



## The Kano Society Bulletin



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### News

The *Kano Society* was deeply saddened to learn of the recent death of two senior *judoka* – Saburo Matsushita *Kodokan 9<sup>th</sup> dan* and Naoki Murata *Kodokan 8<sup>th</sup> dan*. Both men were large presences at the *Kodokan Judo Institute*, with each possessing vast technical and historical knowledge. The void that their passing leaves is significant.

### Publisher's Comments

This short issue of "*The Bulletin*" has been produced by guest editor, Llyr Jones. It has been published ahead of our usual distribution drumbeat so that we can share the tributes to Matsushita-sensei and Murata-sensei in a timely manner. These tributes have been prepared by John Bowen and Brian Watson respectively.

These are unprecedented times with the health crisis resulting from the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic. Sporting events all over the world have been cancelled or postponed including the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and all organised *judo* activity has ceased. These moves are part of the necessary and vital efforts to contain the spread of the virus and reduce the burden on the healthcare system. Seldom has the *judo* maxim "*Jita kyoei*" "Mutual welfare and benefit" been more relevant.

### Contributions

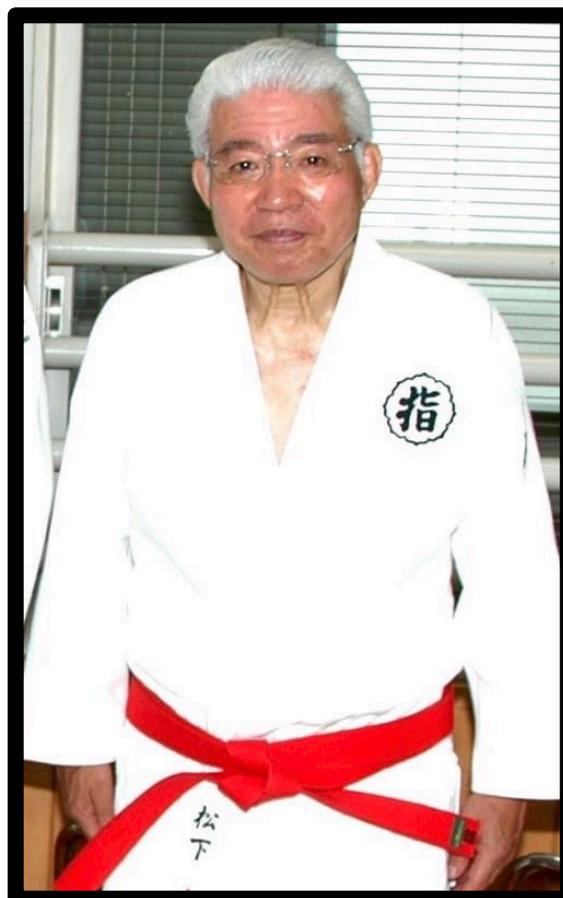
The backbone of the *Kano Society's* activities is this on-line publication. We welcome contributions in the form of articles or photographs etc. to "*The Bulletin*".

Thank you and stay safe,

Diana Birch

## In Memoriam: Saburo Matsushita *Kodokan 9<sup>th</sup> dan* (1935 – 2020)

John Bowen (with additional material by Llyr Jones)



A giant of modern *judo* and a great friend and ambassador to British *judo*, Saburo Matsushita, passed away on Sunday 19 April 2020. He was 84.

