

Midori Yama Budokai: *Hanshi's Corner*  
AKA: Rogers' Syncretistic Chautauqua  
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*Ichi go, ichi e: One life, one meeting*

**BIOGRAPHY OF JIGORŪ KANŪ**



**JIGORŪ KANŪ**

Jigorō Kanō was born on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1860 in the village of Mikage, which is located close to Kobe. He was the third son of Jerosaku Kanō, a merchant in shipping equipment. From the age of 7 to 11 years old, he studied traditional Chinese language and penmanship. During this period (1869), his mother died, and the following year Jigorō moved with his family to Japan's capitol Tokyo. Here, at the age of 17, he enrolled in the Imperial University where he got a degree in economical and political sciences. Since he knew that a job in the political area would be unsatisfactory, he transferred to the pedagogic faculty. A year after obtaining his degree he taught philosophy. Later He worked himself up from teacher to professor and finally vice-president of the school for the nobility. In 1872, he began studies in English at the national school of the foreign languages (1874), continuing in 1875 at the national school Kaisei, which became the University of Tokyo in 1877. Jigorō Kanō was a small man, even for a Japanese. Several of his less civilized fellow students made themselves heard by being rough and using brute force. The small and silent Jigorō Kanō was one of their favorite victims. However, he was too proud to let himself be walked over without any kind of resistance. His was an iron will with the resiliency of a steel spring, resisting more when put under greater stress, but never breaking. Jigorō sought some way that would enable him to fight his assailants on equal terms – and win. Purely by coincidence, he learned of *Jujutsu*, introduced to him as a means for a small man to fight of a giant of an opponent. Jigorō Kanō made a decision to learn *Jujutsu* to perfection, but because of the decline in *Jujutsu* most schools were empty and abandoned leaving many *Jujutsu* teachers no other choice than to find a job elsewhere. It was therefore not easy to find a good teacher but, at the age of 18, he found Yagi Teinosuke who taught him the basic principles.

It was through the mediation of Yagi, that in 1877, with Kanō on the faculty of literature, he started *Jujutsu* with Fukuda Hachinosuke of the *Tenjin-Shin'yō Ryū*. Hachinosuke Fukuda was a very noble person from whom Jigorō Kanō learned much. In 1879, Kanō demonstrated *Jujutsu* for Ulysses S. Grant when the former U.S. President visited Japan. This demonstration took place at the home of the prominent businessman Shibusawa Eiichi. Other people involved in this demonstration included the *Jujutsu* teachers Fukuda Hachinosuke and Iso Masatomo, and Kanō's training partner Godai Ryusaku. Unfortunately, Fukuda died soon after this demonstration, at the age of 52. Upon his death, Kanō received the school *Denshō* or Books of Transmission. Kanō then began studying with Iso, who had been a friend of Fukuda. Iso's *Jujutsu* training had given him a powerful build, and he was known for excellence in *kata*. Iso, at that time was 64 years of age, but still incredibly strong and flexible. Kanō had the utmost respect for Iso and later testified: "Never did I see a more beautiful posture than that of my teacher Iso" Iso was also a specialist in *atemi*. In 1880, a demonstration of *Jujutsu* was given at the university. Also present was the *Tozuka Ryū*. In 1881, at the age of 21, Kano received a bachelor of arts and gained a license to teach *Tenjin Shin'yō-ryū (kyōshi menkyō)*. In 1881, Iso died and like Fukuda before him, left the *Denshō* to Jigorō Kanō, naming Kanō as his successor. Kanō began the study of *Kitō Ryū* with Iikubo Tsunetoshi. In addition, in 1881, Kanō finished his studies in philosophy and moved to Eishoji. The *Kodokan* was originally located in four rooms of the Eishoji temple. The largest of the rooms, 4 by 6 meters was used as the *Dojo* or place for learning the way. In the first year, Jigorō Kanō only had nine pupils. Today the *Dojo* of the *Kodokan* is almost 45 times larger (± 1100 square meters). Millions of pupils, both male and female from a wide variety of nationalities, have visited the *Kodokan-dōjo* to date. In 1882, Kanō became a Professor of Economy at the School of Agriculture, and at the age of 22 opened his own school in Tokyo named *Kodokan*. "*Kodō*" may mean, "proclaiming the truth" and "*Kan*" means "gathering" or "hall." Teaching came naturally to Jigorō. With the name of his school, he mentioned his goal: "to gather and proclaim the truth." From the beginning, Kanō used *Judo* as an educational means. He taught *Jujutsu* according to his own beliefs, which was based on the wisdom of his teachers. The methodology was very different, however. Young and full of energy he pursued his eagerness to learn new things with a strong will. Sometimes he traveled for days, visiting other teachers and learning their secrets to improve his own techniques. Jigorō Kanō reached a height unheard of in *Jujutsu* in those days. In this first school, Kanō lived together with his pupils. He was unmarried at that time and had a servant taking care of the household. After one year the school was too small and he had to move to a larger venue. The mat was laid down in one of the halls of the Institute for English literature studies, political sciences and economy of which Jigorō Kanō in the mean while had become the principal. In 1883, Kano received the *Menkyō* or diploma of teaching from Iikubo. That same year Kanō became a student of Jikubo, head of the *Kitō* School. Although, the techniques of this school were more complicated and often difficult to understand, after one year Jikubo confessed to Kanō there was nothing more he could teach him. Beginning in 1884 pupils had to take vows before being admitted to the school. The following are the five most well known vows:

