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The Road to Participation in Competitive Sport

The twentieth century brought with it a flood of changes to Japanese society. The seeds that had been sowed immediately following the Meiji Restoration and Japan's opening up to the outside world were beginning to bear fruit by the turn of the century. The earliest pioneers of women's physical education and sport, such as Atomi Kakei, whose private girls' school offered courses in 'dance exercise', were inculcating a new ethic of physical freedom into a small number of young women. As courses in physical education became formalized by the state in the 1880s and 1890s, more and more young women were exposed to the calisthenic exercises that were in vogue in Europe around the same time. How these low-impact routines transitioned to full-blown competitive sport in a matter of decades is a key question to keep in mind while reading this chapter. We will look at how the foundation of women's competitive sport was laid at the turn of the twentieth century by a number of influential educators.

While Atomi Kakei was the first Japanese woman to open a private girls' school, and to incorporate dance into the curriculum, she was not alone in introducing the precursors to sport in Meiji-era Japan. A number of other influential educators would change the face of education for young women and would help open society up to the idea of women taking part in competitive sport.

Toyoda Fuyu: Introducing movement into primary education

Toyoda Fuyu was born in Ibaraki prefecture in 1845. After losing both her parents at a young age, she began practicing martial arts, becoming skilled in the *naginata* or long pole sword. At the age of eighteen, she married Toyoda Kotarō, a student of Dutch sciences. When Toyoda Fuyu was twenty-four and her husband thirty-three, he was tragically assassinated in Kyoto during the fights between those trying to keep out foreigners and those, like Kotarō, wanting to open the ports.¹ Seeking to carry on the spirits of her parents and her husband, Toyoda absorbed herself fully in her studies, taking a special interest in Fukuzawa Yukichi's ten-volume series *Seiyō jijō* ('Conditions in the West'), which discussed the strengths of Western institutions and culture. By the early 1870s, she had begun gathering neighbourhood children and teaching them informally, and in 1875 she enrolled at the newly established

Tokyo Women's Normal School (*Tokyo joshi shihan gakkō*, now Ochanomizu Women's University) in order to become a teacher. She focused her studies on primary education, which included work by German educator and theorist Friedrich Fröbel, the so-called inventor of kindergarten.² At this time, the notion of primary education theory was still relatively unknown in Japan, and Toyoda Fuyu began giving public lectures with such titles as 'Understanding Motherhood' (*hahaoya kokoroe*) and 'The Theory of Kindergarten' (*yōchien no setsu*). These talks were published shortly thereafter in the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, and in this way many of Fröbel's theories of early childhood education became quickly disseminated throughout the country.³

These theories involved using play and games as a method of education for young children. Toyoda began using Fröbel's methods at a kindergarten she helped establish in 1876, incorporating song and movement into teaching such topics as colours, numbers and directions. Some of the songs were adapted from German or English, maintaining their original melodies, while others were products of Toyoda's own imagination. By the early 1890s, kindergartens had begun opening around the country, and Toyoda's adaptations of Fröbel's teaching method were being used by a rapidly growing number of educators. She travelled around the country helping to establish schools, and she also travelled abroad to Europe to exchange ideas with educators there. Toyoda lived until 1941 and is credited with having had a huge effect on primary education in the three eras she lived and taught in – Meiji, Taishō and Shōwa.⁴ Had it not been for her fervent efforts to adopt and adapt Fröbel's methods of play, physical activity may not have been introduced into the education system until much later, and there would have been little precedent for the subsequent development of women's sport in Japan. However, Toyoda was not the only advocate of physical activity in schools at that time, and her focus was on young children rather than on girls or women alone. Another advocate, Tsuboi Gendō, was working around the same time to develop women's physical education.

Tsuboi Gendō: From movement to dance

In the early Meiji era, 'physical education' for girls was synonymous with 'dance'. The man credited with having introduced and promoted dance as a means of physical education for female students in Japan is Tsuboi Gendō. Tsuboi's gift for foreign languages, interest in furthering women's education and passion for Western sports led him to help formalize physical education for women (beyond the small number of private institutions that had begun to similarly experiment with dance in the Meiji era).

