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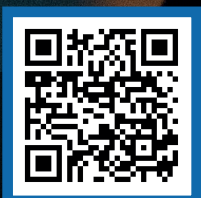
Department of
East Asian Studies
Japanese Studies



Women and Martial Art in Japan

A hybrid *u:japan* lecture by Kate Sylvester

Thursday
2023-05-11
18³⁰~20⁰⁰



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Photo source:
kate Sylvester



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This lecture will focus on the ethnographic work and key arguments from Dr Kate Sylvester's recent publication, *Women and Martial Art in Japan*. The book, based on extensive original research, examines the practice by women in a university sport setting of kendo, the Japanese martial art which, using bamboo swords as well as protective armour, and descended from traditional swordsmanship, instils in its practitioners, besides physical skills, societal values of etiquette and resilience as well connecting them to a "traditional" outlook, which includes a gendered cul-

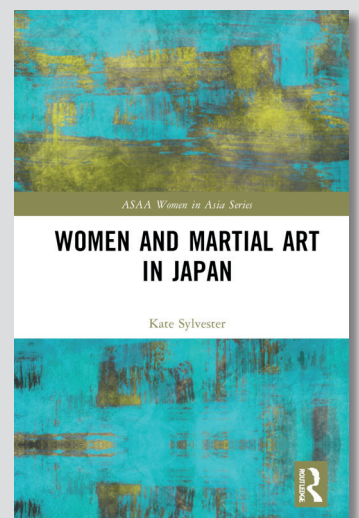
tural identity.

The book therefore illustrates an unexplored example of identity construction in Japan, one which legitimises women's sport experiences within a male-centric physical culture, unpacks the notion of "tradition" in kendo and unravels its stultifying control over women's kendo participation, and discusses the androgenicity of women's participation to highlight its subversive potential to develop women as leaders in sport, politics, and other fields which continue to be very male dominated in Japan.



Dr Kate Sylvester

is a research affiliate of The Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences (GIH). Her work intersects school club sport (*bukatsudō*), gender identity politics, and cross-cultural transformations of body culture with a special focus on Japanese martial arts (*budō*). Kate has trained and competed in kendo for 31-years across multiple (cultural, international) settings. She is the head coach of the Swedish Women's National Kendo Team.



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