

The Nationalisation of the
Body in Martial Arts:
A Case of Post-war Japan

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Kendo matches are conducted as sporting competitions, but the main emphasis is on moral education and discipline, focused on self-perfection.



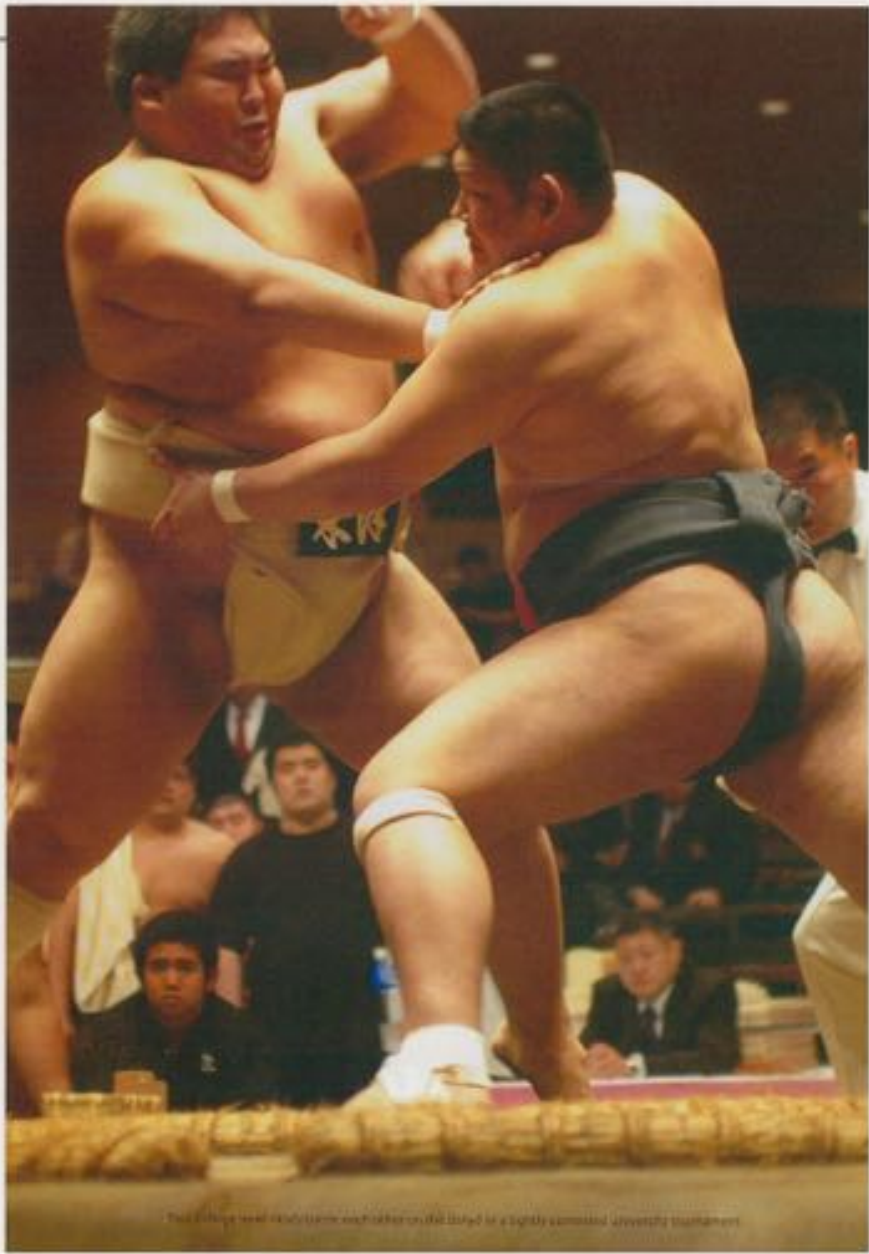
Archery competition is based not only on hitting targets, but the composed and graceful manner in which the archer practices these shots, and the resulting composure following its depths.



Kendo, the "way of the sword" with cutting blades attached to the ends, was a basic Japanese weapon in ancient times. Today, as well as the traditional kendo, it is practiced as a dynamic sport, with broad interest and participation in the international community.



Aikido, the art of unarmed fighting, was greatly influenced by all the traditional Japanese sports.



Introduction

- ‘The nationalisation of the body’ as a notion and emotion of the people—nationalism, national identity—that is internalised in an individual’s body and is defined as a reflection or realisation of collective solidarity.
- Remarkable examples of this phenomenon; Turnen in Germany, the Czech’s Sokol and the Gaelic sports of Ireland.
- Japanese martial arts or *budō* can be compared to these examples [Iwahara, 1936].

Outline

1) First period (from 1931 to 1945) ;

Martial Arts as a tool of nationalisation

2) Second period (from 1945 to 1988) ;

Martial Arts as a sport

3) Third period (from 1989 to date) ;

Martial Arts as a tool of nationalisation

Point

- The historical background of how martial arts became a tool for nationalisation two times
 - The conditions under which this became possible
- The inconsistencies and the issues that subsequently arose
 - The positive potentials

1. Martial Arts as a tool for nationalisation: 1931–1945

1-1 How did Martial Arts become a tool for nationalisation in 1931

- In 1911 and 1912, *kendō* and *jūdō* were used as PE teaching materials in middle and normal school.
- In January 1931, martial arts were made compulsory for boys in secondary schools inc. middle and normal schools.
- Ministry of Education stated that martial arts is ‘unique to Japan’ and insisted that the objective of these lessons was to train ‘a national spirit of fortitude and vigor’ and to discipline the mind and body.

