

## The Structure and Activities of the Nihon Yūei Renmei

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There still exists in Japan today a traditional form of swimming called “*Nihon eihō*.” It has continued to exist even after the demise of the Tokugawa shogunate. It is divided into several schools.

Under the influence of competitive swimming, which became popular in the Taishō period, the activities and spread of the traditional Japanese swimming method was diminished and its presence became less conspicuous. The organization known as the Nihon Yūei Renmei (Japan Traditional Swimming League) came into existence at this time. But although the existence of this organization has been recognized, little is known about its actual conditions.

In this paper, I attempted to elucidate this organization in full, using as my primary source references to the Nihon Yūei Renmei found in documents preserved in the Kankai-ryū of Japanese traditional swimming school. The results of my investigation are as follows.

The Nihon Yūei Renmei was begun in Tokyo in Taishō 14 (1925) by people associated with traditional Japanese swimming. It continued until Shōwa 5 (1930). Its main activities were holding public exhibitions of traditional Japanese swimming and holding a competition with swimming races which was begun under the influence of competitive swimming. Events in which participants competed with each other in skills associated with traditional Japanese swimming were also held at these meetings.

In Shōwa 5 (1930), the Japan Swimming League which was located in Tokyo transformed itself into a national organization under the urging of the Nihon Suijō Kyōgi Renmei (Japan Amateur Swimming Federation). This new organization, also called Nihon Yūei Renmei, was founded in

October of that year.

In the process of its founding, the Nihon Yūei Renmei once made a promise to join the Nihon Suijō Kyōgi Renmei, but ultimately refused to join. This refusal led to a power struggle between the two organizations, but ultimately the Nihon Suijō Kyōgi Renmei continued to maintain a superior social position. But even under such circumstances, exchange between the Nihon Suijō Kyōgi Renmei and various schools of traditional Japanese swimming was maintained. As a result of this exchange, there was a meeting in Shōwa 14 (1939) of officials from the Nihon Suijō Kyōgi Renmei and representatives of the schools of traditional Japanese swimming, and in the next year (Shōwa 15 [1940]), the Nihon Yūei Renmei accepted the offer of the Nihon Suijō Kyōgi Renmei to participate in a competition held by the latter. The Nihon Yūei Renmei never joined the Nihon Suijō Kyōgi Renmei but the twelve schools of traditional Japanese swimming did ultimately join it. This system continued until Shōwa 17 (1942) when the organization was forced to disband under wartime conditions. It did not continue as an institution into the post-war period.

The Nihon Yūei Renmei was organized to maintain, spread and develop traditional Japanese swimming, and it held competitions in order to achieve its goals. The present foundation, Nihon Eihō Iinkai of the Nihon Suiei Renmei (Japan Swimming Federation), modified these policies to work for the advancement of traditional Japanese swimming. However, I believe that ingenious new ideas are becoming necessary in the modern age.