

Early History of Ju-Jitsu, Part III

BUJUTSU THE MEIJI PERIOD POLICE COMPETITIONS

Judo verses Ju-Jitsu

By Laszlo Able

Kano Jigoro (1860 - 1938) opened his first Kodokan dojo in July 1883 at the Eishoji temple in Asakusa, Tokyo. In 1886, he moved to a dojo in Fujimicho located on the property of a friend.

The Kodokan moved several times before settling at its present site in Kasuga, Bunkyo-ku. From its original location at Eishoji temple, it moved to Minami Jimbocho, Kanada; then to Kami Niban-chi; next to Fujimicho, also in Kojimachi; on to Shimo Tomizaka-cho, Koshikawa; from there to Sakashita-machi, Otsuka; and finally to the now familiar location near Suidobashi.

During the Kodokan's years in the Fujimicho Dojo, Judo almost completely smothered the prevailing Jujitsu traditions of the area. Perhaps the primary reason for this was Judo's success in direct competitions with various Jujitsu forms.

The Police Agency of the early Meiji period (1868 - 1912) decided to adopt Jujitsu in January 1883, as part of police self-defense training. During the following March, a large number of applications were received from various Jujitsu traditions from all over Japan.

Some of those selected were:

- Yoshin Ryu Totsuka-ha - Terushima Taro, Nishimura
- Sasasuke and six other instructors
- Sekiguchi Ryu - Naka Danzo, Hisatomi Tetsutaro and one other instructor
- Ryoji Shinto Ryu - Nakamura Hansuke and Uehara Shogo
- Kito Ryu - Okuda Matsugoro
- Takenouchi San-to Ryu - Samura Masaaki
- Takenouchi Ryu - four instructors
- Tenjin Shinyo Ryu - three instructors
- Shinkage Ryu - one instructor
- Shinmel Sakkatsu Ryu - one instructor
- Yagyu Shingan Ryu - one instructor

Even though Jujitsu proved useful to the police, the Mombusho (Ministry of Education) of that time thought it to be inadequate for educational purposes, and never made it a compulsory subject in schools. This fact, coupled with Kano's influence within Mombusho ranks, moved the 5th Chief of the National Police Agency to organize a series of competitions between Kodokan Judo and Jujitsu to resolve whether Kano's innovations made Judo superior to traditional systems.

The first of these police bujutsu taikai (martial arts meets) was in honor of the opening of a new shrine commemorating the spirits of those policemen who had sacrificed their lives in the Satsuma (Seinan) Rebellion of 1877. Varying dates have been given for this tournament, but it is likely that it was held in 1886. The vagueness of the dates and other particulars concerning these taikai or tournaments give them an almost mythic character.

Among the most notable competitors for the Kodokan were:

- Saigo Shiro
- Yokoyama Sakujiro
- Yamashita Yoshikazu
- Tomita Tsunejiro.

The most famous of the Jujitsu competitors were:

- Terushima Taro
- Nakamura Hansuke
- Enchi Kotaro.

According to Koizumi Gunji, the final score was nine victories and one draw for the Kodokan. Like the dates of the event mentioned above, this figure is also subject to some variation depending on the sources used. That the Kodokan was an overwhelming victor is beyond dispute.

Saigo Shiro (February 4, 1866 - December 22, 1922) was born in Kushima. His opponent, Terushima Taro, was one of the strongest exponents of Yoshin Ryu Totsukaha Jujitsu. Their match was a great surprise to all the spectators. The fight went on for about 15 minutes before a sudden inward movement by Terushima opened his defenses, enabling Saigo to throw him using a technique called "yama-arashi" (mountain storm). This legendary movement is not a Judo technique, but has been likened to Judo's seoi-nage (shoulder throw) and tai-otoshi (body drop). Yama-arashi was a product of Saigo's grueling years of training in unarmed fighting prior to his joining the Kodokan. Donn F. Draeger in *Modern Bujutsu and Budo* writes this of Saigo, who at the time still used his original family name of Shida.

In 1877, Saigo Taigo Tanomo Chikamasa sponsored Shide Shiro and took him to Aizu to teach him Oshiki-uchi (the secret hand-to-hand fighting art of the Aizu-han). After three years of arduous training, Shida moved to Tokyo to further his education. While studying at the Seijo Gakko, a training school for army personnel Shida enrolled in the Inoue Dojo of the Tenjin Shinyo Ryu in 1881.

Two years later, he caught the eye of Kano Jigoro who was also a disciple of the Tenjin Shinyo Ryu. Kano was, at this time, struggling to build a reputation for his Kodokan. Shida's skill in hand-to-hand encounters convinced Kano that it would be a good idea to offer Shida an assistant instructorship at the Kodokan and Shida accepted.

Saigo's victory made him the most famous figure in Judo history. He did not last long in the Judo world, however. His loyalty was deeply divided between his old ko-ryu (traditional martial arts) teachers and Kano. This finally led to his resignation from the Kodokan and his departure from Tokyo. He never again practiced either Judo or Oshiki-uchi, but instead devoted himself to Kyudo, the Way of the Bow and Arrow.

Yokoyama Sakujiro (1864 - 1914) was born in Tokyo. His fight with Nakamura Hansuke of the Ryoji Shinto Ryu attracted the most attention and speculation of the tournament. The bout lasted an incredible 55 minutes before it was called a draw. The referee, Hisatomi Tetsutaro of the Sekiguchi Ryu had to pry each of their fingers apart to break the almost weld-like grip the two fighters held for so long.