Martial Arts is an effective tool for nationalisation

- **Ukichi Sato (1895-1975) emphasised:**

‘Japanese martial arts are the most valuable as a means of understanding the pure spirit of Japan, and most appropriate for promoting the awareness of a Japanese people’; ‘in combination with Bushido, Japanese martial arts promote development, with a resulting demonstration of the desired virtues in the martial arts of the spirit of loyalty and patriotism’ [Sato 1928]

The ‘precious characteristic’ of martial arts that was not found in sports.

The disparities between the martial arts and sports in ‘ethnicity and national character’ created several other differences:

Competition rules to critique the immaturity of *kendō* competitions as ‘the beauty of the martial arts spirit not bound by winning or losing’.

Very burdensome and assiduous etiquette and unscientific and irrational practice methods.

‘Suppression of expressing one’s emotions’. [Sato 1928]

Pattern and Issues

Sato's claim indicates a pattern

- (1) Emphasis on historical origin and tradition**
- (2) Emphasis on the uniqueness distinguishing it from sports and other cultures.**

The issues with Sato's claims

- Prohibit maintaining rules of competition, rationalising the practice of martial arts and even expressing one's own emotions.**
- Unification of the value of martial arts and elimination of the possibility of diverse development.**

1-2 Combining intense nationalism and militaristic demand

- After the Second Sino-Japanese War began in 1937, martial arts were regarded as a means of training self-sacrificing soldiers.
- In April of 1941, *Kendō* and *Judō* were made compulsory for boys, and *Naginata* used for girls in elementary schools.
- With Japan's participation in World War II in December of 1941, martial arts were reorganised into effective battlefield combat strategies.
- In 1943 and 1944, *Naginata* was made compulsory in girls middle and normal school.
- The purpose of these martial arts lessons to 'train to attack as a main focus' and to cultivate 'practical skills of serviced devotion'.

Judō techniques as combat-style attacks in Elementary School PE Classes



東京高師附属国民学校を訪ねて

国民学校体育科の
教材が、
格闘技が
教えられるもの、
いままこと
日本の
高師

道 科 體



現場に於ける有込率の打突
（四方突・側面打）
元側の打突を中心にして、内側の
四人は、一歩退却の諸方突を行ひ、外
側の四人は、側面打の突撃を連続繰
返す。
内外交代して更に修練する。

極 技
教師對兒
童の極技



「其場に於ける空回打突（斜上打）」
「斜上打」は、空回打は右手で、内側側は左手で、其に相手の動きを攻撃する。
どの兒童にも一歩一歩の戦術が通つてゐる。



Kendo in Elementary School's PE Classes



Kendo for the War

Group Competition in 1939

Honing Sword and Bayonet Skills
against enemy in 1943 (Bennett
2015)



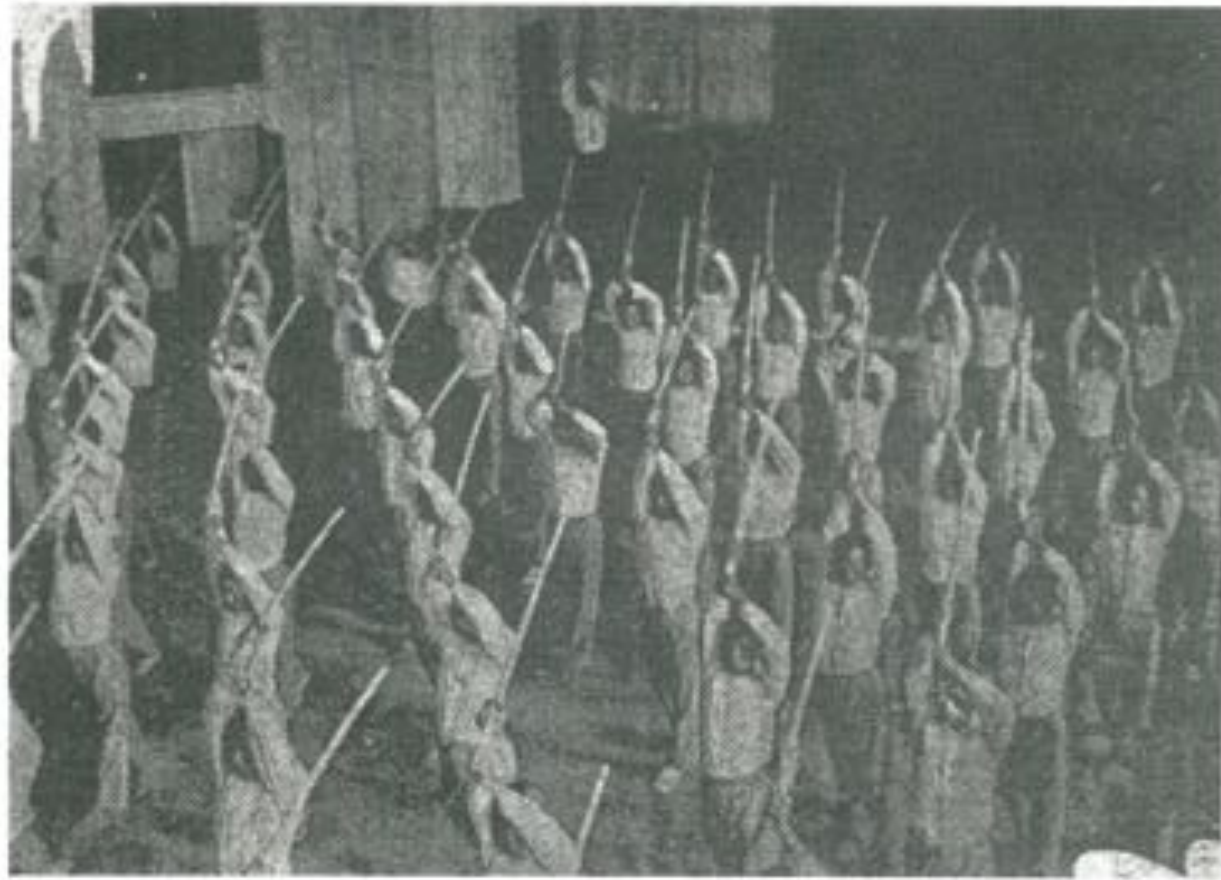
Japanese army's brutality during the Nanking Incident in 1938



