

# Irregularities in the Alleged Original Kanji for the Higher Boards of *Danzan Ryu Jujutsu*

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## Background

Professors Janovich and Arrington claim that their sensei, Professor Kufferath, received from Professor Okazaki a list of kanji, in Professor Okazaki's handwriting, for all the names of the three highest boards of the system (SHININ NO MAKI, SHINYO NO MAKI, and SHINGIN NO MAKI) and all of their techniques. This claim is important because Professor Okazaki did not include the kanji for the names and techniques of these boards in any of his other known writings, including the *mokuroku* in which he lists the names and techniques for the other basic boards of *Danzan Ryu*. Both Professor Janovich and Professor Arrington pledged to Professor Kufferath that they would not share the original, handwritten kanji, although Professor Arrington was allowed to post these kanji on his superlative website: <http://www.danzan.com/>.

However, the alleged original kanji, as posted on the Danzan Ryu website in typeset form, when translated, challenged several long-held beliefs about the system as transmitted by the AJJF and other Danzan Ryu organizations. Research done by Professor Jenkins of the AJJF also raised some questions about irregularities in the kanji themselves. In addition, even senior students and family members of Professor Kufferath do not believe that original renderings of the alleged kanji exist. Thus, it seems prudent to investigate these kanji before accepting them as authentic.

To investigate these irregularities, I showed these kanji to several professional Japanese and American translators, both from English to Japanese and from Japanese to English (including a translator at the National Security Agency); to professors of Japanese language at Tokyo University (Japan's premier university); to martial artists and martial arts historians whose native language is Japanese; and to several long-time students of Danzan Ryu. Their comments, along with the observations from Professor Jenkins of the AJJF and from my own notes, are the sources for this report.

As discussed below, a close look does reveal several historical and linguistic irregularities that seriously challenge the belief that these kanji came from Professor Okazaki. That is, if the kanji are accepted as authentic, several other conclusions must also be accepted, all of which are highly suspect.

This report was prepared in the spirit of scholarly research into Danzan Ryu jujutsu. I am simply interested in the degree to which the characteristics of the kanji themselves

support or refute the claim of their authenticity and am not interested in the circumstances of the claim itself. I believe the irregularities described below need to be explained before the kanji and their interpretations should be accepted as authentic.

## The Irregularities

1. The first technique of SHININ NO MAKI, as taught by the AJJF, is ISAMI TASUKI NAGE (勇襷投), in which TASUKI means “a cord to bind the kimono sleeves,” a translation consistent with how the AJJF teaches this technique. However, the alleged original kanji show this technique as ISAMI TSUKI NAGE (勇突投), where TSUKI means “a strike, thrust, or punch.” I found no other written or photographic evidence to support the claim that ISAMI TSUKI NAGE is the intended name for this technique. All photographs of the Kodenkan and notes from Okazaki students (with the possible exception of some of Professor Kufferath’s students) show ISAMI TASUKI NAGE and are consistent with this name. (An early videotape is cited as evidence that this technique was to be taken from a punch or a thrust; however, to many of people, the attack appears to be a downward, overhead strike. See:

<http://www.danzan.com/HTML/ESSAYS/Isami%20Tsuki%20Nage.pdf>.)

2. Techniques 19 and 20 of SHININ NO MAKI, as taught by the AJJF, are EBI SHIME (蝦絞) and USHIRO EBI SHIME (後蝦絞). However, the alleged original kanji read EBI HEBI SHIME (蝦蛇絞) and USHIRO HEBI EBI SHIME (後蝦蛇絞). Again, with the possible exception of some of Professor Kufferath’s students, no other Okazaki students include the term HEBI (“snake”) in their notes on these techniques, and I found no other written or photographic evidence that supports the use of HEBI. My Japanese language sources all found the addition of HEBI to be irregular in these names. It is also difficult to imagine how the term “snake” is related to these techniques.

3. The alleged original kanji for KAN-NUKI, as in the SHININ techniques, ASHI KANNUKI, MAE KANNUKI, and USHIRO KANNUKI, consist of two characters, 間 and 抜, which are pronounced “KAN-NUKI” and that mean, somewhat cryptically, “space withdrawal.” All my native Japanese-speaking sources agreed that the combined characters are probably incorrect. (These characters, in this combination, can also be read as MANUKE—meaning “fool”—and one source even asked if someone were having fun at our expense by using this combination.) In contrast, there is another, single kanji, perhaps older and rarer, that is also pronounced KANNUKI (襷) and means “gate bar,” which is much less cryptic, more descriptive of these techniques, and that my sources thought was credible.

4. Technique 23 of SHINYO NO MAKI, as taught by the AJJF, is ZU KURAWASE (“head strike:” 頭食). However, the alleged original kanji read ZOZU KURAWASE (“elephant head strike mutually”: 象頭喰合). As above, with the possible exception of some of Professor Kufferath’s students, no other Okazaki students have ZOZU KURAWASE in their notes on these techniques, and I found no other written or photographic evidence that supports the use of ZOZU KURAWASE. Many of my Japanese language sources found the term

ZOZU to be odd, both in the reference to elephants in general and in reference to elephants in this technique.