According to E. J. Harrison in his book, *The Fighting Spirit of Japan*, Yokoyama started to train in Jujitsu under a master of the Tenjin Yoshin Ryu at a dojo in the Nezu area of Tokyo. Harrison also describes the contests of the time as being extremely rough, and injuries and even fatalities were not uncommon results. Yamashita Yoshikazu (February 16, 1865 - October 26, 1935) became a student of Kano's at the age of 19. He was a native of Kanazawa, where in pre-Meiji days his family had held some position in the clan, which involved martial instruction. His rise through the Kodokan ranks can only be described as meteoric. He gained his Sho Dan (1st degree black belt) after only three months practice, 2nd dan in June 1885, 3rd dan in September of 1885 and 4th dan in May 1886. In 1898, he became the first person to receive the rank of 6th dan.

In the first tournament, he fought Yoshin Ryu Totsuka-ha advocate Enchi Kotaro. (Another record states that his opponent was Terushima Taro. Yamashita was ranked 4th dan at this time; a fact, which supports those who assert that this taikai was, held in the latter half of 1886. Not many details are known about their fight other than that Yamashita threw Enchi with seoi-nage.

Tomita Tsunejiro, (February, 1865 - ?) was Kano's first student and the first, together with Saigo Shiro, to receive the rank of Sho Dan. He came from Shizuoka. The name of his opponent in this tournament apparently went unrecorded.

Other participants in this taikai are also unknown. Surely some of the other Jujitsu instructors who had been hired by the police took part. As for the Kodokan, those who remained with Kano during his move to the Fujimicho dojo could have also been involved.

The most proficient of these were:

- Arima Sumitomo who authored a book on Judo
- Sato Noriyasu
- Tobaru Takizaburo who later became a teacher of the Tenjin Shinyo Ryu after studying under Inoue Keitaro.
- Kinotsuk Soji

Other early, though not as expert, practitioners included:

- Kawai Keijiro, Munataka Itsuro, Otsubo Katsukazu,
- Oda Katsutaro, Yoshimura Shinroku, Honda Masujiro,
- Yuasa Takejiro, Tamura Kataskkazu, Kano Tokusaburo,
- Hirose Takeo, and Oshima Elsuke, who co-authored a book about Judo in English with Yokoyama Sakujiro.

In another taiki, held during 1888, in which 14 or 15 persons participated, Yamashita faced Terushima, Stao Noriyasu took on Nishimura Sadasuke of the Yoshin Ryu Totsuka-ha, and Enchi Kotaro was again pitted against Saigo. There were two or three draws, but the Kodokan was again the overall victor. Ten of the fights were against Yoshin Ryu Totsuka-ha advocates¹ indicative of a strong rivalry between the two factions. Totsuka Hikosuke (-1813 - 1886) headed this style of Jujitsu, who had a dojo in Tokyo's Agata-cho district. He had over three thousand student's form all over Japan.

The rivalry between the two systems must have been all the more intense since Kano forbade his students from engaging in purely personal matches. Thus, these taikai were the only chance for the older Jujitsu traditions to try their strength against the Kodokan.

We are fortunate to have available a few physical statistics on some of the main contenders. They make interesting reading:

Contender Height Weight Age

| | | | |
|-----------|--------|-------|-------------|
| Nishimura | 174 cm | 91 kg | 33 yrs. old |
| Saigo | 159 cm | 58 kg | 20 yrs. old |
| Terushima | 171 cm | 83 kg | 27 yrs. old |
| Yokoyama | 169 cm | 95 kg | 26 yrs. old |

Both Tomita and Yamashita were 21 years old at the time of the first taikai and Kano himself was only 26. Thus youth was surely on the side of the Kodokan.

The rules also favored the Judo men. There seems to have been no time limit. The use of striking and kicking techniques known as atemi-waza and joint techniques called kansetsu-waza were prohibited, thereby drastically limiting the Jujitsu men. Clean throws indicated victory, and this, too, must have placed the Kodokan people at an advantage.

It should be noted, however, that prior to being recruited by Kano Jigoro, many of his men were already well experienced in Jujitsu. This point is of great importance because at the time of these confrontations, the techniques of Judo were still in an embryonic stage of development. The Kodokan nage-waza (throwing techniques) originally comprised 42 kata called Go Kyu no waza and were selected only in 1895. Later, in 1920, they were revised and six new forms, giving the present 40 standard kata replaced eight of the original forms.

At the time of the competitions, the Kodokan relied almost entirely on nage-waza. This left the Kodokan practitioners very vulnerable to the ne-waza (groundwork) of the various Jujitsu traditions. This naturally stimulated the development of a Kodokan katame-waza (pinning techniques), and Kansetsu-waza (joint locks). All this was accomplished, however, well after the last of the police-sponsored competitions between Judo and Jujitsu.

Atemi-waza, too, were held in high regard by many Jujitsu styles and were well developed. It was not until 1907 that the Kodokan incorporated a total of 20 kata aimed at teaching such striking and kicking attacks to the vital points of the body.

Inquiries at the newly-built Kodokan, searching through old Meiji period newspapers and, where possible, police records have so far failed to uncover any further facts or documents related to these historically important Judo-Jujitsu matches. The dearth of clearer information leaves us with questions, which hopefully will be answered in the future. Can these tournaments really be called Kodokan Judo against Jujitsu; or were they merely Jujitsu matches where Kano had been able to secure the help of stronger practitioners? And somewhat more curious, why didn't Kano personally take part in any of the many bouts?