

Early History of Ju-Jitsu, Part II

by Dennis Helm, Godan.

THE FOUNDING OF KODOKAN JUDO



At the turn of the seventeenth century, Japan was in disorder and disunion. Three able generals successfully subdued the other warlords. The Tokugawa clan obtained supremacy and assumed the Shogunate. A strict hierarchical social order was imposed in which the descending scale ran from the warriors down through the peasants, artisans to the merchants at the bottom. The Shogunate put tax collecting and its finances in order, administered careful control of the population, and generally executed a viable dictatorship. This may well have been the world's most ambitious effort to make time stand still. The Tokugawa rulers brought a reasonable degree of order and unity to Japan for almost two hundred years.

During the time of the Tokugawa regime, the role of the emperor was emphasized as the focal point of Japanese life, even though he was living in genteel poverty in his secluded Kyoto court. Shogun and commoner alike ignored him.

In 1573 Oda Nobunaga became Shogun and for nine years gained control of almost all of Japan. Nobunaga was assassinated in 1582 and the commoner Toyotomi Hideyoshi took over of the government and continued to unify the country. He ruthlessly put down any traces of insurrection and revived the old gulf between the warriors - the samurai - and the commoners by introducing restrictions on wearing the long sword. The long sword was restricted to the samurai class.

In 1603 Tokugawa Ieyasu became Shogun and was determined to ensure his family's control of the government. The Tokugawa period brings great change to the social history of Japan. The bureaucracy of the Tokugawas was all-pervading. Not only were education, law, government and class controlled, but also even the dress and behavior of each class was dictated. The traditional class-consciousness of Japan hardened into a rigid class structure.

With the death of the shogun Tokugawa Shogun, in August 1866, new struggles began to determine his replacement. Emperor Komei died in February 1867, and Mutsuhito succeeded him. In November, the new Shogun, Keiki, was forced to resign, and in January 1868, the young Emperor proclaimed the Shogunate abolished. Imperial rule was restored in Japan. The abolition of the Shogunate ended 265 years of Tokugawa Family rule in Japan.

At little past two in the afternoon on the thirteenth day of the tenth month of the first year of Meiji, which was November 26, 1868, in the Gregorian calendar, the Emperor took up residence in Tokyo and thus symbolized the opening of Japan's modern era. Tokyo was established as the new imperial capital and the arrival of the Emperor there gave it legitimacy.

That the Meiji Restoration was called a restoration was not mere chance. It was not a revolution, despite the changes it brought. The men of Meiji restored the Emperor to his ancient place at the center of Japanese life and restored to Japan the sense of national unity he represented. They renewed the vitality of existing Japanese institutions and added new ones. The Restoration was engineered by the upper class and it continued to be controlled from above with changes filtering down from the top.

The Imperial ordinance, prohibiting the samurai class from wearing swords in 1871, dealt a terrible blow to martial arts. The art of Jujitsu was no exception. The MILITARY CONSCRIPTION ORDINANCE OF 1872 established an army and a navy requiring all males who reached the age of twenty irrespective of class to register for military service, and to be ready for all emergencies. In the conscript army, the ordinary citizen was raised to the level of the samurai and was imbued with the Japanese warrior's code.

The Imperial Rescript For Soldiers and Sailors, a clearly Confucian document drafted in 1882, admonished them "to consider loyalty their essential duty, "to have "sound discrimination of right and righteousness, and to "make simplicity their aim". It was during this era that the founder of Kodokan Judo, Jigoro Kano (1860-1938), appeared. He was born in Makagemachi of Hyogo Prefecture, which is the current Kobe and came up to Tokyo in 1871 at the age of ten. Master Kano showed great promise in his academic pursuits. From the time of his arrival in Tokyo he attended private school where he pursued classical studies as well as yogaku, or western learning.

He was physically frail in his early youth and the thought of making himself stronger never left his mind. Kano learned that through the art of Jujitsu a person of slight build could throw or subdue a larger and more powerful opponent.

