion of army methods and the fighting arts of shooting and bayonet practice. During the period that Tojo [Hideki] was in charge his deputy, General Ryukichi Tanaka, director of the Army's Bureau of Military Affairs, and Admiral Sakai Tokunagi [sic: Vice Admiral Tokunaga Sakae], director of the Education Bureau of the Navy, actually 'ran the show'. Great friction was caused during this period by the persistence of many of the old members in adhering to the old methods as against the new ones of the military. Hence in many local branches the new methods never prevailed.[21]

Even if the Dai Nippon Butokukai was seen as an adjunct of the Japanese imperial state, it was a reluctant ally, often insisting on practicing martial arts free from political influence. The Butokukai bridged the past and the present, but could find no final home in either.

At a time when wartime jingoism was at a peak and breathless reports from the front filled the pages of Japanese newspapers, the articles that began appearing in the Butokukai newsletter and other publications even after the purported military takeover in 1942 were thoughtful, at times almost defeatist—a far cry from the kind of confident martial-missionary zeal that marked many religious publications in the West, too. For example, in the September, 1943 issue of *Butoku*, the official magazine of the Dai Nippon Butokukai, director Ishii Saburō 石井三郎 set up a dichotomy between the "materialist" (*butsuteki* 物的) English and Americans and the "Yamato damashii" (大和魂) spirit of the Japanese, taking refuge in a higher moral plane and finding solace in the purity of Japanese tradition and spirit as the fight against the philistines of this world took a bad turn in the field (Ishii 1943, 3). It is the aesthetics of martial metaphysics, and not the hard fighting of the battlefield or the thrill of total victory, which animates Ishii's essay. Martial virtue is the goal—not military drill, not fanatic devotion to the wartime state, but the cultivation of the better self through spiritual-bodily exercises. Ishii's and other similar articles recommended the maintenance of martial virtue and devotion to the emperor while allowing, at least tacitly, for the possibility that the present course would falter. This cuts-both-ways metaphysics, lending itself neither wholly to the martial nor wholly to the imperialist, greatly complicates Gen. Douglas MacArthur's postwar assessment that the conflict between the United States and Japan had been "basically theological" (Thomas 2019, 177, citing Moore 2011, 31, 139-40). Spiritual, martial practice in the Butokukai bled over Western categories drawing bright lines between the religious and the secular.

The martial virtues themselves were also not absolute, and were seen within Japan, and especially by members of the Dai Nippon Butokukai, as being considerably more delicate than the

American authorities believed. Far from being principles of religious fanaticism, the martial virtues, according to their expositors in the Dai Nippon Butokukai during the late 1930s and early 1940s, required constant vigilance in order to maintain their purity from outside influence. Butoku, seen as monolithic by the Americans—a cult-like drumbeat goading the Japanese millions to wage aggressive war—concealed endless gradations of meaning within an eternally-receding epistemic horizon. In fact, according to the wartime Butokukai publications, *butoku* was anything but a tonic for fanatic bellicosity. The true practitioner of martial virtue had to accept that the goal of inner discipline and the exercise of martial-virtue uprightness in society could never really be achieved. For a world-conquering creed (as many Americans saw it), the way of the warrior turned out to be remarkably introspective, even defeatist. Perhaps this esoteric aspect of *butoku* made it all the more religious in the eyes of the American authorities, but if this is true then, at the same time, it would have made the Dai Nippon Butokukai martially impotent to the same degree that it was religiously inclined.

This esotericism—on full display in many Dai Nippon Butokukai publications, especially *after* the sharp military turn in the early 1940s—further complicates the question of whether the Dai Nippon Butokukai was a religious organization. For example, in "Japanese Spirit and Character Development," written by martial arts devotee Ashizawa Hirozumi 蘆澤碩純 and published under the auspices of the Hokubei [North American] Butokukai 北米武徳會, the Japanese *kokutai*, or national character, is presented as an elaborate reflection of the solar system and other heavenly bodies, with the number of moons orbiting each planet and their distance and position from the sun all forming an intricate numerological whole reinforcing the universal necessity of the Japanese empire and, ultimately, the Imperial Household (Ashizawa 1938, 3-12). If anyone had wanted to turn this astrological Pythagoreanism into motivation for aggressive war, he or she would first have had to figure out what it all meant—no mean feat, and perhaps akin to translating the prophecies of Nostradamus into an army quartermaster's report. The Dai Nippon Butokukai may have been primarily an organization for practicing fencing, wrestling, archery, and other gymnastic and calisthenics arts, but at precisely the time that the Butokukai was supposed by the Americans to be mesmerizing the Japanese into mindless militarism, those in charge of the Butokukai invested the organization—and martial arts as a whole—with a cosmology which, albeit springing from and terminating in the imperial line, nevertheless presented a formidable obstacle to anyone who might have wished to vulgarize the martial arts into jingoistic marching orders.[22] Here, again, we find the "complete act" of premodern religious sensibilities swamping the Enlightenment categories which the Americans, and the Japanese modernizers, were attempting to impose upon Japan.