Born in Chiba prefecture in 1852, Tsuboi began reading the Chinese classics at a very young age and, after realizing his talent for learning foreign languages,

began studying English intensively at the age of fourteen. By the time he was nineteen, Tsuboi was working in the Ministry of Education (*Mombushō*) as a translator. When an Amherst College professor, Dr Leeland, visited Japan in order to help institutionalize a system of physical education in 1870, Tsuboi served as his translator and took a deep interest in the new systems of physical culture being introduced. When Dr Leeland returned to Massachusetts after being in Japan for four years, Tsuboi took over his position as Japan's primary organizer and proponent of physical education. He translated several works about Western systems of physical education and also wrote his own with such titles as 'The New System of Body Calisthenics' (*Shinsei taisō sho*) and 'Means of Outdoor Play' (*Kogai yūgi hō*). He eventually left his post at the Ministry of Education in order to teach at a number of different universities, including Tokyo Women's Normal School, where Toyoda Fuyu was also working to develop theories of play and physical activity in the Japanese classroom.⁵

Around 1876, government-funded research on physical education had begun focusing on dance as a method of modernization and Westernization, and Tsuboi was pinned as being the most appropriate person to help carry out its implementation in the school system. The *Educational Research* (*Kyōiku kenkyū*) documents of that year read as follows: 'The British and Germans have embraced a kind of round-and-round about dance (*kurukurukurukuru to mau*). We anticipate that if we Japanese could not only appear in our tailcoats (*enbi fuku*) but also have Mr. Tsuboi teach us in schools how to dance the quadrille, it would be most fine indeed'.⁶ While girls in university at this time had already established certain forms of dancing in loosely organized club activities, Tsuboi sought to formalize dancing as part of Japanese women's education.⁷ He wrote illustrated volumes describing step-by-step specific dances for women to use in an educational setting. At the many posh events Tsuboi attended in his capacity as a translator (and, later, as a prominent figure himself), he became impressed with certain forms of dance and music, and he chose his favourites to promote in the school system. For example, because Tsuboi had written books about and promoted the merits of the quadrille, a dance performed in groups of four that had been popular among eighteenth-century French aristocrats, the dance took hold quickly in Meiji-era Japan.⁸

Around the turn of the century, Tsuboi began spending significant time travelling abroad and learning about physical culture in Western countries. He travelled first to England, Germany and France and on subsequent visits went to Sweden, Denmark and lastly to the United States in 1902, making stops in Boston, New York, Chicago and San Francisco. The *Boston Globe* reported Tsuboi's visit on 8 May 1902 as such:

Prof. Tsuboi has nearly completed a tour around the world in quest of new ideas for later practice in Japan ... 'There is much variation in systems', he said yesterday in his quaintly accented English, 'but little difference radically is there in the German and Swedish and the American, which is more or less adapted

from these... When I arrive home I shall instruct my large corps of teachers in the new and advanced methods which I consider superior to those now in use'.⁹

Tsuboi's sentiment seems to echo that of a generation of influential Japanese physical educators and theorists, namely that the methods and ways from abroad were superior to those in Japan.¹⁰ While contemporary scholars and writers on sport in Japan often highlight the distinctly Japanese elements of imported Western sports,¹¹ it seems that in the early Meiji period there was little effort being made to retain the *wakon*, or Japanese spirit, in physical education.

In the later years of his life, the main focus of Tsuboi's efforts became establishing a formal system of physical education for Japanese girls. Drawing from his experiences abroad, his work highlighted the possibilities for and importance of physical education for girls and women. His later book titles included Means of exercising for ladies (*Joshi undō hō*) and Marching exercises for elementary schoolgirls (*Shō gakkō joshi kōshin undō*). While dancing and marching may not seem terribly progressive by today's standards, they were a radical change for turn-of-the-century Japanese women, and this is why Tsuboi is still recognized today as a pioneer in women's physical education in the Meiji and Taishō eras.

H. Irving Hancock: A foreigner's view of Japanese women

Interestingly, the flow of information on physical education during the early years of the twentieth century was not only from Western countries *into* Japan but also, less frequently, the other way around. During the Meiji era, an American writer named Harrie Irving Hancock (pen names included H. Irving Hancock and Douglas Wells), who had served as a war correspondent, a sportswriter and a general advocate of good health, spent some time in Japan in order to write a book titled *Japanese Physical Training: The System of Exercise, Diet, and General Mode of Living that has Made the Mikado's People the Healthiest, Strongest, and Happiest Men and Women in the World*.¹² The demand for this book in the United States was so great that Hancock published another book the same year, 1904, titled *Physical Training for Women by Japanese Methods*.

The latter book starts off with the author stating that '[i]n this volume [I have] endeavored, with painstaking care, to make plain the principles of the kind of athletic work that has resulted, undoubtedly, in making the little Japanese women the strongest and most cheerful members of their sex to be found anywhere on earth'.¹³ He follows up this bold claim with discussions of his own training at a jujitsu school in Tokyo, how he got pinned to the ground there by a 'supple young woman'¹⁴ and how if American women were to follow the jujitsu techniques laid out in his book, then 'feminine weaklings would be as rare in this country as they are in Japan'.¹⁵ Throughout the book his phrasing

is heavily exaggerated and the conclusions he draws about all Japanese women based on his limited anecdotal experience are absurd, and yet the book's wide circulation in the United States make it nonetheless worth considering critically.