Master Kano decided to train in the art of Jujitsu and possibly make himself physically fit. During 1877, while attending the Imperial University in Tokyo, Kano found Hachinosuke Fukuda, the Master of the Tenjin Shinyo-Ryu. Kano promptly enrolled with Fukuda as a pupil. After attending classes during the day at the university, Kano could be found at the dojo practicing kata and randori. Due to his enthusiasm and effort he surpassed the senior pupils and became a ranking member of the dojo, with the title of Shihan-Dal, meaning, "representing the Master". The techniques of this Ryu of Jujitsu, such as atemi-waza, shime-waza, and hodaku, were superior in many technical aspects to other Ryu. They contributed much to broaden Kano's scope

of the art. In 1879, with the untimely death of Fukuda, Kano entered the school of Masammoto Iso, which was the main branch of the same Tenjin Shinyo-Ryu.



Here Kano continued his efforts to master the art of Jujitsu. During 1881, Master Iso passed away and Kano turned to an entirely new Jujitsu Ryu, the Kito-Ryu, where he was able to continue his training under the guidance of Konen likubo. When 22-year-old Kano took nine of his private students from the dojo of his master likubo in February 1882, and set up his own dojo, Judo didn't automatically spring into being. In fact master likubo came two or three times a week to help Kano's students. They were still learning Jujitsu rather than Kodokan Judo. Possibly Kodokan Judo came into being the day that Kano first defeated likubo. Until then Kano never had been able to throw him. That day in randori (free practice), Kano blocked every move likubo made, then applied two of his techniques - ukewaza and sumiotoshi - to throw the Jujitsu master no less than three times.

Kano explained: "Force your opponent to make his body rigid and lose his balance, and when he is helpless, you attack". Upon hearing this, likubo replied: "Your skill in randori surpasses me, so we will discontinue the practice sessions, but you alone should continue to study and perfect the randori techniques. However, your kata form needs further improving so in this area I will give you instruction.

The Tenjin Shinyo-Ryu, which Kano first studied, was especially known for atemi-waza and katame-waza, while the Kito-Ryu excelled in nage-waza techniques. Therefore, Master Kano was able to grasp the wide spectrum of Jujitsu, including its philosophy. The three Jujitsu Masters from whom Kano received tutelage were all foremost leaders in

their respective Ryu and were also considered distinguished Grand Masters of the whole art of Jujitsu. Kano received further instruction from many other masters representing other Ryu. Jujitsu originally was not an application of consistent principles of science but simply a group of methods of attack and defense devised by different masters, one Ryu representing a group of methods devised by one master, and other Ryu representing the devices of others. This being the case there was no fundamental principle by which the validity of the various methods could be tested.



Techniques from a Tenjin Shinyo Ryu training manual.

At this time, there seems to have been a significant growth in Kano's systematic development. This is the point where his personal philosophy coalesced into a coherent ideal. Kano having seriously studied Jujitsu came to conceive of one all pervading principle by which the various techniques could be evaluated, which was: "Whatever be the object, it can best be achieved by the highest or the maximum efficient use of mental and physical energy directed to that purpose or aim". Going back into Japanese history, Kano studied all of the methods of attack and defense taught by different masters. He found that there were many methods which could stand his test, while others could not.

Preserving those which he deemed valid, and adding many other techniques of his own device which he felt confident could stand the test, he organized his own system of attack and defense in 1882. "JUDO" was the name of the principle together with its application, whereas Jujitsu was the name for a group of different devices not founded on such a principle. Kano named the institution where this principle was studied and its application taught, the KODOKAN, which literally means "an institution for studying the way". Inasmuch as the name Judo was used 250 years before Kano was born by the Jikishin-Ryu, it is necessary to qualify Kano's as Kodokan Judo.

When Kano was graduated from the Imperial University in 1881, he also had accomplished his primary aim, which was to make himself physically fit. Realizing that Jujitsu training could make an important contribution to everyday life, he decided that such profound benefits should not stop with himself but should be promoted widely among young people and carried on to future generations.

