

Good morning. みなさん、おはようございます。

My name is SHIMADA Junji. I came to Melbourne from Tokyo to take up the position of Consul-General of Japan at the beginning of last year. Today, I am delighted to be standing here at the serene Kenshikan (謙志館) Dojo, to say a few words in this opening ceremony for the Otsuka Memorial Taikai.

I was told the story behind how this Kenshikan Dojo was established 32 years ago and about the person who was determined to build a permanent kendo (剣道) dojo in Melbourne, the late OTSUKA Kenshiro (謙志郎). Shortly after giving generous financial assistance to build this dojo, Kenshiro passed away, before even finding a proposed site for the dojo where we stand today, but his family carried out his wishes. Such a fascinating story.

The opportunity to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the opening of the Kenshikan was unfortunately lost until today due to the global pandemic, which has completely changed our way of living. But today, I am most grateful to see the return of community sports, like today's Otsuka Memorial Taikai and I am sure everybody here feels the same.

Although I have not participated in any forms of Budo (武道) before, my wife Kaoru has been practising Kyudo (弓道), Japanese archery, for eight years in Japan. Luckily she can continue to practise Kyudo in Melbourne at a local Kyudo-kai. Like Kendo, Kyudo belongs to Budo, Japanese martial arts, focusing not only on competing but also training the body and spirit. In both Kendo and Kyudo, as you enter the dojo, you bow to show respect to the dojo and then to everyone present. Competitions are not just how well you hit the target, but the judges look for calmness of spirit as well.

We are privileged to have this Kendo dojo in Melbourne, which is the home of Melbourne Budokai, the largest Japanese budo club in Australia for the arts of Kendo, Iaido (居合道), Jodo (杖道), and Naginata (なぎなた). I am sincerely grateful to the Melbourne Budokai for their long dedication to making Kendo, as well as Iaido, Jodo, and Naginata, accessible to the people of Victoria.

No matter whether you are competing, judging, helping in the tournament, or just watching, I hope everyone here today will experience the spirit of Budo.

Thank you very much and enjoy the Otsuka Memorial Taikai!

頑張ってください！