An article in *The New York Times* that ran shortly after Hancock's book was published discusses his reasons for choosing to write on Japanese women's physical training:

The 'whole aim' of Mr. Hancock's new book is 'to show how the Japanese women become perfect physical women'. In Japan, he says the women contest with equal success with men of the same age, weight, and height. Consumption and coughs are rare among Japanese women, and their muscles are 'most prettily rounded'.¹⁶

The article suggests an unusually egalitarian system of physical training in Japan, which seems to run counter to the image of submissiveness connected with the *ryōsai kenbo* ideal that is often discussed by (contemporary) Western scholars of this time period. In considering the way that Hancock's work must have been received in the United States around 1904, one has to consider the dominant discourse about women's physical activity at that time as well. This was right around the time when the previously male-only Olympics started to allow women in select sports that were considered to be adequately feminine, namely golf, archery and tennis. There was active debate over the place of sport in women's lives – a debate summed up well by Lucille Eaton Hill, the director of Physical Training at Wellesley College at the turn of the century. In the introduction to her edited volume, *Athletics and Out-Door Sports for Women*, Hill writes, 'Our ever present ideal should be Health and Beauty; and during this early stage of our experience in athletics our watchword should be "Moderation"'.¹⁷ Hancock's work suggests much the same, with his repeated allusions to how graceful and attractive Japanese women are (as a result of their superior physical regimens) and with the final sentence of his book reading, 'GREAT MODERATION IN ALL EXERCISES!' (emphasis in the original).¹⁸ Put simply, while physical activity for women was a subject worthy of both scholarly and popular attention at the time, it is clear that the dominant viewpoint in the United States held that too much exercise was harmful for the feminine physique.

While the focus of the present work remains on the discourse of women in sport generated *within* Japan, since such discourse was not created within a vacuum, Hancock's work should not be ignored. Following the Meiji Restoration, viewpoints and opinions among the Japanese populace were no doubt affected by the new relationships being created with other nations – particularly those Western nations that Japan sought to gain approval and/or learn from. Therefore, while it would be easy to write off *Physical Training for Women by Japanese Methods* as a mere entrepreneurial ploy, it is important to consider the ways that its popularity may have reverberated within the Japanese discourse of the time. Moreover, Hancock's work is helpful in pointing out that

Japanese women were, in fact, taking part and excelling in sports. Even though the majority of scholarly work within Japan at this time discusses the nascent stage of women's physical education (in schools) at the turn of the twentieth century, Hancock's work shows us that outside of schools some women were engaged in fairly rigorous physical activity, namely martial arts like the jujitsu¹⁹ that he discusses or the *naginata* (pole sword) that Toyoda Fuyu was trained in.

The three pioneers: Inokuchi Akuri, Fujimura Toyo and Nikaidō Tokuyo

While Toyoda Fuyu and Tsuboi Gendō are widely credited with introducing physical activity into the education system, three women are acknowledged as having specifically targeted women's physical education. Inoue and Kameyama's authoritative *Supōtsu bunka wo manabu hito no tame ni* (For those who study sports culture) lists these three women as being pioneers in shifting the domain of sports from a male-only pastime to something that could be enjoyed by both sexes. From the 1890s to the 1920s, Inokuchi Akuri, Fujimura Toyo and Nikaidō Tokuyo profoundly affected the course of women's sport in twentieth-century Japan.²⁰ In addition, the first female Olympian from Japan was a direct product of one of the institutions founded by these women, which helps in highlighting the clear connection between physical education for girls in schools and women's involvement in competitive sport.

Inokuchi Akuri

Inokuchi Aguri was born on 22 November 1870 in Akita City in north-eastern Honshu. After moving south and graduating from Tokyo Women's Normal School at the age of twenty-one, she changed her name to 'Akuri', as she thought her given name resembled the English word 'ugly'.²¹ Inokuchi was selected by the Ministry of Education (*Mombushō*) to study physical education in Massachusetts, the first Japanese person sent abroad to do so. It was significant that she was selected, as the vast majority of people sent abroad at that time were men. In fact, in the twenty-three years between 1889 and the end of the Meiji era (1912), of the 600 Japanese individuals sent abroad, only eight of them were women.²²

In August of 1899, Inokuchi departed from the port of Yokohama and arrived in Northampton, Massachusetts, about a month later. There, she went to Smith College, as one of her teachers from Tokyo knew someone at Smith with whom she could live and study English. At Smith, a professor of physical culture, Senda Berenson, introduced Inokuchi to the Boston Normal School of Gymnastics, and it was there that she continued her studies after reaching a high level of competence in English at Smith.

