

KYU-SHIN-DO AND ZEN JUDO

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Most *Judokas* (judo practitioners) are familiar with Dr. Jigoro Kano, the founder of modern Judo and the Kodokan, the organization he created to spread his art around the world. What is not common knowledge, however, is that for most of the first half of the 20th Century there were two major Martial Arts organizations in Japan who trained *Judokas* and awarded Judo ranks. One was Kano's Kodokan. The other was the Butokukai.

The Butokukai was established in 1895 by the Japanese government to train Martial Arts teachers. In 1911 the organization opened its martial arts training school, the Bujutsu Semmon Gakko, largely known as the Busen. Its aim and purpose was to promote and cultivate Budo in a true Samurai spirit, and to produce teachers to go out and propagate the Japanese Martial Arts throughout the world. Zen Judo's origins are closely connected to the Butokukai through one of its leading graduates, *Sensei* (teacher) Kenshiro Abbe.

Kenshiro Abbe, the founder of the Kyu-Shin-Do, was born on December 15, 1915 in the Tokushima Province, Japan. He was the fourth son of Toshizo and Koto Abbe, in a family that had four sons and five daughters. Kenshiro was their youngest child. His father was a school master and a *Kendo* (way of the sword) teacher. Unfortunately, Kenshiro's father died young at the age of 51 on September 4, 1919, drowning in floodwater during a *Kendo* weekend course in the mountains. His sudden death brought the family together and helped to create strong ties among its members.

It was Mr. Manpei Hino, a 20-year teacher, who became a father figure to Kenshiro and introduced him to the martial arts. Mr. Fukiwara, Kenshiro's grade school teacher, also helped allowing the students to play *Sumo* wrestling in their physical education classes. Kenshiro would win many school tournaments in *Sumo*, eventually becoming the wrestling champion of Tokushima's schools.

At the age of 14 Kenshiro joined Kazohira Nakamoto's *Judo dojo*. *Sensei* Nakamoto, a former police officer, became Kenshiro's main Judo instructor until he entered the Busen. That same year Kenshiro received his *Shodan* (1st degree black belt) rank in Judo. A year later he attained the rank of *Nidan* (2nd *Dan* or degree black belt), and the following year he was promoted to *Sandan* (3rd *Dan*), when he became the champion of the Tokushima High School Judo League. *Sensei* Shohei Hamano of the Butokukai was the one who awarded Kenshiro with the rank of *Sandan*. Kenshiro was the youngest *Judoka* to receive that honor.

But it was during his *Shodan* examination that Kenshiro caught the attention of the Butokukai experts. One of the masters from the Butokukai, Mr. Shotaro Tabata, acting as a referee in Kenshiro's testing, had suggested to Abbe's *Sensei* that Kenshiro should consider applying for the Busen. With the help of one of his teacher, Mr. Nakano, Kenshiro prepared for the school's entrance exam in Kyoto. 300 candidates took the entrance exam. Only twenty would be chosen for Judo and twenty for *Kendo*. Kenshiro was one of the candidates who got accepted into both programs. He moved to Kyoto with his mother and sister, Toyoka, to attend the school.

At the Busen Abbe received instruction from Ogawa *Hanshi* (genius), the Butokukai *Judan* (10th *Dan*) sword master. While at the Busen Kenshiro also enrolled in Mr. Gen Tanabe's philosophy class, at the Kyoto Teikoku University. That early encounter with philosophy would be influential in the formation of his system. While the training was arduous at the Busen, Kenshiro managed to receive his *Yondan* (4th *Dan*) rank in Judo, being again the young *Judoka* to attain it. His sister, Toyoka, decided to take Martial Arts too, enrolling in Mrs. Mitamura's *Naginata* class. She would dedicate the rest of her life to the practice of the art.

Judo matches were held at the Busen every Saturday afternoon. Kenshiro usually competed in them, being very seldom defeated. Each Saturday session involved fighting five opponents in succession, with each bout lasting five minutes. In the Fall of his second year at the school Kenshiro received his *Godan* (5th *Dan*) in Judo. By then he was fighting twenty opponents in succession. Kodokan instructors heard of Abbe's prowess and send representatives to work out with him. Abbe's relationship with the Kodokan would be rocky given his views of what traditional Judo should be like. After graduating from the school Abbe was invited to become a teacher at the Busen. He was also invited to teach at the Kodokan, but he decided to accept his alma mater. He taught Judo at the Busen until 1937.