To be sure, the Butokukai was not only an esoteric study group. There was more to the Butokukai, and to the martial arts, than these musings about the harmony of the spheres. There was much robust physicality involved, and the publications of the Dai Nippon Butokukai are not short on tough talk for those who were seen as imperiling the spiritual unity of the Japanese nation.

According to one fairly typical tract from 1936, for instance, weakling intellectuals were to be kept at bay and prevented from hamstringing imperial Japan through a regimen of exercise of the body as well as of the mind, bringing the two into a joint state of hardy discipline (Shimamura 1936, 2, 16 ff). Beyond this, Edo-period civic-minded philosophers such as Ninomiya Sontoku 二宮尊徳 (1787-1856) were to be emulated and enfolded into an all-encompassing *budō* ethos braiding the mental and menial into sinewy citizens ready to make sacrifices as their country required (Satō 1943a, 3-5). Martial heroes from the past, such as Yamaoka Tesshū 山岡鉄舟 (1836-1888) and Miyamoto Musashi 宮本武蔵 (1584-1645), were also held up by many in the Butokukai as models for modern Japanese (Satō 1943b, 6-7). Perhaps in an effort to bridge the chasm between the intricacies of *butoku* philosophy and the immediacies of *butoku* practice, Dai Nippon Butokukai publications contained a liberal dose of the cerebral, the spiritual, and the more readily accessible.

At the same time, had the American authorities who were accusing Japan of plans for world domination under a divine emperor reflected a bit more, they might have found that such a goal would be difficult due to the emphasis that so many Butokukai leaders placed on the idea of Japan as an outsized family. If the Dai Nippon Butokukai was part of a religion, it certainly lacked the universality of Buddhism or Christianity. Aforementioned *butoku* expositor Ashizawa Hirozumi, for example, posits Japan as a giant kinship network comprising the unified people and their emperor (Ashizawa 1938, 2). According to Ashizawa and many of his contemporaries, martial spirituality was to be practiced in order to train the Japanese people for service to the emperor (Shimamura 1936, 3). This is an ideal that translated awkwardly, if at all, when non-Japanese people were involved. Likewise, Butokukai author Satō Kenji emphasized that Japanese history was, in essence, tribal, with state and gods smoothly linked and the Japanese people drawn together thereunder (Satō 1943a, 4). Not even St. Louis IX had argued that Christendom was only for Frenchmen. If the Japanese Empire was truly bent on global conquest (religious or otherwise), as the Americans kept insisting, then these Butokukai ideas would seem to be much more hindrance than help to such a plan.

Paradoxically, the untenability of Butokukai "ideology" as vehicle for religious imperialism can be seen in the very breadth of the Dai Nippon Butokukai's reach. As the Japanese Empire (and Japanese out-migration) expanded, Butokukai branches, branch shrines, and spinoff groups appeared throughout North America, Asia, and the Pacific: Taiwan, Manchukuo, Hawaii,[23] California, Karafuto 樺太, the Korean Peninsula, Qingdao, and Shanghai, among other places. But this vast expanse of territory conceals the tension at the heart of the Japanese imperial project.[24] Because the Japanese people were subjects of an emperor to whom they were connected by more than war and politics—because Japanese society as a whole retained some of the "complete act" which Andrew Jones argues typified premodern Christian societies before the invention of categories such as "secular," "sacred," and "religion"—the Dai Nippon Butokukai should perhaps best be situated as part of "Japan's informal empire" (Duus, Myers, and Peattie 1991), wherein "Butokukai membership serve[d] to (re)create and maintain local social hierarchies, while

Butokukai spectacles, events, and classes offered members and non-members alike the opportunity to create and enjoy notions of Japanese national community through their own local practices and realities" (Gainty 2013, 3). In both war and peace, and both at home and abroad, Japan the country, the Japanese as a people, and the Emperor as the sovereign of both were bound in ways that made the Butokukai a vector for the propagation of a sense of imperial belonging, as well as a site for experiencing the ambiguity of what it meant to take part in that state (Gainty 2013, 3). The belonging on offer was not universally fungible.