Kano taught in the government school, which educated the children of the House of Peers. The Emperor's son also attended this school. Kano later filled the post of Director of the Bureau of Primary and Secondary Education in Japan, and for twenty-four years served as the Principal of the Higher Normal College in Tokyo. Through teaching Kodokan Judo to the future teachers of Japan, Judo was introduced into the curriculum of the school children of Japan. Kano was thus able to propagate his art. Judo was almost immediately recognized, as a national exercise and Kano's method of teaching became a widely accepted instructional technique.

The true genius of Kano's Kodokan Judo is found in the leg movements, which had no counterpart in previous Japanese Jujitsu systems. While Kano was studying at the Tenjin Shinyo-Ryu he also studied European wrestling and Japanese sumo systems and combined elements of each to allow his 105 pound body to throw a burly 170 pounder by the name of Fukushima, who took great delight in smashing him about the mat. The Technique Kano used is now known as Kataguruma, or shoulder wheel. While keeping balance on a focal hip point, he soon developed a strong goshi, or hip technique. A brilliant invention of Kano's was the development of one-legged techniques.

In the past, Jujitsu techniques had been designed for action against men in armor and were greatly restricted. The older Jujitsu techniques were not designed to be used against a person in street clothes. The concept of off balancing one's opponent and using one's body in an efficient manner was also a new concept to martial arts. Kano started Kodokan Judo in 1882, at the Eishoji Temple. In his attempt to develop a workable sport out of the great number of

Jujitsu techniques, Kano ran into trouble, because many people felt that those remnants of an obsolete political-social system would be best forgotten. Even though Kano was a modernist, he felt that the old knowledge, where applicable, should be refined and not destroyed.

Kodokan Judo became the focus of criticism from Jujitsu experts, especially from Hikosuke Totsuka, who was the most influential Jujitsu expert with a great number of followers. The other Jujitsu systems were suspicious of the practical merits of Judo in combat. Between the Kodokan Judo and other Jujitsu Ryu there developed a keen rivalry, especially between the Totsuka-Ryu and the Kodokan. In 1886, under the auspices of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Board, a tournament between the two opposing groups was held to decide the supremacy of the two forms of Japanese self-defense. In the tournament, ten highly selected Kodokan experts competed, including the "Great Four" of the Kodokan: Tsunejior Tomita, Sakujiro Yokoyama, Yoshiaki Yamashita (who later went to the United States and taught Judo to President Theodore Roosevelt), and Shiro Saigo.

Through the early years when Judo was developing at the expense of Jujitsu, Kano rose in the education field. He lectured at various schools and colleges and was appointed Principal of the Tokyo Higher Normal School. In 1889, he traveled to Europe for the first time as attach to the Ministry of the Imperial Household, and represented the Ministry of National Education in China in 1902 and again in 1905. With such a fast rise in the demanding field of government service, it is amazing that he was able to spend any time on Judo. During his lifetime Kano developed a reputation as a scholar and spoke excellent English. At one time he gave a lecture at the University of Southern California in his major field, which was Japanese literature. Along with everything else, Kano had a great organizational talent. He built a nucleus of first rate judoka around himself, and exhorted the other Jujitsu masters to adopt his methods. By a firm but gracious example he saw the Kodokan Judo movement flourish. His idea of education involved not only teaching but setting a good example as well. His first students, mainly Yamashita, Isogai, Yokoyama, Saigo, Suzuki, Nagaoka, Mifune, and Tomita emulated him and carried his teaching and example throughout Japan.

Dennis Helm is the author of *2000 YEARS: Jujitsu and Kodokan Judo*

***2000 YEARS* is the product of more than a 22 year effort involving library research, hundreds of interviews, and world wide travel. This is the history of early Jujitsu and later Kodokan Judo starting with its founder "Jigoro Kano" as he studied various Jujitsu systems. This led up to the Meiji period Police Bututsu Competitions between Kodokan Judo and the best Jujitsu men of the period. These competitions are covered in as a great depth as historically possible. The information is not available anyplace else.**

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