

DID U. S. BLOOD MONEY FEED JAP

BLACK DRAGON

By COURTNEY RANDOLPH

WAS the Black Dragon Society exacting its toll from Japanese gambling syndicates in the United States?

If so, old Mitsuru Toyama, founder of the dreaded Dragons, must have rubbed his boney hands in glee when the president of the "Little Tokyo" gambling club returned to Japan each year, the pockets of his kimono bulging with thousands of American dollars.

If Toyama did control the purse strings of these Japanese gambling combines, did the sneak attack of Pearl Harbor wipe out his noxious influence? Only recently several Japanese, formerly associated with the Los Angeles "Tokyo" club, were arrested for operating games of chance in a nearby concentration camp.

From the bowels of the underworld, authorities have disgorged the machinations of this Oriental gambling ring, which operated along the Pacific Coast for almost a century. The last shred of secrecy has been ripped away and the mysterious inner-workings of America's "Little Tokyo" laid bare.

From these Japanese gambling clubs unbelievable sums of money, red with the blood of murdered Nipponese, long poured into the treasury of the Land of the Rising Sun.

"Just a dead Jap. Another unsolved murder!" Crime experts frequently voiced these words as Oriental bodies, many unidentified, were found with their skulls cut wide open and their bodies thrust grotesquely into meter boxes. Others were hacked into bits and left in dark alleys and weed-covered fields.

The sea, too, gave up her dead. Tightly sewn sacks were washed ashore and when ripped open revealed the mutilated remains of a Jap.

The inception of these "Little Tokyo" clubs dates back to the gold rush days of '49. The cry, "Thar's gold in them thar hills!" resounded throughout the land, even to foreign countries. The result was an influx of Japanese immigrants, who were employed to build railroads.

Far from their homes and families, the Japs organized card rooms, which were known as Social Clubs.

Later on, an element of crime crept into these innocent recreational centers, which had been founded by simple, lonely immigrants. A vice ring dealing in gambling, narcotics and prostitution began to flourish. Like

a huge octopus, this syndicate of corruption extended its tentacles of crime from the Canadian border to the Mexican line of Southern California, sucking ill-gotten gains into the maw of a greedy mouth.

THE "Little Tokyo Social Club" was incorporated in Los Angeles in 1919. In later years it dominated all other similar clubs in the United States.

A president was selected and the unwritten law was that he should rule for a period of one year. He was then give \$40,000 and a one-way ticket back to Japan. For eight years this agreement was carried out to the letter.

Then, on December 31, 1927, H. Arakawa's life was snuffed out by gunmen in Sacramento. He was president of the Little Tokyo Club and head of the local gambling club there. Police found his bullet-riddled body on the stairway.

Y. Yasuda was made president in 1929. Despite an armed body guard, he was killed on the night of June 21, 1930, as he entered his home. Nine shots were found in his body.

S. Nojiri, a narcotic dealer, known as the "Japanese Torpedo," aspired to become president to succeed Yasuda and was suspected of having hired two gunmen to kill him. The Torpedo made a trip to Portland and on his way back to Los Angeles, via Sacramento, was killed October 14, 1930, in Japanese Alley.

In 1930, Jack Hisao Kubo became head man. But on the night of December 4, 1930, he disappeared and was never seen again.

Sadaichi Oku became president in 1931, but was killed shortly after taking office. He was slain while attempting to unlock the door of his residence and an investigation revealed the key hole had been plugged.

A reputed eye-witness to his murder, one Shimizu, partook of too much sake, opened his mouth too wide. He, too, died. His body was found cut to ribbons in a river bottom in Santa Barbara County.

It was during Oku's reign in 1931



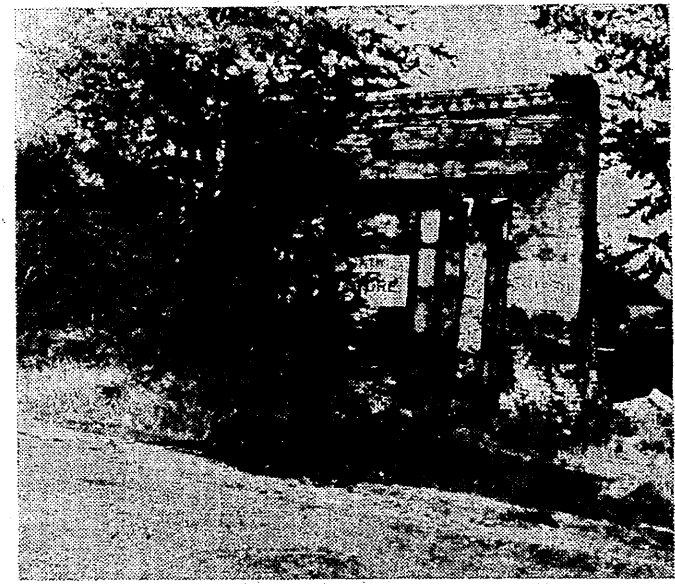
SO SORRY murmurs Hideichi Yamatoda, but not sorry for the big sums of American money he gathered in as president of the Little Tokyo gambling syndicate and later took with him to Japan.



MYSTERY WOMAN of Little Tokyo was Mrs. Wanda Yamatoda, Oklahoma-born white woman who married Jap club chief.



