Sporting Activities of the Young Men’s Association during the Period between Taisho Era and Pre-war Showa Era: An Analysis of the Fuchu-Sport Bulletins*

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This study evaluates the state of sports at the Fuchu YMA in Tokyo. To this end, the paper analyzed Fuchu Sports, a YMA-published newsletter that specialized in sports and was modeled on the popular sports magazine Asahi Sports. The publication of Fuchu Sport was an indication of the strong interest in sports during the Taisho era (1912-1926). After the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Education announced their directives promoting physical exercise, the Tokyo government hosted conferences on the development of sports and physical education in Tokyo YMA. Accordingly, Tokyo was a step ahead of other regions in Japan when it came to setting up YMA athletic clubs. The founding of the Fuchu YMA Athletic Clubs was mainly supported by the Fuchu YMA, but it also received funding from the local authorities and schools of Fuchu. When the Athletic Club recruited university students to become their coaches, the club’s programming changed and its level of competitiveness went up significantly. Finally, the Athletic Club’s collaborations with surrounding educational institutions, particularly school athletic clubs, led to remarkable successes in competition and expanded the club’s philosophical mission.

Keywords: social education, community sports, sport pedagogy, Tokyo

1. Introduction

Every village has had regional youth groups called Wakamono-gumi*1 since the Edo period (1603-1868) in Japan. These groups are responsible for maintaining the security of the village, conducting religious ceremonies and festivals, and providing youth education. The Young Men’s Association (YMA) which based on these youth groups’ communities, was positioned itself as an officially sanctioned social, educational institution in the pre-war period (1926-1945) of the Showa era. The YMA developed until the state’s guidance from the latter half of the Meiji era (1868-1912) to the Taisho era (1912-1926). The Ministries of Internal Affairs and Education supported the YMA with the aim of delivering vocational and supplementary education to working youths in their own communities after they had completed their compulsory education.

There is considerable significance in the education and support the YMA offered Japanese communities from the Taisho era to the prewar period of the Showa era. More than three million young people enrolled in the YMA at the beginning of the Showa era, accounting for 60 percent of people between the ages of 15 and 25*2 at that time. Considering that fewer than 10 percent of high school students progressed to junior year*3, it is clear that the YMA offered educational opportunities for many young people.

Since the Taisho era, physical education and sports activities*4 were emphasized in the YMA. The YMA physical education and sports programs, which seek to develop physical strength and mental
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discipline through physical exercise, are situated at
the intersection of the military and education and
coop youth into the regime (Kozu, 1994). Since the
Taisho era, the YMA has organized numerous
physical education and sports activities to cultivate
the mind and body through physical exertion
(Kinoshita, 1970; Kozu, 1994; Takenoshita and
Kishino, 1983).

Until now, the YMA’s physical education and
sports activities have been discussed from two main
perspectives. The first perspective focused on the
YMA’s interaction with public policy as it pertained
to physical education and sports, which was mainly
coming from the Ministries of Internal Affairs and
Education as they guided YMAs across Japan.

Kinoshita (1970), Ishizu (1975), Takenoshita and
Kishino (1983), and Irie (1991) have examined
YMAs as part of the policy promoting physical edu-
cation that was pursued in the pre-war period of the
Showa era. They demonstrated that the YMA’s
physical education and sports activities were shaped
by various social conditions, including a national
health crisis and the military education problem,
that the state was required to coop youth into the
regime. However, these studies only considered the
perspective of the state.

The second perspective drew from concrete
examples of YMA community engagement to
examine the physical education and sports activities
of Japanese youth. Kozu (1994) has described the
ways that rural youth, with their unique mentality,
maintained their autonomy while engaging in state-
sponsored sports. Sasaki (2000, 2004) has
deciphered the details of the formation of YMA
competitions and the opinions of young people who
accepted or resisted participating in sports. Those
studies analyzed the YMA’s institutional newslet-
ers.

Depictions of the YMA’s physical education and
sports activities have focused on the abovemen-
tioned institutions. How the YMA, as a community
organization, embodies the state’s goals of physical
education and sports engagement has not received
adequate attention. Currently, only Kozu’s study on
rural youths’ views on sports and Sasaki’s study on
competitions offer details of the YMA’s activities.

My analysis focuses on the Fuchu Sports newslet-
ter, because it presents an opportunity to investigate
the details of one YMA community’s physical
education and sports activities. Because the Fuchu
Sports published by the Athletic Club of Fuchu
YMA in Fuchu-machi Kitatama-gun of Tokyo Pref-
ecture and focuses exclusively on physical engage-
ment. Previous studies have analyzed YMAs’ gener-
al newsletters, such as the News and Reports, which
often do not provide detailed accounts of the athlet-
ic training and events. Arguably, Fuchu Sports can
provide valuable historical material.

This study aims to describe in detail the YMA
Physical Education Club activities, based on an
analysis of Fuchu Sports articles and treating the
Athletic Club of Fuchu YMA as a case study.

Before moving on to the focus of discussion, this
article provides an outline of Fuchu Sports and
brief the backgrounds of its publication. Subse-
quently, the following three points are examined as
the focus of this study. First, the article examines
the processes through which the Athletic Club was
established, focusing on Tokyo Prefecture’s policy
of encouraging physical education within YMAs
and the response of Fuchu YMA. Next, the article
explains the organizational structure of the Athletic
Club. Lastly, the article traces the development of
the Athletic Club’s activities since its establishment.

