

## **Judo / Influence of Jigoro Kano in the Global Education and the Olympic movement**

Michel Brousse  
University of Bordeaux

In today's world, judo is recognized as an Olympic sport. The International Judo Federation is made up of 195 member countries. The timeless modernity of Kano's method is regularly showcased. During the opening ceremony of the last Astana World championships the importance of the symbols associated with judo, i.e. wisdom, mutual help, and the improvement of the individual in order to benefit society was emphasized. Jigoro Kano's contribution to the Olympic movement is considered as unequalled even though the founder remained extremely reserved about the consequences of its inclusion as an Olympic sport. The place judo occupies today in the Olympic program is a revealing sign of the importance it has gained and of its world recognition in the field of sports. Throughout the world it is practised by some 20 million players and it conveys its humanistic values independently of generations and cultures. Numbers put aside, the image of judo is closely linked to Japanese culture and traditions. Jigoro Kano's method has become a model of an educative practice shaping both bodies and minds.

We may question such an evolution and put into perspective the permanence of Kano's philosophy. Paradoxically it is not Kano's judo but sport judo that allowed the universal diffusion of the educative message of the Japanese art. Sport judo has been the subject of heated debates; some of these have persisted today. Reshuffled by Western perspectives Kano's method has gone over borders and taken root in new countries, as a counterpoint of sporting activities of Anglo-Saxon origin focused on the quantification of physical activity and performances. In that perspective, judo offers an alternative to the measured forms of sports since its philosophy unites mind and body.

For some, judo as a sport appears as a cultural transgression. For others its westernization is a recurrent factor used to explain globalisation and its sport orientation is equated with the price to be paid to gain its universal appeal. On one side, tradition-conscious observers worry about the gaps and lapses witnessed on the technical level, the modes of transmission and the finalities linked to the activity. On the other side, modernists favour play-oriented approaches and sports encounters. For them, commercial endeavours and the sport prism give more visibility to a discipline often seen as exhausting and exacting.

However the debate shows that judo has been bridging gaps between generations and spanning Western and Eastern cultures. The image of Kano's method stands out as unique and because judo at its best has steadily combined education and competition, traditions and modernity, and it has steered a clear course towards the future as the 2020 Olympics will most certainly prove.