In fact, far from dominating their surroundings, and in contrast to the role they played in helping form Japanese imperial identity, Butokukai chapters tended to stay on the margins of life outside the home islands. Few religions proselytize so stealthily. Many Dai Nippon Butokukai shrines and dojos in China and Taiwan were in Japanese concessions or other areas set apart from the public. In other places, Butokukai building projects were crowdfunded, further diluting the connection to centralized control. Halls were used for communal purposes as well as martial arts functions, making them more like Kiwanis Clubs than training grounds (Nakagawa and Nishikawa 2020). Internal divisions within the Butokukai prevented even this limited outreach from being effective. Lt. Col. P.K. Roest, the GHQ official who adopted a nuanced view of the Butokukai during the Occupation in contrast with most of his colleagues, wrote in 1946 that:

> Many so-called branch societies [of the Dai Nippon Butokukai] were formed all over Japanese occupied territory since 1941, but these were never recognized by their home society since they disagreed on the strict standards maintained by the Japanese organization. No members were ever sent to these branches at the initiative of the BUTOKU KAI.[25]

If the Butokukai chapters in foreign territories were meant to inculcate non-Japanese people, or even local Japanese residents, into the religious cult of emperor worship, they signally failed in their mission. It is much closer to the historical truth to say that the Dai Nippon Butokukai was shy, even retiring, in foreign settings. Sometimes even comically so. In Seattle, the Butokukai dojo was just a borrowed room at the Seattle First Baptist Church (Bennett 2015, 206).[26]

Know Your Enemy?

Unlike Lt. Col. Roest, many Americans, particularly those in positions of authority, were not ready to allow such ambiguities to modulate the harsh tones and broad brushstrokes increasingly used to portray Japan as the liberal world order's implacable foe. In its blanketing of the American and Asia-Pacific populations with pre-war innuendo and wartime propaganda, the American government seized on the confluence of religion and politics in portraying Japan as a uniquely fanatic nation-state (see esp. Dower 1987). One of the best examples of how the United States government saw Japan—and insisted that its soldiers and citizens see the country, too—is filmmaker Frank C. Capra's (1897-1991) propagandistic diptych *Why We Fight: The Battle of China* (1944) and *Know Your Enemy: Japan* (1945). Taken together, these films are a droning

work of monomaniacal ideology accusing Japan of wishing to bring half of the globe under imperial domination in accordance with the little-known or -understood (then or now) doctrine of *hakkō ichiu* 八紘一宇, the program for uniting the many races of Asia and the Pacific under the Japanese emperor (see also Kuroiwa 2022).[27] In Capra's films, bells gong and the Japanese people mindlessly bow in submissive obedience, automatons of emperor worship who are marching in lockstep on a drive for conquest. Although it was later learned that the "Tanaka Memorial"—the document purporting to be by Baron Tanaka Giichi 田中義一 (1864-1929) memorializing to the Shōwa Emperor (1901-1989) on Japan's plans for world domination—on which Capra largely premised his films was a forgery and a hoax, the false document neatly captures the anti-Japanese hysteria that typified wartime America. The Butokukai was lumped in by the American authorities with these fever visions of a rampant, fanatical Japan, and therefore seen as also being infected with what the Americans characterized as cultish behavior (see also Union of Democratic Control 1936, esp. 4-7).

While the Americans went to great lengths to paint Japan, and the Butokukai in particular, as irredeemably religious, after the war the Occupation authorities used the Butokukai as a catch-all to purge many with no overt religious affiliation at all.[28] Whereas the Butokukai had been (erroneously) linked with Buddhism by the FBI as a pretext for arresting Tamori Shimo, and then positioned as an adjunct of the statist Shintoism of the war years, immediately after the Japanese surrender the Americans reversed course, as it were, with many seeing the Butokukai, not as a religious organization, but as a militarist one. Charges of religious devotion evaporated and the Butokukai was re-positioned by the American authorities as a kind of right-wing militia. As Denis Gainty points out, "Fully two-thirds of the Japanese bureaucrats purged by the Occupation—including police officers and mid-level administrative officials—were removed because of their membership in the Butokukai" (Gainty 2013, 145).[29] The purge rolled across the archipelago, with officials in every prefecture and administrative unit affected by the clearing-out of the Butokukai's ranks (Sakaue 2012, especially the table on p. 24).[30]

One individual purged by the American authorities whose case reveals the Americans' deeply conflicted thinking on the Dai Nippon Butokukai is Suehiro Izutarō 末弘厳太郎 (1888-1951), a legal scholar and public intellectual active mainly during the Taishō and early to mid Shōwa periods. Although Suehiro hailed from a family of *kannushi* 神主, or Shintō priests, in southern Japan, Suehiro's father had refused to continue in that line of work and instead moved to Tokyo, where he eventually became a judge on the Daishin'in 大審院, or Court of Cassation, an earlier iteration of the Japanese Supreme Court. In his voluminous writings, Suehiro Izutarō, who followed in his father's footsteps in studying the law, displays both an erudition about religion as well as a deep skepticism about all forms of religious belief. There is no evidence of which I am aware that Suehiro was involved in any form of organized religion or that he held any metaphysical commitments whatsoever. And yet, like so many other Japanese public figures in the second half of the 1940s, Suehiro was investigated by the American

authorities based in large part on his involvement with the Butokukai, as well as with the Nippon Taiiku Kai 日本體育會 (Japan Athletic Union).