In 1937, at the age of 23, Abbe was awarded his *Rokudan* (6th *Dan*) rank and in June of that year he enlisted in the Japanese army, serving for four years in a garrison in the Toan-sho Province in Manchuria. It was during the time in Manchuria that Abbe began formulating his theory of *Budo* (the Way of the Warrior), *Kyu-Shin-Do*. And it was also at this time that Abbe was invited by O'Sensei, Morihei Ueshiba to study Aikido under his care.

Returning home to Kyoto in 1941, he met Keiko who became his wife. The Abbe's had two daughters, Junko and Noriko. In 1945 he received his *Shichidan* (7th *Dan*) rank in Judo and his *Rokudan* (6th *Dan*) rank in Kendo from the Butokukai. After Japan's defeat in the war all forms of *Budo* were forbidden, so the Butokukai and the Busen were temporarily disbanded. But Abbe obtained a position as Judo teacher to the Kyoto police department and was allowed to continue his practice. In 1951 he would become editor of the *Judo Shinbun* (the Japanese Judo magazine) and director of the Judo Social League. He was also the official referee for the All-Japan Police Championships and National Tournaments.

After the birth of his third daughter, Yayoi, Kenshiro resigned from his post with the Kyoto police. Feeling that Japanese Judo was in decline, he decided to go overseas. He arrived in England at the age of 40 sent by the International Budo Council, which had been founded that year. Abbe took residence at the London Judo Society. A year later he and Bill Woods formed the British Judo Council. Kenshiro spent 1956 teaching and studying Judo, Kendo, Aikido, Karate and *Katsu* (Shiatsu massage).

His time in London lasted nine and a half years. At the end of this period his organization, the *Kyu-Shin-Do*, had over 3,000 members. For a while Abbe taught Martial Arts around Europe, returning to London from time to time. A car accident in 1960 forced his early retirement. Eventually he returned to Japan in 1964 during the Tokyo Olympics. There he lived until he died in December 1985. His long absence from his family, during his European tour, took a toll on his marriage and Kenshiro ended up alone at an old people's home. His funeral was held at the Zuigen Temple in Tokushima, where Kenshiro was buried in the family grave.

The *Kyu-Shin-Do*

Abbe was greatly concerned with the modern trend toward materialism. It was to counter this lack of spiritual interest that he blended ancient Japanese philosophy and Martial Arts, creating the *Kyu-Shin-Do*. For the *Kyu-Shin-Do* Judo syllabus Abbe used the same system that he learned at the Butokukai, which explains why the *Kyu-Shin-Do* syllabus and the Zen Judo syllabus (which is derived from the *Kyu-Shin-Do*) are different from the Kodokan syllabus. Some of our throws do not appear in the Kodokan *Gokyo no waza* and the order of throws in the Kodokan *Gokyo* is very different from the one in our syllabus.

The *Kyu-Shin-Do* is a specific *Budo* system where *Kyu* means to study, to seek; *Shin* means the heart, the spirit, the true inner nature, the central law or nexus point of life; and *Do* means the way or path, in the sense of a journey involving one's whole life - a way of life or self-discipline. The whole system is based on three fundamental principles:

Bambutsu Ruten - all things existing in the universe turn in a constant state of flux. All thing in the universe undergo a succession of change.

Ritsudo - This motion is rhythmic and smooth, a flowing movement.

Chowa - All things act, flow, work in a perfect accord (*wa*) or harmony.

One can see in Abbe's principles the influences of both Taoism, Buddhism and also Sensei Ueshiba's Aikido, especially in his third principle which emphasize perfect accord and harmony. For Kenshiro the universe revolves and therefore always keeps in perfect balance. All motion in the universe may be resolved, basically in a series of circular movements. It is only by applying this fundamental principle of motion and avoiding stiff angular stances that we can achieve the best in Judo. Kyu-Shin-Do starts from a relaxed posture, namely perfect relaxation of mind and body. Its actions are gentle, soft, quick and safe because they spring from a relaxed mind and body.

