

Chapter 2

The History of Kodokan Judo

The art of Jujutsu has many variations of the art, which leads to a diversity of approaches. Jujutsu schools (ryū) may utilize all forms of grappling techniques to some degree (i.e. throwing, trapping, joint locks, holds, gouging, biting, disengagements, striking, and kicking). In addition to jujutsu, many schools teach the use of weapons. While armed and unarmed combat has been around for the entire history of mankind, it has been suggested that Jujutsu, as a formal means of teaching, has been around for 600 to 1,000 years.

Judo, meaning "gentle way", is a modern martial art, combat and Olympic sport created in Japan in 1882 by Jigoro Kano. Its most prominent feature is its competitive element, where the objective is to either throw or takedown an opponent to the ground, immobilize or otherwise subdue an opponent with a pin, or force an opponent to submit with a joint lock or a choke. Strikes and thrusts by hands and feet as well as weapons defenses are a part of Judo, but only in pre-arranged forms (kata) and are not allowed in Judo competition or free practice (randori). A Judo practitioner is called a Judoka.

The philosophy and subsequent pedagogy developed for Judo became the model for other modern Japanese martial arts that developed from koryu, traditional schools. The worldwide spread of Judo has led to the development of a number of offshoots such as Sambo and Brazilian jiu-jitsu.

The early history of Judo is inseparable from its founder, Japanese polymath and educator Jigoro Kano, (1860-1938), born Shinnosuke Kano. Kano was born into a relatively affluent family. His father, Jirosaku, was the second son of the head priest of the Shinto Hiyoshi shrine in Shiga Prefecture. He married Sadako Kano, daughter of the owner of Kiku-Masamune sake brewing company and was adopted by the family, changing his name to Kano, and ultimately became an official in the Bakufu government.

Jigoro Kano had an academic upbringing and, from the age of seven, he studied English, Japanese calligraphy and the Four Confucian Texts under a number of tutors. When he was fourteen, Kano began boarding at an English-medium school, Ikuei-Gijuku in Shiba, Tokyo. The culture of bullying endemic at this school was the catalyst that caused Kano to seek out a Jujutsu dojo (training place) at which to train.

Early attempts to find a jujutsu teacher who was willing to take him on met with little success. With the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate in the Meiji Restoration of 1868, jujutsu had become unfashionable in an increasingly westernized Japan. Many of those who had once taught the art had been forced out of teaching or become so disillusioned with it that they had simply given up. Nakai Umenari, an acquaintance of Kano's father and a former soldier, agreed to show him kata, but not to teach him. The caretaker of his father's second house, Katagiri Ryuji, also knew jujutsu, but would not teach it as he believed it was no longer of practical use. Another frequent visitor to Kano's father's house, Imai Genshiro of Kyushin-ryu school of jujutsu, also refused. Several years passed before he finally found a willing teacher.

In 1877, as a student at the Tokyo-Kaisei school (soon to become part of the newly founded Tokyo Imperial University), Kano learned that many jujutsu teachers had been forced to pursue alternative careers, frequently opening Seikotsu-in (traditional osteopathy practices). After inquiring at a number of these, Kano was referred to Fukuda Hachinosuke (c.1828-1880), a teacher of the Tenjin Shin'yo-ryu of jujutsu, who had a small nine mat dojo where he taught five students. Fukuda is said to have emphasized technique over formal exercise, sowing the seeds of Kano's emphasis on randori (free practice) in Judo.

On Fukuda's death in 1880, Kano, who had become his keenest and most able student in both randori and kata (pre-arranged forms), was given the densho (scrolls) of the Fukuda dojo. Kano chose to continue his studies at another Tenjin Shin'yo-ryu school, that of Iso Masatomo (c.1820-1881). Iso placed more emphasis on the practice of kata, and entrusted randori instruction to assistants, increasingly to Kano. Iso died in June 1881 and Kano went on to study at the dojo of Iikubo Tsunetoshi (1835-1889) of Kito-ryu. Like Fukuda, Iikubo placed much emphasis on randori, with Kito-ryu having a greater focus on nage-waza, throwing techniques.

In February 1882, Kano founded a school and dojo at the Eisho-ji, a Buddhist temple in what was then the Shitaya ward of Tokyo (now the Higashi Ueno district of Taite ward). Iikubo, Kano's Kito-ryu instructor, attended the dojo three days a week to help teach. Two years would pass before the temple would be called by the name Kodokan ("place for expounding the way") and although Kano had not yet received his Menkyo (certificate of mastery) in Kito-ryu, this is now regarded as the Kodokan founding.

The Eisho-ji dojo was a relatively small affair, consisting of a twelve mat training area. Kano took in resident and non-resident students, the first two being Tsunejiro Tomita and Shiro Saigo. In August, the following year, the both Tomita and Saigo were granted shodan (first rank) grades, the first that had been awarded in any martial art.

Central to Kano's vision for Judo were the principles of seiryoku zen'yo (maximum efficiency, minimum effort) and jita kyoei (mutual welfare and benefit). He illustrated the application of seiryoku zen'yo with the concept of ju yoku go o seisu, softness controls hardness.

In short, resisting a more powerful opponent will result in your defeat, while adjusting to and evading your opponent's attack will cause him to lose his balance, his power will be reduced, and you will defeat him. This can apply whatever the relative values of power, thus making it possible for weaker opponents to beat significantly stronger ones. This is the theory of ju yoku goo seisu. Kano realized that seiryoku zen'yo, initially conceived as a jujutsu concept, had a wider philosophical application. Coupled with the Confucianist-influenced jita kyoei, the wider application shaped the development of Judo from a martial art to a martial way. Kano rejected techniques that did not conform to these principles and emphasized the importance of efficiency in the execution of techniques. He was convinced that practice of jujutsu while conforming to these ideals was a route to self-improvement and the betterment of society in general. He was, however, acutely conscious of the Japanese public's negative perception of jujutsu. Kano believed that "jujutsu" was insufficient to describe his art: although Jutsu means "art" or "means", it implies a method consisting of a collection of physical techniques. Accordingly, he changed the second character to do, meaning way, road or path, which implies a more philosophical context than jutsu and has a common origin with the Chinese concept of tao. Thus Kano renamed it Judo.

(Taken from www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judo)