

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

By

Phil Morris

Part 2

## **The Persistent Young Kano**

The growing Kano reached his full growth in his mid teens and grew little more than 5 feet 2 inches and weighed only 90lbs. As a boy he was constantly bullied and imitated by much bigger boys. He had been beaten up so often that he vowed to learn Jujutsu. Jujutsu had a reputation of toughening young men and had been portrayed as a way a smaller man could overcome much bigger men. Although he had been given the opportunity from his high level of schooling to progress with the modern changes in Japan's culture, he looked back to the old ways of Jujutsu as a means to deal with his adversaries.

When he had reached 14, he met Baisai Nakai, a family friend who taught him a few Jujutsu moves, one, which enabled him to defeat a larger opponent with ease. Encouraged by this he petitioned Nakai to teach him Jujutsu, however Nakai told him to forget the old ways and to learn one of the new modern western sports. Kano addressed his father to help him find a teacher of Jujutsu and his father told him the same, to forget the old and learn the new, agreeing with Nakai and discouraging Kano.

However Kano relentless to learn the old ways found another family friend called Ryuji Katagiri, who taught Kano some formal Jujutsu exercises. However on being asked to teach him formally, he only laughed and told him he was too young and weak for serious training, but told him to study hard what he had been taught.

Determined the young Kano turned to yet another family friend for instruction, Genshiro Imai, who studied the Kyushin school of Jujutsu, but once again met with no help.

By now Kano had reached the age of 18 and had enrolled in the Tokyo Imperial School. Persistent to train in Jujutsu and against his fathers will, he sought out "seifukushi" or bone setters, at the time these were people who knew and practiced the Martial Arts and were believed to be better Martial Artists because of their bone setting skills.

To this end he met with Teinosuke Yagi, a student of the Tenshin Shinyo Ryu Jujutsu. Yagi introduced Kano to Hachinosuke Fukuda, a master of the Tenshin Shinyo Ryu Jujutsu. With this Kano began his study of Jujutsu proper. Most Jujutsu schools of the

day emphasised the practice of Kata, or present arranged drills of attack, defence and counter attack. However Fukuda emphasised the style of free practice of formal drills. This started Kano on his quest and his mind and body worked tirelessly. But only a year later, Fukuda fell ill and died, so Kano was taken on by another Tenshin Shinyo Ryu Jujutsu exponent named Masatomo Iso. Fortunately Iso also preferred free practice over formal drill, so for the next two years, Kano trained with Iso at any and every opportunity when he had free time from his studies. This led to him formally becoming a master of Tenshin Shinyo Ryu Jujutsu at only the age of 21.

Yet again his instructor fell ill and his dojo was closed down, leading Kano to search again for another instructor of Jujutsu. This led him to meet with Tsunetoshi Iikubo, a master of Kito Ryu. Again fortunately Iikubo also stressed the practice of free movement over formal drills, however Kito Ryu Jujutsu was different to other Jujutsu Ryu in that it specialised in throwing techniques. Kito Ryu relied on old ways of throwing and movement and this began Kano's thoughts and experiments on making techniques more efficient by making changes and modifying the techniques he was learning. Kito Ryu was also the introduction into the future Judo of "Ukemi" or breakfalling, Kito Ryu being one of the few Jujutsu school to practice "Ukemi" as a means to falling from being thrown, most Jujutsu Ryu of the time being merely concerned with despatching the opponent.

An earlier master of Kito Ryu, Kuninori Suzuki, had changed the name of Kito-Kumiuchi to Kito-Ryu Judo in 1714. Over the passage of time, Kito-Ryu Judo had slipped into common usage as Kito-Ryu Jujutsu, but the seed for the later Kodokan Judo sprang from this source.

## **Kano's Thirst For Knowledge**

Kano had begun to study other forms of Jujutsu and even Western Wrestling and began to invent new techniques as a result. Under the tutelage of Iikubo, Kano invented the throws of "Kata Guruma" Uki Goshi" and Tsuru Komi Goshi and made great use of another favourite throw of his "Sumi Otoshi". All Jujutsu systems of the day relied heavily on the practice of leverage to execute techniques, however Kano through his experiments had found the basis of "Kuzushi" or off balancing.