1. Now that I have decided to devote myself to *Judo* I shall not stop practicing this form of art without due cause.

2. I shall never disgrace the reputation of the *Dojo* by my personal behavior.
3. I shall never reveal secrets to outsiders and I shall not subscribe to another school unless absolutely necessary.
4. I shall not teach *Judo* without consulting, and receiving permission from, my teacher.
5. For the rest of my life I shall respect the rules of the *Kodokan*.

The *Kodokan* grew swiftly, but not without the usual difficulties and obstructions. The School was well known in the entire city, but was continuously the subject of strange stories. Rumors spread of an entirely new concept and way of teaching. Stories were told of Jigorō Kanō's strange ideals and chants. The practical results of the *Kodokan* were viewed with suspicion and contempt. Hikosuke Totsuka, an old *Jujutsu* teacher who had reopened his School, had contempt for Jigorō and his *Kodokan*. That is why a lively competition – and sometimes more – existed between the two Schools. Kanō became secretary of the School of the Noble ones and two of its pupils, Yamashita and Yokoyama, became instructors. The Tokyo city police had developed an interest in *Judo* and this art was taught for the different departments. Under the auspices of the Police Dept, a tournament was organized between the various Schools, in particular between the Schools of Jigorō Kanō and Hikosuke Totsuka. It would be a decisive battle. The system that best suited the wishes of the Ministry would be officially recognized by the Ministry and would be taught on all Schools. Defeat would have meant the end of the *Kodokan*. Both Jigorō Kanō and Hikosuke Totsuka sent their fifteen best pupils to the tournament. The *Kodokan* turned out to be the undisputed victor with thirteen matches won and two undecided. The tournament once and for all made clear that *Kodokan*, concerning its practical use, was number one. This same year, four *kata* were formalized for the *Kodokan*, these were the *Nage no Kata*, or Forms of Throwing, *Katame no Kata*, or Forms of Grappling or Control, *Ju-no-Kata*, or Forms of Suppleness and *Itsutsu no Kata*, or Forms of Five. In 1887, at the age of 27, Jigorō Kanō finalized his technical manual, but he would be 62, before he believed *Judo* had grown enough that he dared put his thoughts to paper. In 1889, Jigorō Kanō left Japan to tour Europe. He wanted to learn about Western educational methods and at the same time promote his *Judo*. Around 1890, at the request of several high British naval authorities, a demonstration in *Judo* was given for some 60 naval attaches. The spectators were enthusiastic and became the first goodwill ambassadors in Europe, as the Japanese military command opened schools for the soldiers. In 1891, when Kanō returned from his voyage, he married and became Director of the College of Kumamoto and advisor of the Minister for National Education. In 1893 Kanō found the principal of the Higher Normal School. Much later, in 1899, *Judo* entered the *Butokukai* of Kyoto, and the following year the *Kodokan* Research Center was formed. In 1900, the *Kodokan* suffered defeat in a contest with *Fusen Ryu Jujutsu*, which specialized in *ne waza* or grappling techniques. Typically, Kanō persuaded *Fusen Ryu*'s headmaster, Mataemon Tanabe, to share the syllabus with Kanō. Kanō also sought out a similar style, *Jikishin Ryu Jujutsu* and incorporated its techniques. From this point on, *Kodokan Judo* began a trend toward *ne waza*. One year later, in 1901, *Kodokan* had 6,000 members and 212 black belts. Kanō's ideas steadily spread. In 1902, Kanō traveled to China for official inspection of his schools and in 1903, Yamashita was sent to the United States, where he opened a school, which became immensely popular. President

