

## GO NO KATA (The kata of resistance)

There seems to be a certain amount of agitation among the cyber-senseis about the long abandoned Go no Kata of Jigoro Kano. It is said that he constructed it in contrast to the kata of yielding (Ju no Kata). The kata is often written Go Ju no Kata in Japanese books. Basically one side pushes or pulls, the other side resists (go) then the initial attacker adapts his attack (ju) to overcome the other which sounds pretty much like everyday judo. It reminds me of world champion Sugai's description of judo as 'skilful adaptation under stress'.

According to the authoritative biography Kano Jigoro published by the Kodokan in 1964 the Go no Kata was devised and taught by Kano in the early days but its usage lapsed because Kano thought it had some 'unsatisfactory' aspects (*i ni mitanai*) which required improvement (*ichidan no kairyo ga hitsuyo....*). What they were he never spelled out. (see p. 381)

Now some work by various diligent researchers has unearthed a version of the kata which may well be the kata as originally taught by Kano a long time ago. This is just possible because some may remember what their teachers (not Kano) taught them of it. There is nobody now alive who would have experienced it first hand from Kano.

The same biography quoted above also has a long section (p. 324 – 332) on the development of a new principle beyond the principle of Ju. It is entitled (*Ju no Ri kara shingenri e no hatten*). In other words Kano did not regard the principle of Ju as the final one. He thought Seiryoku Zenyo was and here he is interpreting it as a technical (not moral) principle akin to the idea of maximum efficiency minimum effort/best use of mind and body.

At this point I concede that it is probably about time I revisited Japan to scour the book shops and libraries and talk to old friends there. Information can come from odd sources which paradoxically may be more credible than orthodox ones. It is even possible that Kano contradicts himself. Most of what he had to say about judo was in lectures/talks which were subsequently produced in various magazines. . How correctly we may never know He wrote extremely little in book form. More translations of his work are required.

The undeniable fact is that the teaching and practice of the Go no kata lapsed a long time ago. So where does that leave us now? I suspect that the current revival of the kata will take the same course it took many years ago when Kano was alive. It will lapse again because of its 'unsatisfactory' aspects.

The big question which is never touched on in the great cyber dojo is who has the authority to decide on the 'unsatisfactory' aspects and how they can be improved. Anybody who presumes to revive and/or improve the kata is asserting a knowledge of judo greater than that of Kano. The current 10<sup>th</sup> Dans do not have that authority. The tragedy of Kodokan judo is that Kano did not have a son who was good enough at judo to be able enough to move it out of a purely Japanese context to fit a more international one.

From a Japanese point of view judo froze in time in 1938 when Kano died. He created Kodokan Judo which ipso facto made him the master or Shihan) of the school. What he created could of course be changed by him while he was still alive but not after his death. This is known as the *iemoto* (master of the school) in Japan and it has created many problems in other 'schools'. One rare exception is the father and son Kanami and Zeami and their schools of Noh theatre and art. Kanami stood on the shoulders of his father. Attempts to create new kata in Kodokan judo have always foundered on this *iemoto* point. Goshinjitsu is an example. Is it a kata or not and why?

Apart from all the considerations above one can perhaps understand why Kano had reservations about the Kata. The kata, as available on the internet, does not flow that well and the responding techniques do not especially 'click'. For example there are a number of times where tori moves behind uke and does a rear daki-age/uranage-like move which as it stand is virtually unworkable. See how wrestlers do it. Also the tension that is created with the pushing and pulling is either handled by turning on the periphery of it or is simply converted with a *ju* yielding motion. Some of the techniques look like sumo and taichi especially its 'pushing hands' exercise (tsui-shu). Finally some of the jigotai postures cry out for a ko-uchi-gari. If you can't go through the arms attack the legs!

The Go no kata is a very interesting historical relic of judo. I do not think it holds any answers to the prevalent muscular style of judo. Sumo is much better at dealing with resistance than judo especially with its technical use of *doshin* (concentricity) and its *hiraku* and *soto/uchi muso* techniques (. The pushing hands practice of Taichi, however, could be worth doing on a regular basis. Perhaps the go ju no kata also owes something to the Chinese martial arts practice of strong (*go*) breath out and soft (*ju*) breath in. Maybe there is more to this than meets the eye.

**But don't forget Kano stopped using it!**

© Syd Hoare 2010