

ing it into a martial sport and system of self-defense. Subsequently, capoeira Regional became popular internationally, and it even formed the basis for Hollywood movie fight choreography.<sup>9</sup> This represents the extreme (and to date, the most commercially successful) adaptation of African martial tradition.

## KENDO IN NORTH AMERICA, 1885–1955

*Joseph R. Svinth*

### INTRODUCTION

Before World War II, people of Japanese ancestry living in North America did not practice kendo (Japanese swordsmanship) for military preparedness, or even sport. Instead, they used it as a cultural artifact that connected students, expatriate businessmen, immigrants, and their families to traditional Japanese culture and values. As George Izui put it, “Many of us started out to train in kendo as a sport, but later became more involved in the more difficult combination of mental and physical disciplining. There was no room for any conceited superstars” (personal communication, July 4, 1998).

### KENDO COMES TO NORTH AMERICA

A kendo dojo, or “place for studying the Way,” was established in Honolulu in the late 1890s. Other early kendo clubs include ones in San Francisco (before 1907), Seattle (before 1909), Denver (1912), Steveston, British Columbia (1913), and Los Angeles (1914).

As a rule, these early clubs catered to comparatively educated men, men who might be termed exchange students or expatriate businessmen rather than immigrants. Various reasons prevented immigrants from practicing fencing, or teaching it to their children. One reason was time. Japanese immigrant men typically worked for wages 10 hours a day, six days a week. Afterward, they went home and cleared land during the winter and



Men demonstrating kendo in Tacoma, Washington, during the mid-1930s. Courtesy Tacoma Public Library.

picked fruit or went fishing during the summer. Obviously, this did not leave them much time for recreational activities.

A second factor was money. As few immigrants were wealthy, even dedicated kendo practitioners had trouble arranging for the second set of armor and *shinai* (a pliant bamboo practice sword) that a partner required.

A third factor was prejudice. Visions of Japanese agricultural workers attacking their overseers with sticks set off waves of Yellow Peril paranoia, and consequently early community leaders often downplayed Japanese martial traditions.

Finally, it was hard to find someone both qualified and willing to teach. For example, in 1921, the Japanese Association of San Pedro, California hired Noriyoshi Toyama to teach kendo to members' children. Unfortunately, Toyama died soon after, and consequently, when the current teacher (Sasamori Junzo) returned to Japan in 1923, the Los Angeles kendo community was shattered.

During the late 1920s, community leaders decided to bring professional kendo instructors to the United States. This represents a fundamental change, and is largely responsible for the rapid spread of kendo during the 1930s. The organization most responsible for the necessary exchange program was the Hokubei Butokukai, or North American Martial Virtue Association. In 1932, it established a kendo federation in California, and in 1935, it received official recognition from Japan.

The Hokubei Butokukai had its headquarters at Alvarado, California, which was a Bay Area community incorporated into Union City in 1959. Its early professional instructors included Nakamura Tokichi, who started teaching at San Pedro in October 1929, Mori Torao, who taught in Los Angeles from 1936 to 1940, and Fukagawa Susumu and Iwasa Yuji, who started teaching in San Francisco in January 1930. By the mid-1930s, reasonable numbers of American-born teachers were available, and by 1940, most Hokubei Butokukai teachers were American born. In September 1936, the Hokubei Butokukai began spreading kendo instruction into Washington and Oregon. Financial patrons included a Seattle Japanese-language newspaper (*North American Times*), the Fukuoka Prefectural Association (Nakamura Tokichi was from Fukuoka), and the Seattle business community (notably Heiji "Henry" Okuda, who was also from Fukuoka).

Members of Seattle's existing kendo club (the Seattle Kendo Kai) were not happy to see the Californians. Indeed, as far as they were concerned, Nakamura Tokichi was a dojo-robber who bought members by promising higher ranks and lower standards. They were not shy about saying so, either (Jim Akutsu, personal correspondence, January 13, 1998; FBI 100-5006: 10; George Izui, personal communication, October 19, 1998; Paul Kurose, personal communication, January 27, 1998).

The animosity ran deep. Consequently, in June 1938, the two clubs could not come together long enough to organize a joint tournament with which to welcome a visiting Waseda University kendo team. This embarrassed the Japanese consul and led a local paper to complain, "There are two self-centered kendo groups—the Hokubei Butokukai and the Dai Nippon Butokukai<sup>1</sup>—in this city, each of which seemingly has no use for the other, and are obviously unwilling to cooperate with each other" (*North American Times*, June 28, 1938: 8).

