

Outreach Notes, Vol. 13, No. 7

Sent 4/15/16 by Randi Hacker, CEAS Outreach Director

## JAPAN – SAMURAI SWIMMERS (Gr. 3-12)

The 107<sup>th</sup> Imperial Ruler of Japan was Go-Yozei (1586 to 1611) was a great advocate of swimming. In fact, he is considered the founder of the first national swimming organization in 1603 and his decree that all Japanese schoolchildren should learn to swim is still in effect today. For an island nation, comfort and skill in the water has always been an important survival skill especially for those who make their living fishing or diving. But water survival was also critical for the *samurai* especially during the *sengoku* or Warring States period when *samurai* warriors often ended up doing battle on boats. When you fight on the water, it is not uncommon to find yourself suddenly in the water and *samurai* who fell overboard were expected, at the very best, to continue fighting or, at the very least, to save themselves from drowning. Since a typical *samurai* suit of armor could weigh as much as 44 pounds, skill in the water was of paramount importance. And so, as part of their training, warriors were taught *suijutsu* “water skills.” After the decline of the *samurai* culture, this military training morphed into something called *nihon eiho*, a type of aquatic martial art. There are more than a hundred competition techniques derived from different warrior groups and clans. Below is a link to an article which will give you some background on *nihon eiho*, a link to a TV show that was broadcast on Sports Japan and a link to the Wikipedia page of Hokusai, one of Japan’s most famous artists (particularly known for his 36 Views of Mt. Fuji), who immortalized the *samurai* training in some of his woodblock prints. A fun and fascinating project would be to have your students research the different styles of *nihon eiho*, track lineage and compare techniques. Here are the names of three styles to get you started: *katchu gozen oyogi* (full armor swimming), *ina-tobi* (flying mullet) and *tachi-oyogi* (standing in swimming).

[http://www.daitoryu.ca/html/kandan/012808\\_2.htm](http://www.daitoryu.ca/html/kandan/012808_2.htm)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WwDvJeP4W0g&feature=youtu.be>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hokusai>

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### And, just for fun:

Here’s a link to some video footage of the most recent Pyongyang Marathon. That’s right. A marathon in North Korea.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FPn5Ehw5LGI&feature=youtu.be>

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*Founded in 1959, the Center for East Asian Studies (CEAS) at the University of Kansas is the only East Asian resource center in the Great Plains region. Educational outreach is a key component of the Center’s mission. You can find lesson plans and many other materials online at <http://ceas.ku.edu/educator-resources>. If you’re a teacher who would like to add East Asia content to your lessons across all curriculum areas, sign up for Outreach Notes at <http://ceas.ku.edu/email-list>.*