

# The Higher Lists of *Danzan Ryu Jujutsu*

Tom Lang, Yodan  
January 8, 2009

## Introduction

Professor Okazaki organized his *Danzan Ryu Jujutsu* as a classical Japanese martial tradition, or *ryu*. The *ryu* has three levels: *shoden*, the beginning level; *chuden*, the middle level, and *okuden*, the advanced, secret, or most protected level. Not to be confused with these three levels is *kuden*, or the spoken tradition of “whispered secrets,” which is a form of instruction from a master to trusted senior students. Each of these levels reflects the philosophy behind our system, and we are only beginning to explore the implications of this philosophy.

For a variety of reasons, we know a great deal about the techniques in the *shoden* and *chuden* levels. However, the *okuden* level – *Shinin no Maki*, *Shinyo no Maki*, and *Shingin no Maki* – differ from other techniques in the system in important ways. Most importantly, because Professor Okazaki as far as we know did not record these lists or techniques on any of the *moku roku* (the “catalog” of techniques given to new instructors) or *kaidensho* (a certificate of mastery or “graduation” given when instruction is complete), we do not have the Japanese written characters (*kanji*) for the names of the lists or for most of their techniques. (However, see the note about Professor Janovich, below.) Understanding what these lists contribute to the philosophy of *Danzan Ryu* is essential to understanding that philosophy, and the absence of *kanji* to aid in this understanding does not mean that we have no information about them. Professor Okazaki wrote several documents about his system, and all contain information about the philosophy behind it.

Translating Japanese to English is not straight-forward. Like English, Japanese has many homonyms: spoken words and *kanji* with quite different meanings that are nevertheless pronounced identically. A single *kanji* can also be pronounced in several, quite different ways, which also sometimes changes their meaning. For example, the *kanji* for mountain is pronounced *yama* in Japanese but *shan* in Chinese, and the Japanese use both pronunciations (although they drop the ‘h’ and say “*san*” as a prefix and use “*zan*” as a suffix). Thus, in principle, *Dan-zan Ryu* could be pronounced *Dan-yama Ryu*. However, many *kanji* can be read with either the Japanese pronunciation (the *kun-yomi* form) or the Chinese pronunciation (the *on-yomi* form). As a general rule, *on-yomi* and *kun-yomi* forms are not mixed in a single word. Thus, calling the system *Dan-yama Ryu* would be incorrect, and the speaker’s Japanese would be regarded as a poor.

*Kanji* are vital to understanding the meaning of Japanese terms. For example, *tatsumaki jime* (at the end of *Shime no Kata*) can be translated *phonetically* as “standing-winding constriction.” That is, there is a *kanji* for standing that is pronounced *tatsu*, and there is a *kanji* for winding that is pronounced *maki*. However, the *kanji* Professor Okazaki used to name this technique actually means “dragon,” although it is still pronounced “*tatsu*.” Thus, “dragon-winding constriction,” not “standing-winding constriction” is correct. However, when the *kanji* for “dragon-winding” appear together, they mean “hurricane.” Thus, *tatsumaki jime* should be translated as “hurricane constriction,” not “dragon-winding constriction” or “standing-winding constriction.” Another example is the fact that the *kanji* Professor Okazaki used for *shime* (“constriction”) is not the same as the *kanji* used by Jigoro Kano, founder of *Kodokan Judo*, to refer to the same concept, even though the *kanji* mean the same thing and are pronounced alike.

Another reason phonetic translations can be problematic is that Professor Okazaki used *kanji* that are no longer commonly used. For example, he used an older *kanji* for *tori* (meaning to seize or to take) than that used in *Kodokan Judo* and *Aikido*. For this reason, one has to use the complete *New Nelson Japanese-English Character Dictionary*, which contains 7,100 *kanji*, to identify all of the *kanji* Professor Okazaki used in his writing. That is, many of the *kanji* he used are not included in non-academic Japanese-English dictionaries (such as the Classic Edition of *the Modern Reader's Japanese-English Character Dictionary*, which contains only 5,400 *kanji*) or in modern computerized character sets, which can lead to mistakes when assigning a *kanji* to a term on the basis of how it is pronounced. Without the *kanji*, we have only the phonetic name of the term and the translations and transliterations (the English spelling of Japanese words) from student’s notebooks, which may not reflect correct, current, or standard usage but that may provide clues as to the correct meaning.