An early champion of the use of sports to strengthen Japan's body politic and prepare the population for carrying out the imperial project as well as the defense of the homeland, Suehiro parlayed his position as one of the top swimming coaches in Japan into an assignment to coach the Japan men's swimming team at the 1932 and 1936 Olympics. Suehiro's promotion to Olympic swimming coach was part of a calculated effort on the part of Japanese authorities to inculcate military preparedness in the Japanese people—not as part of a religious program, but as readiness against the geopolitical contingencies of a worsening regional and global situation. While many in the West were wary about Japan's rise, especially after Japan won the most gold medals and the most medals overall in swimming at the 1932 summer games, military officials in Japan saw the possibility for translating Olympic success into greater enthusiasm for martial virtue.

Much of the Japanese authorities' actions were also intended as rebuttals to Western racism. Racist caricatures in the Western press confirm the insecurity with which many there viewed a strengthening Japan, in particular through the lens of sports. The Japanese, in turn, were well aware of how they were seen abroad, and many wanted to correct such malicious misinterpretations of their country. One especially racist cartoon, from France, was featured in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* on September 3, 1932. The French cartoon riffs on the "yellow peril" directly under an article announcing that Japan is prepared to welcome home its "conquering" (*gaisen*) swimming athletes from Los Angeles (Yomiuri Shimbun 1932 a, 5). A country which can hold its own in international athletic competitions need not bow to the race-baiting tropes of the colonialist Western powers.

At the same time, the Japanese papers, and public, largely conflated athletic and martial victory as part of the same overall project. The September 9, 1932 issue of the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, for example, has headlines about the victorious Olympians preparing to arrive in Japan, and also about victorious soldiers and their officers announcing their victory in Manchuria at the Imperial Palace. The news on the second page is grouped under the general heading "Pride of Domination" (*seiha no hokori* 制覇の誇り) (Yomiuri Shimbun 1932b, 5). Taken all together, the portrait that emerges is one of geopolitical clearsightedness, not religious blindness to reality. The cultural momentum of sports in Japan was martial, not doctrinal. The country was preparing for war, not proselytization.

The military strongly encouraged Suehiro to push this party line of sports as warm-up for war among his team members. In a September, 1944 pamphlet titled, "War and Physical Culture" (*Taiiku to sensō* 体體と戦争)—partially translated by SCAP staff—Suehiro recalls how the military pressured him to put sports at the service of the empire:

> I got to hear of it [that is, the army's attempt to co-opt sports for military purposes] for the first time in June, 1936 when on my way to the Olympics in Berlin, from Lieutenant General Oshima who was at that time the Managing Chief Director of the Great Japan Phys[ical] Culture Assisting Assoc[iation]

> (Dai Nippon Tai Iku Kyo [sic] Kai).[31] What his Excellency Oshima told me at that time was: "You are going to the Olympics in this brilliant summer. The general public too, not knowing anything, hustle about to see you off. As long as you win in Berlin, they are simple enough to believe that that shows the excellence of our people's Physical Culture. But what the results of the latest examination of the conscripts show is something to be anxious about. I am Managing Director General of the Phys[ical] Culture Assisting Assoc[iation] + as such I have great anxiety about the future of our country. What I want you to do when you arrive in Berlin is win in the Olympics by all means. That goes without saying. But more than that—starting with Germany see how physical culture in every country is doing. Particularly note + see whether the general public in foreign countries are in ecstasy as in our country over the principle of Olympics. I want you to note + study this point carefully + look at it as a means of national defense.[32]

In the end, Suehiro concurred with Lt. Gen. Oshima, agreeing to allow sports—in this case, swimming—to be co-opted by the imperial state. No mention is made of religion.

If anything, these suggestions by the military that sports be politicized dovetailed with a growing admiration among Suehiro and his fellow law-and-society scholars for the National Socialist regime, and in particular the successes it enjoyed in turning sports, labor movements, and other ostensibly non-political activities and organizations to the service of the central state.[33] Nor were Suehiro and his Japanese colleagues alone in their thrall to the possibilities of organizing a state under the twin rubrics of wartime readiness and physical fitness.

> Even England [where Suehiro sojourned in the autumn of 1936 on his way home to Japan from Berlin] was deadly in earnest on the viewpoint of defense + was making phys[ical] strength of the people her objective. And being made to see this, I secretly felt the anxiety for my country's slowness on this point.[34]

The 1936 Olympics were thus a landmark event in twentieth-century history in more ways than one, marking a burgeoning worldwide embrace of a National Socialist-style marriage between the technocratic state and a physically fit, well-ordered citizenry.[35] It need hardly be pointed out that National Socialists were contemptuous of religion. In Japan, too, admiration for National Socialism sprung most often from political, societal concerns—how to make Japan stronger, strong enough to resist the onslaught of liberalism and Bolshevism. Those who admired National Socialism in Japan were not monks, priests, or pastors. Sports, for Japanese "national socialists," were for war, not for the individual soul.