This study examines the period from Fuchu
YMA’s establishment in 1919 to the establish-
mnt of the wartime regime and the enactment of
the National Mobilization Law in 1938. I treat Fuchu
Sports as my key primary source and use the News
and Reports and related Tokyo Prefecture and
Fuchu-machi official documents to supplement my
findings.

2. The outline of Fuchu-machi and Fuchu
YMA

2.1. The local conditions of Fuchu-machi from the
Taisho era until the pre-war period of the
Showa era

First of all, it should be noted that the local con-
text surrounding Fuchu YMA. There were three
major characteristics of Fuchu-machi, where the
Fuchu YMA was located, from the Taisho era to
the pre-war period of the Showa era. The first piece
of context is the dramatic development of rail net-
works there. The Keio Electric Tramway, which
linked Shinjuku Station to Fuchu Station, opened
in 1913. Then, the Gyokuman and Nambu Railways
enabled access to the city center and expanded
Secondly, because of the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923 and the development of local manufacturing, a huge inflow of people occurred. The damage from the earthquake to Fuchu-machi was much smaller than central Tokyo, so many earthquake victims moved to Fuchu-machi. As Figure 1 illustrates, the population was on the increase continually from the Taisho era to the pre-war period of the Showa era.

Third is the significant development of manufacturing industry. In 1938, the Tokyo Prefecture reported, “Due to the recent, rapid expansion of heavy industry production, 40 percent of the town’s production and one-third of the town population’s employment comes from manufacturing. The major industry is textile, which accounts for the majority. Textile is followed by printing, bookbinding, and food processing” (Regional Division, General Affairs Department, Tokyo Prefecture, 1938). Industries in Fuchu-machi were developing with the sericulture industry that has lasted since the Meiji era.

As demonstrated above, one of the major characteristics of Fuchu-machi, from the Taisho era to early Showa era, was that, it was trying to transform into an emerging business and industrial area while it preserved its rural village character. Accordingly, it can be said that Fuchu YMA was in a different local context than that of the “pure rural village area” (Sasaki, 2004, p.17) targeted by previous studies (Kozu, 1994; Sasaki, 2000, 2004).

2.2. The establishment and development of Fuchu YMA

In September 1905, the Ministry of Internal Affairs issued a notice to improve and develop regional youth organizations (Matter of the improvement and development of the Local Young Men’s Associations). That December, the Ministry of Education issued a notice to encourage the establishment of the YMA and the state issued a call for the reform of youth organizations (Matter of the Young Men’s Associations). While the circumstances surrounding the youth organization were changing nationally, the Bubai Young Men’s Group was established 1903 in Fuchu-machi.

And, in September 1913, the Fuchu Young Men’s Group*7 was established to realize “the improvement and development of the town, both materially and mentally, by cultivating a practice of uniting together to break down the modern trend in which young people are losing their rigor and caught in selfish attitudes and indeterminacy which are negative consequences of civilization, and in which they are only interested in satisfying their own desires without paying consideration to others” (Ogawa,
The Fuchu Young Men’s Group formed initially, launched by integrating the youth organizations that already existed in various wards of the town. Incidentally, their activities were focused on research into agricultural products, the development of local infrastructure, and the encouragement of supplementary learning to improve the quality of life. Their activities did not include physical education or sports activities yet.

In March 1919, the Fuchu Young Men’s Group changed its name to Fuchu YMA, following an urgent need to join the town’s youth associations with the YMA federation, which had been established in the county, and to keep up with times” (Watanabe, 1930). Furthermore, the Rules of Fuchu YMA also drafted at the same time.

According to The Rules of the Fuchu YMA, the organization’s aim was “to cultivate a healthy nation and contribute to various projects’ progress by respecting the Imperial Rescript on Education and the Boshin Shosho (Imperial Rescript of 1908), enhance the relationships among the members, and engage in learning and developing one’s physical strength” (Fuchu Young Men’s Association, 1930a). The members were organized primarily as “regular member” by voluntary participation of residents who are 15 to 30 years old. There also were “special members” who had graduated from the organization, including those who served in the Young Men’s Group, and “honorary members”, who the powerful residents of the town, to encourage the participation from a wide range of age cohorts.

The main activities include holding of the general assembly (once a month), the “holding of the general assembly (once a month)”, “holding of lectures and seminars”, “offering consolation to soldiers”, and “instructing and encouraging academic learning, moral development, and physical education”. The executive committee consisted of the mayor who was the head of the Fuchu YMA, a teacher of Fuchu Higher Elementary School who was the vice-head, and a few members who were permanent secretaries.

Next, we can see the characteristics of operation in Fuchu YMA, through the positioning of the business on physical education and sports activities. Fuchu YMA had set up five business departments at the time of its establishment: The Department of Lectures, The Department of Social Affairs, The Department of Moral Education, The Athletic Club, and The Judo Club*. Subsequently in 1933 the Baseball Club and in 1937 the Kendo Club were added. It is noteworthy that the activities related to physical education and sports were divided into different departments according to the discipline. That arrangement contrasts with Sasaki’s (2004) findings on the Tsukizu YMA in Ishikawa Prefecture, all of whose physical activities were grouped together in the Department of Physical Education. Similarly, neighboring YMAs such as Nishifu YMA and Tama YMA also regard the activities related to physical education and sports as the Department of Physical Education.

The head of the club, Murakoshi, explained the logic behind Fuchu YMA’s arrangement as practical since “running each discipline separately is easier because their activities are not constrained.” He gave the example of the Judo Club, which was supervised by the Fuchu Police Station (Murakoshi, 1926a). A key feature of the Fuchu YMA operations was to let the physical activities be run individually and independently.