In a 1902 interview with the *New York Herald*, Inokuchi told the reporter that while physical education did exist in Japan from the kindergarten level up to high school, the Japanese were unaccustomed to using apparatuses like those found in US schools at the time. She said, 'When I go back to Japan the first thing I shall ask for will be the apparatus such as we use here in Boston, and I think the government will get it for me.' When asked about women and exercise in Japan, Inokuchi responded,

Our women are not as a rule weaklings, yet they are not universally strong. They owe the fact that they are generally in good health to the prevailing customs among the children. In Japanese families the older children, both boys and girls, are at an early age given the task of taking care of the younger children ... The older children carry the younger children on their backs, even in play; so, you see, they have exercise very different from what you have in America.²³

So taken was Inokuchi by the gulf between American and Japanese physical education systems that she compiled a chart in order to highlight the main differences. This chart read as follows:²⁴

United States	Japan
Physical education in schools is considered essential and is held to a high standard	Physical education is regarded as having little educational value
Each class is taught with the use of high-quality teaching materials that focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the body	Without considering students' physical make-up (<i>taishitsu</i>), all students use the same teaching materials
The gymnasium is large and contains much equipment. Students must wear gym uniforms, and they come to class prepared to learn diligently	Class is carried out on a dirt floor under the open sky. Nothing more than a sash of material (<i>tasuki</i>) is used while exercising
Class will vary depending on the strictness of the teacher. Some will go through the teaching materials slowly and others fast	Students will be taken to the exercise area because it is compulsory, but it is often with little direction or instruction
Students are like one in body and mind (<i>isshin dōtai</i>), all paying very careful attention to the commands they are given	Little thought is given to the management of the class
Students are obedient to the rules, and even with many dozens of students they act as one, promptly and gracefully carrying out the exercises	Movement of the limbs is mechanical. Timing of class is unreliable, and it often ends early

It is quite evident from this side by side comparison which system Inokuchi found to be superior and therefore worth emulating. During her time at the Normal School of Gymnastics, Inokuchi took courses that were yet unknown to the Japanese academy, including kinesiology, medical gymnastics, athletics and anthropometry (the study of human body measurements). She later spoke of how rigorous the education was and what a difficult time she had, noting that, 'When I entered the school, it was with fifty fellow students, but at the time of graduation there were only twenty of us left.'²⁵ After graduating from the Boston Normal School of Gymnastics, Inokuchi took a short summer course in physical education instruction at Harvard University, and then returned to Japan in February of 1903 at the age of thirty-two. Upon her return, she was fully committed to incorporating the American system of physical training into the Japanese education system.²⁶

Within a year after returning to Japan, Inokuchi was teaching at Tokyo Women's Normal School, conducting lectures and short courses on gymnastics and informing students about American methods of physical education. She established and headed the Department of Japanese Calisthenics (*kokugo taisō senshōka*), and within four years the department had graduated eighty-eight women. Many of these women went on to establish departments of physical education at various institutions across the country, and Inokuchi's direct impact on the genesis of modern women's sport in Japan is evident through the success of these new programmes.²⁷

The establishment of new physical education departments for women was not the only place Inokuchi's impact could be seen. She also introduced Western-style uniforms into the Japanese physical education system, as she believed that an increase in physical activity for women was impossible without a change from the impractical *chakko* (bulky trouser pants outfits) being worn at that time. The outfits she carefully copied from those in the United States had bloomers and a short skirt, which enabled much more freedom of movement. She also designed a different Japanese-style uniform that she called the 'fastened hakama' (*kukuri hakama*), which was easier to transition to than the Western-style uniform. The fastened hakama added buttons and hooks to the *chakko* so that parts of the outfit could be easily adjusted to allow more movement during exercise. Both styles were used through the Meiji and Taishō eras, but by the start of the Shōwa period (1926), the Western-style uniforms with bloomers were being used throughout the entire country.²⁸

The changes that took place as a result of Inokuchi's efforts were part of the larger trends towards modernization in the Meiji era, as discussed in Chapter 2. Inokuchi was sponsored and supported by the Meiji government for her study abroad in the United States, as Western sport and physical education were areas of particular concern by the government at this time. Meiji leaders sought to prove how advanced they were in both an ideological and a physical (militaristic) sense. The sports tournaments for men that had

begun taking place in Japan at the end of the nineteenth century were held for women as early as 1905.²⁹ Moreover, a growing body of literature, both popular and analytical, was being written about the inclusion of women in sports and physical training. One of the earliest and most active promoters of this literature was Fujimura Toyo, the founder of Tokyo Women's College of Physical Education (*Tokyo joshi taiiku daigaku*).