The opprobrium stung. Consequently, "after we [the Hokubei Butokukai] built our new hall [in Seattle in 1940]," said Heiji Okuda's son Kenji, "the Kendo Kai's teachers [Junichi] Yoshitomi and [Umajiro] Imanishi used to come over all the time and teach classes" (personal communication, May 9, 1998). Nevertheless, the Hokubei Butokukai and Seattle Kendo Kai never



Left to right: Yeikichi Matsumura, Yuichi Akune, and Moriharu Tanigami of Steveston, British Columbia, following the Hokubei Butokukai's 1937 Seattle tournament. Courtesy Joseph Svinth.

organized any joint tournaments. Moreover, as late as 1941 the Japanese consul was still grumbling that the two groups wasted his time calling him to complain about the actions of the other (FBI 100-5006: 2-5).

The Hokubei Butokukai did not just establish clubs in downtown cores. For example, in southern California, it had clubs in Brawley, Chula Vista, El Centro, Huntington Park, Redondo Beach, and Riverside, while in Oregon, metropolitan Portland had two clubs (Columbia Boulevard and Gresham-Troutdale) that were located miles from downtown.

Although not affiliated with the Hokubei Butokukai, British Columbia kendo clubs often participated in tournaments with its Seattle branch. In 1940, British Columbia had six kendo clubs, located at Vancouver, Steveston, New Westminster, Sunbury, Whonnock, and Woodfibre. The instructor at Vancouver and Woodfibre was a Canadian-born but Japanese-educated man (*kibei*) named Motoo Matsushita, while the Steveston instructor was an immigrant (*issei*) named Yuichi Akune.

### NUMBERS OF PRACTITIONERS

Researcher Ito Kazuo once asked how many people did judo in the Pacific Northwest before World War II. The response was that there were probably 400 *yudansha* (literally, "grade holders," but figuratively, black belts), plus another 1,000 of lesser grade (Ito, 1973: 241).

So, if perhaps 1,400 boys and men did judo, how many practiced kendo? In addition to the two big kendo clubs in downtown Seattle, there were six smaller clubs in the Puget Sound region, three in Portland Metro, and scattered enthusiasts. Between them, the two downtown clubs reported several hundred students, which was probably more than everyone else combined. (To give an idea of the size of outlying clubs, in 1941, Tacoma reported 30 members, while in 1938, Bellevue advanced its nine current members and welcomed five new members.) Numbers in British Columbia are unknown, but there were still just six clubs, with the largest being in Steveston and Vancouver. Therefore, all told, there were probably 150-200 kendo practitioners in Canada and another 300-400 in Washington and Oregon.

However, this is not what one usually hears. Instead, one reads that before World War II, 10,000 Japanese Americans practiced kendo, 2,500 in Los Angeles alone (Azuma, 2000: 85). Admittedly, California had more practitioners than Washington and Oregon. Nonetheless, I have seen nothing to convince me that the dozen or so Los Angeles clubs averaged several hundred members each. Neither has anything caused me to believe that nearly 8 percent of the approximately 126,000 Japanese Americans



Kendo tournament at Gresham, Oregon, February 1940. Courtesy Joseph Svinth.

living on the U.S. mainland in 1940 practiced kendo. So, if we assume this statistic is exaggerated, then the question is to identify who started this story, and why.

One possibility is jingoistic newspapers. For example, on February 4, 1907, the *New York World* reported on page 1 that hundreds of Russo-Japanese War veterans living in Hawaii drilled with broomsticks in anticipation of the arrival of the Japanese fleet. True, many Japanese immigrants (*issei*) referred to the Japanese Navy as “our Navy.” However, it is also true that in 1907, there was only one kendo club in Hawaii, and its members could have been counted on fingers and toes. Therefore, if this is the source, then it is a brilliant example of what Kaiser Wilhelm II called “the Yellow Peril.”

A second possibility is that Hokubei Butokukai leader Nakamura Tokichi was a man who liked to blow his own horn. For example, on July 21, 1940, *Japan Times* (p. 3) quoted Nakamura as saying that his classes had aroused interest “in over 10,000 Nisei<sup>2</sup> living in America.” Because

Japanese culture does not encourage juniors to question seniors, it is doubtful that any kendo enthusiasts would have questioned Nakamura’s statement. Nor would the U.S., Canadian, or Japanese governments have bothered to doubt him, either. After all, he said what they wanted to hear.

