

Is It Danzan Ryu Jujitsu?

Professor Bob McKean

During the late 1920's and early 1930's, Professor Henry S. Okazaki (1880-1951) built his Danzan Ryu Jujitsu system by collecting different arts that were available to him in Hawaii. It is considered by many that DZR was officially established in 1928. Professor Okazaki died in 1951. He was able to only teach his DZR to others for less than twenty-three years.

When Professor Okazaki died in 1951 he left no designated successor or inheritor to carry on his ryu. Without a successor to direct and manage the ryu, DZR became frozen in time. DZR had always been in a state of transition. Professor Okazaki was always modifying his ryu to include new or improved arts. What he was teaching to his disciples in the early 1930's was not totally the same as what he was teaching to them in the late 1940's.

During the 1930's Judo had a major influence on the arts Professor Okazaki included in his DZR. The passing on of these arts can be found with the early black belt disciples of Professor Okazaki who came to the mainland prior to WWII. During WWII Judo was out of favor because of its relationship to Japan. During the 1940's DZR was strongly influenced by the striking arts found in Kenpo Karate and Kajukenbo. This can be found with several of Professor Okazaki's black belt disciples who came to the mainland after WWII.

With teaching his ryu for only 23 years, why did Professor Okazaki intentionally not designate a successor? Was it his intention to have his disciples further develop DZR on their own as individuals instead of by one person or one organization? Many of Professor Okazaki's black belt disciples did not pursue passing his DZR on to others. Many of those who did had different exposures to DZR and the teachings of Professor Okazaki. There is a noted difference in the DZR arts between those disciples who trained with Professor Okazaki prior to WWII and those of post WWII as well as the number of years they spent training under Professor Okazaki. Pre WWII disciples such as Professor Ray Law (1899-1969) and Professor Bud Estes (1909-1981) trained two and four years under Professor Okazaki while post WWII disciples such as Professor Bill Montero (1916-1992) and Professor John Cahill (1921-1962) trained thirteen and fifteen years.

As Professor Okazaki's disciples moved to the U.S. mainland, prior to and after WWII, some joined together to form DZR organizations while others went out on their own to form individual schools and other DZR organizations. Some of these early DZR organizations eventually split into other DZR organizations.

Today there are 12 DZR organizations with approximately 322 schools and 7,500 members. Without a designated successor, or one central organization, the different DZR organizations have been left to interpret and teach the DZR arts, principles and concepts their own specific way. Some DZR organizations have included other martial arts into their organization making it a mixed martial arts group and not specifically

DZR. Others have changed some of the known original arts of DZR and have even made up their own lists of arts and call them Danzan Ryu Jujitsu.

Several of Professor Okazaki's black belt disciples took some of the arts, principles and concepts of DZR and designed their own system and included additional arts, principles and concepts. These disciples named the systems they developed and did not call them DZR. They continued to teach and promoted DZR but they also taught and promoted their own system. Some of these disciples of Professor Okazaki include:

Professor Wally Jay (1917-2011)	Small Circle Jujitsu
Professor Joe Holck (1926-2011)	Matsuno Ryu Goshin Jitsu
Professor John Chow-Hoon (1927-1988)	Chow-Hoon Goshin Jitsu
Professor Sig Kufferath (1911-1999)	Ken Ju Ryu Kenpo Ju Jitsu

These refined branch systems of DZR are still being taught by the black belt disciples of their founders but they are not being called DZR.

I believe Professor Okazaki intentionally did not appoint a successor or inheritor of his DZR because he did not want his ryu to become stagnant and eventually become a "classical martial art." Remember he had only been teaching DZR for approximately twenty-three years. Most importantly Professor Okazaki gave us more than just lists of arts. He gave us a code of conduct to live by and a path to follow to help further develop our character.

Now for the question for those of us who study DZR. When does DZR stop being DZR? Each of Professor Okazaki's disciples took something with them when they left regardless of how many years they trained or during which years they trained. These disciples are now gone as are many of the second generation black belts of DZR. During my 50+ years of DZR training and teaching I have seen many of the DZR arts, principles and concepts changed, dropped or interpreted in many different ways. With each new generation of DZR black belts the ryu seems to change, sometimes for the betterment of DZR and sometimes not.

The original arts, principles and concepts of Danzan Ryu Jujitsu belong only to Professor Henry Okazaki. As students of DZR it should be our duty and responsibility to preserve, protect and perpetuate the teachings of Professor Okazaki to the best of our ability. If we take away or add to his teachings it is still DZR or do we change the name of the ryu we developed out of respect for Professor Okazaki?

My Sensei, Professor Bill Montero, told me just prior to his passing, "Make DZR yours and always give credit where credit is due".

Professor Bob McKean has been a student of Danzan Ryu for more than 50 years. If you would like to share your constructive comments, additional facts or evidence based information on this subject, please contact Bob at cop2rn@aol.com

October 31, 2019