



空手研究室

YABU SENSEI'S
CORRECT
DEPARTURE FROM
HAWAII

by Yannick Schultze

ARTICLE – NO. 4

This analysis of Yabu Kentsū's departure from Hawaii clarifies historical discrepancies concerning his travel dates and arrival ports. Drawing on well-preserved newspaper records, it corrects these errors, providing a more accurate account of Yabu's journey and his eventual return to Japan. The research also uncovers details of the farewell party organized in his honor, emphasizing the significance of his visit to the local karate community.

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Yabu sensei's correct departure from Hawaii

by Yannick Schultze

I have been studying the life of Yabu Kentsū in more detail for some time now. It has surpassed my personal interest, and I feel it is time to share some of my findings.

I've always been particularly fascinated by Yabu Kentsū's trip to Hawaii, especially because, unlike in Okinawa, many Hawaiian newspapers have been well-preserved, providing a rare glimpse into Yabu's journey across the four islands—Oahu, Kauai, Maui, and the Big Island.

I can't quite recall when I first came across the issue of *Classical Fighting Arts* featuring Charles Goodin's outstanding article on Yabu's senior students in Hawaii. However, it quickly became a favorite. The captivating photographs and meticulously researched content drew me in, and I often revisit this masterpiece for fresh inspiration. In this article, Goodin highlighted the grand Karate Demonstration held on July 8, 1927, where Yabu Kentsū took center stage, solidifying his influence in Hawaii's martial arts history.

Unlike usual, this time I would like to start from the end and focus first on Yabu's departure, as several inconsistencies already appear here. For instance, the Okinawan *Ryūtan* issue from December 1938 mentions December 28, 1927, as the departure date and the port of Yokohama as the arrival port. Upon closer examination, however, both pieces of information turn out to be incorrect. Additionally, the arrival date in Hawaii is also incorrect, as Yabu arrived on March 25, 1927.

On May 25, Shōwa 2 [1927], after arriving in Honolulu, Hawaii, he spent nine months visiting the four islands of Oahu, Kauai, Maui, and Hawaii (Big Island). He departed Honolulu on December 28 of the same year [1927] and arrived in Yokohama [Japan] on January 5, Shōwa 3 [1928].¹

Fortunately, three passenger manifests of Yabu are very well-preserved and even publicly accessible, which are:

- Trip to San Francisco (1919)
- Trip to Honolulu (1927)
- Return Trip to Kōbe (1927)

As previously mentioned, the date and location of arrival were incorrect. Yabu's actual departure from Honolulu was on December 26, and the arrival port in Japan was Kōbe, not Yokohama. Additionally, a closer look at the newspapers from that time also confirms December 26, 1927, and we also find the ship's name mentioned.

Attached are four newspaper articles translated from Japanese.

¹ Ryūtan, No. 33, December 198, p. 118

Mr. Yabu Kentsū Returning on the 26th [December]

Mr. Yabu Kentsū, who was on a business trip to Big Island (Hawaii) to teach karate, returned to Honolulu on a ship yesterday [December 16, 1927]. He is scheduled to return to Japan on the ship *Korea Maru*, departing on the 26th [December].²

Farewell to Mr. Yabu Kentsū Hosted by Kyūyō Athletic Club

The karate greatmaster, the venerable Yabu Kentsū, has decided to return to Japan on the ship *Korea Maru*, which is scheduled to depart on the upcoming 26th (Monday). In light of this, the Kyūyō Athletic Club in this city, where he has been teaching karate, will host a farewell party for Mr. Yabu on the 25th (Christmas Day). Those wishing to attend should register with Mr. Kawakami Kitarō, Mr. Asato Sadao, or Mr. Kawamae Kanshun. Additionally, the participation fee is 1 dollar per person, and the venue and time will be announced later.³

Mr. Yabu's Farewell Party to be Held at the Hawaii Hotel

As previously reported, the farewell party for karate shihan Mr. Yabu Kentsū, who will soon return to Japan, is scheduled for the 25th [December]. The venue will be the main hall of the Hawaii Hotel, and the event will begin at 5:00 p.m. on that day. Those wishing to attend are requested to register by 8:00 a.m. on the same day at the Hawaii Hotel.⁴

Mr. Yabu Kentsū

Returned Home [to Japan] on the latest ship

The Farewell Party Was a Great Success

Since arriving in March of this year, Karate shihan Yabu Kentsū had been teaching Karate in various places. On [December] 26, [1927], he departed for Japan on the ship *Korea Maru*. His farewell party was organized by the local Kyūyō Club and was held on the evening of the 25th [December] in the large hall of the Hawaii Hotel. The event was chaired by Kawamae Kanshun, and in response to the farewell address given by Tōyama Tetsuo, Mr. Yabu also gave a thank you speech. As entertainment, Ryūkyūan music was performed by „Kawakami Tenjin“, and with about fifty attendees, the event was a great success. Additionally, the Kyūyō Athletic Club plans to continue promoting Yabu's Ryūkyū Karate throughout the islands.⁵

When we compare the information from the newspapers with the words of Miyagi Hisateru ([see article: NO 3 - Yabu Kentsū & Miyagi Hisateru](#)), it seems that "Yabu's karate" was still active for a few years after his departure, but it was probably practiced only in a small private circle. Further intensive research would be needed here to obtain well-founded answers.

² Hawaii Hōchi, 17. December 1927, p. 3

³ Hawaii Hōchi, 23. December 1927, p. 4.

⁴ The Nippon Jiji, 24. December 1927, p. 5

⁵ The Nippon Jiji, 27. December 1927, p. 2.