A third possibility is mistranslation. In 1942, federal agents asked Heiji Okuda, the head of the Hokubei Butokukai in Seattle, how many people practiced kendo in the United States. Okuda replied, “Ten thousand” (“Henry H. Okuda,” n.d.). Although Okuda’s statement is documented, he may have meant the number figuratively rather than literally. After all, in Japanese, one can say “*ichi-man*” (10,000) in contexts where in English one would say, “Uncountable.” Perhaps Okuda meant to say “an indeterminate number, but many,” but the interpreter, who probably was not a native speaker, misunderstood him to mean an exact number?

No matter. Although regional kendo associations clearly had hundreds of active members and thousands of supporters, treat the estimate of 10,000 kendo practitioners in North America before World War II with caution.

## HOW TRAINING WAS CONDUCTED

Before World War II, North American kendo training usually took place at a Japanese-language school, church gym, or other shared community space. Before classes began, older youths swept and mopped the floors, while younger children, in the words of Kenji Okuda (personal communication, May 1998), “horsed around until the teachers showed up.”<sup>3</sup> Once the teachers arrived, then everyone lined up in rows, with the instructors facing the students, the senior-most person kneeling to the right, and his juniors arrayed by seniority to his left. Positioning in these rows was exact and changed only following formal promotion.

Classes started with formal bows to tradition and instructors, followed by a brief lecture. Next, students practiced basics—about 30–45 minutes of every hour were devoted to practicing proper strikes and parries. After that, students put on their armor and fenced. During the fencing, fundamentals were everything, with enormous stress on how the hands were placed, how the *shinai* was gripped, how the feet moved (Ken Hibi, personal communication, August 1, 1999). At the end of training, everyone knelt in a formal position while the teacher spoke about morals and ethics. Finally, everyone bowed to thank each other for participating in training, and then headed home (FBI 100–5006, 10; Ryo Munekata, personal communication, August 3, 1998).



Japanese and Japanese American teachers of the Hokubei Butokukai, in Japan, ca. 1934. Back row, left to right: Yamamoto, 1-dan; Nakamura Sensei; Hirano, 5-dan (from Japan). Front row, left to right: Hara, 2-dan; Maruyama, 4-dan (from Japan); Fujii Sensei; Nakano, 2-dan; Imada, 2-dan. Courtesy Joseph Svinth.

The formal position in which practitioners knelt was called *seiza*. “Sometimes you’d sit so long, your legs became numbed,” recalled Kenji Okuda. “When they had you stand up, people would topple over. It was painful!” (personal communication, May 9, 1998). Such hardship was intentional, as it was supposed to forge the spirit. As Ruth Nishino Penfold put it, “We also practiced *seishin shuyo* (meditation of the inner spirit). We sat in Japanese style on the bare floor. This was difficult for me because I was very young and inexperienced in life. It was hard keeping unnecessary thoughts from crowding in” (personal communication, April 2, 2001).

Originally, parents ordered kendo armor from Japan, but by the late 1930s, local merchants began stocking armor. Thus, most students had their own set (Kazuo Kinoshita, personal communication, April 1, 2001). Yeikichi Matsumura recalled that armor cost about \$100, which was a lot of money in those days (Janet Matsumura Zilberman, personal communication, September 12, 1999). Once suitably attired, proud parents rushed

their children to a photographer for a formal portrait and then sent the resulting prints to relatives in Japan. Unfortunately, Japanese Americans usually destroyed such photos after Pearl Harbor, while their Japanese relatives often lost their photo albums during the fire bombings of 1945. Consequently, such pictures are somewhat rare today.

Intermediate students—say 3-*kyu* or higher—sometimes learned special breathing and meditation techniques. These methods helped calm the practitioners, and teachers said that they might help students understand their opponents’ motivations. With complete understanding, Jim Akutsu (personal correspondence, January 13, 1998) recalled, “You were supposed to know what your opponent was going to do before he did.”

*Kangeiko*, or winter training, was an ascetic discipline (*shugyo*) commonly associated with prewar kendo classes. Although *kangeiko* was meant to build practitioners’ character through overcoming shared hardships, as far as most young Japanese Americans were concerned, it mostly involved training during the middle of winter with the heat turned off and the windows opened wide.