Interestingly the invention of the throw "Kata Guruma" is supposed to have come about from his meeting with Kenkichi Fukushima, a 200-pound bruiser. Outweighed by 100 pounds, the lightweight Kano invariably lost to the bigger man. He wanted to beat Fukushima so badly, he studied everything he could get his hands on, books on sumo techniques, training books from abroad, other Jujutsu systems. Finally, Jigoro worked out a new technique. The next time he met his burly rival he charged in low, lifted Fukushima onto his shoulders, whirled him around and easily tossed him on the mat. He promptly dubbed his new throw "Kata-Guruma," or shoulder whirl.

Kuzushi was a new concept in Jujutsu, although without doubt it had been used for centuries, no one before had used it as a defining principle. With this the meaning of "Ju" had become apparent. "Ju" had been a commonly applied name to the many physical practices, styles and techniques. "Ju" was particularly effective when "Kuzushi" or off balancing was used. Therefore "Ju" could be termed as a strategy

whereas “Kuzushi” was the tactic. Kano began to use “Kuzushi” as the tactic and the means to executing the technique. Strong opponents suddenly became weak when off balanced.

## **Jujutsu To Judo**

One day whilst practising freely with Iikubo, Kano threw him three times consecutively. Iikubo being unable to respond to Kano’s movements failed to throw Kano at all. From that moment Iikubo was reported to have said "From now on, you teach me," Iikubo shortly retired after this. Judo, in essence, was born that day. Kano was later accredited a master of Kito-Ryu in October of 1882.

In February 1882 at the age of 22, Kano left Iikubo and took nine of his own private students and set up his own dojo at the Eishoji Temple, Tokyo. However Judo per se did not come into being for some time and most of the training practiced was still reminiscent of Jujutsu. Iikubo visited the dojo several times a week to assist Kano with his teachings. Jujutsu as it was, was still a violent affair and many Japanese were frowning upon its practices. In the public eyes, Judo still did not have many clear defining differences from the practise of Jujutsu.

By 1881, Kano had graduated from University and received an appointment to teach literature at the Gakushin (Peers School), an exclusive school for children of elite Japanese families. This appointment had helped Kano codify his thoughts and training practices and set in place the beginnings of the Kodokan activities. As Judo had not yet been distinguished in the public mind from Jujutsu, many of his early students could only attend practice by promising their parents that they were going to study literature with the now Professor Kano.

Kano named his dojo the “Kodokan”. Literally, “Ko” means “to lecture” or “to spread information”, “Do” means “the way”, and “Kan” is “a public building or hall”, put together translating roughly as “A place for the study of the way”. To name his system “Judo” Kano revived a term that the 5<sup>th</sup> Headmaster of the Kito Ryu, Terada Kan’emon, had adopted when he founded his own style of Jikishin Ryu Judo. The name combines the Kanji for “Ju” meaning “Gentle” and “Do” meaning “Way Of”, therefore “The Gentle Way”. The “Do” had enormous philosophical meanings as it was the Japanese translation for the Chinese word “Tao” and used the same ideogram.

From Kano’s experiences of previous Jujutsu styles as well as integrating his own methods, Judo was formulated using the Katame Waza (Mat Techniques), Atemi Waza (Striking Techniques), Nage Waza (Throwing Techniques), Sutemi Waza (Sacrifice Techniques) and “Ukemi” (Breakfalling) of the Kito Ryu Jujutsu and the Shime Waza (Choking Techniques), Osae Komi Waza (Pinning Techniques) and the Kansetsu Waza (Joint Locking Techniques) of the Tenshin Shinyo Ryu Jujutsu. Senior students were also expected to learn “Kappo” or resuscitation, as knocks outs were regular in the Jujutsu of the time. However in forming Judo, Kano eliminated many of the dangerous techniques of Jujutsu and formulated a system of physical culture, mental training and of winning contests. A way of life for life, which he termed Kodokan Judo.

Randori (Free practice) and Kata (Formal exercises) became firmly established and even made the subject of various lectures and debates as part of the education system. Kano stressed the big difference between Jujutsu and Judo was the “Do” or finding the way. He saw it as a sport rather than another Martial Art like Jujutsu. Jujutsu was seen as a method of self defence whereas Judo was seen as a competitive sport, only retaining the dangerous techniques of Jujutsu as part of Judo’s self defence system and eliminating their use within Judo contests.

As such Judo’s “Koshiki No Kata” preserves the traditional forms of the Kito Ryu with only a few minor differences from the main tradition. Again the “Kime No Kata” preserves many of the Tenshin Shinyo Ryu techniques but not the forms.

*© 2003 reproduction by authors permission only.*