Here, I comment on what we know and don’t now about the names of the higher lists of the system and how this information may contribute to the overall philosophy of the system. In the absence of *kanji* that can be reliably attributed to Professor Okazaki, we simply do not know for certain what the names mean: most of what follows is conjecture. We can, however, present the best conjectures to date. The conjectures here come from the scholarship of Professor Tom Jenkins of the AJFF, who has translated several of Professor Okazaki’s *moku roku* and *kaidensho* and from Professor Tony Janovich, a senior student of Professor Sig Kufferath, himself a direct student of Professor Okazaki.

Professor Janovich says that he has Professor Okazaki’s handwritten *kanji* for the *okuden* lists, which were given to Professor Kuferath, who gave them to him (see also “Success is in the Beginning” at: <http://www.kodenkan.com/success.html>). If so, speculation can be replaced by scholarship. The problem is that some of the *kanji* allegedly from these *okuden* lists are not consistent with conventional Japanese usage,

with Professor Okazaki's usage in his other writings, or with other established historical records. Nevertheless, Professor Janovich graciously referred me to the above article on his web site in which he relates his understanding of the *okuden*. I have tried to paraphrase him accurately for purposes of comparison.

Professor Jenkins began studying *jujutsu* with Professor Estes in 1959. The definitions of the lists given here are from Professor Estes. In addition, for several years, Professor Jenkins intensively studied written Japanese, especially the older terms used in the martial arts, in the process of translating Professor Okazaki's writings. He researched and compiled the *Japanese Martial Arts Character Dictionary* (see [martialartsdictionary.com](http://martialartsdictionary.com)). The accuracy of his dictionary and translations of several of Prof. Okazaki's scrolls have been verified by Dr. Kimihiko Nomura, Professor of Japanese Language and Culture, California State University, Chico. To authenticate Professor Estes's interpretations of the higher boards in the absence of *kanji*, he compared all possible combinations of the *kanji* pronounced as *Shinin*, *Shinyo*, and *Shingin* and placed them in the context of the scrolls written by Professor Okazaki to arrive at his interpretations. The information here comes from several conversations with him. As before, I have paraphrased him for purposes of the comparison.

## Shinto or Zen?

At the root of the difference between the two interpretations is whether Professor Okazaki was more concerned with *Shinto* or *Zen* when he formulated these lists. Professor Janovich reports that Professor Okazaki believed in Shinto, until shortly before his death, when he converted to Christianity. Indeed, in scrolls written before World War II, Prof. Okazaki includes several references to *Shinto* and to the Emperor, whose worship had become associated with *Shinto*. These references do not appear in scrolls written after the War because they had become associated with Japanese nationalism and militarism.

*Shintoism* is Japan's traditional religion. It is a naturalistic and animistic religion; animals and things (rocks, trees) may have or be possessed by spirits, or *kami*, of which there are literally thousands. The *kami* are very human-like. They inhabit the same world as humans, and have the same thoughts, feelings, and foibles. *Shinto* is not especially concerned with an afterlife; more emphasis is placed on fitting into this world than preparing for the next. Thus, *Shinto* rituals and teaching focus on maintaining relationships between humans and *kami*.

According to Professor Jenkins, Professor Okazaki modeled *Danzan Ryu Jujutsu* on the philosophy of *Kodokan Judo*, in which he was ranked as a *sandan*, and that has a traditional Zen structure. He even calls his system *Kodenkan Judo* (not *jujutsu*) in his scrolls and in his advertising at the time. The "den" in *Kodenkan* literally means a

“school of Zen transmission,” and “do,” as a philosophical way, is a Zen way to enlightenment (*satori*).

*Buddhism* has co-existed with and been blended into *Shinto* since it came to Japan from China in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. (Buddhism is concerned with freeing one’s self from attachments to worldly goods and emotions. It emphasizes mindful acceptance of the present moment, spontaneous action, and letting go of self-conscious, judgmental thinking. The path to this enlightenment is through austere training and discipline (*shugyo*). Professor Okazaki’s daughter, Imi, is on record as saying that her father was Buddhist.

The problem is made more difficult because the line between *Shinto* and Zen is fuzzy. In Japan, one can believe in *Buddhism*, *Shintoism*, and Christianity at the same time, without conflict. Thus, the fact the Professor Okazaki believed in *Buddhism* does not mean that he did not embrace *Shinto* and vice versa.

Dozens of Japanese words are transliterated (spelled) as *shin*. For our purposes, *shin* can be expressed by the *kanji* meaning heart (meaning both courage and the organ and that can also be pronounced as *kokoro*) or by the *kanji* meaning a spirit or a god in the *Shinto* religion (and that can also be pronounced as *kami*.) At issue, then, is whether Prof. Okazaki meant *shin-kokoro*, which is a *Buddhist* concept, or *shin-kami*, which is a *Shinto* concept.