Obviously, the discipline was not always so Spartan. Otherwise, no one except a handful of masochists would have stayed with kendo training, especially not once they discovered cars and the opposite sex. To demonstrate through actions rather than words that they truly had the best interests of the younger generation in mind, club supervisors routinely included social activities in their training schedules. For example, when the Tacoma Kendo Kai held its first meeting of the season in October 1940,<sup>4</sup> its first order of business was planning a party (*Great Northern Daily News*, October 16, 1940: 8). Likewise, on March 2, 1941, the Seattle Hokubei Butokukai hosted a bazaar featuring dancing and “good things to eat served by beautiful girls” (*Great Northern Daily News*, February 28, 1941: 8).

## FEMALE PARTICIPATION

Circa 1940, about 10 percent of the kendo students in Tacoma and Seattle were teenaged females. These girls trained together with the boys. “I was most nervous about practicing fencing with Mr. [Tamotsu] Takizaki’s daughter, Teresa, when she showed up,” Henry Itoi recalled. “The fellows were reluctant at first to hit her. But we found out in a hurry that she could dish it out vigorously, and take it too” (personal communication, August 24, 1999).

Girls also trained in California, and during tournaments, the California girls sometimes competed with boys (*Japanese-American Courier*, Decem-

ber 18, 1937: 3). However, in the Northwest, boys and girls competed separately. As this made winning trophies much easier, the girls never complained. (Although winning trophies is not the goal of kendo competition, it is always hard to convince young people of that) (Taeko Hoshiwara Taniguchi, personal communication, March 30, 1998).

In Seattle and Los Angeles, girls also practiced with *naginata*, which are six-foot polearms fitted with a single wooden blade. In Japan, schoolgirls started wielding *naginata* during physical education classes in 1924, and on December 15, 1929, Seattle's Miyo Inouye gave a demonstration at Seattle's Nippon Kan Theater (*Japanese-American Courier*, December 14, 1929: 2). Inouye evidently taught the Seattle class, as in February 1940, she and Teresa Takizaki, who had recently returned from a year in Japan, gave a *naginata* demonstration in Vancouver, British Columbia (*Japanese-American Courier*, February 3, 1940: 4).

Outside these communities, Japanese American girls could not develop fearless posture and alert eyes using *naginata* because there were no available instructors. Therefore they did kendo instead (Taniguchi, personal communication, March 30, 1998). Tacoma girls who did kendo included Sachiko Yamamoto, Taeko Hoshiwara, and Kai Nakagawa. On August 1, 1937, Yamamoto earned special distinction for winning her division against Californian opponents. "Although us girls were few in number," recalled Sachiko Yamamoto Oyanagi, "we strived to do our utmost" (personal communication, March 30, 1998).

In Oregon, there were just three female kendo practitioners. These were Gresham's Arie Shiiki and Portland's Ruth Nishino and Chiye Tomihiro (Ray Shiiki, personal communication, February 20, 2001). Nishino's parents encouraged her to study kendo because "it seemed to produce slim, taller bodies. This results because the participants do not have to concentrate on keeping upright and on their feet [as in judo]. The emphasis is on speed and accuracy in hitting the vital spots: *o-men* (head), *o-kote* (wrist), *o-do* (waist), and *o-tsuki* (throat)" (Penfold, personal communication, April 2, 2001).

Finally, in British Columbia, the only known female practitioner was Eiko Matsushita, sister of Vancouver kendo teacher Motoo Matsushita (*Japan Times*, March 13, 1941: 3).

## PROMOTION

Taeko Hoshiwara Taniguchi doesn't remember exactly how rank was judged or awarded. "I know *dan* rank came from Japan," she said. "The

instructors looked at you and wrote to Japan and you got a certificate. But for *ikkyu*, *nikyu*, etcetera, you didn't get any certificates. I guess they just looked at us during competition and said okay, you're this rank" (personal communication, March 30, 1998).

To this, George Izui added, "A nominee's personal character was considered as well as the proficiency with a *shinai*. To emphasize its significance, I recall going to my *sensei* [teacher] with my father and making the sad request to strike my name off the list of *shodan* nominations. The reason was my unpredictable temper" (personal communication, July 4, 1998).