Fujimura Toyo

Fujimura was born in 1876 in Kagawa prefecture on the island of Shikoku. She graduated from her local elementary school at the age of twelve but was forced to suspend her studies for several years after this due to poor health. While her father repeatedly insisted that education for girls was unnecessary, Fujimura's mother, Tane, insisted so strongly that her daughter continue her studies that it eventually led to a separation with her husband. At the age of sixteen, Fujimura Toyo and her mother both wanted her to go to Tokyo to continue her studies, but ongoing problems with her respiratory system inhibited her from doing so.³⁰ In spite of her health problems, she continued reading Chinese classics and other works on her own, keeping hope alive that she would soon be able to continue her education more formally. When Fujimura was nineteen, at the recommendation of her district official (*gunchō*) she was admitted to Kagawa prefecture's Normal School (*shihan gakkō*), but again she had to leave after only one year due to her weak physical condition.³¹ When her strength was restored four years later, Fujimura moved up to Tokyo to study science at the Tokyo Women's Higher Normal School (*Tokyo joshi kōtō shihan gakkō*),³² but her studies were again abruptly interrupted when her mother fell ill and she moved back to Kagawa prefecture to take care of her.³³ That Fujimura should be torn between her duties at home as a good daughter and her desire to further herself in the newly broadened education system suggests a struggle that many young women of her day were certainly faced with.

Back home in Kagawa, Fujimura did manage to continue her studies while taking care of her mother. She became licensed as an elementary school teacher and began teaching gymnastics and dance – subjects she had learned during her three years at Tokyo Women's Higher Normal School. In 1902 she arranged the first exhibition meet (*kyōshinkai no taiiku taikai*) of these two activities and received much praise and attention for her work following the meet. According to Fujimura, her own participation in these new physical activities also helped her to overcome the respiratory illnesses that had afflicted her and made her so feeble in her earlier years. For this reason, she became an active advocate for the inclusion of physical education in schools.³⁴ Moreover, since she had been discouraged as a child from furthering her own education, Fujimura put special emphasis on developing programmes specifically for female students.

In particular, Fujimura advocated a new kind of calisthenics that differed from the earlier methods put forth by Inokuchi. The form that was most widely practised at the time, Swedish calisthenics (*swēden taisō*) was based on a scientific system of stretches of different body parts (neck, arms, abdomen, back and legs) and required no equipment. The aim was to ‘develop the body into a harmonious whole under the perfect control of the will’ and to ‘improve the functional activity of the body’.³⁵ Since this was the most common form of calisthenics for women in the United States at the time, Inokuchi had brought back this method and disseminated it through Japan’s schools. Fujimura critiqued the Swedish method because its rigid movements made breathing difficult, which was an issue she was acutely aware of due to her respiratory conditions. She therefore advocated German calisthenics (*doitsu shiki taisō*), which resembled the system promoted through Tsuboi Gendō’s 1882 book *Shinsei taisō sho* (New system of body calisthenics). She was strongly influenced by an eccentric American educator and promoter of calisthenics named Dioclesian (Dio) Lewis, who had published a book in 1871 titled *Weak Lungs and How to Make Them Strong*. Perpetually concerned about the declining health of Americans, Lewis developed a system of ‘new gymnastics’ that incorporated apparatus such as dumbbells and rings, and which emphasized precise, rapid movements and the use of every set of muscles.³⁶ This method was said to be equally beneficial to one’s inner organs as it was to his or her outward appearance.

Fujimura sought to introduce Lewis’ educational philosophies to the Japanese classroom and found that they were particularly applicable to young women who, if exercising at all, were doing so in the stiff Swedish style. In addition to the new style of gymnastics, Fujimura promoted *yūgi dansu*, or ‘fun dancing’, which had yet to gain much popularity among Japanese women. In 1908, she was suddenly appointed headmaster of the Tokyo Women’s School of Gymnastics and Music³⁷ after its previous headmaster/founder Takahashi Chūjirō died while on a study trip to the United States. Unfortunately, school management was not Fujimura’s strong suit, and the school was almost forced to shut down due to its shrinking number of students. Luckily, Fujimura’s mother and siblings were highly supportive of her endeavours, and they managed to keep the school alive by working with barely any recompense – her little sisters Ei and Yone taught dance and home economics and her little brother Kamenosuke taught English and logic, while her mother assisted in administration.³⁸