3. On Fuchu Sports

Fuchu Sports was a newsletter published by the Fuchu YMA’s Athletic Club. It was distributed only to members and was not for sale. It was produced by a mimeograph, and the entire newspaper, including the cover, was handwritten. It was launched in 1926, the year after the establishment of the Athletic Club, and published once or twice a year until 1938.

The aim of the publication was “to develop the Athletic Club, to promote competition, and to enhance mutual relationships by active submission and being frank with each other” (Athletic Club of Fuchu Young Men’s Association, 1926a). The contents can be roughly divided into reports on the Athletic Club, competition results, and members’ views and opinions on sports. Members wrote the segments on views and opinions and match reports, and they were allowed to use pen names when they submitted their pieces. The newsletter reveals members’ daily activities and their views on physical education and sports.

Unlike the News and Reports, Fuchu Sports was not subject to state intervention and did not receive subsidies from Fuchu-machi or the Fuchu YMA.
The members performed all the tasks from article submission to editing and printing, suggesting involvement in the publishing of *Fuchu Sports* was voluntary.

During the second half of the Taisho era, when *Fuchu Sports* was launched, mass entertainment began to take root due to democracy, popular demand for a better life, and heightened awareness of the rights of the masses (Minami, 1965). Sports were no exception, and they spread among the masses during this period (Kinoshita, 1970).

The driving force behind the spread of sports among the masses during the Taisho era was mass media (Kinoshita, 1970). Newspapers, magazines, and radio broadcasting communicated competition results and trends of the sporting world. Sports involvement and consumption rapidly developed and attracted popular notice. Likewise, the Fuchu YMA subscribed to *Asahi Sports*, a sports magazine published by Osaka Asahi Shimbun, so that members could read it. *Asahi Sports* reported on sports in Japan and abroad and contained many photographs, which allowed members to learn about different sports. Thus, the development of mass media during the Taisho era played an important role in promoting an interest in sports among local YMA members.

Furthermore, the *Asahi Sports* magazine inspired members to launch the *Fuchu Sports* newsletter. The following excerpt explains the background for launching *Fuchu Sports*:

> “Recently, Asahi Shimbun has launched a sports magazine called *Asahi Sports* so as to educate people about exercises and competitions. Following *Asashi Sports’* reporting, the members are closely and completely taken in. The Athletic Club has decided to publish a newsletter mainly focused on our activities, since it is our organization’s institution that will broadcast Fuchu’s sports to all residents in the county. The club’s newsletter is therefore named *Fuchu Sports*.” (Athletic Club of Fuchu Young Men’s Association, 1926b)

It is implied that *Fuchu Sports* would be modeled on *Asahi Sports*, and in fact the members followed the model so thoroughly that “Fuchu” in the newsletter’s title was written in katakana like in *Asahi Sports*. It was also an expressed intention to use *Fuchu Sports* to communicate the Athletic Club’s activities widely throughout Fuchu-machi and Kitatama-gun.

*Fuchu Sports* is a glimpse into the members’ enthusiasm for their Athletic Club activities. As such, the newsletter symbolizes the heightened interest in sports among local YMA members in the Taisho era.

4. The establishment of the Athletic Club and its organization

4.1. Tokyo Prefecture’s policies to promote physical education and sports within YMA’s

During the Taisho era, the YMA federation began to focus on physical education and sports activities. Following a directive from the Ministries of Internal Affairs and Education in 1915*9 titled “On the development of YMA teaching” (hereinafter referred to as “the first directive”), moral and physical training became important and physical education and sports slowly began to be pursued at YMAs (Takenoshita and Kishino, 1983). Then in 1918, the Ministries of Internal Affairs and Education issued a directive titled “On factors which contribute to the healthy development of YMA” (hereinafter referred to as “the second directive”); it provided further impetus for physical education. This directive declared that “to enhance young people’s physical strength through physical training and exercise is a factor in cultivating the vitality of the state. This will ensure a sound quality in both body and mind” (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Education, 1918). It emphasized the YMA’s physical education and sports activities. In response to this development, the Tokyo Prefecture discussed various policies to promote exercising within the YMAs.

In May 1917, prior to the second directive, the Tokyo Prefecture established its own Council of the YMA Leaders (hereinafter referred to as “the Leaders Council”) to encourage founding YMAs in new towns and villages, train existing leaders, enhance supplementary education, and improve physical education. That July, the Tokyo Youth Physical Education Committee (hereinafter referred to as “the Physical Education Committee”) was formed as a derivative of the Leaders Council. The Physical Education Committee sought to promote physical education...
education at the prefecture's YMAs and research delivery methods. Its membership consisted of head teachers of prefectural schools and experts in physical education.

On June 18, 1918, the Physical Education Committee issued Tokyo Prefecture Ordinance No. 63 which concerned promotion regulations. This document stipulated that Tokyo prefecture would grant incentives if YMAs developed physical education facilities and held lectures and competitions to improve physical education (Tokyo Prefectural Government, 1918). It also stated that a certificate of commemoration would be awarded to YMAs that performed highly in physical strength tests and competitions for youths.