Suehiro's enthusiasm for the adhesive and transformative power of sports was also partly inspired by the United States, where similar conflations of sport and manly readiness for battle were very much in vogue. In 1931, for example, Suehiro cited Theodore Roosevelt's views on sports, which were that some amount of "sacrifice" (*gisei* 犠牲) on the field of play was necessary, even if it meant losing lives to the violence of sport, in order to cultivate "fighting spirit" (*fuaichingu supiritto* ファチングスピリット) among young men (*Chūō Kōron*, October, 1931, reprinted in

Suehiro 1933, 327-328).[36] In August of 1932, on the occasion of the send-off party for the Japan men's swim team, Suehiro again echoed Roosevelt when he wrote in *Bungei Shunjū* that winning was much less important than sportsmanship, and that luck would determine much more of the outcome than would will (Suehiro 1933, 333-334). In wars, one must be ready to regroup and return to fight another day—just the lessons that competitive sports also teach. In all, Suehiro saw the Butokukai as teaching fair play, determination, and physical culture, all of which could be pressed into wartime service.

This drive to make sports double as training sessions for military service goes much farther back than the twentieth century. For instance, although there is some doubt as to whether the Duke of Wellington (1769-1852) really said—as is often repeated—that the battle of Waterloo had been won on the playing fields of Eton, Suehiro's citation of Theodore Roosevelt and his remarks about England's receptivity to sports for empire show that governments around the world saw the advantages in a citizenry both fit for physical activity and ready to put fitness to use in overseas wars (Green and Svinth, eds. 2010, 479). The Wellington trope—true or not—was deployed in Japan by those responsible for training young men physically and spiritually to fight in imperial wars, such as in a 1908 address to the Education Ministry and War Department which advocated teaching karate and related martial arts on the grounds that the Duke of Wellington had credited English success against Napoleon to the hale bodies formed in English schoolyards.[37] Twentieth-century powers knew that what was needed for national strength was mobilization, and nothing prepared society to be mobilized like athletics. This was a common point among all great military nations, regardless of their religious or political striping.

Modernity's insistence on viewing sports as bigger than recreation or exercise went far beyond even these visions of pick-up games as first musterings for empire. Pierre Coubertin (1863-1937), founder of the modern Olympic games, was explicit in his view that sports could be a new kind of religion. Religion scholar Peter J. Leithart explicates Coubertin's theme in this way:

> The religious underpinnings of the Olympic revival were explicit in the voluminous writings of the French educator, historian, and sociologist, Baron Pierre de Coubertin. [...] For Coubertin, the Olympics cultivated the ancient *religio athletae* for the modern world. Sports foster physical culture as well as an ethos of 'nobility of thinking and purity of morals.' Coubertin wrote in his memoirs, 'For me, sport is a religion with church, dogma, cult . . . but especially with religious feeling' (Leithart 2012).[38]

To be sure, *strictu sensu* Coubertin's Olypianism was not the same thing as muscular Christianity, the latter being a recapitulation of Thomas Hughes' (1822-1896) *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857) wherein the rough-and-tumble of the boys' school inculcates Christian morality on the basis of shared striving and competitive sport (Green and Svinth 2010, 479). Olympianism was transnational and humanist while muscular Christianity sought to put Christianity at the service of the nation-state.[39] This important distinction notwithstanding, given this worldwide trend toward conflating sports, religion, and politics, it is not surprising

that the American authorities should have failed to understand the Dai Nippon Butokukai, both before and after the Second World War—unable to decide whether it was a religious organization or not, and, if it was, what kind of religion it espoused. In the event, the Butokukai defied categorization. It was not "muscular Shintō," not a religious cult, not a paramilitary, not a club for fanatics—it was, simply, a martial virtue society, rooted in Japanese traditions both corporeal and spiritual. East or West, moderns just could not make any sense out of the thing. The Butokukai retained a Lubacian wholeness which modernity implicitly denied could still (unthreateningly) exist.

Even in the plenitude of postwar power and purging, the U.S. still was not sure what the Butokukai was or how it should be treated (see, e.g., Bennett 2015, 160). For example, as Masuda Hiroshi details, GS Political Affairs Division Chief P.K. Roest, who was charged with helping uproot fanaticism from Japanese society, continued his behind-the-scenes support for the Butokukai, writing, "At no time did the Butoku Kai have a specialist or group in charge of 'spiritual' training. The 'spiritual' counterpart of the sports taught had been an integral element of the teaching itself for every one of these sports" (Bennett 2015, 157).[40] In other words, the Butokukai was sui generis, leaning neither into the military barracks nor into the religious revival tent. Maj. Gen. Charles A. Willoughby (1892-1972), Public Safety Division chief Col. Harry S. Pulliam, and others in the Civil Information and Education (CIE) section of the Occupation were also opposed to a broad purge of the Butokukai on the grounds that it would lead unnecessarily to a weakening of domestic order (Gainty 2013, 144-45; Wildes 1953). Many Butokukai members and supporters wrote to the Occupation authorities, arguing in favor of keeping the Butokukai as a martial arts society which could contribute, as one Butokukai leader from Ibaraki Prefecture put it in a 1946 letter, its spirit to the rebuilding of a peaceful Japan (Yamamoto 1996b, 179).[41] In the end, however, the anti-Butokukai faction won out. Government Section (GS) leaders Maj. Gen. Courtney Whitney (1897-1969) and Col. Charles L. Kades (1906-1996), backed by MacArthur, pressed forward with a full-scale purge of the Butokukai (Masuda 2000, 270-71).[42] The Butokukai was neither religious nor militaristic, and perhaps that was precisely why it needed to go. The Americans ended up not knowing their enemy after all.

