Yoshiaki Yamashita Photograph Album

ca.1904
1 volume (0.25 linear ft.)
Call no.: PH 006

Yoshiaki and Fude Yamashita, ca.1904

Seeking to strengthen his nine-year old son's "character," Samuel Hill sought out a suitable man to provide instruction in an exotic art he had seen during a business trip to Japan: judo. A wealthy Seattle railroad executive, Hill had the contacts -- and funds -- to hire the best and in February 1903, Kazuyoshi Shibata, a Yale student and friend of a Japanese acquaintance, recommended Professor Yoshiaki (Yoshigutsu) Yamashita as the best man for the manly job.

Born in Ishikawa Prefecture on Feb. 16, 1865, the son of a minor samurai, Yamashita had a basic grounding in the traditional martial arts before joining the new Kodokan dojo of Jigoro Kano, the founder of judo, in August 1884. Yamashita rose steadily, even rapidly, through the ranks, achieving his sixth degree black belt in 1898 and gaining wide respect for his technical mastery. By the turn of the century, his reputation earned...
him a position teaching judo at the Japanese Naval Academy and Tokyo Imperial University.

Having long believed that making judo better known abroad would be good for Japan, Yamashita was an outstanding choice to spread the discipline in America, and he quickly responded to Hill's inquiry. Accepting the offer in August 1903, Yamashita sailed for Seattle the following month, bringing with him his wife, Fude, and a 19-year old assistant, Saburo Kawaguchi. Barely a week after their arrival, the trio gave a private judo exhibition for Hill and prominent invited guests, which historian Joseph Svinth believes may have been the first Kodokan judo exhibition for a non-Japanese audience in North America.

From Seattle, Yamashita and his party traveled across country by rail to Washington, D.C., where Hill's son, John Nathan Hill, was then living. Offering demonstrations and lessons through the Japanese Legation, Yamashita found an eager audience of students in the nation's capitol, and a surprisingly strong interest among the daughters of the nation's political and corporate elite. Among the many who took notice was the President, Theodore Roosevelt, who had a well-known passion for what he considered manly pursuits. Through the Japanese Naval Attaché, Isamu Takeshita, Yamashita was introduced to Roosevelt at the White House in 1904 and by the spring, he had Roosevelt adding judo to his regular fitness regimen.

In January 1905, Yamashita left Washington to accept a position instructing midshipmen at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. At the same time, representatives of the Army visited Annapolis to investigate the potential of Japanese martial arts, but while these representatives were favorably impressed, the Academy opted instead to hire a wrestling champion to train the cadets, a man who preferred the traditional western sports of boxing and wrestling.

From this point forward, Yamashita's American sojourn wound down. His contract with the Naval Academy was not renewed for the fall 1905, but after Roosevelt personally intervened, Superintendent James H. Sands agreed to rehire him for another year. At the end of this second term, however, Sands recommended that the judo program be discontinued as not essential to shipboard life. Yamashita returned to Japan in the fall 1906 and continued to teach judo until his death on October 26, 1935. He was posthumously awarded the 10th degree black belt, the first ever so honored.

**Scope of collection**

The Yamashita photograph album consists of 53 silver developing out prints of Yamashita's tour of the United States in 1903-1905. Laid onto stiff cardboard pages in a canvas-bound album, the images appear to have been used as teaching aids or as promotional material for classes taught by Yamashita in Washington, D.C., during the early months of 1904. A small number of images show Yamashita, Yamashita's wife, Saburo Kawaguchi, and their students, but the majority are intended to depict particular judo holds and throws.

Laid into the album are four documents: a list of judo exercises (2p.); Yamashita's address ("kindness of Lt. [Isamu] Takashita" of the Japanese Legation); a receipt in Japanese and English for payment by George de Geofroy, (presumably for judo lessons); and instructions for various judo throws (6p.). Yamashita's calling card is included in an envelope laid into the front of the album. Many of the images are numbered in the negative and appear to have been photographed in a rather elaborate setting.

