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History of Japanese Kendo (1)

*By Kunikichi Kaneko**

To begin with, the origin of Kendo or swordsmanship and its development, mainly in ancient times, will be stated in general, and history of Japanese Kendo will be explained in chronological order. The various studies of history of Kendo ever published are not sufficient in their explanations, in which the origin and the development are not clearly mentioned. Then, my purpose is to clarify those doubtful points mainly in ancient times.

The points are as follows:

(1) If swordsmanship is the systematized form and method in the act of manipulating the sword, it would not have existed without the sword. Then, how swordsmanship was influenced by the change of the sword? Or vice versa?

(2) Thinking of the life in the primitive age, what meaning did the sword have?

(3) Why was the sword to be respected?

(4) What sort of people were adopting swordsmanship?

The origin of swordsmanship and its development should be studied from every respect. But, the very few records only show the existence of swordsmanship but the practical method.

Therefore I will mention the general meaning of the sword, explaining mostly the ancient thoughts, political status and religions.

To my regret, swordsmanship itself can not be stated enough this time, but it will be explained fully on another occasion.

As the means of living, ancient people fought each other or with animals. As the result, not only they organized the method of manipulation of weapons, but also they made more advantageous utilizing better materials.

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It is natural that a people conquered others by means of his superior weapons and his advanced wisdom in order to construct his state.

Especially the interesting fact is that among the barbarians, their religions, which are the foundations of their lives have very important meanings. Accordingly the great significance of the sword implies that it surely has some relations with the primitive religions before the sword itself was respected.

And it will be said that the sword was also influenced by the continental culture.

Now, assuming that in ancient times, there was an unseparable relation between the sword and swordsmanship, I will explain generally the origin of swordsmanship.