●新聞に報道された「百人斬り競争」の記事



'*kendō* Gymnastics' in Korea in 1938



(『京城日報』 1938年7月29日)

2. Making Martial Arts into a sport

2-1 The banning of martial arts

- Japan was under United States rule (from August 1945 until April 1952).
- **Martial arts were not only removed from the school curriculum and extracurricular activities, but also from society:**
 - 1,927 martial arts teachers were forced into retirement
 - 1,219 executives of the *Dai-Nippon Butokukai* (the Great Japan Martial Virtue Society) were removed from office
- Use of the term *budō* was banned.

2-2 Martial arts reclaimed as sport

Case of Kendo

- The prohibition periods of *kedo*, *jūdō*, and *kyūdō* (Japanese archery) differed.
- In 1946, the Japanese Ministry of Education gave *kendō* the most severe evaluation, specifically, **‘the fact that *kendō* was used as a means to train [young men] to use swords in war’**.
- **‘Classical sports, such as *kendō*, which encourage the martial spirit, should be totally abandoned. Physical training should no longer [be] associate[d] with *Seishin Kyoiku* (ideological education)’**(the Far Eastern Commission in 1947)

Shinai kyōgi, a new bamboo sword sport



For *kendō* to become a sport

The Committee reported in 1953 the four following, specific requirements.

- (1) Play for the purpose of *kendō* itself, not as a means to an end, was specifically imposed. Don't be bound by the result; instead, enjoy the process of the activity itself.
- (2) The activity's purpose subsists in the process itself; in other words, *kendō* is the pursuit of better technique and purposeful activity. Don't be restricted by external objectives.
- (3) Mutual affirmative cooperative relations are the goal, not mutual negative human relations.
- (4) The [sport was to be governed by the] presence of reasonable and clear rules of competition.

Transforming into Sport

- Making martial arts into a sport meant that elements such as militarism, ultra-nationalism and nationalisation would be extracted from the self-concept of martial arts practitioners and that martial arts would need to transform into a pure activity.
- Accordingly, from 1958 on, the term ‘**combative sports**’ or ‘*kakugi*’ replaced the general term for *kendō*, *jūdō* and *sumō* (wrestling) in junior high and high school PE.

2-3 The New Leaders

Toshio Watanabe (1911-1989), a member of the School *Kendō* Research Committee declared:

‘We have concluded that *kendō* will be a sport from now on and have shown how it should progress as one. This is the policy made from thinking of and deeply reflecting on the state of the times’ [Watanabe 1962].

The new leaders, Watanabe and other members of the Committee, were alumni of universities and colleges, and for them, *kendō* involved not just moralistic didacticism, but competitive athleticism.

Secondary School Sporting Clubs in 1932

	<i>Boys Middle Schools</i>	<i>Girls Middle Schools</i>	<i>Vocational Schools</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Kendo	569	1	508	1,078
Judo	476	0	311	787
Kyudo	119	132	98	349
Sumo	155	0	166	321
Track and field	550	517	453	1,520
Swimming	377	199	197	773
Tennis	546	600	481	1,627
Volleyball	175	563	81	819
Basketball	213	451	127	791
Baseball	450	2	260	712
Table tennis	47	424	114	585
Football	210	0	52	262
Rugby	24	0	5	29
Rowing	73	3	25	101
Ski	72	56	48	176
Skate	10	8	8	26
Others	210	403	220	833
Total	4,276	3,359	3,154	10,789

Note: Survey among 2,153 schools, 594 boys' schools, 949 girls' schools, 610 vocational schools.
Source: Monbu Daijirin Kanbō Taiiku-ka 1932, quoted in Sakae (1998:32).