**Inventory**

Mr Kamaguchi -- Mr. Kitagaki -- Prof. Yamashita -- Mrs. Yamashita

cia.1904
Silver developing out print
Children's class: Margaret Perrin -- Miss A. Lee

cia.1904
Silver developing out print
Nage no kata: Uki Otoshi

cia.1904
Silver developing out print
Se oi Nage

cia.1904
Silver developing out print
Sukui Nage

cia.1904
Silver developing out print
Uki Goshi

cia.1904
Silver developing out print
Harai goshi
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>ca. 1904 Silver developing out print</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tsurikomi goshi</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ca. 1904 Silver developing out print</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uchi mata (rotation [arrow])</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ca. 1904 Silver developing out print</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tomoe nage (a)</td>
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<td>ca. 1904 Silver developing out print</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tomoe nage (b)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ca. 1904 Silver developing out print</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ura hage</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ca. 1904 Silver developing out print</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tsuri otoshi</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ca. 1904 Silver developing out print</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yoko gake [photo loose, laid into album]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ca. 1904 Silver developing out print</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yoko gake</td>
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<td>ca. 1904 Silver developing out print</td>
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<td>Yoko guruma</td>
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<td>ca. 1904 Silver developing out print</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Uki maza (a)</td>
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<td>ca. 1904 Silver developing out print</td>
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<td>Uki maza (b)</td>
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<td>ca. 1904 Silver developing out print</td>
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<td>Dai i kyo: Tai otoshi</td>
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<td>ca. 1904 Silver developing out print</td>
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<td>Osoto gari</td>
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<td>ca. 1904 Silver developing out print</td>
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<td>Da ashi harai</td>
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<td>Yoko otoshi</td>
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<td>ca. 1904 Silver developing out print</td>
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<td>Dai san kyo: Harai goshi</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dai shi kyo: Kata guruma</td>
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<td>Dai roku kyo: Giyaku maki komi (a)</td>
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<td>Giyaku maki komi (b)</td>
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<td>ca. 1904 Silver developing out print</td>
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<td>Dai hi kyo: O goshi</td>
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<td>ca. 1904 Silver developing out print</td>
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Silver developing out print

*Sumi gaeshi*
ca. 1904
Silver developing out print

*Dai san kyo: Obi otooshi*
ca. 1904
Silver developing out print

*Dai shi kyo: Utsuri goshi*
ca. 1904
Silver developing out print

*Tawara gaeshi*
ca. 1904
Silver developing out print

*Dai go kyo: Uchi maki komi*
ca. 1904
Silver developing out print

*Se oi otooshi*
ca. 1904
Silver developing out print

*Se oi otooshi*
ca. 1904
Silver developing out print

*Osoto guruma*
ca. 1904
Silver developing out print

*Dai raku kyo: kube nage (a)*
ca. 1904
Silver developing out print

*Kube nage (b)*
ca. 1904
Silver developing out print

*Hiza guruma*
ca. 1904
Silver developing out print

*Kueki raoshi (a)*
ca. 1904
Silver developing out print

*Kuyeki raoshi (b)*
ca. 1904
Silver developing out print

*Uchi konei (a)*
ca. 1904
Silver developing out print

[Uchi konei (b)]
ca. 1904
Silver developing out print

*Tsuki komi (a)*
ca. 1904
Silver developing out print

(same)
ca. 1904
Silver developing out print

*Ke komi*
ca. 1904
Silver developing out print

*Yoko uchi*
ca. 1904
Silver developing out print

[unidentified throw]
ca. 1904
Silver developing out print

[unidentified kick]
ca. 1904
Silver developing out print
Administrative information

Access
The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Bibliography

Digitized content
All images in the collection have been scanned and are available online through our digital repository, Credo.

Processing Information
Processed by rsc, February 2008.

Language:
English

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