Subsequently in September 1921, the Leaders Council debated on “the most appropriate method to encourage healthy development of youth organizations” (hereinafter referred to as “method for YMA’s healthy development”) and concluded that it was “to contribute to the cultivation of the mind and the strengthening of the body by setting up physical education clubs and providing physical education equipment” (Kitatama-gun Young Men’s Association, Tokyo Prefecture, 1922a). The prefecture began to promote the physical education and sports activities at YMAs by encouraging each one to open a physical education club and providing the financial support stipulated in the aforementioned ordinance.

Actually, the number of YMAs with a physical education club in Tokyo Prefecture began to rise with the Prefecture’s encouragement. Near the Fuchu YMA, for instance, it was reported that by 1927, 22 out of 25 YMAs in Kitatama-gun offered physical education and 15 YMAs had physical education clubs (Kitatama-gun Young Men’s Association, Tokyo Prefecture, 1927).

As mentioned above, since the issuing of the first and second directives, the Tokyo Prefecture organized a council for the YMAs and engaged in developing the YMAs physical education and sports activities in the prefecture. As the method the council ultimately selected was not legally binding, not all YMAs in the prefecture developed physical education clubs. However, the policy to encourage YMA physical education clubs was the first of its kind in Japan*10, and so it is noteworthy as a characteristic of this prefecture.

4.2. The organization of the Athletic Club of Fuchu YMA

On October 31, 1925, Fuchu YMA formally organized the Athletic Club that the club had not been engaged in systematic activities apart from participating in competitions around the county.

The head of the club, Murakoshi, issued the following statement on the establishment of the Athletic Club in a congratulatory address at the launch of Fuchu Sports:

Of late, in our country’s youth physical education movement, the government, in the form of the Ministries of Internal Affairs and Education, is co-operating with local authorities and the private sector to encourage young people’s moral development and improve their physical strength. With this meaningful aim, they have encouraged physical education and spread it widely, which is a remarkable development. This autumn, the Athletic Club of Fuchu Young Men’s Association was organized, with your enthusiastic support, to promote physical education. Congratulations on the steady progress thus far. The need to cultivate physical strength is urgent, and I hope young people will become aware of it and try harder to seek the true meaning of that endeavor. (Murakoshi, 1926b)

Murakoshi’s statement demonstrated that the Athletic Club formed because the YMA members understood and agreed with the intent behind the ministries’ directives. On the other hand, Murakoshi believed that the cultivation of young people's physical strength was urgent and demanded that young people be fully engaged with awakening and truth-seeking through these activities. He added, “we do not need a club that only engages in competition. The outcomes must be given back to the residents” (Murakoshi, 1926c), suggesting that the role of the Athletic Club was to benefit Fuchu-machi as a whole.

The “Rules of the Athletic Club of Fuchu Young Men’s Association” (hereinafter referred to as “Athletic Club Rules”) detailed the club’s structure and aims, as developed in discussions between representatives of Fuchu-machi and the Fuchu YMA. It also included a plan for systematically
managing the club.

4.3. The organization of the Athletic Club

This section outlines the organization of the Athletic Club by examining the Athletic Club Rules. Below is a summary list of the five most important articles from the ten included in the Athletic Club Rules.

Article 1: The Club is called the Athletic Club of Fuchu Young Men’s Association, and its secretariat is located at Fuchu Elementary School.

Article 2: The aims of the Club are to train the mind and body, improve field athletics, and enhance friendship among the members.

Article 3: To achieve the aims specified in Article 2, the club will take the following steps:

1. Implement field athletic training
2. Implement an internal competition twice a year as well as competitions with other YMAs
3. Publish the Fuchu Sports newsletter four times a year
4. Hold social events for members
5. Provide other activities as deemed necessary

Article 4: The following office holders are placed in headquarter:

1. One representative (Mayor of Fuchu-machi)
2. Two executive members (an elementary school teacher and the Association’s executive member)
3. One head of the club (recommended by the members)

Article 5: There are two categories of membership: ordinary members and special members

Ordinary members: Male members of the Fuchu YMA who are between 15 and 25 years of age
Special members: Teachers and administrative staff from Fuchu Secondary School (the remainder has been omitted)

The composition of the executive committee of the Athletic Club illustrates that not only the Fuchu YMA as the presiding, but also the Fuchu-machi and Fuchu Higher Elementary School were involved in the management of the Club. Specifically, the mayor represented Fuchu-machi. The executive members came from the teaching and administrative staff of Fuchu Secondary School and the executive committee of the Fuchu YMA. The head of the club was selected by the members.

The rules also clearly define members’ eligibility and status criteria. Eligible members were male members between 15 and 25 years while the YMA age limit was set at 30 years of age. The club age limit was five years younger, because “young men over the age of 25 should prioritize collaborative activities with the reservists” (Athletic Club of Fuchu Young Men’s Association, 1926c).

Beyond the “ordinary members,” who satisfied the aforementioned eligibility criteria, the category of “special members” was intended for teachers and the administrative staff of Fuchu Secondary School. This category enabled that staff to participate in activities with ordinary members even if they did not belong to the YMA.

At the time, the county headquarters for the teaching staff organization, the Kitatama-gun research department of physical exercise, was located at Fuchu Secondary School, and its activities were carried out mainly in Fuchu-machi. They gave teaching seminars on physical education for the staff, trained for physical education at the YMA, and researched methods of teaching physical education to elementary school pupils (Division of Physical Education, Secretariat, Minister of Education, 1934). The teaching staff sometimes participated in the Athletic Club as special members so that they could research instruction methods for field athletics. In addition, the “teachers’ field athletics competition” for the Kitatama-gun staff allowed the club to be a place for the staff to practice. Thus, not only did the Athletic Club and Fuchu Secondary School run the club together but also they collaborated in the actual sporting activities.