Watanabe's Team Won a Championship Flag in 1932



Watanabe Demonstrated Kendo in US Military Camp in 1951



2-4 The significance of martial arts becoming sport

1) Transforming martial arts into sport neutralised its value.

The theory was based on (1) Psychology and/or play theory (W. Benary, K. Groos), (2) Liberalism that existed even before World War II in the Japanese physical education and sporting world [Sakaue 1998], (3) Reflecting on *budō* having been used as a tool of militarism and ultra-nationalism.

Its theoretical standard and ideology were overwhelming and a great influence in having a permanent place in school PE.

2) Facilitated the reform. The method of sports, such as rules and teaching methods, were referenced, and aggressive absorption took place.

3) Co-ed culture was brought into martial arts. *Kendō* and *jūdō* were re-opened to men and newly opened to women. The notion that 'martial arts is for the masses' removed the barrier of gender bias.

2-5 The popularity of martial arts as sport

After being reborn as sport, martial arts gained popularity.

- The number of new *kendō* rank holders annually was more than 30,000 from 1965 on, 40,000 from 1971 on and 50,000 in the 1980s.
- At the 1964 Summer Olympic Games in Tokyo, *judō* became a sport for men, and that caused its popularity to rise in Japan. One bit of supporting evidence is the number of newcomers of *Kodōkan* peaked in 1965 at 46,127.

First All Japan Naginata
Championship and Third Kendo
East vs. West Match in 1956



Victory Parade of Championship
Team of All Japan High School
Kendo Championship in 1960



3. Re-inventing Japanese traditional culture — Becoming a tool for nationalisation

3-1 Outline

- A peak of popularity among Japanese youth in the mid-1980s.
- At the same time, Japanese martial arts associations began to question the concept of martial arts as a sport.
- **In 1989**, the Ministry of Education declared ‘the word ‘*budō*’ has more meaning to it than ‘sports’ and changed the name ‘combative sports’ into ‘*budō*’. Teachings on **the originality and uniqueness of traditional Japanese culture** were made compulsory. flying the national flag and singing the national anthem at schools also became mandatory.
- **In 2008**, *budō* became compulsory in junior high school.
- **In 2019**, **beginning nine martial arts can be implemented**. These include *jūdō*, *kendō*, *sumō*, *kyūdō*, *naginata*, *karate*, *aikidō*, *shorinji kenpō* and *jukendō* (or bayonet).

3-2 Signs of change in 1985

- The Japanese *Budō* Association, the Diet's *Budō* Federation and *Nippon Budōkan*—began to hold annual general assemblies.
- **However** pressure groups were unable to change the name 'combative sports'. There are two reasons behind this: (1)the opposing side built an 'impenetrable wall'.(2)no arguments could logically be won against the claim that 'martial arts is a sport' [Nishimura 1983].
- **Until 1984**, the resolution of the annual general assembly of these three groups was, 'martial arts teach how to make strong bodies as well as minds at the same time, which is unlike the western way of teaching intellectual, moral and physical education separately'. 'Our country must preserve the special nature of these traditional martial arts'.
'While martial arts is turning from an ethnic culture to a shared culture, we must establish a view of martial arts that encompasses its universality as sport without being swayed by obsessive national consciousness'.
- **In 1985**, the above phrase disappeared.

▼ Japanese *Budō* Association's Opening Meeting in 1977.
Prime Minister Abe Received the Petition from
the

Association in 2007 ▼



3-3 Factors of the change

1) **'The conservative heyday' had come.** The Liberal Democratic Party, or the conservative, held the majority in parliament until the late 1980s.

2) **National pride was enhanced.** In 1980, Japan was covered in 'great economic power nationalism'.

3) **'Martial arts boom' occurred, mainly among Japanese youth.**

In 1984, the number of high school *kendō* club members peaked at 95,071. Some may have experienced increased pride in their own culture, linked to 'great economic power nationalism'.

A clearer reason for the boom would be the period's misconduct and violent events involving students. Parents looked to martial arts as a method of instilling discipline.

Forces promoting nationalisation through martial arts saw it as an effective therapy for certain symptoms and as a means of education for the Japanese youth.

