

The History of Judo and Zen Judo

A Brief History Of Zen Judo

I would like to thank Sensei H.B. (Keo) Cavalcanti 6th. Dan head of American Zen Judo for the following information :- LIST OF CONTENTS:- [Chapter 1.](#) - The Roots Of Japanese Martial Arts. [Chapter 2.](#) - The Founding Of Kodokan Judo by Dr. Jigoro Kano. [Chapter 3.](#)- The Founding Of Zen Judo by Dominick McCarthy. [A Poem.](#) - "From Start to End - From Colour To Colour" by Dominick McCarthy. Appendix. - From the founding of Kodokan Judo to the formation of Zen Judo and The British Zen Judo Family Association. [Download The Judo Family Tree \(14K\)](#) in Acrobat pdf format. **Chapter 1**

Judo had its origin in the Japanese art of Ju-jutsu, a system of hand-to-hand combat. The bushi of feudal Japan (samurai) are usually credited for developing it. Ju-Jutsu was known by several names throughout Japanese history—taijutsu, yawara, kempo, kugusoku, kumiuchi, koshi nomawari. What is unique to the art is the use of skill, finesse and flexibility rather than strength to overpower opponents. Economy of energy, balance, and grace were the outstanding hallmarks of its practitioner.

**S/he was expected to be soft and pliable, winning by appearing to yield. During the feudal period, Ju-jutsu was part of the bushi training, along with archery, spearfighting, swordsmanship, firearms, horsemanship, tactics, and etiquette. Its importance grew with the rise of the bushi class after the late Heian period. Subsequent periods of Japanese history (Kamakura, 1185-1336; Muromachi, 1336-1573 ; Tokugawa, 1603-1868) saw the art become more diversified and specialized as it was taught in schools (ryus) that emphasized different aspects:—
Throwing, groundwork and striking, according to their founders vision.**

Given the constant state of war in Japanese feudal history, ryus tested their vision of Ju-jutsu on the battlefield, where survival was the premium. The three hundred years of peace that followed the Japanese civil wars changed the nature of the art. Under the harsh Tokugawa martial codes combats between bushi became rarer. On the other hand, unarmed combat was more usual.

The rise of the common citizen at the end of the period required that Ju-jutsu techniques be adapted to their everyday life needs. At that time, several ryus gave up their insistence on ceremonial or ritual posturing in favor of a practical approach to hand-to-hand combat.

By the end of the period, the ancient martial arts of Japan (Bu-jutsu) created for a warrior class began to fade as the martial ways (Budo) created for the commoner gained importance. Budo was not simply a collection of fighting techniques. It was also a spiritual discipline, a way of life. With the Meiji Restoration (1868), several branches of the martial arts changed names and orientation--KyuJutsu became Kyudo, Iai-Jutsu became Iaido, Aiki-Jutsu became Aikido and Ju-jutsu became Judo. There was a shift from a warfare approach to everyday life principles.

Schools passed their tradition to students in the form of techniques, philosophy and ethics. Students were expected to be fully versed on hand-to-hand combat but also to embody the philosophy of the ryus' founders [Top](#)

Chapter 2

[Dr. Jigoro Kano](#), founder of modern Judo, was born in Mikage, in the Hyogo Prefecture, on October 28, 1860. Shihan Kano never viewed martial arts as a means to display physical prowess or superiority. A pacifist, he studied them to find harmony in his dealings with others. In his youth Kano studied Ju-jutsu under Sensei Teinosuke Yagi, Sensei Hachinosuke Fukuda (Tenshin-Shinyo ryu) and after graduating from Tokyo University, under Sensei Iikubo (Kito ryu).

His search for a unifying principle for the techniques he learned led Kano to Seiryoku Zenyo (maximum efficiency in mental and physical energy). To him, only techniques that saved physical and mental energy should be incorporated into a Do. The idea was to use the energy of one's opponent to defeat his or her aggression. He called his system Judo, and to propagate it he founded the Kodokan (the "school to learn the way") at the Eishoji temple in 1882.

Kano's system was built around three major arts: throwing (nage waza), groundwork (katame waza) and striking (atemi waza). Throwing techniques, drawn from the Kito ryu, were further divided into standing (tachi waza) and sacrifice (sutemi waza) techniques. Standing techniques included hand (te waza), hip (koshi waza) and foot (ashi waza) throws. Sacrifice techniques include full (ma sutemi waza) and side sacrifice (yoko sutemi waza) projections. Groundwork and striking techniques were drawn more heavily from the Tenshin-Shinyo ryu. Groundwork was organized into groundholds (osaekomi waza), strangulations (shime waza) and joint locks (kansetsu waza). While Kano taught groundholds earlier to his students, shime and kansetsu waza were saved for those who had attained a higher ranking.

High ranking students were also expected to know the art of resuscitation (kappo), so as to conduct their training in a safe and responsible manner. Judo's striking techniques included upper (ude ate) and lower (ashi ate) limb blows. Among the techniques used were those fists, elbows, hand-edges, fingers, knees and feet strikes. Because of its lethal nature, Atemi waza was also taught exclusively to high ranking Judokas at the Kodokan.

The Judo syllabus was taught in a well-structured manner. Standing techniques were organized into five sets ranking from less strenuous or technically difficult to more advanced (the Gokyo no waza). Ground and striking techniques were organized into sets also. All sets were introduced slowly as Judokas became more proficient in the art. Students were divided into mudansha (color belt level) and yudansha (black belt level). Mudansha were ranked into five grades (kyus) while yudansha were ranked into ten degrees (dans). Ranks indicated the student's level of expertise in the art as different techniques were introduced at each level.