Next, the budget allocation of the physical education club of Fuchu YMA, which underpinned the activities of the Athletic Club, is central to this investigation. The distribution of funds reflected the status of physical education at the Fuchu YMA. Available data is limited because there are few confirmed historical records of the Fuchu YMA accounts. However, we can examine the only public financial report to be published, which was in a News and Reports from 1930.

Table 1 summarizes the Fuchu YMA financial
One hundred and fifty-nine yen were allocated to the physical education clubs, which consisted of the Competition and Judo Clubs. It accounted for approximately 34 percent of the Fuchu YMA’s annual budget. The Fuchu YMA was engaged in many activities other than physical education; however, it received about one-third of the total budget, which indicates its importance to the Fuchu YMA.

The association granted a subsidy of 139 yen to the Athletic Club, whereas the Judo Club only received 20 yen, amounting to a difference of over one hundred yen. The Athletic Club’s budget was larger because the Judo Club was developed and supported by the Fuchu Police Station.

As demonstrated, the Fuchu YMA allocated 30 percent of its annual budget to the Athletic Club, which underscores Fuchu YMA’s focus on the Athletic Club. The budget allocated by Fuchu YMA to the Athletic Club was spend on “expenses to hold competitions, registrations, and expeditions” (Athletic Club of Fuchu Young Men’s Association, 1931a). Though the Athletic Club charged all of its members about one yen a year, it remained “difficult to finance all activities with membership fees only” (Athletic Club of Fuchu Young Men’s Association, 1931a). Thus, subsidies granted by the Fuchu YMA were most likely a substantial percentage of the operating budget.

5. The evolution and changes in the Athletic Club’s activities

In 1925, when the club was first established, it had 50 members. Membership declined to 33 in 1930 and then within five years to 26 members, only ten years after the establishment (Figure 2). Next, in terms of the occupations of the members, the category of “student”\(^\dagger\), which was not counted at the launch of the club, became prominent and accounted for about 20 percent of members in 1935. Meanwhile, the proportion of workers engaged in commerce and manufacturing declined.

One member acknowledged that “the number of members was on the increase for the first two years, but since about 1928, it kept on declining” (Suzuki, 1933). He cited “changes in the activities and situation of the club” as the reasons for the decline (Suzuki, 1933). The head of the club, Murakoshi, stated that “while it is not desirable that the number of members is declining and it is difficult to attract new members, the club’s activities keep expanding year after year” (Murakoshi, 1932). Was there a relationship between the decline in membership and the changes in the activities offered? Below, we

| Table 1 | Annual budget Fuchu-machi YMA (1930). |
|---------|----------------------------------------|
| Section | Breakdown                              | Amount   |
| Office expenses | Miscellaneous expenses                | 62 yen   |
| 76 yen (17%)     | Demand expenses                       | 14 yen   |
| Convention expense | Maneging board expenses              | 10 yen   |
| 10 yen (2%)      | General meeting expenses              | 30 yen   |
| Operating expenses | Welcome and leaving meeting expenses | 49.3 yen |
| 204.3 yen (45%) | Encouragement expenses                | 42 yen   |
|                  | Distribution expenses                 | 40 yen   |
|                  | Founding festival expenses            | 9 yen    |
|                  | Funeral expenses                      | 4 yen    |
|                  | Publishing expenses                   | 30 yen   |
| Club expenses    | Athletic Club Subsidy                 | 139 yen (30%) |
| 159 yen (34%)    | Judo Club Subsidy                     | 20 yen   |
| Fundamental property expenses | Accumulation expenses    | 10 yen  |
| 10 yen (2%)      | Total                                  | 459.3 yen|

(Summarized from using “Fuchu-machi YMA cash budget sheet of 1930” (Fuchu YMA, 1930b))
5.1. Defining the Club’s activities (1925-1926)

The Athletic Club was founded with the aim of training minds and bodies, improving field athletics and enhancing friendship among the members. However, it is doubtful that the freshly launched Athletic Club actually focused on improving field athletics. During its first two years, “the emphasis was placed on developing a sound and strong body and endurance by physical training rather than on improving field athletics” (Godo, 1926). The concrete assessment for the club’s goals was based on physical strength tests rather than athletic competition*12.

Immediately after its inception, one member reported, “we gather on the exercise grounds of the elementary school on first and third Saturday or Sunday of the month, and we do a marathon and have a meeting’’ (Athletic Club of Fuchu Young Men’s Association, 1926d, p. 16). As for the training sessions, “Only those who are motivated participate at their own volition” (Athletic Club of Fuchu Young Men’s Association, 1926d, p.17). Under these conditions, the club did not encourage systematic engagement in club activities, or as another member explained, “Rather than an Athletic Club, those who want to do some physical exercise come together and exercise as they see fit’’ (K. Y., 1926).

As described above, one of the reasons why programs were modest at the club’s inception was that, while Tokyo Prefecture’s policies encouraged the setting up of a club, they did not provide concrete instructions on how to run the club. In other words, the management of the club was delegated to each YMA. Consequently, the Athletic Club struggled to learn how to manage itself. As a result, its early activities focused on offering ways to relieve stress through “something similar to field athletics” (Hirota, 1926, p.21).