Fees for these promotions were nominal, and were paid by clubs through dues rather than charged to individuals (FBI 100-5006: 9).

The practice form (*kata*) taught in North America was generally the *Dai Nippon teikoku kendo kata*. This curriculum descended from police kendo forms developed around 1885-1886 and was periodically updated. Until *dan*-graded, few students learned *kata*. Explained Taeko Hoshiwara Taniguchi, "None of us kids was good enough to do *kata*. The instructor, the *renshi*, he did *kata*. It was dangerous because you used a real sword. We hardly saw those *kata*, except during an exhibition or something. All we did was practice *men*, *do*, *kote*" (personal communication, March 30, 1998).

Equally, few second-generation Japanese Americans (*nisei*) ever handled a real sword. For example, George Izui only began practicing with real swords during the 1970s, and then mostly because he had grown bored with the game of tag played in local kendo tournaments (personal communication, July 4, 1998). Reasons included the secrecy that surrounded the transmission of traditional Japanese sword arts. Nakamura Taizaburo taught swordsmanship to Japanese army officer candidates from 1935 to 1945. "Until the end of the [Second World] War," says Nakamura, "sword techniques and forms were prohibited from being shown even to the parents and brothers of a practitioner." The reason, he said, was that "this way the styles could be transmitted only to the direct students of certain styles" (Nakamura, 1998).

Therefore, if students wanted to learn *kata* and *iaido* (quick draw using real swords, also called *batto-do*), they had to go to Japan. Travel was expensive and because of political disagreements between governments, it was hard to organize and arrange. One youth who overcame these difficulties was Dick Yamamoto, who went to Japan in the mid-1930s to train with the Hokubei Butokukai. As Yamamoto recalled:

I received my 5-*dan* and took my *renshi* exam at the Dai Nippon Butokukai in Japan in 1939. I came back to the States soon after. I instructed kendo at

Seattle, South Park, Tacoma, Sumner, Puyallup, and Portland. I was what you call a *junkai kyoshi*, or roving teacher.

I don't think you know about the kendo ranking of *renshi*, *kyoshi*, and *hanshi*. A *renshi* [someone who has mastered himself] is ranked 4-*dan* or 5-*dan*. A *kyoshi* [instructor] is someone ranked 6-*dan* or 7-*dan*. A *hanshi* [master instructor] is someone ranked 7-*dan* to 10-*dan*. To get *renshi*, a degree exam was held at the Dai Nippon Butokukai in Kyoto. The test included a written exam in kendo knowledge, *kata*, and *shiai* [competition]. It took three days to test. (Personal communication, April 16, 1998)

Yamamoto's experience was of course exceptional. Furthermore, his description of grading and testing refers solely to the prewar Hokubei Butokukai.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, his description still gives an idea of how prewar kendo teachers were trained and selected.

## REGIONAL TOURNAMENTS

Although there were local kendo tournaments on Oahu as early as the 1890s, regional tournaments (*taikai*) appear to date to the 1920s. For example, during the early 1920s, Sasamori Junzo organized regional tournaments in Los Angeles. Steveston hosted British Columbia's first known regional tournament on April 18, 1931. The Seattle Kendo Kai organized Washington's first major regional tournament on July 4, 1933. Finally, Gresham-Troutdale held Oregon's first major regional tournament on February 11, 1940.

By this time, many people attended these tournaments. For example, in February 1941, 140 practitioners gathered for a tournament in Vancouver, British Columbia. Clubs competed as teams, and a typical team had about 10 members. "The competition make-up was to align all contestants of a division by instructor-graded ability," said Frank Muramatsu. "The two lowest ranked players began the competition with the winner matched against the next in line. The division winner was the player with the most wins. My personal best was thirteen consecutive wins" (personal communication, March 5, 2001).

Upon starting a bout, contestants were expected to give a spirited shout, or *kiai*. "I had a fearsome, loud *kiai*," recalled Ruth Nishino Penfold, "I stood at the start and bellowed in a loud voice, 'Saa-kita,' 'Beware, here I come!' The first time the Portland kendo team went to Seattle, my *kiai* really frightened my opponents and startled them, but as there was more skill in kendo, I lost my rounds" (personal communication, April 2, 2001).



Katashi "Ken" Hibi of Steveston, British Columbia, following the Hokubei Butokukai's 1938 Seattle tournament. Courtesy Joseph Svinth.

