

# History of Danzan-Ryū Jūjutsu

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## Okazaki's Early Years

Okazaki Seishirō, (岡崎星史朗, his given name was originally 清史郎) was born on January 28, 1890 in the town of Date in the Fukushima Prefecture of Japan. His father was Hanuemon Okazaki and his mother was Fuka Suenaga. In 1906, Seishirō moved from Japan to the big island of Hawaii and settled in Hilo. In 1909, he was examined by a doctor who diagnosed Seishirō with incurable tuberculosis.

## Master Tanaka's School

In relating this story to Sig Kufferath, Okazaki said, “With courage borne out of desperation, I went to Master Yoshimatsu Tanaka (田中吉松師範).” At that time (1910), Tanaka was teaching Jūjutsu at his Shinyūkai Dōjō (心勇會道場), in Hilo and in Okazaki's words, “started to practice Jūjutsu in earnest and in defiance of death.” Whether or not it was due to his frantic devotion to Jūjutsu, Okazaki's tuberculosis healed and developed a strong, iron-like body. He believed that he owed his life to Jūjutsu and devoted the rest of it to the teaching and promotion of the art.

## The Beginning of Danzan-Ryū

While in Hilo, Okazaki mastered various Jūjutsu techniques being taught at the Yoshin-Ryū, Iwaga-Ryū and Kosogabe-Ryū schools. He then combined these systems with Karate techniques from the Ryūkyū Islands (Okinawa) and the knife techniques of the Philippines to form the Danzan-Ryū school of Jūjutsu. Danzan (檀山) are the kanji (Chinese characters) that denote the Hawaiian Islands, thus Danzan-Ryū is the Hawaiian school of Jūjutsu. According to Kufferath, one of Okazaki's most influential instructors, Wo Chung, called Hawaii: “T'an Shan”, so Okazaki dedicated part of the system to Chung's memory. Chung taught Okazaki Mushi-Jutsu, which was the art of boxing with intent to kill, as Okazaki translated it. In 1917, he also studied the Hawaiian secret killing art of Lua under the tutelage of David Kainhee, a native Hawaiian. This training took place in the district of Puna on the island of Hawaii. He also studied western boxing and wrestling, and he learned dirk throwing from a Spaniard. Okazaki incorporated all of these arts into his system. In addition to the martial systems, Okazaki studied all the resuscitation arts of Kappō and Seifukujutsu, the Japanese art of physical adjustment and restoration. He was a firm believer that one of the virtues of Jūjutsu was its techniques of restoration from disabling blows.

## A Challenge

In September of 1922, a heavyweight American boxing champion named Carl “Kayo” Morris visited the islands and began to challenge Judo and other martial arts. His claim was that his boxing was superior to any Japanese fighting art. When the challenge was answered in the Hilo arena by several Japanese martial

artists, they were defeated by Morris, causing them to lose face. According to Kufferath, Okazaki then challenged Morris to a match. Okazaki reportedly suffered a broken nose in the first round. He then retaliated with a reverse arm lock which wrenched Morris' arm and caused him to faint from the pain. Okazaki later said, "I enhanced the reputation of Japanese Jūjutsu by defeating him with much splendor." Okazaki received a gold watch from the Japanese community for restoring its honor.

## **The Trip Back to Japan**

In September 1924, Okazaki left Hilo and returned temporarily to Japan. This trip lasted five months, three of which he was actually in Japan and the other two months, he was on-board a ship in transit across the Pacific. During his stay in Japan, he traveled extensively, visiting more than 50 Dōjōs scattered between Morioka City in the north and Kagoshima in the south. He mastered some 675 techniques of Jūjutsu, all the while improving his own Danzan-Ryū. During this time, he visited the Kodokan and received a black belt in Jūdō from Prof. Jigoro Kano. He returned from Japan in February of 1925 and started to teach his Jūjutsu on the island of Maui.

## **Honolulu**

In 1929, Okazaki moved to Honolulu on the island of Oahu. It was here that he opened the Okazaki "Seifukujutsu In", or Okazaki Adjustment and Restoration Clinic which would eventually be called the Nikko Restoration Sanitorium. At the same time, he opened his Kodenkan Dōjō to teach his Danzan-Ryū Jūjutsu while still testing and improving his system. People came in droves to the Sanitorium with so-called incurable nerve disorders. During his 1934 visit to Honolulu, President Franklin D. Roosevelt received a treatment from Okazaki at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. Incidentally, President Roosevelt offered Okazaki a job at the White House as his private therapist. Okazaki, not wanting to leave the islands, declined the offer.