5. A notebook kept by Bing Fai Lau, a Chinese student of Professor Okazaki, contains kanji for SHINYO NO MAKI and SHINGEN NO MAKI, although no other evidence on these pages establishes these kanji to be what Professor Okazaki intended. Nevertheless, these kanji have been claimed to be the correct ones for the names of these two lists. However, the kanji for SHINGIN attributed to Bing Fai Lau differ from the alleged original kanji for this list.

神現 The kanji for SHINGIN attributed to Bing Fai Lau (meaning the “Scroll of the Present, Existing, or Actual Spirit”)

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神原 The alleged original kanji for SHINGIN (meaning the “Scroll of the Original Spirit”)

6. Striking the vital points of the body (*kyusho*) is an important part of several martial traditions. Lists of vital points, in English and in kanji, are commonly found in books on judo, karate, and aikido. (See: *The Kyusho of Ate Mi*, by Tom Lang, 1977, for a list of 226 vital points identified from a comprehensive review of dozens of these books.) In fact, the names and kanji for many points are standard across several traditions. Professor Estes’s SHINGIN NO MAKI list describes 32 vital points whose names and locations are the same as standard points, for which we have kanji.

However, the alleged original kanji indicate that there are 35 striking points on SHINGIN no Maki, not 32, as listed in Professor Estes’s and Professor Beaver’s notes. This difference is important because many of Professor Okazaki’s students list only 25 points. These students include Professor Kufferath (see below) and Professor Ancho, who received 25 points from Professor Kufferath.

(An analysis of Professor Estes’s SHINGIN notes, which list 32 points, discovered that three standard points were labeled incorrectly with the names of three other standard points. Adding the 3 points that were named but not described brings the total count to 35 points. These techniques do not correspond one-to-one with the alleged original kanji for this list. In fact, the alleged original kanji include 7 points not found on other SHINGIN lists and do not include 5 points found on the other lists. This variability is greater than that between all other SHINGIN lists.)

7. Professor Dale Kahoun of the Kilohana Martial Arts Association worked with Professor Kufferath for several years in writing a complete description of each technique for every list in the system. The result, called the Kilohana Workbook, was approved in its entirety by Professor Kufferath in 1999, who signed and stamped with his personal seal the cover page for each section of the book. The Workbook clearly is intended to be the complete and official Danzan Ryu curriculum as transmitted by

Professor Kufferath. Released shortly before his death, it is also the last kata manual he authorized.

The Kilohana workbook lists only 25 striking points for SHINGIN, not the 32 listed in the alleged original kanji. That Professor Kufferath would transmit 25 points is consistent with a report from Professor Brown of the AJFF that he and Professor Ball, also of the AJFF, taught Professor Kufferath the last 7 of the 32 AJFF points. We are left with the need to explain why Professor Kufferath would approve the Kilohana Workbook, knowing that almost of third of the SHINGIN points were missing and why he apparently did not know the last seven points on the AJFF list.

8. The Kilohana Workbook also lists ISAMI TASUKI NAGE (described as “sleeve ties throw”), not ISAMI TSUKI NAGE, as in the alleged original kanji (point #1 above), and EBI SHIME and USHIRO EBI SHIME, not EBI HEBI SHIME and USHIRO HEBI EBI SHIME, as in the alleged original kanji (Point #2 above). However, the Workbook *does* list ZOZU KURAWASE, as in the alleged original kanji, rather than ZU KURAWASE (point #4 above).

9. The alleged original kanji also include kanji for five vital points that differ from the standard kanji for these points, although, curiously, their pronunciation is identical to that of the standard points. If we are to believe that these alleged original kanji are authentic, **we would have to believe that Professor Okazaki would use the standard names and kanji for all the point on the list except for five, which he wrote with kanji that—curiously and improbably—are pronounced the same as the standard kanji but whose meanings are both different and questionable.**

Technique	Standard, Authenticated Kanji and Meanings		Alleged Kanji (Meanings are Questionable)	
RYO-MYO	両毛	Both hairs	料盲	Rate overturn
MYO-SHO/MYO-JO	明星	Bright spot	明正	Next correct
SEN-RYU	潜龍	Lurking dragon	仙龍	Wizard dragon
DOK-KO/DO-KU-KO	独鈷	Spontaneous weapon	独弧	Instant arc
CHOTO	緒頭	Forehead	聽等	Hear equal

Google searches for these kanji in Japanese revealed that *the alleged original kanji for the first three techniques do not appear on any martial arts websites*. None of my Japanese contacts had ever seen the alleged original kanji for RYOMO; all commented that the kanji for MYOSHO were “unusual”; and most thought the kanji for SENRYU and CHOTO were “meaningless.”