3-4 Issue (1) Pressure groups' martial arts theory

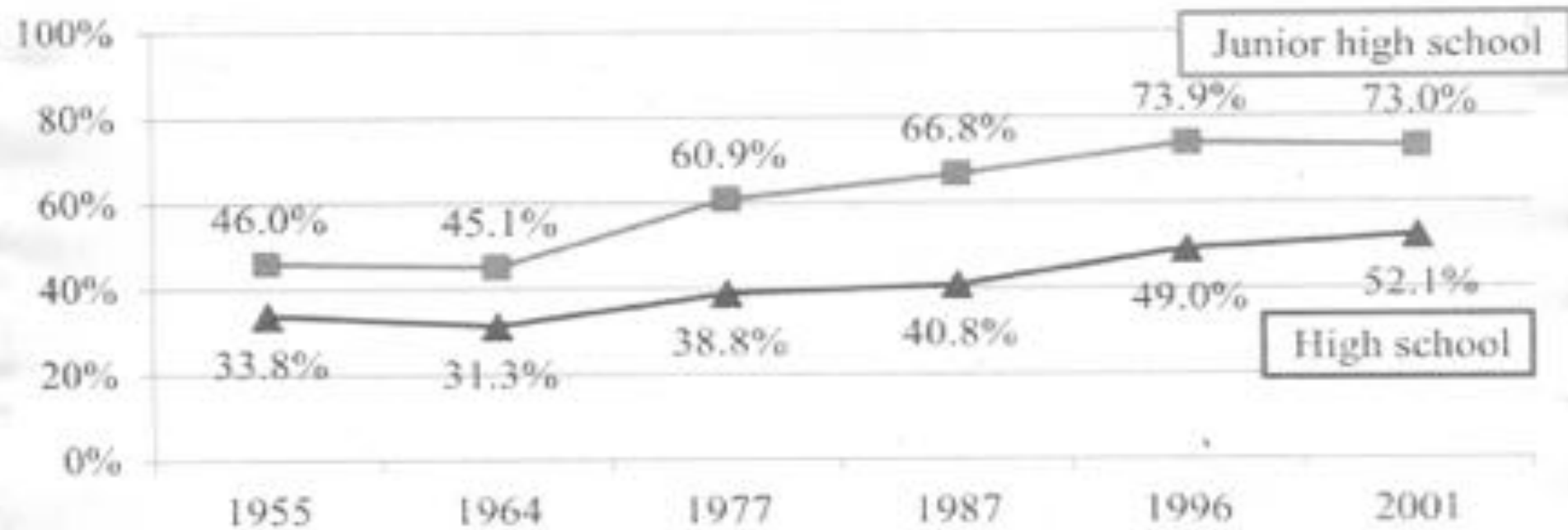
- In 1987, the Japanese *Budō* Association aggregated **the Japanese *Budō* Charter**.
- The Charter stipulated' the special qualities of martial arts as 'seeking the perfect unity of mind and technique, it has been refined into a way of physical training and spiritual development.
- The difference between English version and Japanese version of the Charter.
- 'Martial arts essentially differs from sport, which has the essential characteristics of amusement and competitiveness and is an end in itself. Martial arts cultivates human beings and trains people to be useful to the world [Nishimura 1989].
- **The pattern is one of the dynamics surrounding nationalisation changing martial arts. The *Budō* Charter shows (1) historical origin and tradition are emphasised, (2) uniqueness is emphasised through differentiation from others, specifically from sports.**
- **Such emphasis denies enjoyment and competitiveness, once again removing the possibility of diverse development as a culture. Tradition is made absolute, and critical scrutiny and improvement of it become taboo, closing any path towards progress.**

3-5 Issue(2) Martial arts in school PE

- **Since 1989**, according to its official teacher guidelines, the Ministry of Education has perceived martial arts, **not as sport, but as ‘traditional culture’**. Martial arts has a **‘traditional way of thinking’** that places **importance on character building, and, martial arts can be perceived as educational content rather than sport.**
- **Until 1989**, the Ministry of Education’s traditional thoughts on character building were (1) the overall basic objective was physical education, not characteristics unique to martial arts. (2) Martial arts being used as coaching content was specifically denied because integrating it with general physical education coaching was too difficult. **Turned 180 degrees.**
- The Ministry of Education became obligated to ‘pay attention to how to do traditional actions’ as a strategy for traditional character building in schools. Example is **strict ‘rei’(propriety)**, to suppress the emotions that come with winning or losing. The **‘guts pose’** or raising one’s fist in triumph is prohibited.
- In school martial arts, **a pattern in which dynamics surrounding nationalisation have changed martial arts. Suppressing the expression of one’s emotions was reinstated, along with historical origin and cultural tradition, and uniqueness emphasised through differentiation from the other.**