To complete the transition from Jutsu (martial) to Do (way of life), Kano added a strict code of ethics and a humanitarian philosophy to his system. Kodokan instructors and students were expected to be outstanding examples of good character and honest conduct. Any hand-to-hand combat outside of the dojo or behavior that brought shame to the school would lead to suspension or expulsion. Kano's ultimate concern for the well-being of both the individual and the community is reflected in his teaching methods and in Judo's second guiding principle. Kano utilized four teaching methods in his dojo: randori (free practice of all techniques, similar to the physical training of the Ju-jutsu schools), kata (pre-arranged forms, considered the more technical rituals of the art), ko (his systematic lecturing), and mondo (periods of question and answer). The debates between Kano and his disciples led him to the second principle of Judo, Jita Kyoei (mutual benefit and prosperity). Kano believed that the diligent practice of Judo should lead to the realization that one could not progress at the expense of others; only mutual prosperity offered the key to any real progress in human life.

He was so taken with the principle that he regarded its diffusion, through Judo, as his greatest mission in life. Most of Judo's development took place around the turn of the century. In 1889 Kano traveled to Europe and America to promote the art. He would make as many as eight trips to other continents to propagate Judo before his untimely death at sea, on May 4, 1938.

Judo's technical aspects came into full maturity in 1900 with the founding of the Kodokan Yudanshakai (association of black belt holders). On July 24, 1905 eighteen masters representing the leading Japanese Ju-jutsu ryus gathered at the Butokukai in Kyoto to join Kano's system. Kano's work had triumphed over Ju-jutsu in Japan. The final touches were added in 1909 when the Kodokan became a foundation and in 1920 with the revision of the Gokyo no Waza. The art's intellectual and moral philosophy came into full being by 1922 with the creation of the Kodokan Cultural Judo Society.

Between 1912 and 1952 (when the International Judo Federation was founded), several of Kano's disciples immigrated to other continents to spread the art. Sensei Gunji Koizumi, 7th Dan, went to Great Britain in 1918, to found the London Budokwai. Mikinosuke Kawaishi, 7th Dan, a world expert on Judo kata, went to France in 1922. Sensei Sumiyuki Kotani, 8th Dan in 1952, trained the first team of American Air Force Judokas at the Kodokan (that team became the seed of American Judo and what is now the United States Judo Association). As Judo spread throughout the West it slowly gained the form of a sport. Its inclusion in the 1964 Olympic Games and popularity in World and Regional Games led to an emphasis on its physical aspects, sometimes at the expense of its intellectual, moral and spiritual underpinnings. [Top](#)

Chapter 3

In an effort to preserve the philosophical and spiritual aspects of Dr.Kano's art Zen Judo was created in England in 1974. Judo had been introduced to Great Britain in the early 1900s with [Sensei Yukio Tani](#). He was followed by Sensei

Uyenishi who taught Judo to the British Army at Aldershot. Sensei Gunji Koizumi founded the most famous Judo club in the country, the Budokwai of London, where he and Tani taught for many years. The post-war period saw the organization of several major Judo associations in Great Britain. The British Judo Association (BJA) was the largest and most influential. Not long after the BJA's creation, the British Judo Council was formed under the influence of Sensei Tani, and a third organization, the Kyu Shin Do, was created by [Sensei Kenshiro Abe](#). Zen Judo originated from the Kyu Shin Do.

Shihan Dominick McCarthy, the founder of Zen Judo, was trained in the Kyu Shin Do system. When the Kyu Shin Do began to emphasize more Western aspects, Shihan McCarthy created a separate group to preserve its original spirit. In September 1974 the Zen Judo ryu came into life at the Community Center on Love Lane, Petersfield, England.

Since its creation, Zen Judo has spread across England. There have been clubs also in Germany, Canada and now in the United States. The first American dojo opened its doors on March 6, 1991 in Nashville, Tennessee, under the leadership of Sensei H.B. (Keo) Cavalcanti. The first American Zen black belts were awarded in his club to Kimberly Sory, Stephanie Bunte, Elizabeth McDaniel, and Neal Warren.

Zen clubs tend to attract a good following, with low membership dropout and high retention rates. Student interest in the art seems considerably greater than in the competitive styles. As an effort to preserve the traditional style of Judo pioneered by Dr. Kano, Zen Judo dojos do not participate in tournaments or competitions. As a Judo ryu it is devoted to technique, skill, and merit rather than the athletic ability.

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Webmaster Note:-

On the 1st. January 2000 Sensei Andrew Millard 6th. Dan former Technical Director and Gordon Lawson 3rd. Dan formed *The British Zen Judo Family Association* with the aim of "taking it (Zen Judo) forward to new beginnings". What effect this will have on the Zen Judo style we will have to wait and see. For more information see other links.

(10th. Jan. 2000) **Bibliography** Brian N. Bagot. Zen Judo: A Way of Life.

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Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1973. **A Poem by Sensei Dominick McCarthy - The**

Founder of Zen Judo *From Start to End - From Colour To Colour* **The white is yours from the start, so hold it well. Yellow, to eliminate your fear, brings out the best. Orange, to feed the fruit of your labours, to ban all pretext; Green, to gather wisdom like Mother Earth. Blue, to reach for the sky - its limits are yours. When Brown appears, like fertile soil, you are almost**

settled. Only *Black*, at the last, helps you peer through the darkness, of the everlasting light of Arts. Dominick McCarthy. [Top](#)