

Franco Vacirca Garcia

The Sons of Maeda

Gracie Jiu-Jitsu Unlocked



The Martial Art that revolutionized the World!

Photos by Alica Fröhlich and Jens Lorenzen

In Memory of Grandmaster Pedro Hemetério



Grande Mestre
Carley Gracie



Dedication

I dedicate this book to my parents, my mother Angela Garcia, and my father Vito Vacirca, as well as to my sister Maria Carmen and my brother Demetrio.

Special thanks to my longtime friend Marco Cerutti, and to my Jiu-Jitsu teachers Grandmaster Pedro Hemetério (São Paulo) and Grandmaster Carley Gracie (Rio de Janeiro).

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For Sandra Nagel, because without her valuable support and contribution I would never have started this book, which lastly is an important life's work for me.



Grande Mestre
Pedro Hemetério



In search of the life.....



With the search for life

one learns to live, to fight with it, one learns to die.

With a suitcase and a disappointment.

I made my account at a station.

To open my way without knowing the language, to accept my fate, in the company of loneliness.

Fighting with life, fighting against the wind, without money, without food, all is suffering.

The suffering in life, taught me to live,

who does not suffer does not feel the dying.

***I met people who really helped me,
I will never have enough coins to pay them.***

***I also met others who cannot understand me and I
feel concern how these people are.***

***I do not care that these people do not love my
poetry, it would be enough if one day they would
understand me.***

***Even though I am an emigrant, I always have hope, to
return with my romances, to my people, to my
homeland.***

-Angela Garcia Vacirca December 1993

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INTRODUCTION

If there had been no Mitsuyo Maedas, with the emphasis on the plural Maedas, Jiu-Jitsu would probably have been forgotten during the 20th century.

We owe the survival of the valuable and unique knowledge of this martial art to numerous masters who left their native Japan at a young age around the turn of the century before last for an uncertain future in the West. They all took an arduous journey, either to leave behind a rapidly changing Japan after the Meiji Restoration in 1868 and to create better prospects for their future lives, or because, like Maeda, they had been sent out into the world by their masters expressly to spread the "Arte Suave" (Bras. gentle art).

Most of these young masters were perhaps only twenty years old and had witnessed the first Japanese Chinese War in 1894/95 as teenagers, thus also how the fighting techniques they learned (often from their fathers) on the tatamis were simultaneously used outside on the battlefields. So, the techniques absolutely had to work in the harsh reality!

At the same time, almost paradoxically, Jiu-Jitsu allowed them to break out of the rigid cultural system of how to fit into life and society as Japanese. By allowing their traditional knowledge and skills to flourish in the West, they were able to explore new avenues without feeling that they were betraying their country or damaging their family honor. However, this, had only become possible after the increasing opening of Japan (around 1853), which had been completely closed off for centuries.

Parallel to the political and cultural changes in Japan, Jigoro Kano further developed Jiu-Jitsu by unifying it from 1882 and adapting it to the changed circumstances and requirements for a martial art after the demise of the Samurai. He laid down important principles for the new Jiu-Do (later renamed Judo) in the statutes of the Kodokan Institute:

"By uniting all the advantages, I have taken from different schools of Jiu-Jitsu and adding my own techniques, I have developed a new system of physical training, mental training and competition. This system I call Kodokan Judo."

Well over a century after Jigoro Kano's writing, an illustrated text written around 1913, which I once came across on my first trip to Japan, served as inspiration for this book that you now hold in your hands. That text was most likely written in South America, at a time when the young master and author was in Cuba or possibly Argentina, making his first attempts to establish the Jiu-Jitsu he had brought with him from his homeland. His name was - Mitsuyo Maeda.

This book is particularly interesting because Maeda not only had some selected Jiu-Jitsu techniques photographed with himself and his companion, but he also writes about what to look for as a jiu-jitsu practitioner and what was important to him. First, he explains how important it is not to use force and that the focus should be on the "scientific method" of defense techniques. Therefore, to achieve efficient and effective results, it is not least important to study the human anatomy thoroughly.

He goes on to explain that the application of pressure points against vital parts of the body (which he calls Atemis), such as a punch with the edge of the hand or a fist between the nasal bone and the forehead, a targeted blow against the larynx, nose, mouth as well as the solar plexus, stomach, and ribs, and even against regions of the shoulder are highly effective. It also explains the importance and

necessity of twists and leverage techniques against wrists, arms, and legs, all of which are also part of Jiu-Jitsu. He points out how important it is to live healthy and that to do so, one must adhere to the following:

- pay attention to nutritious and light food.
- healthy, clean air is important.
- drink enough water.
- never eat too much.
- eat little meat.
- drink little or no alcohol.
- do not smoke too much.
- never practice excessive sex.