Why is it important to understand the origins of the Kyu-Shin-Do? Because it was at a Kyu-Shin-Do *dojo* that *Shihan* (founder) Dominick Mac McCarthy, the founder of Zen Judo, took his first Judo lessons. It was at a Kyu-Shin-Do *dojo* that he was awarded his *Shodan* rank. Some of his family still maintains those connections - Mac's oldest son, Rick McCarthy, still holds a high rank with the Kyu-Shin-Do organization. Furthermore, it is through the Kyu-Shin-Do that Zen Judo is connected to the Japanese origins of our art. Which makes the Zen Judo family highly indebted to *Shihan* Kenshiro Abbe for bringing Butokukai Judo to the West.

As far as I can tell the Kyu-Shin-Do and the Zen Judo family are the only two groups in the West that practice Judo in the Butokukai style. The rest of the world has adopted Kodokan Judo. So we are the keepers of that system in the West. We are responsible for its preservation and perpetuation. We inherited Abbe's system in Zen Judo when Mac chose to continue to use the Kyu-Shin-Do syllabus. And all Zen Judo Sensei contribute to its preservation when we commit ourselves to perpetuating the syllabus by promising to uphold its integrity and to pass it on to our students as it was taught to us. We all make such a promise when we awarded our black belts.

Kyushindo Philosophy

The Universe was stated under a great principle of creation, which had existed from the beginning of time. The Universe has been controlled and governed by the principle that all things transmigrate.

The Laws of the Universe:-

The Law of transmigration.

The Law of Rhythm.

The Law of Harmony.

Kyu-Shin-Do is the understanding through knowledge and experience of the principles of the Universe and the understanding of the true way of life through Japanese Judo.

All things in existence are governed by the Universe and shall be a rhythmical cycle of birth, existence and death.

We can enjoy the highest form of life by mutual understanding between oneself and the Universe and by harmonizing with all things in general.

The Universe revolves and therefore always keeps in perfect balance and must have a center and radius governed by geometrical motion. We must therefore bear in mind that every movement on the earth has been controlled by Universal evolutions.

Therefore the student of Judo shall strive for perfection and harmonize with everything by opening his mind and body by relaxing first his mind and then his body. This idea conforms to nature.

The fundamental principles of the spiritual side of the human being is, and must be, gratitude to the principles of the Universe. This gratitude is the first and foremost, love, and the first step to communication with all people. This leads to love towards parents, friends and all things in the Universe.

The first step towards Kyu Shin Do is to have a clear understanding of each other through co-operation and affection towards each other. In the spirit of this most needed principle, we can live in healthy and perfect harmony in this world of to-day.

The ultimate aim of Kyu Shin Do is the achievement of permanent peace and happiness for the human race; which is the understanding towards neighbor, the understanding of the highest ideals and gratitude for all things. The person who has not an understanding mind and does not make any efforts to understand his neighbor, does not receive any respect or rewards.

To learn and perform good techniques is not the only aim or object of Judo. Judo is a way towards universal understanding and is just one of the many roads which can lead to world peace and Universal happiness. The way of Judo is not only realization of one's aim in life, but also gives the training and discipline necessary to strive to make an effort for life in peace and unity.

All life of any kind existent in the Universe has a continual flow of circulation and transmigration - for instance, we consume food and expel the waste. The donor who is ready to give and who does not ask or think, will surely be compensated by someone else. Similarly, if a man robs someone else, he in turn will be treated likewise. The practice of Judo is the same principle.

The human race in this world has the law of the Universe instilled in it. This is embodied in the principle that if we love, and our actions, motions and motives are of a peaceful harmonizing nature, they will be returned by those whom we have treated similarly.

The principle idea of Judo is always to give your best. The individual who makes an effort to give of his best is always well rewarded in life.

Kyu Shin Do starts from natural posture and this basically means the perfect relaxation of the mind and body, free from petty anxieties and illnesses. The actions of Kyu Shin Do are of gentle smooth movements, soft, quick and safe. These movements spring from a relaxed mind and body, which helps to build up strength and purpose.

We shall try to make an effort to harmonize with the Universe, otherwise we will discover that it is against us. The accumulation of effort is a steady circular movement about the centre of gravity and radius.

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