According to George Izui:

Rules regarding contests yesterday did not seem as complicated as they are today. A contest was refereed by one person. His calls were never questioned. If a contestant had a doubt about the official's call, he tried to do better next time, so there would be no doubt. There may have been penalty rulings, but I cannot recall anyone having been charged with one. Teammates did not applaud or shout any encouragement, advice, or joyous approval. The spectators may have applauded a good contest, but I do not remember. (Personal communication, July 4, 1998)

For prizes, divisional champions received new *shinai* while overall champions received cups. Once the tournament was over and the trophies

handed out, then everyone attended a banquet at a local (usually Chinese) restaurant.

## WORLD WAR II AND BEYOND

North American and Hawaiian kendo clubs closed following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and many club leaders were arrested as potentially dangerous enemy aliens. The U.S. government simultaneously passed legislation prohibiting people of Japanese descent from possessing swords or firearms. Consequently, *shinai*, armor, and trophies were hidden away or destroyed. "My father felt that all things Japanese should be destroyed so the kendo equipment was burned and buried," said Frank Muramatsu. "It would now be in the ground about where the terminal building of the Portland Airport is now located" (personal communication, March 5, 2001).

Similarly, ancestral swords were buried or broken. As Frank Chuman told Bill Hosokawa, "Disposal of these beautiful pieces of Japanese workmanship seemed to be a symbolic rite. It was as though a tangible cultural tie with Japan were being severed" (Hosokawa, 1982: 135).

The ties stayed broken inside the "relocation centers" into which the U.S. government moved about 120,000 Japanese Americans. True, a few young men practiced kendo, in part as a way of protesting their incarceration. Thus, there is a photo of California's Hiroji Miyohara in kendo armor at Heart Mountain (Ozawa, 1965). However, upon release from the camps, few Japanese Americans continued with kendo. Some were too busy resuming their lives. Others viewed kendo as too closely linked to Japanese militarism. Finally, everyone was intimidated by ongoing FBI surveillance. Therefore, in 1951, Heiji Okuda sold his vacant Seattle kendo hall to the Nisei Veterans Committee for \$1,000 and lawful considerations (*Northwest Times*, October 31, 1951: 1; *Northwest Times*, December 19, 1951: 1; "Henry H. Okuda," n.d.).