Prof. Okazaki was one of the first teachers to break from tradition and teach Japanese martial arts to non-Japanese. In fact, it is reported that in 1922, Okazaki taught Jūdō to two students, Dr. Baldwin of Hilo and Chief Fatoio of Samoa. For this he was severely reprimanded by his instructors. In Honolulu, however, Okazaki was the master. Kufferath relates that Okazaki was ostracized by other Japanese for doing this. Okazaki believed that everyone should have the opportunity to learn Jūjutsu, regardless of their heritage. His first class in Honolulu consisted of six students: his son Hachirō, Kiyoshi Kawashima, Benjamin Marks, George Harbottle, William Simao and Y.S. Kim. In 1932, Richard Rickerts, Curly Freedman, Charles Wagner, Harold McLean, Bob Glover and Denzel E. Muggy enrolled in the Kodenkan. In 1936, they graduated with instructor's diplomas. Okazaki also formed an organization originally called the American Jujitsu Guild and later renamed to the American Jujitsu Institute (AJI).

Prof. Okazaki felt that his was the most comprehensive form of Jūjutsu because it took what he believed were the optimum approaches to self-defense and combined them into one school. He was also an avid promoter of sport Jūdō and Sumō in Hawaii.

## **The Detention of Professor Okazaki**

After the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 by the Imperial Japanese Navy, the United States declared war on Japan beginning the U.S. involvement in World War II. Forces of the United States military waged a two-pronged campaign in European and Pacific battle theaters.

In February of 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 that allowed military commanders to assign “military areas” from which anyone, regardless whether they were citizen or non-citizen, may be excluded. These areas grew from actual military bases to large segments of the continental U.S. and its territories. The order eventually gave commanders the authority to relocate people to areas outside of the exclusion zones. Over the course of the war, more than 100,000 individuals spent time in internment camps all across the United States. A large percentage of these were people of Japanese heritage, but the internees also included Germans, Italians and other ethnicities. In many of these cases, those who were relocated were natural-born American citizens.

What followed for Hawaiian Island residents was martial law where many Japanese were arrested and detained. Many reports have indicated that Prof. Okazaki was detained, even though documents released by the U.S. Department of Justice under the Freedom of Information Act do not indicate this. Eyewitnesses such as Steven J. Byzek, a black belt under Okazaki, says that Okazaki was taken in for questioning by the authorities, but that he was not detained. George Freedman recalls that the Professor was taken to Sand Island and his father Curley Freedman helped secure his release. His youngest daughter Imi recalls that she visited him on at least two occasions in the internment camp at Honouliuli. This was a clear recollection of her's since she had to make a long bus trip through mountains and jungle to get to the location. Other records show that he was detained at Honouliuli from December 13, 1943 and paroled on February 8, 1944. Some accounts of this time do indicate that the Kodenkan was closed for a time, but was later reopened.

### **Special Black Belt Class**

One of Okazaki's dreams was to have a Danzan-Ryū school in every state of the union, which is today becoming a reality. Okazaki used the Kyu/Dan ranking system for Danzan-Ryū. (Kyu are for the undergraduate ranks, while Dan are for the black belt degrees.) He also used the traditional certification, awarding the Mokuroku (instructor's scroll) to black belts who achieved instructor level. These scrolls were from 8 to 10 feet in length, handwritten in Japanese and contained much of Okazaki's philosophy, a history of Jūjutsu and a catalog of Danzan-Ryū techniques. Those who received the scrolls were considered official Danzan-Ryū teachers and black belts were not allowed to teach or organize their own classes until they received a scroll. Scrolls were usually awarded when the student received their second-degree black belt in Danzan-Ryū. “We practiced six days a week and Okazaki had a Special Sunday Class at his home (on Kewalo Street) which was by invitation only”, Kufferath recalls.

The other traditional certification was the Kaidenshō (certificate of complete transmission), which was a diploma, handwritten in Japanese. This diploma certified that the named person was a master of Danzan-Ryū and had learned the entire system. Kaidenshō were given to students after they received personal instruction from Okazaki on all of the secrets and Okugi (奥義), or “inner mysteries” of Danzan-Ryū. Sig Kufferath and a number of other Okazaki students attended a special black belt class in February of 1948. The curriculum included the advanced katas Kiai No Maki, Shinnin No Maki, Shinyō No Maki and

Shingen No Maki, as well as commando techniques, serious and fatal blows and resuscitation.

