

# **Karate Today** —Strolling through Karate History—

Article 4

July 18, 2023 → July 18, 1927

Back to 96 Years Ago

The fourth article of “Karate Today” will take you back to July 18, 1927, which is 96 years ago.

## **Y**abu Kentsu conducts Okinawa Karate promotional activities in Hawaii!

Yabu Kentsu is regarded as one of the most important figures in the history of Okinawa Karate. He taught karate at the Okinawa Normal School and contributed greatly to the later popularization of Okinawa Karate. Yabu departed for the U.S. on April 2, 1919 (he left Japan in March of the same year), and remained in the U.S. until 1927. On March 14 of the same year, he embarked in San Francisco and left the U.S., but did not return directly to Japan.

At the time, many Okinawans had already immigrated to Hawaii, and Yabu traveled to Hawaii to teach "Karate" at the request of Okinawans in Hawaii (specifically, Toyama Tetsuo and Higa Seikan). Yabu landed in Hawaii on March 25, and then until December 26, on which date he boarded a ship to return home, he continued to promote and teach "Karate" for nine months. During this period, Yabu made a tour of the four Hawaiian Islands (Oahu, Kauai, Maui, and Hawaii), and on July 18, 1927, exactly 96 years ago today, he presented a lecture and demonstration of Karate at the Puunene Japanese Language School on Maui.

What was his motivation behind his travel to the U.S in the first place? In fact, Yabu's trip to the U.S. was a time-limited trip of about two months on official business, namely, a physical education tour. Although it is unknown exactly how he ended up visiting the U.S., he was in the U.S. for nearly nine years, including his stay in Hawaii.

Furthermore, according to the information collected on Yabu during this period, it appears that he had left his official duties by April 1921 at the latest. One memoir describes Yabu's appearance when he first arrived in Hawaii as "dressed very poorly, with his shirt worn out," and this gives an idea of the financial difficulties he was facing after leaving his official duties.

In Hawaii, Karate movements can be observed since the 1900s, and Yabu's visit also facilitated the formation of a karate organization, which greatly increased the enthusiasm for Karate in Hawaii.

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