Theodore Roosevelt was among those to visit the school and receive instruction from Yamashita. *Kodokan* still retains the letters of gratitude to Jigorō Kanō from the President. In 1905, as a member of Commissions of National Education, Kanō made his second voyage to China. In 1907, the *Kodokan* moved to Shimotomisaka, with 207 *tatami*. This same year, Kanō had the sleeves of the *uwagi* (jacket) and pant legs of the *zubon* lengthened, as well as establishing the *Kyu-Dan* system. At that time, there were three white belts, three brown belts and three black belts. Kanō, recognized by his peers as a legitimate founder of a system held no rank. Traditionally, the founder could not be ranked with a system of his founding. Kanō never claimed a rank in *Judo* and usually wore a wide white belt, and more rarely a black one. It was never mentioned if the black belt were for *judo*, or for the *jujutsu* ranks. After his death, *Kodokan* awarded him an honorary 12<sup>th</sup> Degree, designated as a “double width white belt.” The year 1909 found Kanō seated on the Olympic Committee; a position he kept until his death in 1938. This same year, he began charging admission fees for new students and examination fees. Prior to this, Kanō had used all his own income from teaching, giving lectures and doing translations and correctional work to defray expenses for himself and his students. With the increased number of students, he could no longer afford to do this. Although not generally known, it was due in great part to his efforts that *Judo* and *Kendo* became part of the Japanese public schools programs in the 1910’s. A section for the training of professors in *Kodokan Judo* was created in 1911, and the same year found Kanō elected as president of the Japanese Sporting Federation. In addition, in 1911, Kanō founded the Japan Amateur Athletic Association. The *Kodokan* became a repository of historical and technical information. Kanō had studied *Seigo Ryu*, and *Yagyu Ryu*, as well as *his Kito Ryu* and *Tenshin Shin’ yo Ryu*. *Tenshin Shin’ yo Ryu* was, itself, a fusion of *Yoshin Ryu* and *Shin No Shindo Ryu Jujutsu*. In addition, *Yoshin Ryu* was Yamashita's specialty. *Tenshinshin’ yo Ryu* incorporated striking, throwing, holding, and choking techniques as well as joint locks and *aiki*-type movements. Training also included study of eighteen battlefield weapons. Later, *Takeuchi Ryu* masters participated in the construction of the *Kodokan* syllabus. *Takeuchi Ryu* itself was a derivative of *Daito Ryu*. As *Daito Ryu* evolved into subsequent arts, Kanō sent students such as Mochizuki to Sokaku Takeda and Kenji Tomiki to Morihei Ueshiba to bring back developments. In 1912, Kanō called together the remaining leader masters of *Jujutsu* to finalize a *Kodokan* syllabus of training and *kata*. Aoyagi of *Sosuishi Ryu*, Takano, Yano, Kotaro Imei and Hikasuburo Ohshima participated from *Takeuchi Ryu*. Jushin Sekiguchi and Mogichi Tsumizu participated from *Sekiguchi Ryu*, Eguchi from *Kyushin Ryu*, and Hoshino from *Shiten Ryu*, Inazu from *Miura Ryu*. Takamatsu, a *Kukkishin Ryu* expert, had worked with Kanō on weapons, at which Kanō was a recognized expert, and contributed his favorite personal technique of *hiza guruma*, which remains a popular *Judo* competition technique. 1912 was the year the rules of *randori* changed, as well as the requirements for *Shodan*. It was during this year that Yokoyama died; he was posthumously promoted to 10<sup>th</sup> *dan*. Kanō was a pioneer of international sports, being the first Asian member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC); a position held by Kanō from 1909 until 1938. He officially represented Japan at most Olympic Games between 1912 and 1936. He served as leading spokesman for Japan’s bid for the 1940 Olympic Games. The year 1920 found Kanō on this third voyage to Europe, via the United States. He visited the Budokai of London With Aida Koichi. The *Kodokan Dan Grade Holder’s Association* was formed