ALLERGIC to photographers was this Jap gambling lord, during trial for alleged murder of a Lodi, Calif., rancher.



BLACK DRAGON LAIR? In the basement of this old building, erected in the gold rush days of 1848, Oriental gamblers first began to operate, thereby giving birth to Little Tokyo clubs.

that the 92-year-old Mitsuru Toyama is said to have sent his first Black Dragon emissaries into the United States.

Sera was president in 1932. During his administration the Olympic Games were held in Los Angeles and two men, Mitsuo Tagawa and George Irie, organized a sweepstake on the outcome of the equestrian events. Tickets priced at \$1 each were sold through all of the Tokyo Clubs. Tagawa and Irie sold 75,000 tickets, took the money and decamped for Japan. Shortly after, Sera gave up his presidential career and hid himself back to Tokyo.

THE real Capone of the "Tokyo" gamblers and the most hated and feared man on the Pacific Coast was Kinpachi Yamamoto. It is not known just when he began his hijacking activities, but a mere presidential job did not appeal to him. Employing a gang of the most deadly gunmen he could find, he began preying upon all of the clubs up and down the coast. It is rumored that he collected as high as 50 per cent of the "take" in some instances.

It was a known fact that he was importing narcotics from the Orient. Government officials were never able to prove it, however. The Internal Revenue Department's Income Tax

Division started an investigation and found that he had evaded a \$160,000 income tax. He was found guilty and on May 14, 1938, was sentenced to prison for 18 months and fined \$3000.

After serving his time Yamamoto was deported. He is now said to be directing the horde of narcotic salesmen and brothel keepers following in the wake of Japanese armies as they march through conquered lands.

The next man who had presidential aspirations was Buichi (known as Snake) Tanaka. This renegade gambler was also a gunman and white-slaver. While employed by the "Little Tokyo" in El Centro, California, he was arrested on a white-slave charge. Out on bail, pending deportation, he made a visit to Sacramento. He aired his views and expressed a desire to become a candidate for president. As a result, guns blazed again on July 3, 1935, and Japanese Alley claimed another victim.

Hideichi Yamatoda was the seventeenth and last president to hold office in the "Little Tokyo" gambling syndicate, taking over the reins in 1936.

In addition to operating the Little Tokyo gambling club, Yamatoda also handled the affairs of the Nichibei Kaisha film exchange, both located in the heart of the Japanese colony in Los Angeles. When officers raided the club, which was located on the third

floor of a building at 317 1/2 Jackson Street, they are said to have found enough guns and ammunition to fortify a small military stronghold.

From the income of various enterprises, which authorities estimated at a million dollars yearly, Hideichi is believed to have amassed a fortune.

Disregarding the unwritten law, Hideichi Yamatoda did not return to Japan at the end of a year.

EARLY in 1938, the hounds of crime howled and death stalked again through the Japanese underworld. Terihiko Namba, a Lodi rancher, disappeared. Namba had a yen for the games of chance and once a year he drove his truck from San Joaquin Valley to Los Angeles to take a fling at the Little Tokyo Club. It is said that he dropped \$10,000 to this club and on his last visit, which was on May 21, 1938, he parted company with \$4500.

It was stated that he asked for "rice money," which was refused, and in a fight that ensued he was beaten to death with the sawed off end of a billiard cue. Some people say that his bruised and battered body was dragged down the stairs and thrown upon the sidewalk, where it lay until spirited away by persons unknown.

His truck remained uncalled for in a nearby parking lot for five months and when the attendants finally re-

ported the matter to the police a search was made, but Namba's body could not be found. Hideichi Yamatoda was arrested, but nothing came of it, and the charges were dismissed.

Joe Kato knew Namba well and, when Terihiko disappeared, he talked a lot about it. He had not learned that an open mouth was unhealthy. His body was found, the head pounded to a pulp, crammed into a meter box in Fresno.

DOCTOR TOMITA, a Japanese physician in Los Angeles, also knew a great deal about the Tokyo Club affairs, but he remained silent. Shortly after Namba's disappearance, he left on a steamer bound for Japan. He committed suicide before the boat reached its destination.

In the year 1939, the Los Angeles Little Tokyo Club was closed. Still—Hideichi Yamatoda did not return to the land whence he had come. And his actions met with great disfavor in certain circles.

In 1941 Hideichi Yamatoda disappeared. At first it was thought that he had met the same dire fate that had befallen some of his predecessors. But authoritative sources later revealed that the "Little Tokyo" president was in Japan, imprisoned in a Tokyo jail—something to do with American money, they said.

The fate of this powerful Jap gangster is a matter of speculation in the minds of a great many people. Perhaps he still languishes in prison. Perhaps he was granted the supreme honor of committing hara-kiri.

Thus the Black Dragon is believed to have spread a trail of death and terror through Jap colonies in California. Federal authorities are keeping a watchful eye open, ready to chop its vicious tentacles at the least sign of recurrent life. They are determined that never again will Japan's dread secret society reach across the ocean to drain American dollars for its nefarious activities.



MEMBERS ONLY doesn't apply to detectives smashing three steel reinforced doors to reach the interior of the Little Tokyo club where they sought and found a billiard cue murder weapon.