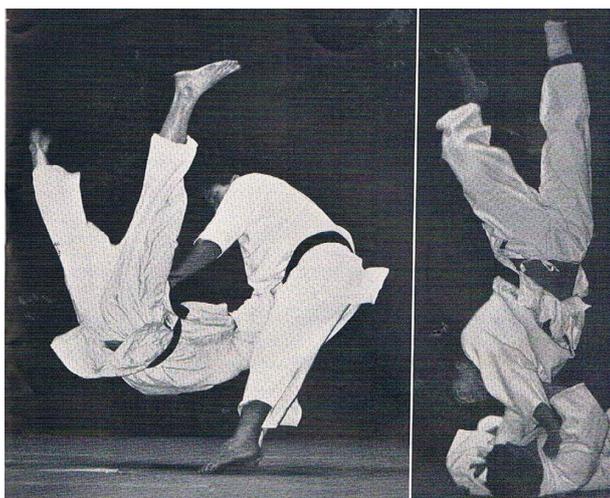
He had been working at the *Kodokan* until 3 April 2020, after which *Kodokan* employees were told to stay home. He fell ill on the 10 April, and as his condition worsened, he was moved to a hospital in Kanagawa and placed in the Intensive Care Unit, ICU, where he passed away on 19 April 2020 of COVID-19. He was the first fatality in a group of 19 All Japan Judo Federation (AJJF) employees working at the *Kodokan* who were confirmed to be infected by the novel coronavirus.

Trevor (T.P.) Leggett first saw Saburo Matsushita in November 1957, at the All-Japan Students championship, which Matsushita won in fine style, whirling Akio Kaminaga over in the final with his famous *harai-goshi* [sweeping hip throw]. That moment was caught in an iconic photo that is instantly recognized by *judo* fans everywhere. Leggett noted that Matsushita did not seem to use great force in his throws, but that they looked irresistible once he came in for them.



Saburo Matsushita throwing Akio Kaminaga

Leggett was instantly impressed and in due course invited Matsushita to the United Kingdom (UK) to study English and instruct at The *Budokwai* and at Leggett's club, The *Renshuden*. Matsushita came to London in the summer of 1958 and returned to Japan a little over three years later. He always expressed great respect for Leggett, and a fondness for the time he spent in Britain.



Mr. Matsushita's taiotoshi in gonosen no kata (left) and his demonstration of the dragonfly turn (right).

### Saburo Matsushita

Saburo Matsushita, 5th dan, left this country on December 7th for Japan after a stay of just over three years. He is now 26 and has been a fifth dan since he was 22, having been all-Japan Students Champion in 1955 and 1957, he was also all-Japan Young Men's Champion and Tokyo champion in 1957.

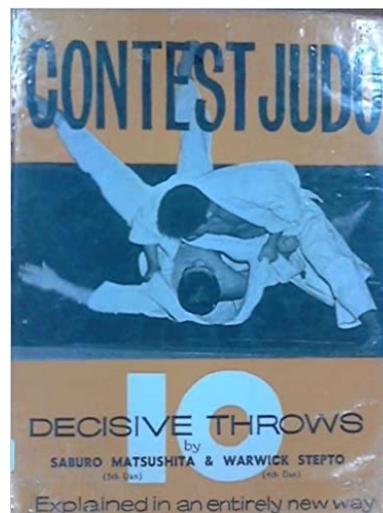
He came to this country in 1958 to instruct at the Renshuden but in addition, he attended the Budokwai once a week for over a year, and has also instructed on the summer courses. His first public performance was with Ishii at the Chelsea Town Hall in 1958 and since then he has appeared in all of the subsequent Budokwai Albert Hall shows.

He studied English during his stay in this country with what success can be gathered by remembering that his first judo coaching lessons required an interpreter, while he returns now as the author with W. Stepto of a book in English. This book, "Contest Judo" is reviewed elsewhere in this issue, suffice to say here that its major contribution to the judo literature is that its emphasis is on practical judo, as it develops in the strain of actual contest.

We wish him well on his new ventures and hope to hear of his future success.

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Article in "Judo, the Quarterly Bulletin of The Budokwai", Issue No.68, January 1962



"Contest Judo" by Matsushita and Stepto

I remember practising with Matsushita at The *Renshuden*. He was about 1.78m tall (5' 10") and maybe weighed some 90 kg in his prime. He always stood upright, in contests as well as *randori* [free practice]. When we came to grips, he felt as immovable as a marble pillar. I remember when he presided over Leggett's Sunday black-belt class at The *Budokwai*, he made us all duck-walk around the *dojo*. He did it seemingly without much effort, but I could hardly walk afterwards.

