

Definition of Jujitsu and Sport of Judo

Principles of Jujitsu

During the later part of the Min era (China), from 1368-1421 AD, Shiroubei Yoshitoki Akiyama, a pediatrician, and Yoshin Miura were doctors in Hizen Nagasaki, Japan. It is said that they tried to establish the two styles of Yoshin-ryu Jujutsu to help maintain good health.

Yoshin Miura always said to his students, “The reason why people get sick is that they eat a lot without exercising. Proper exercise prevents disease.”

From 1368 to 1421, Shiroubei Yoshitoki Akiyama went to China as a medical exchange student. In China, he learned the three techniques of “Hakuda” (Chinese martial Art) and the twenty-eight “Kappo” (resuscitation techniques).

Chin Gen Chin, a naturalized Chinese living in Japan, lectured at martial arts seminars. Yoshin Miura took these teachings to design jujitsu for the use as medical treatment.

Bujutsu (Jujitsu) – Development as Combat Technique

During the periods of 1477-1573 (Warring States Period) and 1603-1867 (a 250 year period of national isolation policies), bujutsu (jujitsu) was developed in Japan as combative techniques. It was used in attacking, and self-protection.

Jujitsu is a generic name that includes jujutsu, jyuho, kumiuchi, yorigumi, wajutsu, taijutsu, hoshu, kogusoku, koshimawari, kenpo, hakuda, and teshibari.

During the Warring States period, fencing and the sword were much more socially popular, but it is important to acknowledge that samurais also needed to learn jujitsu. It was vital that they learned barehanded fighting techniques in the event that they were attacked while they were sleeping or if they broke or dropped their sword. They needed to have a way to protect themselves and defeat enemies without relying on a weapon. Therefore, although fencing was more dominant, the practice of jujitsu developed along with fencing as an important fighting technique.

Feudal lords were always looking for popular swordsmen. They held no holds barred matches, where the swordsmen fought with real swords. These expert swordsmen fought in front of a lord until either one was injured, defeated, or killed. All in the hopes of being told “well done” by the lord. Jujitsu was treated the same way. This notion of sacrificing human lives in order to advance bujutsu was quite dangerous. I believe that the Wild West era in America was similar, where social standing could be determined by being a quick draw.

In Japan, it was assumed that a sensei could not prove his strength without inflicting mortal wounds and injuring his beloved students. Teaching must have been very difficult for them. As if to corroborate this, jujitsu began bone setting (similar to chiropractic practices in the USA). They did this without the medical licenses, which are required today.

At the end of the Tokugawa shogunate in the Edo period (1853), Admiral Perry and his four “black boat fleet” from America arrived in Uraga Port, demanding the end to Japan’s national isolation policy. Although Japan endured several civil wars, Japan continued its modernization and advanced into the Meiji era (1868-1912). However, as Japanese society continued its modernization, the concept of “kirisute gomen” (the practice of killing a human life being commonly accepted) and the encouragement of martial arts had changed from individual rivalry to the modern way of team competition with the introduction of guns. As a result of this change in thought, the job of a lone master swordsman, or a lone master martial artist were becoming obsolete. This created many “ronin” (unemployed martial artist).

During that period until about 1880, many jujitsu sects still practiced the art of hard, physical combat. The Sekiguchi sect, Takeuchi sect, Yoshin sect, Kito sect, and others survived by developing special techniques that were guarded under strict secrecy. Other sects survived by teaching only the techniques as an artistic style. In that way, their students were not injured, although it was a more artificial form and very far from actual combat technique. For example, you would lose a karate match if you used your technique and actually “hit” your opponent. This is an example of how the combat technique became more artificial. You would be unable to prove your technique. For example, it would impossible for teachers of Kendo to demonstrate to students how to kill opponents with an actual sword, or a wooden sword.

The Key Points of how Jigoro Kano Succeeded in Changing Jujitsu to the Modern Sport of Judo

It is an important fact that in May of 1882, Jigoro Kano established the Kodokan Dojo (Place of training on the way of Life) in the corner of Eishoji temple. It was established to train the mind and body in the concept of modern sports. Using the “Tenshin Shinyo” sect as his base, Kano combined it with the “Kito” sect to create judo. By using different components from both sects, he hoped to modernize jujitsu by emphasizing physical strength, and to apply the principles of jujitsu to life in general.

The following are major points in the modernizing of jujitsu.

- 1) Recognition as a modern sport must not include techniques with a murderous intent. Kano used the method where dangerous techniques of jujitsu were only taught as style and principle. The techniques were not to be used to injure others. (see memorial photo as reference)



Professor Jigoro Kano and Pioneers of USA Judo Ambassador Hotel, Los Angeles, CA. August 14, 1932
Photo Courtesy of San Fernando Judo Dojo

Judo is the Way to use most efficiently one's mental and physical strength. By training, one should discipline and cultivate his body and spirit through the practice of techniques for offense and defense, thereby to master the essence of this Way. And, by dint of these means, it is the ultimate goal of Judo to build oneself up to perfection and benefit the world.

