



Danzan-Ryū Jūjutsu History

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Okazaki's Early Years

Seishiro Okazaki 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, [Seishiro](#) moved from Japan to the big island of Hawaii and settled in [Hilo](#). In 1909, he was examined by a doctor who diagnosed Seishiro 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." At that time (1910), Tanaka was teaching Jūjutsu at his [Shinyūkai dojo](#) 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 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 "Danzan", so Okazaki dedicated part of the system to Chung's memory. Chung taught Okazaki Mushi-Jutsu, which is 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 Kappo 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 [K.O. 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](#) (here demonstrated by Prof. Sig Kufferath) 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 in transit across the Pacific. During his stay in Japan, he [traveled extensively \(here seen at Nachi Falls in the southern district of Wakayama prefecture\)](#), visiting more than 50 dojos 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. This [photograph](#) is Okazaki with a Kiai Jutsu master named Hiroshima. During this time, he visited the Kodokan and received a black belt in Judo 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 "Sefukujutsu In", or Okazaki Adjustment and Restoration Clinic which would eventually be called the Nikko Restoration Sanitorium. At the same time, he opened his Kodenkan Dojo 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, including President Franklin D. Roosevelt. 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.

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 Judo 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 Hachiro, 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 \(AJI\)](#).

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 Judo and [Sumō](#) in Hawaii.

World War II

On December 7, 1941, forces from the Imperial Japanese Navy executed a surprised attack on the U.S. military bases on Oahu, thus entering the United States into war with Japan. What followed for island residents was martial law where many Japanese were arrested and detained at the military base on Sand Island. Many reports have indicated that Okazaki was detained as well. Documents released by the U.S. Department of Justice under the Freedom of Information Act do not show that Okazaki was detained. 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 a prison camp. This was a clear recollection of her's since she had to make a long bus trip to get to the location. Some accounts of this time do indicate that the Kodenkan was closed for a time, but was later reopened.

Ironically, it was during the war that Okazaki helped to developed the U.S. Army's field manual on hand-to-hand fighting (FM 21-150) and also taught many servicemen the art of Jūjutsu.

Note 1: Sig Kufferath, who was the Army hand-to-hand combat instructor in Honolulu during the war played a key role in the development of this manual.

Note 2: The current version of FM 21-150 can be found [HERE](#).

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 the undergraduate ranks, while Dan are 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 which was by invitation only", Kufferath recalls. (Note: The use of the name "Okugi" for this class was first used in 1993 by Profs. Sig Kufferath and Tony Janovich and copyrighted by Prof. Janovich.)

The other traditional certification was the Menkyo Kaiden or [Kaidenshō](#) (certificate of mastery), 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. Kaidensho were given to students after they received personal instruction from Okazaki on all of the secrets and *Okugi*, 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, Shinyo 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 Kaidensho 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.

This [photo](#) shows the post class dinner for the students, the Professor and other invited guests.

Okazaki's Last Years

In December of 1948, 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 Seishiro Okazaki [died](#) from the effects of a third stroke.

The First Replacement

The passing of 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 a large margin. 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](#), 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), 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 their dojo in Campbell, California.

Okugi 1993

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. This class was called "Okugi" and the name was copyrighted 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 dojo to learn the inner mysteries of Danzan-Ryū. Kufferath and Janovich presented the advanced katas and resuscitation that Okazaki taught earlier. They also presented updates and improvements to the system in the same manner as Okazaki.

24 of the 25 students [graduated](#) from this class and received a [Kaidensho](#) 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".

[Okugi 2003](#)

After the 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 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.

*Note: Some of the above information was taken from an article written by [Tony Janovich](#) in the April 1990 issue of **Black Belt Magazine**. It is used here with permission of the author.*

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