The Athletic Club also offered opportunities to young people who had never been able to participate in sports. One member admitted, “I learned how to play sports by their rules for the first time when I joined the Athletic Club’’ (Yoshida, 1926). A more critical comment on the arrangement was that “all those joining were complete beginners and it did not look good at all” (Sasaki, 1928). Unsurprisingly, the young people who encountered sports for the first time were not necessarily successful in the competitions. However, it is meaningful that the Athletic Club provided the local youth with a chance to discover the world of physical education and sports.
5.2. Improving the activities qualitatively (1927-1934)

About two years into its existence, the Athletic Club moved to improve its operation, in particular, its training. One manifestation of this effort was the club’s invitation to coaches outside the YMA to provide instructions on how to run the competitions.

Around 1927, the Athletic Club began inviting external coaches for the weekend activities. A member named Kiyota reported on the coaches’ invitation:

Although we engage in field athletics, what method of training are we using? So far, the club emphasizes simply running long distances in order to improve our physical strength. However, if we continue as we have been doing, it is not clear what activities we are doing as a club, and there is a worry that the club could disappear in the future. Since competitions are frequent, we have to work to produce results. So, we have asked a member of a university Athletic Club to coach us, using our personal network, on the essence of field athletics. Fortunately, we have many universities in the neighborhood and it was realized with relative ease (Kiyota, 1928).

Inviting external coaches was an attempt to augment the daily activities of the Athletic Club and strengthen its regime. It was also an attempt to overcome the crisis of the time: that the meaning of the club was being questioned.

The club hired members from the university field athletic clubs in the neighborhood to be their coaches. Chuo University and Nihon University were two universities that provided coaches, but no specific names have been found. The coaches’ backgrounds are largely unknown, but it appears that several students provided instruction. There were many universities in Tokyo Prefecture and Fuchu-machi was easily accessible; therefore, the Athletic Club felt free to invite university students to be coaches.

Introducing external coaches indeed changed the Athletic Club:

“Until now, I had believed training for a 100-meter sprint or marathon was simply to run as much as possible. However, since the coaches started to come, the content of training has changed a lot. We now do careful physical exercises, jumping, and occasional swims in Tamagawa River” (Kubo, 1928).

Then, this demonstrates that the training, which up until this point, consisted of only running, was altered with the invitation of coaches. This manifested itself in the competitions. In 1927, the Fuchu-machi team achieved its first overall win at the Kitatama-gun YMA federation’s sports day. Until then, Fuchu-machi had always come last, and their win was reported as “a truly astonishing outcome” (Athletic Club of Fuchu Young Men’s Association, 1928). After that, the club achieved five more consecutive wins. In 1928, a member named Eiji Noguchi won the right to participate in the Meiji Shrine Athletic Meet for the first time in the club’s history, after which the club was able to send more members to participate in the competition.

As the content of the training improved, the format of the club’s programming also changed. One member described the difference: “at the Athletic Club, we all gather in the evening after work and are united in our efforts to improve our skills” (Kiyota, 1931). The training regime shifted to group sessions in the evenings, after work or school. One member named Noguchi claimed, “if you are a member of the club, you should take part in every training session” (Noguchi, 1931). Participation in the training session became obligatory for members.

Inviting the external coaches led to changes in the Athletic Club’s training regime, which in turn led to the improvement of the members’ athletic skills. Participation became obligatory and a field athletics ground was constructed exclusively for the club. At its establishment, the Fuchu YMA rented and developed into a training ground a piece of land that Fuchu-machi had earmarked for a school. However, there were many constraints on the use of that field since it had to be shared with the town factories and the YMA’s baseball clubs. These problems were a major obstacle for the Athletic Club.

Around 1931, a conflict arose with the other clubs over the “problems of the ground. It made the Baseball Club use it” (Athletic Club of Fuchu Young Men’s Association, 1931b). From around 1932, the club began to investigate building a
competition ground exclusively for field athletics.

At the same time, it had been decided that the horse race course would move to Fuchu-machi from Meguro-mura, Ebara-gun in Tokyo Prefecture. The club believed that this move would present a major opportunity and it attempted to secure funding for the construction of a new competition ground by providing free labor for the race course. Noguchi, a member, explained the situation in detail:

What was most problematic in terms of training at the YMA was the issue of the training ground. So, we lobbied very hard to build a new ground, which was also necessary for the development of the town. As a result, a plan was drawn up to build one about the size of 4,000 tsubo (approximately, 13,200 m²) and with a budget of 1,000 yen. Then, fortunately, because some members volunteered to provide labor when the Tokyo Horse Race Course moved, we obtained funding of about 1,000 yen, and the plan was finally realized in 1934. (Noguchi, 1936)

The Athletic Club obtained funding to build a new competition ground by physically assisting in building the horse race track. With the funding thus obtained, the new competition ground was completed in 1934. The construction of the competition ground was a project for the entire Fuchu YMA, not just the club. The completed field athletics ground served as a new training base for the Athletic Club.

The Athletic Club’s activities qualitatively improved, but those improvements had consequences for membership. The first result was the weeding out of members. As the activities of the Athletic Club became more serious, the members had to face the problem of managing work and training. In particular, for workers, it was sometimes difficult to find time to participate and “in the busy period, many members could not take part in training” (Kubo, 1932). Training had become burdensome to some members and they worried about the impact of training on their work. One lamented, “I am attending the training session but it is not a small impact on my work because I make my living by labor” (Yagawa, 1933). Many members may have quit the Athletic Club because they could not manage both work and involvement in the club’s activities. When the club first opened, it offered young people opportunities to participate in its activities. However, the qualitative improvement to its programming appeared to restrict those opportunities, which also contributed to the decline in membership.