10. The alleged original kanji for SHINGIN include two separate points called DOK-KO and DO-KU-KO. However, all other sources present these terms as alternative spellings for the same point (behind the ear). In addition, *the alleged original kanji for DOK-KO do not appear in this combination anywhere on any Japanese website, much less on a Japanese martial arts website*. (The combination does rarely appear as a person’s name or as a place

name.) In contrast, the standard kanji for DOK-KO appear more than 3200 times on Japanese judo websites. DOKO/DOKUKO does not appear on Professor Kufferath's SHINGIN list as published in the Kilohana Workbook.

11. Throughout history, certain Japanese kanji have been modified, often to reduce the number of strokes needed to write them. Thus, there are older and newer forms of the same kanji. The meaning and pronunciation do not change, only the written form. Of interest here is that Professor Okazaki consistently used older and less-common kanji for TORI (捕) and SHIME (絞) in all the lower boards and in his other writings. However, the alleged original kanji for the higher boards use the newer forms (取 and 締, respectively). This irregularity is also true for the five SHINGIN points mentioned above: the standard kanji are older forms and the nonstandard ones are the newer ones.

12. A last consideration is the fact that no other student of Professor Okazaki claims to have seen, much less to have been given, all the kanji for the higher boards.

## Conclusions

One of my contacts showed the alleged original kanji to Masaaki Hatsumi sensei, of ninjutsu fame and a life-long student of the martial arts. According to my contact, Hatsumi sensei "to a large extent confirmed your suspicions [about there being great irregularities in the kanji]."

The irregularities described here challenge the notion that these kanji came from Professor Okazaki. They are also consistent with the kind of errors made by someone who is unfamiliar with the full history of *Danzan Ryu* and even important aspects of the Japanese marital arts in general. In fact, many of my Japanese-language sources indicated that the irregularities in the kanji are consistent with the kinds of errors made by a nonnative Japanese speaker unfamiliar with the subtleties of kanji.

That said, irregularities in some kanji do not mean that all the alleged kanji are incorrect, although they do suggest that all need to be independently corroborated before they are accepted as authentic. Further, the fact that these irregularities raise questions does not mean that they cannot be explained, although any explanations and associated evidence would need to be compelling, given the importance of the claim. In fact, most of the kanji for the techniques are consistent with those compiled by Professor Jenkins of the AJJF, indicating at least reasonable agreement among the traditional spellings, the techniques as we understand them, and the meaning of the associated kanji.

Arguably, differences in the kanji for the techniques are not critical to understanding *Danzan Ryu*. The kanji for the names of the lists represent another challenge, however. Unlike techniques, whose physical characteristics can often confirm or refute the correctness of the kanji used for them, the kanji and meaning of the boards themselves are unknown and open to discussion. The possibility that the names of the boards contain insight into the system is also great. The problem is that, like seeing faces in the

clouds, without authenticated kanji, anyone can see in the boards whatever he or she is primed to look for, so honest disagreements are to be expected. In *Sosuishi* (or *Sosuishitsu*) *Ryu Jujutsu*, SHINGEN NO MAKI is described a form of MENKYO KAIDEN (See: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S%C5%8Dsuisshi-ry%C5%AB>). This reference to the term is the only one I have found outside of the DZR community. (Professor Okazaki also mentions *Sosuishitsu Jujutsu* in his *mokuroku*; perhaps he knew more about the system than its existence?) The possibility that our SHINGIN NO MAKI has a similar meaning in DZR is obvious, but it could also be just another face in the clouds.

I think it is also clear that only a native Japanese speaker, and one who is intimately familiar both with the Japanese martial arts in general and the writings of Professor Okazaki in particular, is qualified to determine which kanji are likely to be authentic for the contested techniques and especially for the names of the boards. The complexity of the Japanese language is so great that nonnative Japanese speakers are at risk for making great and unknown errors. Even American martial artists who have studied in Japan or who have studied classical Japanese martial arts or documents likely do not know enough about the Japanese language or Japanese history to know what they may be missing.

Although I believe my sources gave me their best council, they volunteered their time and expertise and responded to specific questions on my part, rather than immersing themselves in a comprehensive, systematic study of the entire system and the kanji allegedly from this system. Thus, I believe the DZR community should contract with at least two independent, professional, Japanese historians of the Japanese martial arts to examine all the evidence, including the analyses by Professors Arrington and Jenkins and others, and to render conclusions that could then be accepted or rejected on the strength of the supporting evidence.

This is not to say that the extraordinary work of Professors Arrington and Jenkins in translating and interpreting Professor Okazaki's writings is not useful. To the contrary, in most instances the work of one supports the work of the other, and the efforts to resolve the relatively few differences have stimulated the research that has produced the greatest insights. Such honest disagreements often stimulate better research; we all need to work together to recreate as best we can the missing pieces of the system.

In any event, unless each of the irregularities described above can be convincingly resolved; until the plausibility of the kanji have been independently confirmed by qualified experts; or until the alleged original kanji themselves are made publicly available and their authenticity as coming from Professor Okazaki has been independently verified, I think it is unwise to make any claims about them. I also think that all the evidence, for and against, should always accompany any claims made about them. Extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof, and such proof has yet to be presented, much less evaluated, for the authenticity of the alleged original kanji.

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