In some of the photos in this book, Maeda is even wearing the traditional trouser skirt (hakama) that one might know from Aikido or Kendo. One of these pictures also appeared in 1914 in a Jiu-Jitsu book by the Argentine author Oscar Vila, from which it can be concluded that Maeda must have also been in Argentina before settling definitively in Brazil - but more on that later.

In addition to the main points mentioned above and explicitly emphasized by Maeda, what is most striking about this book is how profoundly the Brazilian masters of Jiu-Jitsu were obviously influenced by Maeda later. Almost everything that can be seen in these pictures can still be found in our Brazilian system today: lever techniques, chokes, counter techniques, knife defense, falling and throwing techniques and much more.

So, my point is not to question Maeda's outstanding position in the history of Jiu-Jitsu. We should simply always keep in mind that he was one of many Japanese masters who passed on their knowledge far from home. The reasons and motivation may have been different for each one, but they all have one thing in common: these young men have left us a unique and valuable art, which might have died out without this Brazilian "detour".

To the sons of Maeda who have studied, fought, and taught in the more than 120 years since then, we all belong. All of us who have passed on Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu with dedication, enthusiasm, and devotion to this day and into the future. No matter which line of this wide-branched family we come from and to which we pay our allegiance, we have all contributed to the fact that this great work and knowledge in all its diversity has not only been preserved, but in the 21st century is more interesting, popular, and exciting than ever.

I dedicate this book also to all these "Maedas". They have given us a gift for life. Zurich, March 1, 2021

Franco Vacirca

MY PATH TO THE SONS OF MAEDA

In the beginning there was Bruce Lee...

Already as a little boy, maybe six or seven years old, I was fascinated by the Asian martial arts and early on it was completely clear to me what my path in life would be.

I spent a few years with Judo until I met the Kung-Fu style "Wing Chun" in the spring of 1981. Due to the first Bruce Lee movies, a real Kung-Fu wave had also arisen in Switzerland in the 70's, on which numerous martial arts schools tried to ride and to use the favor of the hour. Some even claimed that one could learn the "real" Bruce Lee fighting style "Jeet Kune Do" with them, which however never corresponded to the truth. But at that time, hardly anyone knew any better, and so anyone who could distinguish a Nunchaku from a Halberd was believed.

I became aware of kung fu through my friend Antonio Stella. We always lived in the same neighborhood in the airport city of Kloten but had lost sight of each other for some time and when I moved with my family from the village to the high Nägelimoos and we met there again, he took me one day to the Kung-Fu training. My first Sifu (teacher) was Mischa Geiger and soon I was training directly with his teacher (Sifu Rolli Krauer), himself a student of Simon Lau, who had his school in London.

I was never a big fan of Katas (fixed forms of exercise), because I did not like the "learning by heart". I like to rely on

my gut feeling, acting, and reacting on instinct. In any case, my teachers always appreciated my enthusiastic drive and very soon I took my first two Wing Chun exams directly with Simon Lau when he first visited us in Zurich. Although I trained so hard, even partly repeating the forms in the shower, I suffered from great exam anxiety. Even today I can remember very well that I had a blockade at one point in the "3rd set" and Sifu Lau corrected me. There I only thought "so now you have made a mistake and failed the exam"! But that evening I held my first two certificates in my hands, and I still remember how happy and great I felt.

Financially, this was a great achievement for my parents, who had come to Switzerland from humble backgrounds abroad. Training was expensive at that time and often people preferred to send their children to soccer or judo training, which hardly cost anything. But my parents supported me on the path I had chosen to the best of their ability and I, for my part, always did my best. I am incredibly grateful for that and over the years I became aware of what my parents had made possible for me.

During my time in high school, I also trained with various other teachers, including the offshoots of masters Austin Goh and Duncan Leung in Switzerland. Later, however, I came to Sifu Carlos Perez, who was also one of Krauer's most respected master students at the time, and who was running his own independent school in Zurich at the time. With him I also trained as an assistant, trained, and taught (Muay Thai boxing and Filipino Kali Eskrima) with him even later when he settled in the city of Solothurn.

Carlos Perez came to Switzerland from Spain as a young man. Together with his younger brother, he ran one of the most successful schools in the 1980s. His kung fu was direct because he loved to fight. I can still remember very well how he returned one day from a training trip in China and proudly talked about his competition experience.