Lingering Categorical Confusion

Even the purge of the Butokukai was ambivalent, unsure of whether the organization being wrung of untoward influence was martial, religious, neither, or both. In 1947, for example, SCAP directly forbade all "spiritual" education, but then, inexplicably given previous denunciations of the Butokukai as a subversive religious organization, declined to prosecute the Dai Nippon Butokukai membership on these anti-spiritual grounds. "In all educational organizations," the SCAP directive read, "the teaching of military curriculum must be forbidden. [...] Physical education must no longer be linked to 'spiritual education'" (Bennett 2015, 160-61).[43] Ignoring this entirely, GHQ instead decided to purge the Dai Nippon Butokukai in accordance with SCAP directives aimed at "militarist" and "ultra-nationalist" societies and organizations—

precisely the opposite of what American pre-war and wartime propaganda would have led one to expect (SCAPIN 548 and 550).[44] The Butokukai had resisted infiltration by the military, but was now being purged as an adjunct to militarism. (A similar organization, the Kōdōkan 講道館, had been encouraged by its founder, Kanō Jigorō 嘉納治五郎, to be proactive in supporting the Japanese Empire, but the Kōdōkan was not dissolved postwar (Sato 2013, 308).) This cross-purposing was reflected in Lt. Col. Roest's bifurcated assessment of the Dai Nippon Butokukai:

> From the materials submitted by the Home Ministry it appears that the BUTOKU KAI could not be considered as an instrument of ultra-nationalism and militarism until the beginning of 1942, unless the athletics taught by the organization in connection with the Samurai code are in themselves considered evil. If that extreme position is taken the organization stands condemned from its inception in 1895.[45]

Even—especially—when the moment of danger had passed, the Occupation could not decide what to make of the Butokukai, or of its own wartime propaganda. The Butokukai confounded moderns, and confounded them more the more modern they became.[46]

The Americans' ambiguous attitude toward the Dai Nippon Butokukai continued well after the purge and even after the end of the Occupation. The Dai Nippon Butoku Kai remained on the U.S. Attorney General's List of Subversive Organizations as late as 1959, even as the U.S. was pressing Japan to play a greater role in world affairs by bringing its client state deeper into the Washington-led "security" system (see Iokibe 2017 and Pyle 2018). Japan was thus to take its place at the front lines of American military dominance, but, according to the U.S. Attorney General, at least, Japan's martial virtue society was the equivalent of the Knights of the White Camelia, the Friends of the Soviet Union, and the Ku Klux Klan.[47] Applicants for government positions in the United States, and potential CIA informants inside of Japan, had to declare whether they had any affiliation with the Butokukai. Although the threat of Japanese invasion had long since been neutralized, the federal government continued to eye the Butokukai with deep suspicion. Even American veterans who had been flagged as members of the Dai Nippon Butoku Kai before entering the military were subjected to continued surveillance after returning to the United States. Did the American authorities really fear a recrudescence of Japanese military power, or was it the possibility that the Dai Nippon Butokukai might still be a *religious* organization that caused the Americans to continue its surveillance of the group and its members?

Conclusion

The ongoing confusion among the American authorities, and also in part among the military and government authorities of Japan, over the nature of the Dai Nippon Butokukai and its affiliates and spinoff groups, is more than just a problem of propaganda, war, or even religion. It is a problem, at heart, of categories and definitions. When speaking of groups or people as "religious" or "secular," appeal is inevitably made to categories arising from the Cartesian divide between the material and the spiritual and the entire Enlightenment movement stemming from

this split. The Butokukai had many aspects and functions, but it grew out of a society in which the Cartesian mode of predicating "secular" and "religious" had not entirely taken hold. Japan incorporated many Enlightenment ideas from the West, but it was not an Enlightenment country. The American authorities expected to be able to make sharp distinctions between "secular" and "religious" organizations, but the Lubacian Butokukai frustrated this categorical imperative, leading to suspicion and, in the end, a disastrous prolongation of an already disastrous war.

