History of Jujutsu

The history of jujutsu lies in the pre-history of Japan, actually, in the reality of mankind. Man has needed to defend himself from the dawn of time. The earliest traceable culture in Japan dates from the year 5000 BC. From this period, clay figures of warriors were uncovered from tombs. Though the history of Jujutsu may well be considered to have begun in the first or second century BC, it's renaissance or Golden Age was during the Tokugawan era, (1603-1867 AD). It was during this period that major schools of the art flourished and became specific, identifiable martial sciences.

This period of time was the filter bed of the martial arts. They were tried and tested, passed or failed during this time. Those that failed, did so because of their ineffective or unrealistic techniques. Some styles were absorbed into others, and new styles arose through improvements on the techniques of the original schools. The testing ground for theory was in actual combat. The term jujutsu was formulated during the seventeenth or eighteenth century. Jujutsu once had many other names, such as: Tai-Jutsu, Kumiuchi, Hakute, Torite, Kenpo, and Yawara. Jujutsu is also spelled: Jiu-Jiutsu, Ju-Jitsu, or Ju-Jitsu. The spelling, Jujutsu, is traditionally used. Jutsu refers to an art, science or discipline. Ju refers to yielding, flexibility and suppleness.

Prior to and during the rise of the Tokugawan Shogunate (Military Government), many schools of martial arts developed immobilizing holds and methods of striking, which we know as Atemi. These methods utilized mainly the elbows, hips, fists and knees, with none of the finger jabbing associated with the late Edo period jujutsu or present day styles. Grappling was used primarily as a standby or asset to the weapons training of the bushi (military). During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a few bujutsu ryu (martial art systems), gave prominence to the grappling techniques over weapons techniques.

The Samurai had an arsenal of weapon arts to choose from:

- Sojutsu: The Art of the spear and associated weapons
- Kenjutsu: The Art of the sword and other hand held bladed weapons
- Bojutsu: The Art of the stave, stick, baton or cudgel-type weapon
- Bajutsu: The Art of horsemanship
- Suieijutsu: The Art of swimming, both with and without armor
- Senjojutsu: The Art of military tactics
- Kyujutsu: The Art of archery
- Hojutsu: The Art of gunnery
- Naginatajutsu: The Art of the long halberd
- Iautsu: The Art of drawing the sword (also known as Battojutsu)
- Kusarigarnajutsu: The Art of chain and sickle
- Tantojutsu: The Art of the dagger
• Toritejutsu: The Art of rope binding

Ryu is a system, mode or tradition of martial practice. Some excelled in certain forms and became noted for their field of excellence. For example, Tenshin Katori Shinto Ryu is classified as a kenjutsu ryu. Muso Shinden Ryu is an iai-jutsu ryu. The schools or traditions of Ninjutsu were broken down into Togakure Ninpo Ryu, (Tai-jutsu), Koga Ninja Ryu, Gyokku Ryu and Kotto Ryu which were grappling and tearing schools, who used Tekagi (spiked gauntlets) or Shuriken (spikes). Being classified a jujutsu school did not exclude the use of weapons.

It was in the Tokugawan era that two lineages of jujutsu became interwoven. The first lineage was the purely Japanese methods such as Oshi-Ki-Uchi modes of the Daito Ryu. The second lineage is that of the Chinese connection. There are two points of transmission in the history of jujutsu. One was pre-Tokugawan and the other Tokugawan. The first, legend says, is that a physician and herbalist traveled to Peking to study Chinese methods of healing. He learned resuscitation techniques, massage, bone setting and joint manipulation which are known in Japanese as Kappo or Kuatsu. He learned the theory of yin and yang and trained many days in a monastery. Upon returning to Japan, he formed the Yoshin Ryu which incorporated techniques he learned and adapted, and added the principle of non-resistance. Offshoots of this ryu came into being. One, Kiajutsu, centered upon the source of "Ki", energy. Others developed their own strengths, taking what they felt was best from the Japanese and Chinese knowledge.

The second was the Ryoi Shinto Ryu, founded in a monastery in what is now a suburb of modern Tokyo. A Chinese master of Chiao-Ti-Shu (Chinese version of jujutsu) and healer with a Confucian background moved to Japan to escape the Mongol invasion of China in the 1600's. He met a Japanese master of jujutsu. These two masters met and exchanged information. Eventually the Chinese master returned, and Fukuno, the founder of Ryoi Shinto Ryu adapted all he learned into his system. This was the beginning of the rise of modern jujutsu.
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