

My Personal Profile & The Creation of Judo By Jigoro Kano



Name: Jigoro Kano

Date of Birth: 28th October 1860

Place of Birth: Kikage, near Kobe (well known for Sake brewing)

Physical Attributes: Height - 5' 2", Weight - 90 pounds as adult.

Family Background: My mother died when I was 10 years old. My father, Jirosaku Kano, was a Shinto Priest as well as an Officer of the Meji Government responsible for purchasing agents for naval and shipping supplies.

Education: At 15, I entered a foreign language school in 1877, I became a student at Toyo Teikoku (Imperial) University (Known today as Tokyo University) - an elite reputation within Japan. I am a committed believer in academic studies and education as a whole, and, as

a result, I have exceeded expectations in my studies, especially foreign languages. Throughout my time at Tokyo University, I acquired the English language very well. I also studied western sports, political philosophy, economics, baseball, moral education, Chinese literature and aesthetics.

In 1881, when I graduated, I was honoured with an appointment at an exclusive school named Gakuokin (Peer's School). A respected school for the privileged and talented children teaching literature.

Sporting Experiences: Because of my size, I was bullied, therefore I became committed to Jujitsu as a sport and self-defence. When I enrolled at Tokyo Imperial University in 1878, I originally tried to find an Osteopath as Jujitsu techniques were included within the study. A local bone doctor named Teinosuke Yagi introduced me to Hachinosuke Fukuda - a Master of Tenjin-Shino-Ryu Jujitsu. Sensei Fukuda taught me freestyle Kata forms, but unfortunately a year after our meeting, Sensei Fukuda died.

Notes I made of the study of Jujitsu were not written in my native language, but in English, both to ensure confidentiality from rival Jujitsu schools, but also to evolve, in line with the new thinking surrounding the change and decline of the Tokugawa Military Government and the restoration of the Emperor Meiji. My father did not approve of my study of Jujitsu - but I conveyed my feelings towards my father "I am no more a child and my ideas have become fixed to a certain extent, so I do not think that it is necessary to depend on my parents in selecting a Jujitsu Master." (UM Judo).

Masatomo Iso, another Tenjin-Shinyo Ryu Instructor then became my Sensei for two years. He had the same beliefs regarding free-style Kata as Sensei Fukuda. I worked extremely hard at both my academic and Jujitsu studies, falling into bed extremely exhausted most nights.

My dedication and determination was rewarded - by the age of 21, I had achieved the position of Master of Tenjin-Shinyo-Ryu Jujitsu.

When Sensei Fukuda fell ill, our dojo closed. Again, I was searching for a new Sensei. My new Sensei - Tsunetoshi Iikubo - a Master of Kito Ryu was going to become a great inspiration and impact on my learnings.

In 1714, Kurinori Suzuki, a former Master of Kito Ryu, changed the name of Kito-Kumiuchi to Kito-Ryu Judo - commonly named Kito-Ryu Jujitsu. The evolution of Judo had begun. During this period of study, I began to see different, improved styles - using western wrestling styles and alternative Jujitsu beliefs as my research. I began creating my own techniques and styles such as new throws - Kata Guruma, Uki Goshi and Tsuru-Komi-Goshi. I realised in order to be successful with throwing, the need to influence the balance of the opponent was necessary for victory. This idea became a main principle and integral requirement - this 'off-balancing' principle became known as 'Kuzushi.'

"Off-balancing." It was a new concept. Although it had undoubtedly been used before, no one had recognised it as an organising principle. "Kuzushi." It was one of those "moments" of revelation brought about by years of hard work, sweat, study, and realisation. Suddenly, the real meaning of "ju" became apparent, and much more obvious. The word "ju" had been applied to a myriad of physical styles and techniques, before the true physical nature of the concept was discovered. "Ju" was effective particularly when "kuzushi" was used. Ju and kuzushi are not the same thing. Ju is a strategy. Kuzushi is a tactic. Kano found a most effective tactic to implement the strategy." (Direct quote from U M Judo Home Page).

I modified Jujitsu techniques to eradicate the harmful skills and promote the self-defence aspects creating the introduction of Judo. Judo can be translated to 'gentle way.' This discovery impacted on traditional beliefs and catapulted new concepts of superior value onto a traditional art.

One of my greatest sporting moments was when I threw my Sensei, not once, not twice but THREE TIMES using kuzushi in ONE DAY!! From that moment on, Sensei Iikubo told me "From now on, you teach me."

As I studied western sports, I found a unity of a diverse of people, all with one common interest - the sport they were participating in. This thinking encouraged me to aim for unity within my sport.

Whilst working at Gakushin (Peer's School), I taught 9 of my private students on a 12 mat dojo area. I was grateful that Kito-Ryu Master Iikubo sometimes assisted me at the sessions, carried out at Eishoji Temple in Tokyo. My students were not completely honest with their parents about their training as Jujitsu did not have a good reputation.

Therefore, my students would tell their parents we were studying Literature together!

I created my own version of Jujitsu - a combination of strength and technique to beat the opponent knowing how to use kuzushi with a technique to weaken the opponent. Kodokan Judo was formed. Distinguishing itself as a new beginning - 'a martial art that stood for a martial philosophy consistent with ancient Chinese concepts of daily life.' There were four main aspects to my Kodokan Judo teaching - randori (free practise), kata (pre-arranged forms), ko (systematic learning) and mondo (questions and answers). Kodokan Judo included principles such as 'Seiryoku zenyo' - maximum efficiency, minimum effort (acquired from English Philosophy), relating to the physical contact. Another important principle is 'Jita kyoei' - unity together (going forward, shining together).

The Eishoji Priests had been extremely patient with us during our training, as I had spent many nights trying to fix broken floors and funeral tablets. Unfortunately, their patience grew thin - the Head Priest Choshumpo is quoted as saying "He may be young, but Mr Kano is really an outstanding man. What a fine person he would be if he would only leave the judo alone." Time to move on.

Outstanding Achievements:

- Creator of Kodokan Judo
- Master of Tenjin-Shinyo Ryu Jujitsu
- First Asian Member of the International Olympic Committee - Japan's representative
- Lifelong commitment to share Kodokan Judo with the rest of the world
- Founder of Koubungakuin - a school for Chinese foreign students
- First President of Japan Amateur Athletic Association
- As an International Olympic Committee Member I travelled abroad 7 times and attended many I. O. C. meetings in the last 10 years of my life.

Japan took part in the Olympics for the first time at Stockholm, Sweden in 1912. In 1940, Tokyo were proud to announce they were going to host the 12th Olympic Games. This was my wish.

Unfortunately on the 4th May 1912, Jigoro Kano died peacefully upon a ship returning to Japan, content with pride at this great achievement. His dream was not fulfilled, due to World War II it was cancelled.

Researched by Lorraine Hewes

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