While the entire Pacific conflict, and the near-century of intermittent misunderstandings that lay temporally on either side of it, cannot be understood solely as a product of differing conceptions of religion, the Ludovican example, explicated by Jones, of the "complete act" in a society not disfigured by a Cartesian split, does go a long way toward helping us understand why the Americans of the mid twentieth century displayed such a strong tendency toward misunderstanding Japan. The Dai Nippon Butokukai was founded in the Meiji moment of modernization and wholesale Westernization, but it was also part of a much, much older tradition of envisioning society as a whole, and not as dissectible into conceptual parts or categorical modes. Conceptually and categorically blind to the realities of "modern" Japan and the different ways in which "religion" and "the secular" might be realized outside of a high-Enlightenment nation-state, the American authorities viewed the Dai Nippon Butokukai, and prewar and wartime Japan overall, as a categorical Other, and therefore, in part, as the target for total war.

Endnotes:

1. The surveillance of the Shimos began at least as early as October, 1939. See, for example, Federal Bureau of Investigation, File No. 61-32, "THE HAWAII BRANCH OF THE DAI NIPPON BUTOKU-KAI," report made at Honolulu, T.H., on January 11, 1940, for October 11, 16, and 17, 1939 on suspicion of "SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES". The Shimos were hardly the FBI's only Japanese quarries. See Power 2003.
2. On the martial and imperial nature of the Butokukai, see briefly Ravina 2010, p. 705, citing Ozeki 1910, pp. 1, 5.
3. On "religion" in Japan, see, e.g., Isomae 2003.
4. On the FBI and religion, see, e.g., Johnson and Weitzman 2017.
5. This is not the case today, however. According to the Dai Nippon Butokukai's website, "The Governor of DNBK [Dai Nippon Butoku Kai] is His Royal Highness, Sosai, Higashi Fushimi, Jiko, the chief abbot of [the] renowned Shorenin Temple. He is cousin to [the] late [sic] Emperor Akihito of Japan." Aikido of Richmond, "DNBK".
6. For an overview of the general dynamic between religion and sports, see Alpert 2013.
7. For a discussion of the term "religion" across a variety of cultures, creeds, and time periods, see, for example, Smith 1998, p. 269, cited in Green and Svinth 2010, p. 474.
8. On the ongoing category split within the United States, see, for example, Guelzo 2020.
9. Citing de Lubac 1998, p. xix: "Something that existed long ago was, in its time, 'a complete act', and it must be understood as such, in its totality."
10. On the debate about "holism" and Orientalism, see, for example, Slingerland 2019.
11. Citing Dai-Nippon Butokukai 1906, p. 39. The pronunciation of Torinoumi's surname is found here: http://www.minatotakanobu.com/?p=6239 (last accessed May 14, 2021). See also Wada 1969.

12. See also Gainty 2013, pp. 36-37, citing Dai-Nippon Butokukai 1906, p. 38.
13. See also Kayashima 2004, pp. 135-136, and "Nippon kenkoku no taikan," in Momii 2001, pp. 1 ff.
14. Ironically, this move was in large part to curb, not complement, the power of the Buddhist establishment in Nara.
15. On *dō* in general, see Yokoyama 1985, pp. 19-20, citing also Sagara 1984, Fukunaga 1984, and Terada 1979.
16. Hiromichi Nishikubo, a police official, took over as head of the Bujutsu Senmon Gakkō (Martial Arts Technical College) in 1919 and immediately renamed it the Budō Senmon Gakkō. The Dai Nippon Butokukai swiftly changed its own terminology as well. See Abe, Kiyohara, and Nakajima 2000, note 3, citing Nakamura 1994.
17. See Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney's reading of "meconnaisance" as "the ambiguity and absence of shared signification [...] in a given social context." Ohnuki-Tierney 2002, p. 28, cited in Gainty 2013, p. 4.
18. The institutional debate over physical education curriculum bore an indirect American influence, as George A. Leland was among the *o-yatoi gaikokujin*, or foreign experts, who advised the fledgling Meiji government on education reform, in Leland's case physical education. See Abe, Kiyohara, and Nakajima, 2000 (no pagination).
19. Citing *Hinode* newspaper (Kyoto), April 20, 1895.
20. Citing a Dai Nippon Butokukai pamphlet by president Kitagaki Kunimichi, 1899.
21. "Memorandum for the Record, General Headquarters, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, Government Section, 26 November 1946. Subject: Information on the Dai Nippon Butoku Kai." Signed P.K. Roest. In Hans Baerwald Collection, BAE-41, National Diet Library, Tokyo, Japan.
22. See "Religious and Spiritual Development in Japan," in Green and Svinth 2010, p. 472. See also Nasu 1937.
23. On the founding of the first Dai Nippont Butokukai dojo in the Kingdom of Hawaii in 1890, see Momii 1939, p. 7, cited in Bennett 2015, p. 205.
24. See "Budō hanshi kyōshi renshi chihōbetsu jin'in chōsa hyō," in Dai Nippon Butokukai Honbu 1937.
25. "Memorandum for the Record, General Headquarters, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, Government Section, 26 November 1946. Subject: Information on the Dai Nippon Butoku Kai." Signed P.K. Roest. In Hans Baerwald Collection, BAE-41, National Diet Library, Tokyo, Japan.
26. Citing Fukuda in Takezawa 1995, p. 68. Butokukai chapters had similarly ambiguous positions in Asia, and while Butokukai buildings and practices remain in place many local populations the marginality of the tradition continues. On kendo in South Korea, for example, see Bennett 2015, pp. 208 ff.
27. The phrase was first used in modern times in 1940 by then-prime minister Konoe Fumimaro (1891-1945), but was also taken up by some Japanese philosophers, such as Nishida Kitarō (1870-1945). See, for example, Arisaka 1996, pp. 81-105. See also Kayashima 2004, p. 136, and Abe, Kiyohara, and Nakajima 2000, esp. "V. After the Manchurian Incident: Consolidation of Fascistic Sport and Physical Education". For an alternative reading which militates against the militarist gloss, see Ōhara 2015. On *hakkō ichiu* see Morgan 2021.
28. Numerous SCAP documents reveal the Americans' discovery that the Dai Nippon Butokukai was not religious after all. For example, a memorandum from Beate Sirota (1923-2012) to "Major Napier" (probably Maj. Jack P. Napier) dated 15 April 1947 details that the leadership of the Butokukai was composed entirely of military and government men. See "Officials of the Dai Nippon Butoku Kai (Great Japan Military Virtues Society) falling under Category G, Appendix A, SCAPIN 550," in the Hans Baerwald Papers, National Diet Library, Tokyo, BAE-45.
29. Citing Baerwald 1959. On the purge of the Dai Nippon Butokukai, see Kayashima 2004, pp. 133 ff.
30. The Butokukai purge revealed the complexity of the organization and the diversity of its members' beliefs. See Bennett 2013.
31. Suehiro probably means Lt. Gen. Ōshima Hiroshi (1886-1975).
32. GHQ/SCAP Records (RG 331, National Archives and Records Service), Box no. 5435, Folder title/number (12) War and Physical Culture—by SUEHIRO, Gentaro (Senso To Taiiku), Sept. 1944, Classification 750,870, handwritten pages, pp. 1-4. Cited in Morgan 2020, p. 178-179.