Saburo Matsushita was born in Kagoshima Prefecture at the southern tip of mainland Japan on 1 September 1935. He attended Kagoshima Commercial High School, which was considered to have the strongest *judo* section in Japan; one of the instructors was Yoshihiko Yoshimatsu, a three-time All-Japan Champion (1952, 1953 and 1955). By the time Matsushita entered the Department of Commerce at College of Economics, Nihon University, he was already a 4<sup>th</sup> dan. During his university tenure he twice won the All-Japan Student Championship and a number of other titles, including Tokyo Champion and All-Japan Young Men's Champion. At 22 he was promoted to 5<sup>th</sup> *dan*, becoming the only 22-year-old 5<sup>th</sup> *dan* in Japan. In 1957, when he entered the All-Japan Championships and was matched against Shokichi Natsui (the reigning world champion). Natsui struggled to a win by decision over Matsushita, who was, it turned out, injured and out of form. In 1958 he graduated from Nihon University and twenty years later, in 1978, became a professor at his *alma mater*.



1957 All Japan Students Championship

Left to Right: Saburo Matsushita 1<sup>st</sup>, Akio Kaminaga 2<sup>nd</sup>,  
Kisaburo Watanabe and Tokuyama 3<sup>rd</sup>

As well as being an exceptional contest player, Matsushita had great skills in *kata* [forms]. He participated in several demonstrations at prestigious events and was *Uke* the first time *Nage-no-kata* [Forms of Throwing] was demonstrated at the Tokyo Olympic Games. This was at the *Nippon Budokan* on 20 October 1964 the first day of the *judo* event (the lightweight class) and the legendary Toshiro Daigo, now *Kodokan* 10<sup>th</sup> *dan*, was *Tori*. Previously Matsushita had performed *Nage-no-kata*, as *Tori*, at the All Japan Industrial Judo Tournament and at the opening of the All Japan Judo Championships. Britain's John Cornish (1928 - 2018) was *Uke* on both occasions.

Matsushita became an Inspector of the *Kodokan* in 2004 and in 2006 was nominated as the Director of the Education and Instruction Department at the institution. Since 2013 he had been a *Kodokan* Board Director and could be seen on a regular basis on and off the mat sharing his profound knowledge. He also held various administrative positions, becoming Vice Chairman and Senior Managing Director of the AJJF, and as the director of the Japan Olympic Committee, he served as the president of the 2003 and 2005 Universiade Games Japanese teams.

At his peak the young Saburo Matsushita was virtually unbeatable. There was always a line of opponents waiting their turn to practice with him, and over they all went to his right-side *harai-goshi*, despite them knowing it was coming. Any mistake, and the opponent would find himself lifted almost, it seemed, to shoulder height. His *harai-goshi* became so famous that opponents would brace away right from the beginning, which forced him to add other techniques, such as *hiza-guruma* [knee-wheel]. Even in his first year at college he was looked upon as a future All-Japan Champion.

So, when Leggett persuaded Matsushita to go to England, the Japanese *judo* establishment was not pleased. And he never had a chance at the All-Japan title. I used to visit him in his fourth-floor corner office in the *Kodokan* and we would sit and talk over cups of green tea. During one of those times, he suddenly started talking about how people thought he would have won the championship if he had stayed in Japan. "Maybe", he said. He did not continue, just looked straight at me.

## Nage-no-kata . . .

was performed this year at the Opening of the All Japan Championships by Saburo Matsushita, 5<sup>th</sup> *dan*, and John Cornish, 4<sup>th</sup> *dan*, both well known to British judoka. Cornish has become very proficient in the performance of *kata* through a very intensive study he has made of this branch of judo during his stay in Japan. It is a great honour to be chosen to perform *kata* at the opening of a contest such as the All Japan Championship.