Changes in Participation Rates of Sporting Clubs in Junior and High School

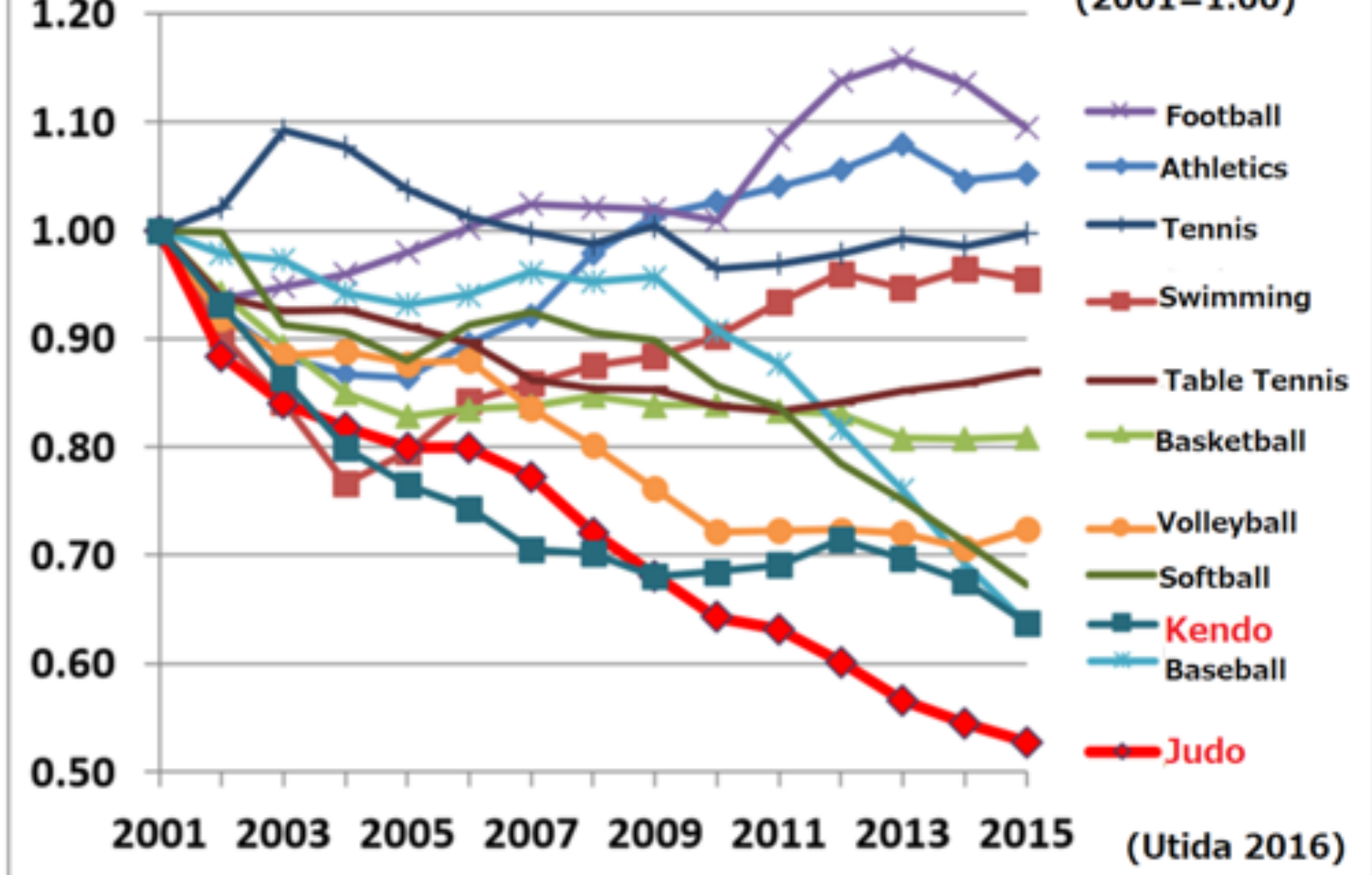
(Nakazawa 2014)



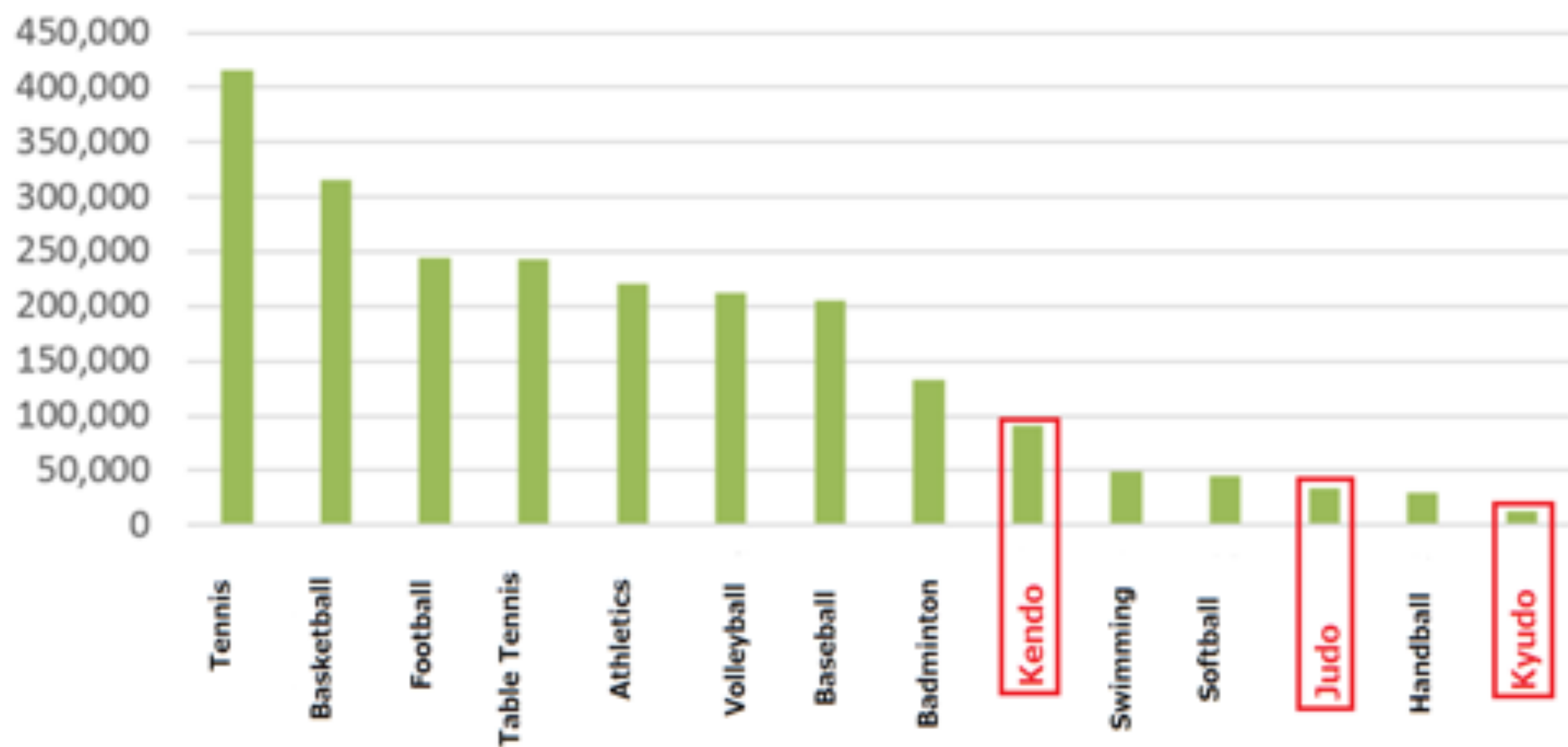
3-6 Did students accept the revival of '*budō*'?