in 1922. The modern derivatives of *Judo*, Gracie Jujitsu and Sambo, show the influence of *Kodokan*'s technical approach and attitude. The founders of both these arts learned *Judo* during this pre-1925 period. *Kodokan* opened the women's *Judo* section (*joshi-bu*) in 1926. Fukuda Keiko, the granddaughter of Kano's *Tenjin Shin'yo-ryu* instructor, headed the department. Kano made his fourth voyage to Europe, this time by way of China and Moscow. The meeting was in Versailles and there was a demonstration in Italy with Mori Matakatsu as his uke. Other European sites visited were Geneva, Paris, London and Berlin. He gave a demonstration to the Ministry for National Education on *Seiryoku Zen'yo no Kata*. Nagaoka and Mifune assisted. During this time he introduced the practice of *bojutsu* of the *Katori Ryu*; all of this in the year 1928. In 1929, Kano and Yamashita performed the *Koshiki no Kata* at the Imperial Palace (film). In 1932, Kano visited Los Angeles, CA, where he gave speeches to the Olympic Committee. 1932 also was the year the *Judo* Medical Research Society was formed. In addition to the above, in 1932, Kano took on the position of Minister of Physical Education, and one year later opened a new *Kodokan dojo*. Although his health left much to be desired, he continued to teach until the end of his life. Almost daily he could be found on the *judo* mat. Kano made a fifth voyage to Europe by way of China, Moscow and Vienna, in 1933. He met with Moshe Feldenkrais in Paris at the Technical School, and gave a demonstration with Kotani Sumiyuki in London. In addition he attended a conference in Munich and gave a speech in Madrid. A sixth voyage to Europe, in 1934, was by way of Moscow, Vienna and Athens, where he gave a speech. He went to Paris with Nagaoka, taking films on *randori* and *kata* to Feldenkrais. His return was by way of Colombo, Singapore, Hong-Kong and Shanghai. In 1936, he made a seventh voyage to the Olympic Committee of Berlin by way of the United States. He stopped in Paris to visit with Kawaishi Mikonosuke, whom he recommended to Feldenkrais as the Japanese instructor of *Judo*. Western European branches of *Kodokan* were established in 1938. Professor Koizumi Gunji was sent to England by Kano. Koizumi opened the Budokai in London, where he taught *Judo*. Professor Hanno Rhi [sic] left for Germany and from there he traveled on to Switzerland. Professor Kawaishi Mikonosuke was assigned to France, and his innovative system is widely used throughout Europe. 1938 was the year of Kano's eighth, and final, voyage to Europe, by way of Cairo and Athens. Kano attended the ceremony of the death of Coubet, then went to Italy and Paris to see his former pupil and ambassador of Japan, Yotaro Sugimura. He had attended the Olympic Congress in Cairo, and was successful in having them held in Japan – a triumph which was shattered by WWII. On his return voyage on the *Hikawamaru*, Kano, running a high fever, had contracted the flu, which developed into pneumonia on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. He died at 6:30 PM on May 4<sup>th</sup>, two days before arriving at Yokohama, Japan, passing away quietly and at ease. His official honors and decorations included the First Order of Merit and Grand Order of the Rising Sun, and the Third Imperial Degree. Kano was inducted into the IJF Hall of Fame on 14 May 1999