The start of the *kata*



Matsushita's *tokuiwaza* —  
*harai-goshi*



*Sumigaeshi*

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Saburo Matsushita

He was an outstanding champion in what was the golden age of Japanese university *judo*. It has been a sad time for *judo*, with his contemporary, Kisaburo Watanabe, dying in September 2019, followed in early April 2020 by Naoki Murata, the Curator of the *Kodokan Judo* Institute Museum and Library, and now Saburo Matsushita.

Saburo Matsushita, 9<sup>th</sup> *dan*, 1935-2020.

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Article in "Judo, the Quarterly Bulletin of The Budokwai",  
Issue No.78, 1964

**In Memoriam: Naoki Murata  
Kodokan 8<sup>th</sup> Dan (1949 – 2020)  
Brian N. Watson (with additional material  
by Llyr Jones)**



Naoki Murata (1949-2020)

Professor Naoki Murata Kodokan 8<sup>th</sup> dan died of heart failure at his home in Saitama Prefecture on 9 April 2020. Born in 1949 in Tokorozawa, a city near Tokyo in central Japan, he graduated from Tokyo *Kyoiku* University in 1973 and went on to dedicate much of his life to *judo* – teaching in more than ten countries, including Iceland and Thailand.

A prolific writer of essays and several well-researched books on *judo*, Murata-sensei served as Curator of the *Kodokan Judo* Institute Museum and Library. Along with Toshiro Daigo-sensei Kodokan 10<sup>th</sup> dan he was the *Kodokan's* expert on the practice and theory of *Koshiki-no-kata* [Forms of Classics].

Murata-sensei was also highly active as an administrator and served in a senior capacity on several committees dealing with *Budo* affairs, including the Japanese Academy of *Budo*.



Naoki Murata – Curator of the *Kodokan* Museum and Library



Naoki Murata and Toshiro Daigo teaching *Koshiki-no-kata* at the 2013 *Kodokan* Summer Course – *Kata* (photograph by Mark Lonsdale)



Naoki Murata lecturing on the “*History of Judo*” during the *judo* session at the UNOSDP\* Youth Leadership Training Camp held at Sendai University on 10 March 2015

(\* UNOSDP = United Nations Office on Sport for Development & Peace)

It was in the year 1999 that I first met Murata-sensei when working on my first book on Jigoro Kano – “*The Father of Judo*”. I was fortunate to have had interesting discussions with him in the intervening years, often over lunch following my visits to the *Kodokan* Library.

Murata, a great authority on the history of *judo*, had this to say of Professor Jigoro Kano: “*Kano's educational policies reflected his deep-rooted deference for his country and its traditions. Judo was developed by him as a vehicle for people to consolidate their minds and bodies, thereby becoming ‘robust citizens’ able to play a positive role in the improvement of society. Kano was a forward-thinking educator of the highest calibre. Judo is practiced around the world as a popular sport, but the higher educational principles promoted by Kano should not be ignored in the pursuit of winning medals.*”



The author donating a copy of his book "JUDO & LIFE" to Naoki Murata at the Kodokan Library on 2 April 2019

Professor Murata's funeral service was held in private on 17 April 2020. His demise is a sad loss to the *Kodokan* and to the world of *judo* research. Rest in peace, Sensei.

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## The Richard Bowen Collection



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In 1949, Richard Bowen began judo training in London at the Budokwai, of which he became Vice-President. He lived in Japan for four years to deepen his studies. A former British International, he fought in the first ever World *Judo* Championships in Japan in 1956. He was the author of more than eighty articles. Richard Bowen built up an extensive judo Library in the course of research for his articles and books, and he kindly donated it to the University of Bath Library. Items in the collection are for reference use only (not available for loan). Items can be viewed between 9am-5pm.

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