

The Institute of Martial Arts and Sciences



The history of ju-Jutsu & its journey to our shores

Prof. Kevin Pell Hanshi MGRY FIMAS

Abstract

This paper will seek to trace the colourful journey of what has become universally known as the art of Ju-Jutsu, commencing with a brief overview of its origins to its eventual arrival on English shores in the closing years of the nineteenth century, in particular to the historical foundation stone laid down by Yukio Tani of the Tenjin Shinyo Ryu.

It will then go on to explore the deeper combative elements of Ju-Jutsu, and investigate what sets it apart from many of the modern day sporting martial arts and will finish with an insight in to how a number of modern day practitioners feel with regards to many of our long established martial arts being led down a path of abuse and destructive commercialism.

Battlefield Beginnings

Ju-Jutsu is the all-embracing hereditary martial art of the Samurai warrior consisting of probably the most varied syllabus of any martial art. Within Ju-Jutsu, you can find the techniques of most of the modern sporting systems, such as, Judo, Aikido, Shorinji-Kempo, and Goshin Jutsu.

In 19th Century Japan there were literally hundreds of Ju-Jutsu schools, each with their own various ideas and styles on battlefield combat and unarmed self defence. Of these original schools, many have died out with only a few managing to survive right up to the present day.

Ju-Jutsu contains many non-Japanese techniques and it is claimed that the Chinese had a very heavy influence on the early developments of Ju-Jutsu and there is even a stone monument honouring the Chinese boxer Chen Yuan-Pin that was placed in Tokyo to acknowledge the Chinese influence on the art of Japanese Ju-Jutsu.

The title Ju-Jutsu was first used in the 17th Century under the Tokugawa Shogunate, the system was developed because of the changes occurring in Japanese society at that time, and the fact that armour was gradually disappearing from the battlefield. Therefore the syllabus had to change because the art was becoming more of an unarmed combat system rather than an integrated combat technique. The first weaponless school of Ju-Jutsu was opened by the Samurai Terada Kanemon. The system he taught was known as Judo but this is not to be confused with the art of the same name founded by Kano Jigoro sensei which came into being almost a century later. The Kenemon Judo system was still very much a warriors unarmed combat art.

Ju-Jutsu From Kano To The UK

Kano Jigoro sensei, the founder of modern day Judo, was born in 1860 and began his study of the martial arts at the age of 17 by enrolling in the famous Tenjin Shinyo Ryu. However, when his first teacher Fukuda Hachinosuke died, he decided to continue his studies by enrolling in another school, the Kito Ryu, in 1881. Training within various Ju-Jutsu schools of the time, Kano received a thorough grounding in striking, grappling and throwing techniques. The eventual result of this knowledge led to the founding in 1882 of the martial discipline known as Kodokan Judo which was, at this period, also sometimes referred to as "Kano Ryu Ju-Jutsu".

Ju-Jutsu was first introduced into Great Britain during the closing years of the 19th Century by certain Japanese students, sailors and businessmen. Among them an instructor named Yukio Tani of the Tenjin Shinyo Ryu came to London aged 19 and went into business with a gentleman of the name of Edward William Barton-Wright. They tried to open a Ju-Jutsu school but failed through pricing themselves too highly and failing to effectively employ the correct marketing strategies.

For a certain period of time, Yukio Tani travelled around the British isles giving numerous demonstrations of Ju-Jutsu in music halls under his stage name 'The pocket Hercules' before eventually going into business with William Bankier (also known as the strongman "Apollo") who managed Tani on the Music Hall circuit. Tani would challenge anyone willing to test his skill, and offered winnings of £1 for lasting

each minute of a bout of up-to 5 minutes, or £5 to £100 for winning, so there was never a shortage of challengers! (It should be remembered here that that the English pound was worth a lot more back then, and that a £100 was a very substantial amount of money!)

According to a letter written by a certain Mr George Lorn of Liverpool Judo club back in 1950:

“
There are still living ex-catch-wrestlers who took prize-money of £5 for lasting three minutes with the deceased champion. One resides in Wigan still who took £25 for lasting five minutes.
”

(Letter appearing in the July issue, 1950 'Journal of Judo'. Published by the Budokwai, London, shortly after the death of Yukio Tani in January)

The rules of these challenge matches required Tani's opponents to wrestle according to competitive Ju-Jutsu rules, which meant that they had to avoid being forced to submit within a defined period of time. The concept of submission wrestling was alien to most European wrestlers during this period, so Tani certainly had the tactical advantage in his challenge matches.

At 5 feet 6 inches (1.67m) Tani allegedly lost only one music hall match and that was to a fellow Japanese national, Taro Miyake. During one week at the Oxford Music Hall, Yukio Tani met and defeated thirty-three men, some of whom were well known continental wrestlers. In one six-month tour Tani defeated an average of 20 men a week, totalling over 500 challengers over the period of the tour, many of which were detailed by Graham Noble. (Noble, G. (2000) 'The Odyssey of Yukio Tani')

In 1904 Tani and Miyake opened the Japanese School of Ju-Jutsu located at 305 Oxford Street, London, which remained open for a little over two years. Tani also partnered with Miyake in co-authoring a book, "the Game of Ju-Jutsu", which was first published in 1906, of which I am lucky enough to possess a copy.