### ***Shi-nin or Shin-nin no Maki***

A common (phonetic) translation of the words *Shin-nin no Maki* (pronounced “sheen-nihn no mahkey”; note the double “n,” which is marked by a slight pause when pronouncing the term) is “the Scroll of a Spiritual Person” (Table 1). As Professor Janovich says in his article:

“One must remember that Prof. Okazaki followed *Shinto*. *Shinto* means “way of the gods.” It worships nature, and its goal is man in harmony with nature. *Shinto* believes that life is a constant progression. So “*Shin Nin*” illustrates that a progression has been made to the first of the black belt lists. Thus, there is “*Shin*” and “*Nin*” representing the progression of man to “*Kami*” or “*Shin*.”

Professor Jenkins believes that the name of the list is *Shinin no Maki* (pronounced “she-nihn no mahkey”; note the single “n”) and translates it as “the Scroll of a Dead Person.” “Death” in this instance is the death of the ego, in the *Buddhist* sense. Thus, the list could also be translated as the “Scroll of Self-Abandonment,” a concept that

includes “*sutemi*,” or abandoning thoughts of life and death to commit one’s self completely to the technique. *Sutemi* is, in fact, a synonym for *shinin*.

### ***Shin-yo no Maki***

Both Professor Jenkins and Janovich spell the name of this list “*Shin-yo No Maki*” (pronounced “shihn-yo no mahkey”), but Professor Jenkins translates it as “The Scroll of Heart” or the “Scroll of Courage,” whereas Professor Janovich translates it as the “Scroll of the Positive Spirit” (Table 2).

According to Professor Janovich:

“There is *shinyo kohiryoku*, a positive mind progressing toward becoming powerful and toward becoming *kami*. At this point, one enters a realm of new light. One can now teach others to a point of satisfaction for both student and teacher.”

Professor Jenkins suggests that once one has trained to abandon one’s self (*shinin*), through the refining process of *shugyo*, one must also cultivate "heart" or "martial courage." The courage, for example, to face superior numbers of opponents in combat, as taught in some of these arts.

### ***Shin-gin or Shin-gen no Maki***

Professor Jenkins spells this list *Shingin* (pronounced “*shin-gihn*,” not “*shin-jhin*”), meaning “moaning and groaning,” whereas Professor Janovich spells it *Shingen* (pronounced “*shin-gehn*”) and translates it as the “Scroll of the Original Spirit” (Table 3).

Professor Janovich:

“*Shinto* believes that man himself is biologically descended from the *kami* (gods). Therefore, anything that exists can realize its potential, and become *kami*. At this point, Prof. Okazaki told Prof Kufferath, we have *Shin Gen No Maki*. *Gen* can mean health, life, or gaining the ultimate truth. In this case, when *Gen* is used as the second character in a proper name it means origin or source. So we are back to the origin, beginning or *kami* in this sense. This means that *Shingen* has led us to the end, which once again is the beginning. The circle is complete and now one travels a full circle in their life and art.”

Professor Jenkins sees this list in two ways. First, as the words “moaning and groaning” indicate, these techniques hurt! Their purpose is to discourage or disable an opponent as quickly, efficiently, and effectively as possible. To apply them, however – and this is the second, *Zen*, interpretation – requires the *Buddhist* principle of *munen muso* or “no mind and no concern with death.” That is, one cannot “plan” to do these techniques during combat, one must instinctively know when and how to apply them. This ability requires skills that take years to master, which is why this list is the last to be taught.

## Conclusions

Why does it matter what Professor Okazaki meant when he named the lists of his system? I think there are at least two reasons. We spend decades learning Professor Okazaki’s system of *jujutsu*, so we should be interested in understanding his entire system: not just the components but his overall organization, intent, and philosophy. To gain this understanding, we need to know how the higher lists relate to the rest of the system.

The other reason we need to understand the higher lists correctly concerns how we present ourselves to the rest of the martial arts community. As interest in the Japanese martial arts increases, more and more people are aware of the clues of authenticity. For example, a black belt who consistently crosses the right side of his *gi* over the left will instantly be pegged as a fake; legitimate Japanese martial artists simply do not dress this way. The same can be said for referring to our system as *Dan-yama Ryu*. The same principle applies to the interpretation we chose for the higher lists; we need to be as accurate as possible.

The choice is not between Professor Jenkins and Professor Janovich. Both have dedicated their lives to *Danzan Ryu Jujutsu* and both sincerely believe that their interpretations are correct. Professor Okazaki wrote that “Literary arts and martial arts are both the Way toward enlightenment, and they both have equal importance . . .” That is, we should look to the literary arts – to informed scholarship – to make this choice.

