

The Origins of Judo

Paired fighting (hand to hand combat between two people) has most likely always been a part of human existence, which might suggest that we humans have a natural inclination to engage in one on one, hand to hand combat. Organized events of paired fighting have been documented as drawings of wrestling on the walls of the pyramids in Egypt dating back to 2050BC, almost 4,000 years ago. In many other cultures too were depictions of paired fighting, including from ancient Greece where under plates and bowls drawings of striking and eye-gouging and of referees about to disqualify combatants were found.

Judo's roots can be found in sumo. In 712AD Japan from the Book of Kojiki there was the first documentation of paired fighting of sumo wrestlers on the Emperor's court. At the beginning of the 12th Century samurai started to rule Japan and they learned sumo techniques as part of their training. This training became more specific to the battlefield and eventually jujutsu (the art of gentleness) began to develop as a means of fighting when the samurai was disarmed. The Takenouchi-ryu was created in 1532 and was one of the earliest origins of jujutsu.

Jujutsu was one of the many skill sets that the samurai had, which included kenjutsu (the art of the sword), kyujutsu (the art of the bow and arrow), sojutsu (the art of the lance) and many more. These were used during a belligerent period of Japanese history where the objective was to kill or maim the enemy. But eventually more peaceful times came to Japan and there were fewer opportunities for the samurai to practice his art on the battlefield. Eventually the techniques were adapted to the conditions of civilian life especially during the Meiji era in the mid-1800s.

By this time, Kano Jigoro was born in Mikage on October 28, 1860. He studied several forms of jujutsu as a young man, Tenjin Shin'yo-ryu and Kito-ryu in particular from which he started Kodokan Judo in 1882. Kano discarded all the lethal aspects of jujutsu and grasping became compulsory. This reduced the level of violence and made judo safer to practice as a form of physical education where it could be taught to more people as opposed to a few behind closed doors. His foresight was amazing for a young man in his twenties because judo was soon preferred over jujutsu in Japanese society.

A Brief History of Judo in point form

1. KANO Jigoro was born in Mikage village, Japan in **1860**
2. He founded KODOKAN JUDO on the premises of Eisho-ji temple in **1882**
3. Kano died on his way to Japan from an International Olympic Committee meeting in **1938**
4. The world governing body for judo, INTERNATIONAL JUDO FEDERATION, was formed in **1951**
5. Judo became an OLYMPIC SPORT at the Tokyo Olympics in **1964**
6. As of **2013** the International Judo Federation (IJF) had 201 NATIONAL JUDO FEDERATION MEMBERS (including Judo Trinidad and Tobago) in 5 CONTINENTAL UNIONS - Asian Judo Union, European Judo Union, African Judo Union, Oceania Judo Union and Pan American Judo Confederation