Some of the other attendees were Marion Anderson, William Ah Moo, Wally and Bernice Jay, Steve Byzek, Richard and Esther Takamoto, Carl Beaver and Jack Wheat. The graduation was held on February 22, 1948 where each of the graduates received a Kaidenshō and the title of Shihan. The other purpose of this class was to get all of the instructors together to update their skills with the most recent Danzan-Ryū teachings. Okazaki had planned to repeat this class every ten years, but this did not happen.

### **Prof. Okazaki's Last Years**

In December of 1948, Prof. Okazaki suffered a stroke that left him partially paralyzed. This severely reduced his teaching ability and much of this was done by his instructors. He suffered another stroke in 1950 which put him in the hospital. At 4:00 PM on July 12, 1951, Henry Seishirō Okazaki died from the effects of a third stroke and atherosclerosis.

### **The First Replacement**

The passing of Prof. Okazaki left the AJI in a chaotic state. In 1952, an election was held to select a replacement for the Professor. The candidates were Bill Ah Moo, John Cahill and Sig Kufferath. The AJI required the officers to be Hawaiian residents, so Cahill, who had moved to California was disqualified. When the election was held Kufferath won by the wide margin of 13 to 4. He continued in the capacity of AJI President until 1960 when he moved to the mainland. He did, however, remain the only Professor until 1965. After unsuccessfully trying to get Kufferath to return to Hawaii, the AJI elected Sam Luke as the next Professor in 1965. After this the AJI appointed a Board of Professors.

### **Danzan-Ryū on the Mainland**

Many black belts received their instructor's scrolls and moved to the U.S. mainland to open Danzan-Ryū schools. Among them were Bud Estes (1939), Richard Rickerts (1941), Ray Law (1939) and John Cahill (1946). These four formed the American Judo and Jujitsu Federation (AJJF). Wally Jay, who founded Small Circle Jujitsu, came to the mainland in 1950 to teach Jujitsu after studying Danzan-Ryū in his native Hawaii. William Montero came to San Jose, CA in 1947 from Hawaii and began teaching Danzan-Ryū. Other mainland organizations included the Shoshin Ryū under Carl Beaver, Mike Chubb and Bill Fischer, the Kodenkan Yudanshakai in Arizona under Joe Holck, the Kodenkan Hombu in Costa Rica under Ramon Lono Ancho, Jr., the Jujitsu Institute of America in Florida and Texas under Bill Beach (a student of Richard Takamoto and Ray Law) and his brother William R. Beach, the Southern California Jujitsu Association under Bill Randle (a student of Ray Law) and James Marcinkus, the Christian Jujitsu Association under Gene Edwards (a student of Bud Estes) and the Kodenkan Danzan-Ryū Association under Kufferath, Ancho, Tony Janovich and Doug Kiehl. In addition to these, Danzan-Ryū headmaster Sig Kufferath (deceased) and his senior student Tony Janovich give autonomous ranking through the Kodenkan Jujitsu School in Campbell, CA.

### **Kodenkan Jujitsu Okugi™**

Forty-five years after the first special black belt class, Profs. Sig Kufferath and Tony Janovich repeated the class that Okazaki earlier held. The curriculum was the same as the previous class with updates and improvements by Kufferath and Janovich. This class was called the Kodengan Jujitsu Okugi™ and the name was trademarked by Prof. Janovich. On two weekends in the summer of 1993, 25 black belt instructors from all over the U.S. came to the Campbell Dōjō to learn the inner mysteries of Danzan-Ryū. Kufferath and Janovich presented the advanced katas and resuscitation that Okazaki taught earlier. From the class, 24 of the 25 students graduated from this class and received a Kaidenshō that was identical to those given in 1948. These students have since gone on to propagate the Okazaki system. From this class, many students have gone on to achieve the title of “Professor”.

After the Kodengan Jujitsu Okugi™ class of 1993, Profs. Kufferath and Janovich discussed the possibility of the next “special class”. They decided to use Prof. Okazaki’s idea of having the training every ten years and decided upon 2003 for this class. Despite the passing of Prof. Kufferath in 1999, Prof. Janovich continued with the plans to hold the 2003 Kodengan Jujitsu Okugi™. In January and February of 2003, nearly 60 students attended this special black belt class, a number which exceeded the original 1948 class. Included in the class were instructors from a variety of organizations, including some high ranking professors. There were also a number of double graduates, who had attended both this and the 1993 class. The 2013 class was held in January and March in Santa Clara, CA for a group of 60 students and included alumni from both the 1993 and 2003 classes.

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