Professor Jigoro Kano, the founder of Kodokan Judo



The Unification of all Jujitsu Styles Towards the Development of Modern Judo.
Meiji 39 - July 24, 1906 * Photo Courtesy of San Fernando Judo Dojo

Kodokan Judo had to be strong and possess substantial political power to convince the more combative jujitsu styles to officially unite as Judo. It was critical that Kano was an educator of high moral-social status as it played an important role in the path to success.

- 2) While omitting dangerous techniques, Kodokan judo maintained the appeal of maintaining combat techniques to defeat opponents. Not just having “artificial techniques”, Kodokan judo maintained its progress as the modern sport of judo by emphasizing the importance of “ukemi” (The safe landing of your opponent after the receipt of a throw) and continuing the concept of jujitsu through the practice of “randori” (free practice of techniques), “nagewaza” (throwing techniques), “newaza” (mat work), “shimewaza” (choke techniques), and “kansetsuwaza” (arm lock- joint locks), which could actually be used effectively in combat.
- 3) Kodokan also set goals of “seiryoku zenyo” and “jita kyoei”, which was spiritual training in the modern sport of judo. In brief, “seiryoku zenyo” is to master the

technique by efficiently using the power of your opponent and adapting it in your own movements. Even when you are doing “randori” during practice at the gym, it is not enough for you to defeat your opponent if your technique utilizes unnecessary strength in your movements.

Moreover, in order to master your technique through practice, you need a partner for “randori”. Both participants have an opportunity to test their techniques on each other. Each individual benefits from the exchange of techniques and the mental, physical interaction. This is the idea of “Jita Kyohei”. It is a learning concept of mutual benefit and welfare that is applicable to all fields of society.

Although there are similar concepts in other sports, it is noteworthy that Jigoro Kano, the founder of judo, insisted that judo students learned these ethics. He wanted to depart from the destructive principle, which exists in combative sports, transforming it into a constructive principle that would contribute to modern society.

Judo slowly progressed through the apprenticeship system by explaining the educational philosophy, which consisted of “spirit theory principle” in conjunction with “jita kyohei”. In order to control uprising from the future successors of judo, they issued black belts up to 10th degree, a “dan” (degree) system was applied for those whose techniques exceeded the abilities of the aging leaders. Judo, which changed the destructive nature of jujutsu to the union principle, was greatly influenced by the idea of “kirisute gomen” which contributed to society in the jujutsu era. The fact that Kodokan judo is the root of today’s world judo, whose principles can be applied to modern society proved its greatness. In fact, the International Judo Federation (IJF consisting of 195 countries) by-law paragraph one indicates that Jigoro Kano’s judo is recognized as the principle of the organization.

The Origin of Judo in the United States

There has been no indication of jujutsu being introduced in America prior to the year 1900. Although it is noted that President Ulysses Grant was the first American to observe a Jujitsu demonstration by Jigoro Kano, who was nineteen years old at the time, during a visit to Japan in 1879.

During a visit to Japan in 1889, the second American who witnessed Judo was Professor Ladd of Yale University. Professor Ladd not only observed Judo, but seriously studied Judo by enrolling himself at the Kodokan.

In Seattle, on October 17, 1903, Yoshiaki Yamashita was the first dispatch from Japan to demonstrate judo. Yamashita later moved to Washington D.C. and taught judo to President Theodore Roosevelt. He also taught “nagewaza” (throwing) techniques of to the wives of Senators Lee and Wadsworth. It is believed to be the first time that judo was recognized in the United States.

As the second dispatch group was sent to spread judo in America, Tsunejiro Tomita, Mitsuyo Maeda, and Dr. Shigeo Yamauchi came to New York City on December 5, 1908. In front of the pro-Japanese President Roosevelt, Tomita participated in a wrestling match at the White House. He was defeated by the 353 lb (160kg) wrestler because of his strong “do-jime” (body squeeze from behind by the arms), which made Tomita unable to breathe.

Although Tomita returned to Japan, the shame of losing the match made it unbearable to stay in America. Maeda, a fourth degree, swore to regain the dignity of judo. He dedicated everything to this cause and continued fighting opponents and won over 1,000 matches. Even though he was undefeated during his promotion of judo, the Kodokan expelled Maeda. He had probably gone against the principles laid out by Jigoro Kano.

Maeda (Konde Koma) was asked by Gastão Gracie, father of Carlos Gracie, to come to the Amazon in Brazil to teach jujutsu. However, what he taught was Kodokan judo. Elliot Gracie created his sect (Gracie Jujutsu) and unsuccessfully fought against Masahiko Kimura. It is regrettable that Gracie Jujutsu as “Vale • Tudo” has regressed from the teachings of Maeda and his effort to spread the philosophy of Jigoro Kano, which is the basis for Kodokan judo’s strong spirit theory, seems to no longer applicable in contemporary society. The concept should revert to the era when Yoshin Miura and Shiroubei Yoshitoki Akiyama used jujutsu to maintain a patient’s health.