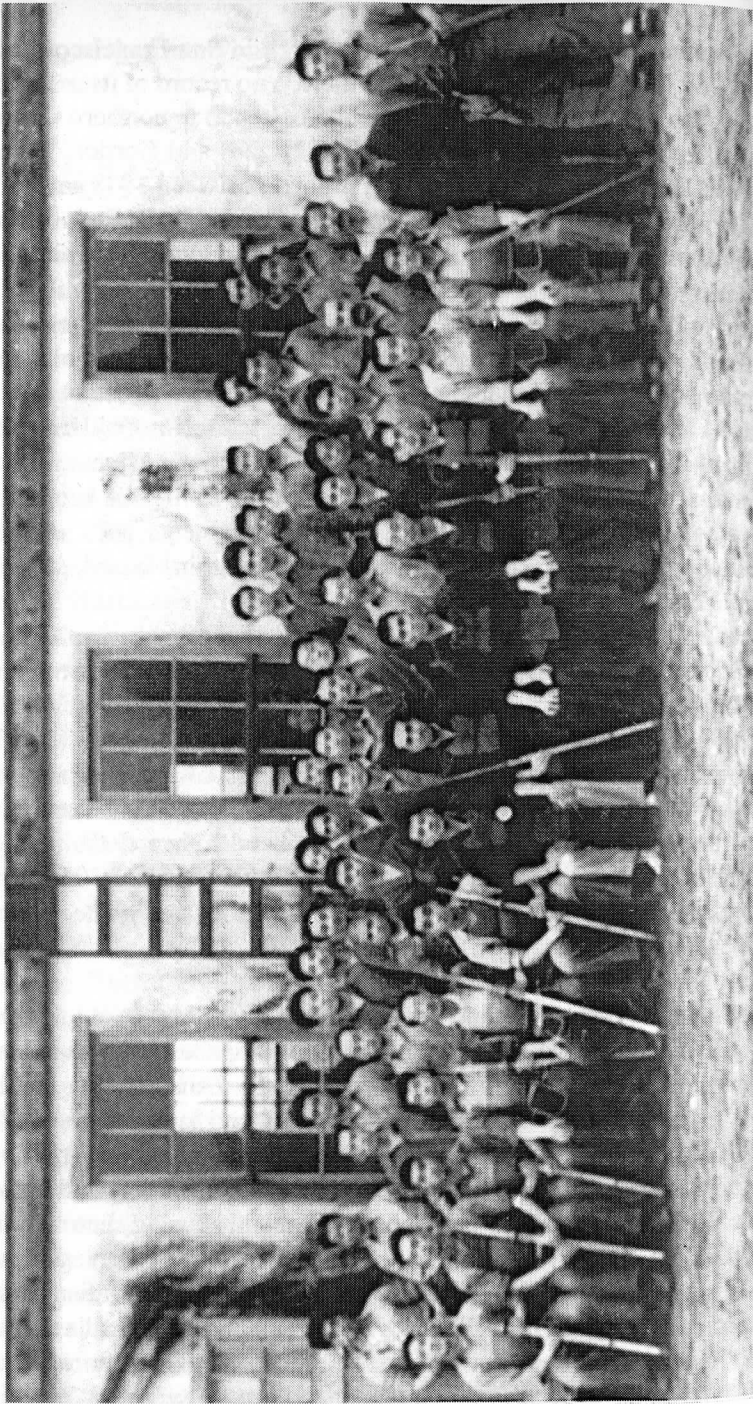
The upshot was that in the mainland United States, kendo had to be reintroduced from scratch.<sup>6</sup> Southern California pioneers included Mori Torao. Mori had helped introduce kendo into California before the war. He had returned to Japan in 1940, but in 1951, his work brought him back to Los Angeles. He soon contacted his old kendo friends (notably Yutaka Kubota and Hiroji Miyahara) and subsequently organized a dojo at a local Buddhist church. In 1956, Mori took 17 Californians to participate in tournaments in Japan, and by 1965, there were at least 250 people practicing kendo in the greater Los Angeles area (Hazard, 2001: 4; Ozawa, 1965).

There was a kendo club at a Buddhist church in San Francisco during autumn 1952, but it did not last long and there is no record of its members. Therefore, the pioneers of the reintroduction of kendo in northern California were the returned servicemen Benjamin Hazard and Gordon Warner. Hazard had learned kendo while serving in Japan between 1948 and 1952, while Warner had done kendo in Japan before World War II and resumed it afterward as a form of physical therapy. (He lost a leg at Bougainville.) In the spring of 1953, Hazard and Warner were graduate students at the University of California at Berkeley, and with the support of fencing coach Arthur Lane and physical education dean Henry Stone, they established a kendo club.<sup>7</sup> A few months later, a separate kendo club was established at Dom and Helen Carollo's Danzan Ryu jujutsu school in Oakland. This club's founders included Hiroshi Uemoto, Yoshinori Miyata, Soichi Fujishima, and Seiichi Uemoto. In 1955, a northern California kendo federation was organized, and in 1956, annual tournaments with southern California began (Asawa, 1962; Hazard, 1973; Benjamin Hazard, personal communication, June 7, 2002).

Sargeant Martin Di Francisco started Washington's first postwar kendo club at Spokane's Fairchild Air Force Base in 1956. This club lasted until at least 1960 (*Fairchild Times*, June 29, 1956: 1; *Fairchild Times*, May 20, 1960: 5). In Seattle, kendo resumed sometime after September 1956. The pioneers were Umajiro Imanishi, Kazuo Shoji, and Kiyoshi Yasui. All three men had taught kendo in Seattle before the war, and their inspiration included seeing Japanese sailors practicing kendo aboard their ships. However, kendo did not return to Tacoma until the winter of 1966–1967 (the pioneer was Rod Omoto) or Portland until 1975 (the pioneers were Stephen Strauch and Tomotsu Osada) (Stroud, 2002; Tacoma Kendo Club, 2002).