## Addendum

Since this article was submitted, doubts about the existence of original *kanji* for the higher boards have only increased. However, even if original *kanji* do not exist, their absence does not mean that the Shinto interpretation is incorrect, only that *kanji* to support this interpretation are not available. We are still left with the same possibilities; the Shinto interpretation, which is based on

limited, hearsay information, and the Buddhist interpretation, which is based on a larger amount of indirect but documented evidence.

**Table 1. Interpretations of *Shi-nin No Maki* or *Shin-nin No Maki***

	<b>As Interpreted by Professor Tom Jenkins</b>	<b>As Interpreted by Professor Tony Janovich</b>
<b>Transliteration</b>	Shi-nin no Maki	Shin-nin no Maki
<b>Pronunciation</b>	SHE-NEEN no mah-key ( <i>not</i> sha-NIHN)*	SHIHN-NEEN no mah-key
<b>Literal Meaning</b>	Scroll of a Dead Person ( <i>shi</i> = dead; <i>nin</i> = person)	Scroll of a Spiritual Person (the character “ <i>shin</i> ” can also be read as “ <i>kami</i> ,” a Shinto god or spirit”; <i>nin</i> = person)
<b>Translation</b>	Scroll of Self-Abandonment or Scroll of Selflessness	Scroll of Spiritual Development
<b>Interpretation</b>	This list is the first to prepare the student for combat. When one is truly committed to combat, he or she has abandoned thoughts of life and death. When faced with adversity, thinking of life or death produces hesitation and weakens one’s resolve.	<i>Shin</i> or <i>kami</i> (spirit) refers to “that which is above,” meaning above humankind. One is now beginning to rising above mundane considerations; that is, one is becoming closer to the Shinto <i>kami</i> spirits or gods.

\* The correct pronunciation of *nin* is “neen” (rhymes with “lean”), not “nihn” (rhymes with “pin”), as we have pronounced it for years in the AJJF. That is, *ni-nin* (two-person) *nage* is pronounced “NEE-NEEN NAH-GAY.” Syllables are rarely stressed in Japanese; each receives the same emphasis. So, it is not ai-KI-do, as is often heard, but AI-KI-DO. The same rule applies here: SHE-NEEN, not sha-NIHN, is the correct pronunciation.



**Table 2. Interpretations of *Shin-yo no Maki***

	As Interpreted by Professor Tom Jenkins	As Interpreted by Professor Tony Janovich
<b>Transliteration</b>	Shin-yo no Maki	
<b>Pronunciation</b>	SHIN-YOH no mah-key (not shihn-YOH)	
<b>Literal Meaning</b>	Scroll of the Necessity for "Heart" or Courage ( <i>shin</i> = heart ; <i>yo</i> = necessary)	Scroll of the Positive Spirit (“ <i>In-yo</i> ” [“een-yoh”] is Japanese for “ <i>yin- yang</i> ”; “ <i>yo</i> ” is the positive spirit and “ <i>in</i> ,” the negative spirit.)
<b>Translation</b>	Scroll of "Heart" or Scroll of Courage	Scroll of Further Spiritual Development
<b>Interpretation</b>	This list continues to prepare the student for combat by emphasizing the courage to take on even multiple opponents. <i>Shinyo</i> techniques often indicate combative strategies that allow one to defend one’s <i>dojo</i> .	The student continues to progress spiritually; to develop in a positive direction toward transcending mundane human experience.

**Table 3. Interpretations of *Shin-gin no Maki* or *Shin-gen no Maki***

	<b>As Interpreted by Professor Tom Jenkins</b>	<b>As Interpreted by Professor Tony Janovich</b>
<b>Transliteration</b>	Shin-gin no Maki	Shin-gen no Maki
<b>Pronunciation</b>	SHIN-GIHN no mah-key ( <i>not</i> shin-JIN)	SHIN-GEHN no mah-key ( <i>not</i> shin-JEN)
<b>Literal Meaning</b>	Scroll of Moaning-Groaning ( <i>shin</i> = “moan and groan”; <i>gin</i> = indicates an on-going process)	Scroll of the Original Spirit
<b>Translation</b>	Scroll of Moaning-Groaning	Scroll of the Original Spirit
<b>Interpretation</b>	Striking is the most efficient form of unarmed combat, but strikes must be delivered quickly, accurately, and instinctively. These techniques are at the end of the system because their proper execution requires mastery of non-conscious thinking, which is to be developed in the previous lists..	" <i>Gen</i> " can mean gaining the ultimate truth. When used as the second character in a proper name, it means “origin” or “source.” Thus, <i>Shingen</i> means to return to the original spirit; the circle of development has been completed.