At the same time, Commander Takeshi Hirose, who was known in the Kodokan as one of the Four Kings, spread judo to Russia. He was known as a jujutsu athlete in Russia and it is believed that sambo was influenced by jujitsu. His reputation as a jujutsu athlete far exceeded his ability as a judo athlete.

In the younger American generations, there tends to be a constant popular misconception that jujitsu, kenpo, karate, taekwondo, Gracie jujutsu, or bushido are martial arts for

artificial self-protection. It seems that many ordinary people misunderstood the concept of sport judo because teachers and coaches have mixed in a pursuit of profit along with sport judo. It is a fact that there was a time when judo was not distinguished from jujitsu. When Jigoro Kano created judo, it was still considered by many to be a part of jujitsu, and even pupils believed that they were practicing jujitsu techniques, not judo techniques.

Judo was written as jujitsu in the two best-seller books, “Bocchan” written by Soseki Natsume in 1906, and in 1908 “Sugata Sanshiro – Judo Saga” written by Tsuneo Tomita, son of Tsunejiro Tomita. There was a time when even people in Japan, the birthplace of judo, could not come to terms with the historical fact that jujitsu became judo, and jujitsu had a strong following.

The Development of Japanese Judo into World Judo/Judo as an Official Olympic Event

During its change from jujitsu to judo, and in the process of becoming an official Olympic event, judo traveled a thorny path. The Sekai Judo Renmei (IJF – International Judo Federation) was established in 1952 and currently had one hundred ninety-five participating countries. It hosts The World Judo Championship as the place for technical competition with rules fit for modern society while taking charge of the Olympic judo technological committee. Sport judo creates a champion every four years through the Olympics.

America took the initiative to make judo an official Olympic sport at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. Since the IJF was established, every judo athlete in the world has dreamed of judo becoming an Olympic event. It was also the dream of Jigoro Kano. In fact, Jigoro Kano submitted a proposal for judo to be an official Olympic event at the IOC conference held in Berlin in 1936. The IOC rejected the proposal. After WWII, the AAU (Amateur Athlete Union) in America demonstrated its strong influence over all sports in the world. There were initiatives started in an attempt to make judo an Olympic sport. However, the judo of that time did not have different weight classes and was perceived as a barbaric martial art. Olympic officials, especially those in the AAU felt that athletes with a hundred pound weight difference who were competing against each other in matches were not participating in a sport, but were practicing a martial art. As a last resort, the first judo championships with weight divisions were held in America in 1953. This event had a great impact in having the AAU recognize judo as a sport.

At the same time, the chairman of the IOC, Avery Brundage was living in Santa Barbara. Dr. Henry Stone of the University of California, Berkley, an avid judo fan, was best friends with Brundage. Yoshi Uchida, former chairman of the USJI (United States Judo, Inc.), and judo coach at San Jose University, was also friends with Stone. These men played a major role in making judo into an Olympic sport.

I strongly believe that teachers of modern judo should recognize that judo should progress as a sport, not into jujutsu. The mission of judo coaches and teachers is to make the general public realize that budo, or jujutsu, is a thing of the past, and that we find value in judo as a modern sport.

Moreover, I think that teachers and coaches in America should recognize that the progress and development of present day American judo will be united by the principles of sport judo, and the necessity of a strong “seiryoku zenyo” and “jita kyoei”.

In the 1930's, Jigoro Kano felt a crisis in the worldwide condition of sport judo. I hope that his quote will serve as a reference to teachers and coaches in America to help them in the development of American judo.

“Recently in our country, there have been a steadily increasing number of people who dislike work and pursue leisure and extravagance. Almost everywhere, individuals and organizations are fighting with resultant loss of energy that is needed for positive action. In order to save them from this situation, a principle of Judo, based on the maximum efficiency concept should be applied as one aspect of modern society and as a natural result of the application of the principle of maximum efficiency, a mutual welfare and prosperity is believed to be the only effective way to ease and neutralize the forces among the individuals and organizations.

In our society today, when we teach the righteous way of life based upon the Theory of Judo, which embodies the principles of continuous improvement of society, then this righteous life provides a basis of definite proof of this principle and unifies the

peoples' way of thinking. Various religious and learned points of view are then made abundantly clear.

Furthermore, when we speak about our international relations, Japan now is in the situation of an isolated soul from the rest of the world. Our country has many different characteristics in comparison to western nations, such as, race, but also language, religion, tradition, customs, etc. Therefore, it is quite clear that the maintenance of truly honest good will with different nations requires a tremendous effort. Nevertheless, our people in Japan have been neglecting this necessary effort and due to this, we cannot find a sincerely friendly nation in the world today.

Reviewing current relations with our closest nation, China, with which we have had much affiliation for several thousand years, it seems that though it has similar race, culture, and writing system to ours, our people do not have much interest in this important international relationship. In order to improve current international relations, there is no other way than practicing a mutual prosperity and welfare concept.”

Although it is said that history repeats itself, this excerpt was written by Jigoro Kano almost seventy years ago in his quest to contribute to society through the development of judo. I feel that everyone should study what he wrote by applying it to present day American judo.

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Note: References used have not been listed.