By contrast, in Canada, kendo continued unabated throughout the war, then played an active role in building the modern Japanese Canadian identity. As in the United States, in December 1941, the Canadian government started arresting suspected Japanese sympathizers, and by September 1942, it had relocated most Japanese Canadians to internment camps. Although the United States guarded its "relocation centers" with soldiers and barbed wire, the Canadians guarded their equivalent "inland housing centres" with open space. However, while the U.S. camps had fences, they also had schools, electricity, and running water, amenities that most Canadian camps lacked until the summer of 1943. Furthermore, Japanese Canadians were told that they must either relocate away from the Pacific Coast or repatriate to Japan. The result was severe disagreement within the Japanese Canadian





Members of the kendo club at POW Camp 101, 1944–1945. Courtesy Joseph Svith.

community—those who chose to relocate were called dogs and those who chose to repatriate were called fools (Takashima, 1971).

So far, there is little difference between the U.S. and Canadian experiences. However, here is a significant one. In early 1943, the U.S. Army began accepting Japanese American recruits. While some Japanese Americans opposed service on principle, no one said that volunteers were wrong for choosing to serve their country, or wished them bad luck. Therefore, by the end of the war, Japanese Americans viewed anything too closely tied to Japanese militarism, to include kendo, as somewhat unpatriotic. (Judo escaped this opprobrium because during the middle of 1943, it was made part of U.S. military training programs.) On the other hand, Canadian Forces refused to enlist Japanese Canadians until January 1945. Consequently, Japanese Canadians came to view kendo as a form of passive (and almost patriotic) resistance to racial prejudice and wartime hysteria.

One center of Canadian wartime kendo was Prisoner-of-War Camp 101, located near a railway stop in Ontario called Angler, inside what is today Neys Provincial Park. Hundreds of Japanese Canadian men were sent here in 1942 for protesting relocation, and in 1943, Motoo Matsushita, the former Vancouver kendo teacher, established “Mr. Matsushita’s Lakeside Kendo Club.” (The name was an ironic allusion to Angler’s proximity to Lake Superior.) The Angler kendo club had maybe 50–60 members. Most had never done kendo before the war, but by the time they left, several were ranked first *dan*. Instructor Matsushita gave his own certificates to these people, as there was no access to the Japanese associations at the time.

Following his release in April 1946, Matsushita went to Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, but after a couple years, he accepted relocation to Japan. Nonetheless, several of his students became leaders of postwar Canadian kendo. Of these, the most prominent is probably Kiyoshi Ono of Montreal.

Canada’s inland housing centres also produced their share of postwar kendo practitioners. For example, from 1943 to 1945, kendo was openly taught in the towns of Kaslo, British Columbia, (J. V. Humphries School, 2002) and Raymond, Alberta. The Raymond instructor was Moriharu Tanigami. Tanigami returned to Steveston as soon as it was legal to do so (1950) and almost immediately joined with Rintaro Hayashi to reorganize the Steveston Kendo Club. Throughout the 1950s, Steveston kendo practitioners worked with members of the Steveston Judo Club to organize permanent training areas. In 1972, the City of Richmond, the Steveston Community Society, and the Japanese Canadian Community Association rewarded their efforts by building the Steveston Martial Arts Centre. The

first structure of its kind outside Japan, and featuring judo, karate, aikido, kendo, and a public library, the Centre played an important role in preserving Japanese Canadian culture into the twenty-first century (City of Richmond Archives, 2002; Moriharu Tanigami, personal communication, June 19, 1999).

## OLYMPIC GAMES AND JAPAN

*Kano Jigoro*

### EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Kano Jigoro was both the founder of judo and a member of the International Olympics Committee, and from 1932 until his death in 1938, he was a leader of Japan's bid for the 1940 Olympics (Bernett, 1980).

Judo became an Olympic exhibition sport in 1964, and today one often hears that one of Kano's ambitions was to see judo in the Olympics. However, that is not quite true. Instead, as Kano told Britain's Gunji Koizumi, "My view on the matter, at present, is rather passive. If it be the desire of other member countries I have no objection. But I do not feel inclined to take any initiative" (Koizumi, 1947: 7). Nonetheless, Kano was a pioneer of sport in Japan (Guttmann and Thompson, 2001), and as such, he (perhaps unhappily) contributed toward judo becoming a sport rather than remaining a martial art.

It is more than 40 years ago that Baron Pierre de Coubertin together with a few people who had a similar idea, started the modern Olympic Games (Young, 1984). At the time of the Greeks it was an affair between Greek states, but the aim of the modern Olympic Games was to be an affair of the world.

---

First published in *Dai Nippon* (1936) (pp. 197–199). Copyright expired; in the public domain.