33. On the worldwide interest in National Socialist law at this time, see Wagatsuma, ed. 1937, esp. pp. 3-4. See also Miwa 1943, pp. 6 ff. On "volunteerism" and fascism, see Ikeda 2019.
34. GHQ/SCAP Records (RG 331, National Archives and Records Service), Box no. 5435, Folder title/number (12) War and Physical Culture—by SUEHIRO, Gentaro (Senso To Taiiku), Sept. 1944, Classification 750,870, handwritten pages, pp. 1-4.
35. See also "Reorganization of Youth and Sport as a Means of Ideological Control" and "Military Fitness and Fundamentalism" in Abe, Kiyohara, and Nakajima 2000 (no pagination).
36. Cited in Morgan 2020, p. 187.
37. "Dai Nippon Butokukai-大日本武徳會 An Analysis by Patrick McCarthy," International Ryukyu Karate Research Society, April, 2013. http://irkrs.blogspot.com/2013/04/dai-nippon-butokukai-analysis-by.html.
38. See also Green and Svinth 2010, p. 477, citing Guttmann 1992, p. 3.
39. For more on the differences—and similarities—between the two, see Hübner 2015, pp. 532-557.
40. Citing Baerwald, "Information on the Dai Nippon Butoku Kai," BAE-41, nos. 2-10, National Diet Library, Tokyo, Japan.
41. Citing Washington National Records Center, GHQ/SCAP Records CIE (B) 05843.
42. Citing Masuda 1998, ch. 2. See also Yamamoto 1996a, pp. 1-12, and Ware, Jr. 1983. Cf. "Memorandum for the Ministry of Home Affairs," signed "COURTNEY WHITNEY," 13 March 1947, in Hans Baerwald Papers, National Diet Library, Tokyo, BAE-42.
43. Citing Beauchamp and Vardaman 1994, p. 99.
44. Cited in Bennett 2015, p. 155.
45. Memorandum for the Record, General Headquarters, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, Government Section, 26 November 1946. Subject: Information on the DAI NIPPON BUTOKU KAI. Signed P.K. ROEST, Chief, Political Affairs Division. Hans Baerwald Papers, National Diet Library, Tokyo, BAE-41.
46. For more details on the Butokukai purge, see Bennett 2013.
47. See also, e.g., a May 27, 1955 secret memorandum to the CIA director [Allen W. Dulles] on political leader Ogata Taketora: "Tokyo Metropolitan Police informant told JAMI liaison 28 Aug 1954 that Ogata and other favor revival Butokai (Martial Arts Society) to strengthen the conservatives," under subheading "2. Re Ogata Taketora Recent Ultranationalist Connections". Classified Message to CIA Director, 215, 27 May 55, available at CIA FOIA Reading Room.

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