

# Jigoro Kano, The Founding, History & Evolution Of Judo

By

Phil Morris

Part 1

## The Beginning

Jigoro Kano was born on the 28<sup>th</sup> October 1860, in the town of Mikage near Kobe, the third and last son of Jirosaku Kano a government shipping agent official and his wife Sada, The young Kano also had two sisters. As in a lot of cases in this era of Japanese history, many young children grew up in a sickly and weak state and Jigoro was no exception.

Jigoro's Grandfather, had began the family's prosperous business of sake "rice wine" making. The family brands included famous names such as "Hakutsuru", "Shiroshika" and "Kiku-Masamune". Jigoro's Grandfather was also the first person to introduce, build and use the first steel ships in Japan, to make coastal voyages delivering "sake". However Jigoro's father was not to inherit the family business as he was not the eldest son and was also an adopted son. Instead he worked as a Shinto priest and government official, this privileged position was to open many doors in the future for the young Kano.

## The Age of Jujutsu

This was the time of the ending of the 300 year old Edo period in Japan and the start of the Meiji Restoration in 1868. An era of great change when the warring factions of the Samurai clans had been all but nullified and Japan was looking West for much of its future aspirations. A time when the Samurai classes were to be disarmed and the carrying of weapons in public banned. This lead to many of the Jujutsu schools of the time falling into decline. A time that the very young Kano would see, witness and experience much change.

However in this age, the term Jujutsu was a common generic name, which was applied to numerous schools of combat that were not all similar in technique or appearance. Examples of these were : - Yawara Jutsu, Taijutsu, Wajutsu, Torite Jutsu, Kempo Jutsu, Hakuda Jutsu, Kumichi Jutsu, Shubaku Jutsu, Kogusoku Jutsu, Koshinomawari Jutsu to name just a few.

Jujutsu arts were seen as "battlefield" arts developed and practiced by the armour clad Samurai. They were not seen as systems of total unarmed combat but systems to be used with the more common and vital weapons, means for an unarmed or lightly armed combatant to fight a heavily armed or fully armoured combatant on the

battlefield. Not many of the jujutsu arts used solely striking techniques but techniques of striking, throwing, restraining, trapping, locking, pinning, grappling, immobilising and weaponry. Effective techniques evolved to protect the vital body parts of the face, throat and body in unison with weapon training against armed opponents.

The many Jujutsu schools or Ryu and Ryu-Ha (off shoots of the main school) had existed for many centuries, Each school was registered and entered into a “Densho” or transmission scroll. Around circa 1600 AD, there were more than 2000 known Jujutsu Ryu and records such as the Kojiki (Record of Ancients Masters) and the Nihon Shoki (Chronicles Of Japan) record Jujutsu as early as 230 BC as “Hikara Kurabe” public unarmed competitions.

During the transition from the Edo into the Meiji period, the need for Jutsu or warrior “arts” gradually became less and the evolution of “Do” or “Way Of” betterment arts came into being. Therefore at this time the Japanese nation’s drive was for unity and for a need to lose its warring class’s, to strive for Martial Ways that everyone and anyone could train in for better national spiritual, mental achievement and discipline through physical training in the Japanese search of the idealism of self elevation and perfection. Arts such as Kenjutsu, became Kendo, Iaijutsu became Iaido, Kyujutsu became Kyudo and so on.

However regardless of the differences and similarities between the Jujutsu systems, the founding in 1532 of the Takenouchi Ryu is the earliest, most reliable record of Jujutsu as we know it today, as an unarmed combat system. This Ryu significantly effected the structuring of other Jujutsu Ryu. By the mid 1800’s, 750 Jujutsu Ryu were registered as unarmed systems, the most popular were the Takenouchi Ryu Jikishin-Ryu, Kyushinryu, Yoshin-Ryu, Mirua-Ryu, Sekiguchi-Ryu, Kito-Ryu, and Tenshin-Shinyo-Ryu; the last two being instrumental in Judo's development.