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Author	笹島, 恒輔(Sasajima, Kosuke)
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China's Laws and Regulations on Physical Education and Sports (I) (1902~1949)

By *Kohsuke Sasajima**

This paper (I) is to make description of the laws and regulations issued pertaining to physical education and sports in China during the 47-year period from the last year (1902) of the Ching dynasty to the establishment of the People's Republic of China (1949), as well as of the background of issuance of such laws and regulations. During the years of the Ching dynasty, no laws or regulations were issued specifically for physical education and sports; they were included in those pertaining to education.

In 1903, with an aim to making the country rich and its military strength strong, in the education law adoption of military training in schools was included, however, in a fear that schools may become hotbeds for an anti-Manchurian and pro-Chinese sentiment, only the use of wooden muskets was permitted at schools.

In 1909, due to the shortage in the number of physical education teachers, physical education was temporarily treated as an optional subject at schools in villages. However, this optional subject was reverted to an essential subject. The revision in 1909 was reasonable and timely in view of the real circumstances prevailed in the education world of China. However, education boards in various localities, concluding that military training should be given at schools and physical education included in essential subjects, requested the Education Ministry for execution of this conclusion. And it seems that the Ministry, as was requested, enforced a revision in 1910.

In the 1911 revolution, the Ching dynasty collapsed and a new China was born. However, for the 17 years (the period of Peking Government) until the Nationalist Party succeeded in its conquest of the northern region and in its unification of all

* Professor of the Institute of Physical Education, Keio University.

of China, strife continued among the military factions for grasping administrative power. Such being the reality, no stability was ever seen in political situation with frequent changes. Consequently, an enough budget was appropriated for education.

During the periods between 1912 and 1922 and between 1922 and 1928 when the 1912 and the 1922 educational systems were put into practice by the Peking Government respectively, almost no laws or regulations were issued. Especially, during the 1922 educational system period, educational policies were enforced most poorly. What was done was only the issuance of the plan for revision of the school system; therefore, no standards for educational courses incidental to the revision plan were issued. Under such circumstances, only a very few laws and regulations were issued during the Peking Government period pertaining to physical education and sports.

As of 18 December 1912, the Education Department issued the direction that "all schools, in addition to the regular subject 'gymnastics,' shall give effective physical exercises to their pupils and students." This is for the first time in China that a direction was issued independently concerning physical education and sports. Also in the "Fundamental Purpose of Education" issued on 2 September 1912, the importance of physical education was given.

In order to secure fully qualified physical education teachers, a direction was issued in 1921 to the effect that the auxiliary physical course at the higher education school should become a regular course.

The Nationalist Government which, upon its success in suppression of the northern region, placed the whole of China under its control gradually became connected with the financial group with the backup of its military clans, and as a result, obtained fruitful results to some extent. However, the Government took the two-sided measures—resistance and talks—to cope, with the Japanese advancement into China after the Manchurian Accident; what the Government concentrated itself on was to conquer the Communists.

In 1937 the Japan-China Accident broke out and the Nationalist Government moved to the back land as the battle line expanded. Finally, the accident turned into the Pacific War. This war came to an end in 1945, however, the strife between the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party became severe since that time, and the Nationalist Party lost in the strife and moved to Taiwan.

This period was a period of reform throughout the world, and China was no exception; it was natural that laws and regulations underwent very occasional changes.

The Nationalist Government issued the "1928 Educational System" and in order to enforce this system perfectly, the Government issued school laws one after another since 1929. It was during such period that detailed curriculum standards and laws on military drill were issued. The national examination system for graduates from physical teachers' schools was established in 1934.

Since 1929, laws and regulations on social physical education were issued in succession, and in order to attain the objective of the training, a 5-year plan was set up.

Laws and regulations pertaining to military training were also issued. Since 1932 when the Japanese advancement became remarkable, more than 10 laws and regulations were issued.

With the occurrence of the Japan-China Accident in 1937, everything was systematized to cope with the accident. In the case of physical education lessons, laws and regulations were issued since 1940 with an objective to make them suitable to time of war. Items required during the period of resistance were enumerated in those laws and regulations.

For the purpose of remedying the deficient physical education equipment at the schools moved to the back land and at those newly built due to the movement of population, a law was issued in 1940, which stipulated the minimum standard for physical education equipment to be possessed by schools.

On some occasions, laws and regulations were issued since 1941, stipulating that the social physical education should be exercised in such way as to suit to war time.

During the war, many laws and regulations were issued concerning physical education and sports with an aim to getting them match the war situation, however, due to the particular under-war circumstances, it is not clear to what extent such many laws and regulations were observed practically.