In spite of her lacklustre management skills, her prominent position enabled Fujimura to have a significant impact on the development of women’s physical education, as it led her to a new platform for propagating ideas about women’s health: publications. Beginning in the mid-1920s, Fujimura began contributing regularly to three popular women’s magazines, *Josei bi* (Women’s beauty), *Josei taiiku* (Women’s physical education) and *Kenkō no josei* (Healthy woman).³⁹

Her articles ranged in topic from 'aesthetics and creativity' to 'why we should offer courses outside during the summer'.⁴⁰ She developed a mantra about good posture being essential to good health, which came to appear on every cover of *Josei bi* magazine: 'Fujimura's key to health: Straighten your back. While standing or walking, sitting or lying down, thinking or exercising, get strength from the straightness of your back'.⁴¹

Like most of her contemporaries involved in developing women's education in the Meiji and Taishō eras, Fujimura travelled to Europe with some frequency in order to observe their programmes of physical education. Her travels around the Netherlands, Germany, England, France, Sweden, Denmark and Czechoslovakia included attending two Olympic Games (Amsterdam 1928 and Berlin 1936) and meeting with educators in each country. She took away from these experiences many new and different perspectives on the extent to which physical training should be a part of young women's lives.⁴² It is important to note that while Inokuchi and Fujimura had somewhat differing philosophies on the kind of calisthenics and activities that should be taught, both were in agreement that a major goal of women's physical training ought to be aesthetic, that is, to help make women more beautiful. While improved physical health was a positive outcome of physical education, muscular strength was not a stated objective, nor was there any mention of competition being linked to physical training. Like their pedagogical methods, this way of thinking was also a direct importation of the Victorian ideals of turn-of-the-century Europe.

There was significant discussion in Europe and the United States at the turn of the twentieth century about what the role of physical education for women should be or indeed whether it was a good idea at all. Columnists, educators and health reformers in the West were actively discussing ways to combat a perceived female frailty while still maintaining a level of femininity. As more and more discourse began to circulate about the issue of women's 'physical culture', two distinct (yet interrelated) issues arose, namely the physical and the aesthetic consequences of women's involvement in sport.

A common physiological principle deployed by scientists and medical practitioners of the time was that of the 'conservation of energy'. The argument was that within any given system or organization there is only a fixed amount of energy available to be expended. Exertion would therefore create a drain on the energy reserves and would deplete the reserves of energy available to other organs. One staunch opponent to women's education who relied on such physiological arguments was Henry Maudsley, a British physician and professor of medical jurisprudence at University College in London at the end of the nineteenth century. He strongly believed that if women were to engage in any sort of mental (let alone physical) exertion, the energy used would lead to serious long-term impairment of fertility and overall health. He wrote, 'The energy of a human body being a definite and not inexhaustible quantity, can it bear, without injury, an excessive mental drain as well as the natural physical

drain which is so great [during the years after puberty]? ... When nature spends in one direction, she must economise in another direction.⁴³

Maudsley was not alone in the circulation of such literature, as others around the same time were publishing scientific case histories of young women who, supposedly, suffered severe physical and mental maladies after engaging in academic work. It was also believed that education would pull necessary energy from the female reproductive system to the brain, resulting in lower birth rates, which was a subject of concern in turn-of-the-century Europe and the United States.⁴⁴ Social Darwinism was pervasive in the rhetoric of the era, which argued that because of their innate physical and emotional characteristics, women were better suited (i.e. biologically determined) to stay at home as wives and mothers.⁴⁵ Women's (perceived) physical inferiority was used to justify maternity as the most important function of womanhood. These various 'scientifically proven' arguments that were circulating in the West and trickling into Japan at the end of the nineteenth century resulted in physical education and sport for women being treated very cautiously, particularly when compared with the male counterpart, which was encouraging men to 'acquire the health benefits of vigorous exercise'.⁴⁶

Beyond the physical concerns was the issue of appearance – both how sport would physically alter the body and how it would affect a specific aesthetic sense of femininity. While the scientific principles regarding sport's effects on women's health were somewhat implicit in the Japanese context, the arguments regarding appearances and femininity were more openly and widely discussed. As evidenced by the titles and content of the magazines to which Fujimura Toyo contributed (e.g. *Josei bi*), beauty and femininity were considered integral aspects of physical education in early twentieth-century Japan. That is to say, while we will see that sport in both the West and Japan would soon come to be considered an activity that ran *counter* to feminine ideals, it was not considered as such during the first decades of women's participation.