- Since the country implemented the nationalisation of martial arts, there has been a **continuous decrease in *kendō* and *jūdō* participants** in junior high schools and high schools clubs.
- The number of *kendo* club members in high school is less than half of its peak in 1984. The decline of *jūdō* club members is even more remarkable. The number of registered members in the All Japan *Jūdō* Federation was about 250,000 in 1993, 190,000 in 1998 and 155,367 in 2017.
- From 2002 to 2005, Japan constructed a budget of 127 million euros (16.7 billion yen) for the maintenance of *dōjōs* (martial arts halls) in 980 schools. In parallel to these efforts, *kendō* and *jūdō* participants are continuously decreasing.
- **Nationalised martial arts has not been well accepted by junior high school and high school students. From the perspective of lifelong physical education, school martial arts has not achieved success.**

Changes in Participation Rates of Main Sporting Clubs in Junior High School
(2001=1.00)

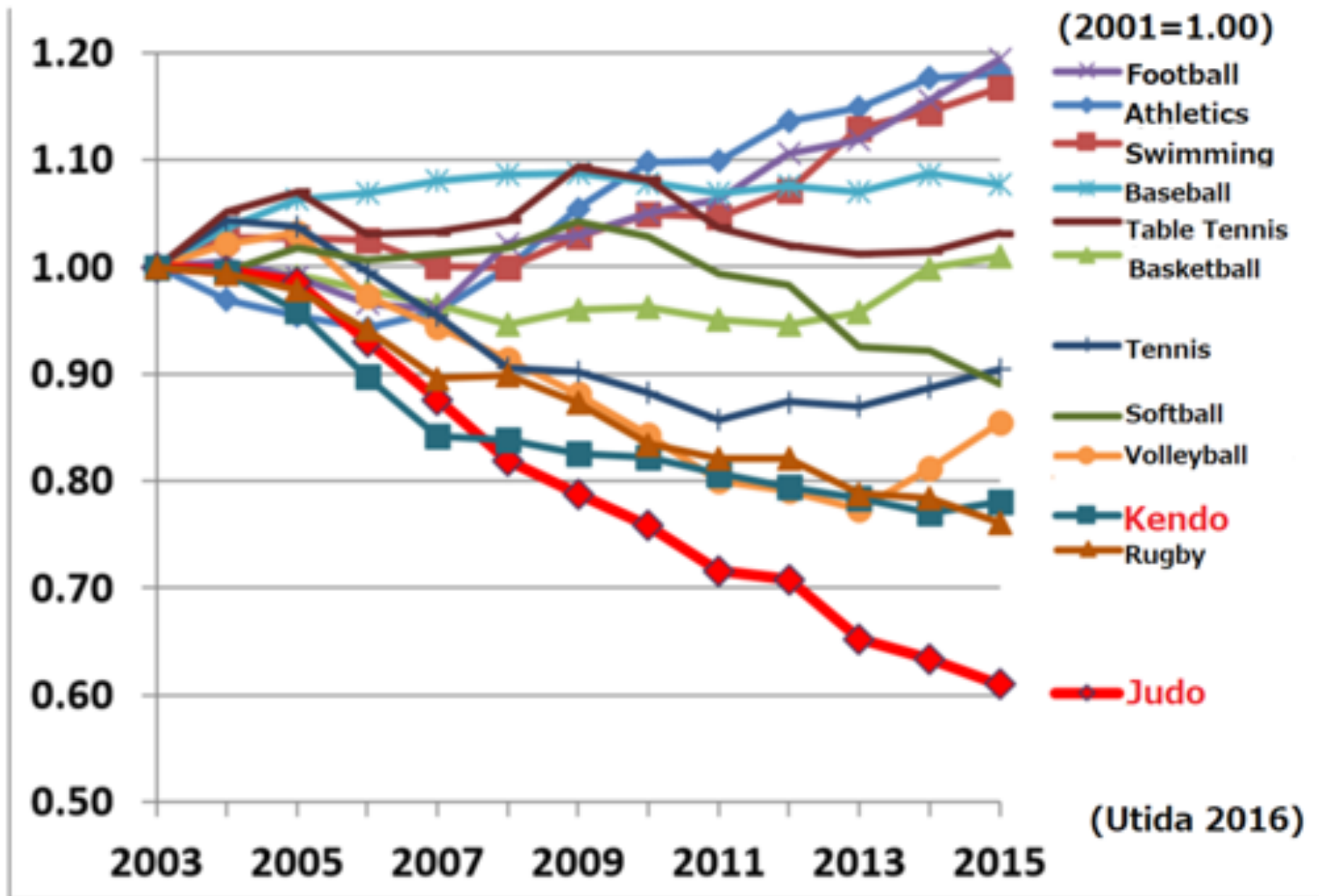