The second effect was the members’ absorption of the club’s activities led to “a discrepancy from what the state intended for the YMA” (Athletic Club of Fuchu Young Men’s Association, 1933). A concrete example occurred in 1933 when a member did not attend the youth physical strength test and instead participated in a competition; his choice to do so became a significant scandal in Fuchu-machi. A member expressed his view that “the rationale for the YMA might have originally been improving the physical strength of the youth and guiding introspection...however, what is important in our activities today is not physical strength test results but winning the competition” (N.I., 1933). At the time, some members seemed to disregard the nationalistic rationale originally associated with the YMA. Interestingly, it demonstrates a discrepancy between the Ministries’ stated goals in promoting the YMA and the actual Fuchu YMA members’ goals. A more detailed examination of this point from multiple perspectives is necessary.

5.3. Interacting with school physical exercise clubs (1935-1938)

From 1935 onward, the relationship with the physical exercise clubs of schools in Fuchu-machi was important to the development of the Athletic Club’s activities. In 1935, the Tokyo Agricultural High School (hereinafter referred to as the “Agricultural School”) moved to Fuchu-machi and opened its doors. The Agricultural School had a field athletics club, and its relationship with the Athletic Club flourished via competitions. In October 1935, soon after the school opened, the first competition between the Agricultural School and Fuchu YMA was held, and this practice continued until 1938. In addition to the competitions, they also held joint training sessions. Interactions with the Agricultural School’s field athletics club led to a new type of consciousness among the Athletic Club members.

Previously, the Athletic Club’s competition had only included YMA members in the county. They
had had few opportunities to compete against athletes from school physical exercise clubs. Shimizu, a member, expressed his view on the change:

Our conventional competitors had been the members of YMAs in the neighborhood, and for the first time, I got to know a school club when we started competing with the Agricultural School students. As they were the educational elite, they might not think too much of the YMA, but sports wipe out all feelings. When we are on the track, schools and status are completely irrelevant. We welcome the existence of the field athletics club of the Agricultural School. Because we are an athletic club, we should compete in sports with the field athletics club of the Agricultural School. (Shimizu, 1936)

Through their interaction with the field athletics club of the Agricultural School, the Athletic Club members began recognizing any social distinction between the educational elite and the YMA as irrelevant. Sports taught them concepts such as freedom, fairness, and equality.

One of the members wrote, “the field athletic club at Agricultural School has a much freer atmosphere and it is autonomous and open” (M. M., 1936). The interaction encouraged club members to reflect on their club’s situation, in which members were preoccupied with winning competitions and no new members were joining. The Agricultural School club members’ philosophy of sports had spread to the YMA. The club members began thinking about the future of their Athletic Club because of their interactions with the Agricultural School. Perhaps after reflecting on these developments, in April 1936, members made revisions to the Athletic Club’s rules so that “Building relationships with school physical exercise clubs” was added as an activity. It demonstrated their intention to pursue interactions with all schools’ physical exercise clubs.

From 1935, the Athletic Club began to interact with physical school exercise clubs in the community. This relationship impacted the Athletic club, making the members rethink what their club could look like in the future.

### 6. Conclusion

This study examined how the Fuchu YMA’s Athletic Club carried out physical education and sports activities. It drew mainly from *Fuchu Sports*, the YMA’s Athletic Club newsletter. The major findings are summarized below.

1) The *Fuchu Sports* newsletter was modeled on a specialized sports magazine, the *Asashi Sports* magazine, and the existence of the *Fuchu Sports* newsletter arguably symbolizes the YMA’s heightened interest in sports during the Taisho era.

2) After the Ministries of Internal Affairs and Education issued their first and second directives, Tokyo Prefecture organized a council to begin working on the improvement and development of their YMAs’ physical education and sports activities. Tokyo Prefecture encouraged founding a physical education club in the YMA from very early on.

3) The Athletic Club came into existence mainly with the support of the Fuchu YMA, but it also received assistance from the Fuchu-machi and Fuchu Secondary School. In particular, the Fuchu Secondary School collaborated with the club on management and hosting activities.

4) Just after its establishment, the club did not undertake systematic activities. When the members decided to invite students from nearby universities to be coaches, the content of the training was transformed and the club’s competitiveness improved. The construction of a field athletics ground for the Athletic Club’s exclusive use also improved the training environment. However, the qualitative improvement of the club’s activities prevented some members’ participation and led to a reduction in membership.

5) A major feature in the development of the Athletic Club’s activities was that physical education and sports activities were systematically pursued due to the Tokyo Prefecture’s promotion and the support from the Fuchu YMA, Fuchu-machi, and the secondary school. Furthermore, the Fuchu YMA Athletic Club benefited significantly from the proximity of schools, including the universities and voca-
This study details the background of the Fuchu YMA’s Athletic Club, its organization, development, and the evolution of its programming. Lastly, I will discuss the study’s contribution to the analysis of YMA athletic clubs.

Approximately 60 percent of male adolescents between 15 and 25 years old belonged to a YMA at the beginning of the Showa era. Thus, the YMA federation played a significant role in youth education in communities throughout Japan. Because state policy emphasized physical education and sports activities at YMA’s athletic clubs, a variety of athletic programs were developed. However, there has not been extensive research on YMA’s physical activities.