Beauty, of course, is subjective and has been a fluid concept over time in all societies. Laura Miller presents a thorough survey of the shifting attitudes towards beauty and body styles in Japan in her book *Beauty Up: Exploring Contemporary Japanese Body Aesthetics*. Beginning in the Heian era (794–1185), she discusses how the ideal shapes of faces, eyebrows, lips and bodies have changed drastically over the centuries for Japanese women and men alike.⁴⁷ During the Meiji era, as physical education started to be part of girls' schooling, modifications in beauty ideology were simultaneously being affected by Japan's increased contact with Europe and the West. For example, facial features such as well-projected noses and prominent chins, which were once considered to be unfeminine, came to be considered attractive for Japanese women.⁴⁸ Body ideals have similarly changed significantly throughout Japanese history, with certain traits such as frailty or robustness coming in and out of vogue. In the early twentieth century, it is clear that frailty and poor posture

were being promoted as being ‘less attractive’ than a degree of muscularity or strength and good posture. Fujimura believed that the steps to be taken towards the goal of becoming a more beautiful woman, including a nutritious diet and modest exercise, would allow women to live long and fruitful lives, which was at the root of her promotion of physical education for women.⁴⁹

Nikaidō Tokuyo

The prominent position of femininity, beauty and aesthetics in women’s physical education in early twentieth-century Japan is important to keep in mind when considering the transition from physical education to participation in competitive sport, as sport seems largely out of synch with the feminine ideals of the era. While Fujimura was active in promoting her specific brand of ‘healthy woman’ until her death in 1955, she was never a supporter of women’s participation in competitive sport and instead encouraged the practice of calisthenics and dance. Japanese women began taking part in international competitive sporting events in the mid-1920s (and entered the Olympic Games in 1928), yet from the discussion thus far we have yet to see a space in which women could train for such events. The link between the development of physical education for women and their eventual participation in competitive sport can be largely attributed to the undertakings of one woman: Nikaidō Tokuyo.

Nikaidō was born in 1880 in Miyagi prefecture in a village called Ainosawa. Her father, who was the village chief, abandoned his family when Nikaidō was a child. She, her mother and her siblings lived for some time in abject poverty, eventually being forced to sell their small house and leave the village. Nikaidō nonetheless continued diligently with her studies, and after graduating from a higher elementary school she passed a test to become a licensed teacher at a regular elementary school.⁵⁰ She wanted to further her own education, but at that time (the 1890s) in Miyagi prefecture there were few options for girls after elementary school. Moreover, there was an ongoing movement to abolish female instructors in Miyagi, as it was argued that they took too much time off and the quality of their teaching was poor.⁵¹ The forces against which Nikaidō was fighting seem only to have made her desire to further her education and teach others that much stronger.

Because her options were so limited in Miyagi, Nikaidō wrote a letter to a newspaper in the neighbouring prefecture of Fukushima explaining her situation and asking for any assistance. A reporter at the newspaper company helped Nikaidō move to Fukushima in order to attend their normal school (Fukushima shihan gakkō). Instead of paying tuition, Nikaidō agreed to teach at the school following her graduation. After this, she was able to matriculate at Tokyo Women’s Normal School (*Tokyo joshi shihan gakkō*, now *Ochanomizu Women’s University*, the same school that most of her predecessors in women’s physical education had attended) and then moved to Kanazawa in Ishikawa

prefecture to teach at the women's higher prefectural school. Nikaidō was twenty-three years old at the time.⁵²

Until this point, Nikaidō Tokuyo was interested in becoming a teacher but believed that the most important subject to be taught was literature, so her goal was to become a teacher in the humanities. When she arrived at Kanazawa, however, she was told that she would be teaching calisthenics (*taisō ka*), about which she later wrote that she was quite upset and humiliated.⁵³ During this time in Kanazawa, however, Nikaidō came into contact with two Canadian missionaries who eventually helped foster in her a genuine interest in physical education. These missionaries, Frances Kate Morgan and Alice E. Belton, taught at various girls' schools around Japan beginning in 1888, and in 1904 Nikaidō attended Miss Belton's Bible class at the Ishikawa Prefectural Girls' School. This class also eventually led her to convert to Christianity. As discussed in Chapter 2, the schools run by foreign missionaries were among the earliest to introduce physical education to girls in Japan (in the 1880s and 1890s), as their curricula were not regulated by the state. Through her association with Miss Morgan, Nikaidō learned about gymnastics and physical education in Canada, and in part because of her tremendous respect for these two women, she began to see the significance of bringing gymnastics and physical education to Japan.⁵⁴ From the early 1900s, Nikaidō's primary focus switched from literature to physical education for girls and women in Japan.

