

What is a Professor?

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Some of the questions that come up occasionally from newer martial arts people are "what does it mean to be called *Professor*," and "are there levels of professorship just like levels of black belt?" Recently, the questions were raised again and they merit some discussion.

Addressing the first question, I believe that someone who is involved in the martial disciplines over a period of time goes through changes as he or she progresses. They start as "martial practitioners," learning the basic techniques and copying the movements as best as they can. Everyone who begins a journey down the path of any martial art starts here. Over a period of time, the person comes to know the techniques and perform them with proficiency. At some point, they begin taking techniques apart, laying the parts out and analyzing them to learn why they work. It is here, when the essence of a technique can be identified and used to teach the technique to any student, regardless of size, weight, age, etc., that they transition to the stage of becoming a "martial artist."

There is much more to the arts than physical techniques, and as the martial artist gains knowledge, there is an understanding of the tremendous obligation that attaches to it. To be a Professor of anything is an acknowledgement by others within that group, usually other Professors, that you "profess" the entire philosophy the entity carries, as reflected by one's actions. In the case of our system, what a Danzan Ryu Professor professes can be found in the Esoteric Principles: gratitude for what Heaven and Earth provide; obligation to the family, the community and the nation; refraining from arrogance; courage, modesty, service and loyalty. When a person engenders these qualities and virtues in his daily life, he is certainly a candidate for the title of Professor.

As to a ranking regime in professorship, this is a purely subjective concept. However, just as there are levels of the title of monsignori, the same may be said of the title of Professor.

1. At the top of the list, by virtue of its historical status within the Danzan Ryu family, is professorship issued by the American Jujitsu Institute of Hawaii with the title, "*Professor of the Institute*." Its first professor was Professor Okazaki and the Institute was the only body that he personally approved. The fact that a person from any organization can be conferred the title by the AJI suggests that the Institute transcends organizational boundaries in favor of the Danzan Ryu jujitsu system, so as to recognize worthy individuals.

2. Next come titles conferred by legitimate Danzan Ryu organizations. Generally, the criteria for conferral of the title of Professor is uniform among the various organizations, with very little variance and, as indicated above, the measuring stick is the Esoteric Principles. Because of the similarity of the prerequisites, other organizations usually recognize and honor the Professors outside of their respective organizations.

3. Lastly, there is the "organizational Professor." These are titles issued primarily for loyalty to a particular organization. The expectations are not dictated or defined by the Esoteric Principles, as in the case of a Danzan Ryu professor. They are defined by what organizational obligations are expected of the conferee. Examples of such expectations might be the registering of all students in the person's dojo with that particular organization, heavy or exclusive participation in the organization's events (and requiring one's students to attend) or requiring all Black Belt candidates to test with that organization. To the organizational professor, the dojo, the sensei and the *ryu* take a back seat.

When one looks at these defining expectations, the distinction between a Danzan Ryu professor and an organizational professor becomes clear. A Danzan Ryu professor is expected to live his life by the Esoteric Principles. An organizational professor is expected to follow the rule of the group, whether or not that rule collides or contradicts the Esoteric Principles or established norms of Ohana and Kokua. From this, one may reasonably infer that if an "organizational Professor" fails to adhere to the organizational expectations that his or her title can be stripped away.

In my life, I have met dozens of people with the title of Professor. To me, there are some that I term, "24/7 Professors" by virtue of their demeanor and their lives: the names of Professor Wheat, Professor Gonzales, Professor Jay, Professor Kufferath, Professor Holck, Professor Limbago, Professor Luke, Professor Congistre and Professor Estes are but a few. There are others, and I include myself, that have not attained that level and are still working towards it. This comprises a majority of those with the title of Professor. On the mat, I am "Professor Fischer" and off the mat, I'm "Bill. Perfection of character is not easily achieved and is a lifelong pursuit.

Sadly, there are some for whom I use the title solely as a courtesy title and not one of respect. These are usually the ones who insist on being called "Professor" while at the same time acting contrary to the Esoteric Principles. Ohana and Kokua are empty terms that are bandied about without thought or commitment. Their actions, however, never go unnoticed and continue to define them. As the character, Kuato, said in the movie, **Total Recall**, --"You are what you do. A man is defined by his actions."