In 1918 Tani became the first professional teacher at the London Budokwai, initially teaching Ju-Jutsu. In 1920, Tani was awarded the second-degree black belt rank in judo by Jigoro Kano, the founder of Kodokan Judo, during a visit to the Budokwai. Tani eventually reached the rank of 4th-dan. Yukio Tani suffered a stroke in 1937 but continued to teach from the sidelines of the Budokwai mats until his death on January 24, 1950.

Ju-Jutsu Today

Having given you a brief overview of the formation of Ju-Jutsu and its journey to these shores, I would now like to now delve a bit deeper into the combative element of my chosen art. Hand to hand combat is as old as the human race. For as long

as man has walked the earth he has shown in many instances an unfortunate leaning towards the use of physical force. Fighting techniques, both armed and unarmed have become more organised with the passing of time. It is after all pointless to spend years learning to defend yourself with a sword when your aggressor is pointing a 9mm Pistol at your head! This brings to mind one of my many favourite quotations "Adapt or Die!!!"

Ju-Jutsu differs from many of the more familiar fighting sports in that it is designed purely as a method of deadly fighting. It was never intended to be an educational system, a competitive sport or a path to inner tranquillity. Consistent with its origins as a fighting system, Ju-Jutsu embraces all forms of personal combat as well as the use of a wide and varied range of hand weapons. A punch or a kick from an opponent or a blow from a weapon can be met and answered with a breaking of joints, a throw, or an attack against the opponent's nerves or pressure points. It can be met with a hard block and finished with a hand strike or kick or trapped in a loose wristed take down similar to techniques used in modern day Aikido. Ju-Jutsu also includes a very comprehensive repertoire of throwing techniques but its throws are always executed in their combat and disabling form, never in their sporting form. In addition, Ju-Jutsu training encompasses many finger pressure techniques applied against nerve or acupuncture points, 30 or so choking techniques and a system of ground fighting that is a science in its own right.

Any form of unarmed combat relies upon just 2 main principles. The first of these is the landing of a distracting blow upon your opponent, the second is the principle of applying force across a joint or a series of joints enabling you to throw the would be aggressor to the floor. Once the mechanics of Ju-Jutsu are understood, more varied applications and a deeper understanding of the art will follow, enabling refinement of both the mechanics and application until the technique becomes an expression of the art itself. The philosophy behind Ju-Jutsu training instils a sense of realism amongst the participants, this removes the unwarranted self-confidence that comes from working with over-compliant opponents; You always try to be as realistic as possible. In any self-defence situation, 110% effort must be given if the will to win is to be successful. Within the study of Ju-Jutsu there are techniques suitable for almost every self-defence situation. This I believe has been responsible for the success of Ju-Jutsu techniques for police officers, close protection teams, security personnel, and members of the armed forces.

No one can ignore the growing crime statistics reported daily in our newspapers and on television. Acts of extreme violence are on the increase and we owe it to ourselves and to our children to ensure that in the event of an attack they have the best possible chance to protect themselves. For many people, myself included, Ju-Jutsu has become a way of life giving us an unparalleled insight into our own abilities, both mentally and physically. Ju-Jutsu may not be for everyone, but everyone can most certainly gain something from its study, particularly if the student is dedicated and willing to learn.

From starting my Martial Arts career as a young child to reaching mature adulthood, I became increasingly aware, disappointed and sadly disillusioned with the path that the Martial Arts in general have taken in respect of their blatant commercialism, and lack of understanding and teaching of basic etiquette, discipline, personal fitness, history and origins, along with the bully-boy tactics employed by dubious heads of various so-called "governing bodies". I, along with many of you I'm sure, can relay

countless stories of deceit, trickery and underhand methods of controlling memberships by awarding grade or the threat of revoking it and worse. The martial arts have seemed to become more about retaining students at any and all costs, rather than pushing them physically and mentally and inspiring them to achieve.

With terms being used such as 'Black Belt Academy', 'Black Belt School', and 'Black Belt Clubs' to attract would-be students the martial arts have, in my humble opinion, lowered themselves to the level of the circus arena (not that there is anything wrong with a good circus! It's just that martial arts are not meant to be one!) Being somewhat of a rather robust character and nobody's fool or puppet, I chose quite early on to distance myself from this type of person and their organisations, and turn inward (and, some may say, even insular) to lay the foundation stone for the creation of my own particular school, which has been influenced by my experiences within the military, as a teenager and young man as well as my varied and disciplined police, security and martial arts training.

Conclusion:

I believe that the success of Ju-Jutsu, both in this county and others, is primarily down to upholding the training ethic of a by-gone era, where blood, sweat and tears along with the determination to succeed at all costs have triumphed over the 'softly softly, hand me your cash and here's your new belt' approach, so readily adopted by the organisations referred to earlier.

With that in mind I would like to respectfully request of my fellows the opportunity to continue with this subject with the submission of a further paper in the future.

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About the author:

Prof. Kevin Pell Hanshi FIMAS has been involved in the martial arts all of his life, he has trained in various styles including Shorinji Kempo, which he studied at Honbu Dojo in Japan, and is a member of the IMAS Faculty.

He has a military background and is both a fully trained commando and police officer. Prof. Pell is now a security consultant who also runs his own large, international martial arts association. In addition, he is a published author, and has appeared in many magazines and television programmes. Prof. Pell now teaches Ju-Jutsu all over the world.