To understand the distribution and development of physical education and sports in Japan from a wider perspective, it is essential to focus on the circumstances under which people from different parts of society exercised. Without examining the reality of the YMA members “who do not feature in the usual history of physical education and sports” (Kozu, 1994), we will never obtain the full picture. Therefore, this study contributes to that conversation by examining a YMA’s Athletic Club that has scarcely been investigated. The research shows the diversity of experience in physical education in the Taisho era.

In this article, I analyzed Fuchu Sports, a newsletter from a YMA that has not been examined in preceding studies. Fuchu Sports is an important historical data source as it documents in detail the YMA Athletic Club’s activities, from its members’ perspective of its members.

The Fuchu YMA Athletic Club was distinct from rural YMA’s, which suggests YMA’s physical education and sports activities differed widely from region to region. It will be fruitful to have further analyses of various regions’ YMA’s, including YMA’s from Tokyo’s city center. In addition, this article demonstrated how a field athletics club from a neighboring school influenced the development of the Fuchu YMA Athletic Club, an important finding on how a YMA interacted with a school. However, this study only investigated a fraction of the interaction and a more detailed examination will provide more insight into the influence exerted between the two parties.

Notes

*1 In addition to the well-known name, Wakanomono-gumi, which originated in the Edo period, there were various regional names for local youth organizations, including Waka-renchu, Nisai-gumi, and Wakaze-gumi.

*2 This was calculated using the total number of members in Japan as reported in the Basic Survey of YMAs in Japan (Association of Japan Young Men’s Associations Survey Department, 1934) and the population estimate data presented in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications Bureau of Statistics (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications Bureau of Statistics, 2003).

*3 This was calculated using the population estimate data presented in the Annual Bulletin of the Ministry of Education, Japanese Empire (Documents Division, Secretariat, Minister of Education, 1973) and in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications Bureau of Statistics (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications Bureau of Statistics, 2003).

*4 In YMA-related newsletters and official documents, physical education and sports are used interchangeably without a clear distinction. Therefore, following preceding studies, such as Kozu (1994) and Sasaki (2000, 2004), this article uses the expression “physical education and sports activities.”

*5 Tokyo Prefecture referred to the YMA’s physical education and sports club as a physical education club. Therefore, unless otherwise stated, in this article, the YMA’s physical education and sports club is referred to as a physical education club.

*6 In Fuchu-machi, the Keio Electric Tramway (present-day Keio Electric Railway) opened between Shijuku and Fuchu stations in 1916. In 1925, the Gyokuman Railway (present-day Keio Electric Railway) opened between Fuchu and Higashihachioji stations. In addition, in 1928, the Nambu Railway (present-day JR Nambu Line), which stopped at Bubai-gawara and Fuchu-honcho stations, also opened. The Keio Electric Tramway brought electricity to a wide area of Kitatama-gun by building a thermal power plant in Fuchu-machi and by laying power grids along the rail to supply electricity to the train (Keio Teito Electric Railway, 1979).

*7 Since there are many cases of community-based youth organizations, such as Wakanomono-gumi, transforming into Young Men’s Groups or YMA’s, it is not easy to identify exactly when the terms of the Young Men’s Group or YMA were first used or when their use faded. However, as demonstrated in the case of Fuchu YMA, after the first directive was issued in 1915, there was a national tendency to replace the term Young Men’s Group with YMA (Tanaka, 1988). It was also demonstrated that there was continuity from the Young Men’s Group to the YMA (Satake, 2011).

*8 The Athletic Club, as a department, existed from the establishment of the Fuchu YMA in 1919. At that time, though,
its activities were limited to participation in competitions as it held no organized activities of its own. It was not until October 31, 2015 that the Athletic Club began organizing its own activities.

The legal status of a Directive is that “it only constrains subordinate offices in relation to the superior office and in principle is not treated as a legal regulation. Therefore, actions that contravene a Directive are not illegal” (Wagatsuma, 1952). Consequently, the directive only encourages YMAs to develop physical education and sports activities; it is not legally binding.

At the National Physical Exercise Organizers’ Meeting in 1926, five years after the Tokyo Prefecture’s promotion policy, the Minister of Education asked: “What should we be mindful of in promoting social physical education.” It answered, “to encourage the founding of a ‘club’ by discipline in the YMA” (Division of Physical Education, Secretariat, Minister of Education, 1940).

Students who belonged to the Athletic Club were students of Tokyo Prefectural Fuchu Agricultural School (vocational school) in Fuchu-machi (Athletic Club of Fuchu Young Men’s Association, 1931c). As Fuchu Agricultural School did not have physical exercise clubs, its students who resided in Fuchu-machi joined the YMA to join the Athletic Club.

In 1919, Kitatama-gun enacted the “Kitatama-gun regulation to commend youth physical fitness” and implemented youth physical strength tests with a view to “improving young people’s physiques and regulating their morality.” The test results were broken down into “the number of first passes at the conscription test,” “the average height and weight,” and “the number of patients with sexually transmitted diseases,” which were turned into a mark by the town or village (Kitatama-gun YMA, Tokyo Prefecture, 1922b).

Before Tokyo Agricultural High School, Meisei Junior High School opened its doors in 1927. A competition with the Athletic Club was held only once, in 1926, when the school operated in its former guise as the Meisei Vocational School. Kodama Kuju, the Headmaster of the Meisei Junior High School, banned the physical exercise clubs from competing with external bodies because “external matches require selection of athletes, which means that a small number of people participate while the majority cannot. I was worried that this would not help the popularization with physical exercise” (Kodama and Kodama, 1976).

Tokyo Agricultural High School was a vocational school specializing in agriculture and forestry under the old regime.

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