The Number of Main Sporting Clubs Participants in Junior High School in 2015

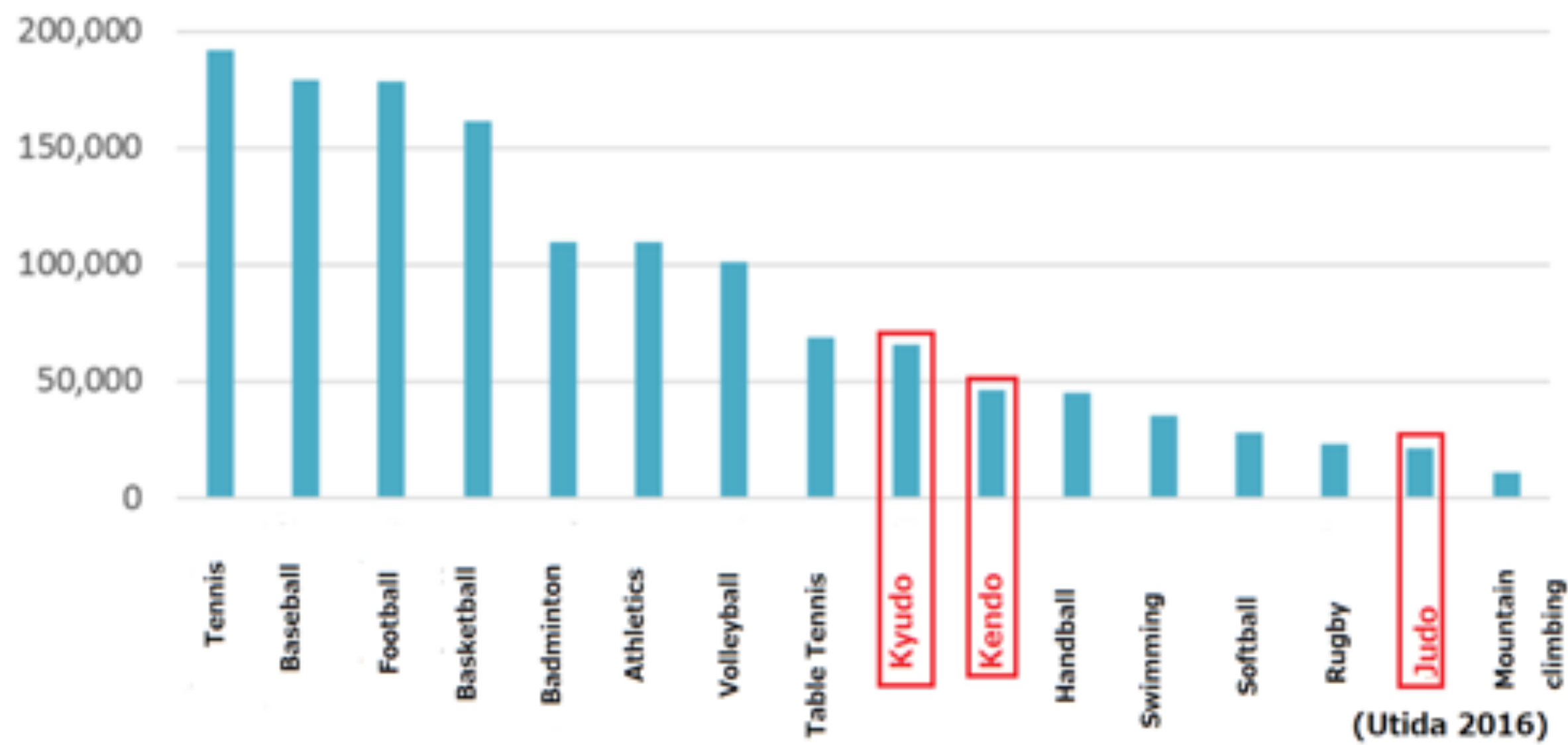


(Utida 2016)

Changes in Participation Rates of Main Sporting Clubs in Junior High School



The Number of Main Sporting Clubs Participants in High School in 2015



3-7 The possibility of change for the better

1) Martial arts in schools has the positive potentials.
Reformed according to the overall physical education goal
'lifelong physical education'.

- 'To enjoy pleasure and delight through being able to do techniques' was the prescribed coaching goal for martial arts. This is specified in the 2008 guidelines.
- The guidelines also request that in martial arts 'the exercise [is] rationally put into practice' to guarantee 'pleasure and delight through being able to perform techniques'.

2) A research by Ryo Uchida, educational sociology researcher.
From 1983 to 2013, 118 junior high school and high school students died during *jūdō* club practice [Uchida 2013].

- Most significantly, from 2014 no student was died!



Thank you for your kind attention !