The summer after she had been transferred to Kanazawa, Nikaidō participated in a short course in calisthenics offered by the Ministry of Education (*Mombushō*), which was the first time she systematically learned about the different methods for teaching physical education. After this course, Nikaidō applied to study abroad and was chosen by the Ministry of Education from among many applicants to go to England to study gymnastics at the Bergman-Österberg Physical Training College. After a fifty-eight-day boat ride departing from Yokohama, she arrived in England at the age of thirty-one.⁵⁵

Nikaidō spent a total of three years in England, learning about their system of physical education for girls. Martina Bergman-Österberg (1849–1915), the school's founder and headmaster, sought to improve the health of the feeble-bodied women in England by raising a general awareness of how to lead a healthy lifestyle.⁵⁶

Nikaidō came to take a special interest in dance, learning new styles not only at the college but also at private ballet studios and the English Folk Dance Society.⁵⁷ Madame Österberg encouraged Nikaidō to found her own school of physical training for girls in Japan. While she thought this to be a good idea at the time, it was not until Ms Bergman-Österberg passed away shortly after Nikaidō's return to Japan in 1915 that she truly set out to make this dream a reality.⁵⁸ Having spent so many years since her childhood wandering about without a place to call 'home', Nikaidō also wrote in one of her memoirs that she felt particularly compelled to settle down and create her own legacy.

In 1922, her dream was realized as the *Nikaidō Taisō Juku* opened in Tokyo's Yoyogi district (now *Nihon Joshi Taiiku Daigaku* or Japan Women's College of Physical Education). Though the school got off to a 'shaky' start, with the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923 striking the area only months after the school opened, Nikaidō worked hard to develop her school and to recruit young women from all over Japan. One of the young women who was an early recruit to Nikaidō's school, Hitomi Kinue, would go on to become the first Japanese woman to participate in the Olympic Games. While Hitomi Kinue would ultimately knock down many preconceived notions of what it meant to be a female athlete in Japan, the barriers she faced were significant. These barriers came not only from those outside the world of women's sport but also from within, as Nikaidō's academy was not geared towards competitive sport at the time Hitomi entered. Calisthenics, gymnastics and dance were the central disciplines of Nikaidō's academy. These activities were considered important for the purpose of improving Japanese girls' physiques and acceptable because they demonstrated feminine grace and did not deplete the body of too much energy.

That said, the moment at which Nikaidō opened her school was one ripe for change in Japanese society. This was, after all, over fifty years after the Meiji Restoration, meaning that many of the ideological changes that had seeped into Japan throughout the Meiji era were finally beginning to take hold by the 1920s. Since class barriers had disintegrated, ideals of feminine virtue cut through all levels of society, as there was an ongoing expectation that all women contribute equally to the modernization of Japan. By the 1920s, a desirable woman would be considered one who both came from a good family *and* one who could successfully run a household. According to anthropologist Laura Spielvogel, this meant that '[a] healthy woman with sinewy limbs and a tireless vigor would be valued over a frail beauty with a fair complexion and long, cumbersome hair. The feminine ideal portrayed women as selfless, efficient workhorses, laboring for their family and their nation ... The Japanese state ... de-emphasized beauty in the mother/wife ideal and played up productivity in an effort to expedite Japanese industrialization'.⁵⁹ So, while less attention was paid to beauty in the name of modernization, it is important to recognize that beauty was definitely *not* akin to frailty at this time. However, the strength and fortitude that was considered desirable in women of this time did not translate directly into successful female athletes, as this strength was to be directed at raising one's family, not at bettering one's self in the sporting arena.

Nikaidō's academy of physical education opened when Japan was at a crossroads: the government was still actively seeking to improve the overall strength of the population, influences from outside cultures were becoming ever stronger and many traditional pre-Meiji ideals still lingered in the society. Improved communications meant that more and more Japanese people were learning of what trends were taking hold in other parts of the world.

For example, women had begun taking part in the Olympic Games by 1900, and some Japanese had taken notice of this as another potential arena for showing off Japanese muscle, so to speak. While the three pioneers of women's physical education in Japan, Inokuchi Akuri, Fujimura Toyo and Nikaidō Tokuyo were in favour of strengthening the female population of Japan without compromising traditional feminine ideals, a fundamental shift came shortly after their programmes of physical training were established. Chapter 4 will begin with a close look at how Japanese society went from being contemptuous and mocking to being supportive and encouraging of women's sport in a matter of a few years. We will learn about several prominent sportswomen who, in the early Shōwa era (1926–89), pushed the boundaries of what activities were considered acceptable (even praiseworthy) for Japanese women.