

The Ju-principle

For those interested in kata I am adding a bit more to my comments on the Go no Kata article I put up on my website over a month ago. Since then I have been too busy, getting out another book (A Slow Boat to Yokohama), to add to my website. Apologies for the cobwebs.

I became curious to check out dated references to the Kata. We know it lapsed under Kano but he is such a logical and modern character in some respects that it sounds like only yesterday when you read his talks and lectures. So I trawled through my old judo books hoping to find out when the goju no kata began to disappear.

The first thing to note with these early references is that the title Go Ju no kata is mostly used - Go no kata is rarely used. This may be because it is a convenient abbreviation but it could also lead to misunderstandings.

Judo Kyohan by Yokoyama & Oshima (Prefaced by Jigoro Kano). First published in 1917.

P.81 mentions the Goju no kata but simply states that it consists of 10 movements but the techniques are not named whereas all the techniques of the other six Kodokan kata are. This would perhaps indicate that the go ju no kata was already fading away some **93** years ago? This book has a preface by Kano so he had ample opportunity to include or explain the Go Ju no kata in more detail if he wished.

On a slightly different tack one interesting detail about this book is in the photos especially the groundwork ones which feature two Butokukai teachers (Kyoshi) namely Imai of the Takeuchi-ryu and Tanabe Mataemon of the Fusen-ryu.. These two gave Kodokan judo a very hard time on the ground. There are some good shots of both of them.

Randori no Kata by Yamashita 9th Dan, Nagaoka 9th Dan and Murakami 7th Dan. Prefaced by Jigoro Kano. Published by Kodokan Bunka-kai in 1921.

Although the book is primarily about the Nage no kata and the Katame no kata, as its title suggests, it names all the Kodokan kata among which is the Goju no kata. No other details of it are given. **89** years ago.

This Randori no kata book is a very interesting one which describes a number of the randori no kata techniques done slightly differently from today. Kata is often defined as consisting of fixed movements (ittei no dosa) but this book contradicts this somewhat.

Judo Kyohon by Jigoro Kano Published 1931

Although this book talks about kata in general it only describes in detail the Seiryokuzenyo Kokumin Taiiku (Tandoku Renshu) and the Seiryokuzenyo Kokumin Taiiku (Kime-shiki Sotai/tandoku Renshu). No other Kodokan Kata are listed and there is **no** mention of Go ju no kata. **79** years ago.

Dai Nippon Judo-shi (A History of Japanese Judo). Published 1939 by the Kodokan.

This is a massive book consisting of 1170 pages. It was published one year after Kano's death in 1938 but so big is the book that it must have taken at least three years if not longer to put together. So it is very possible that Kano had a hand in its publication..

This book contains a lot of competition results and lists the Kata that were performed at these events but there is no mention of **Go ju no kata** performances. The Nage no Kata and the Kime no Kata feature in most of them and Bo-jitsu kata were included from time to time. On page 916 is Chapter 5 entitled Kata and Randori. The Kata are listed as follows:- Nage no Kata, Katame no Kata, Kime no Kata, Ju no kata, Koshiki no Kata, Itsutsu no Kata **but no mention of Go ju no kata. Published 71 years ago**

This is an interesting book because it is prefaced by many military and political leaders. One gets the strong impression that the military and government took over judo at this time. Kano must have kept them at bay when was alive.

Illustrated Kodokan Judo by the Kodokan. Published by Dainippon Yubenkai Kodansha in 1955 . This lists nine kata but Go ju no kata is not one of them. Apart from the six usual ones there is Fujoshi-yo goshin no kata (womens self-defence), Ippan-yo goshin-no-kata (general self-defence) and the Seiryokuzenyo Kokumintaiiku. There is no mention of Gonosen no Kata or Mifune's Nage-waza Ura no Kata. **(55 years ago).**

Judo Gojunen by Oimatsu Shinichi. Published in 1956. Oimatsu was general Manager of the Kodokan and Assistant Professor at Tokyo Kyoiku University. His lineage suggests that he graduated from the Kokushikan (a Tokyo specialist judo college, like Busen). One reviewer of his book wrote that it was somewhat *katai* (hard) which may indicate that it was closer to the truth as opposed to an airbrushed version.

Oimatsu wrote, 'Between 1882 when the Kodokan was founded, and about 1887 the present day Nage no Kata, Katame no Kata and Kime no Kata were created. Following these katas 'it is said that' a second lot consisting of the Ju no Kata, Go no Kata and the Itsutsu no Kata all came out in 1887'. 'The Go no kata was constructed in contrast to Ju no Kata. It starts first with strength/resistance being used against strength/resistance then one side switches to Ju (yielding) and gains the victory'.

Whereas most of the techniques in the individual katas are listed in this book, the techniques of Go no Kata are not. One must assume that Oimatsu had access to Kodokan records. Note that Oimatsu is one of the few to use the title Go no kata.

Kano Jigoro : Official biography published by the Kodokan in 1964. Gives no more than a couple of sentences to it. It mainly describes Go ju no kata as having 'unsatisfactory' aspects which needed 'major improvement'. It also describes Kano's movement away from the principle of Ju which began about 1897. Incidentally the phrase relating to 'improvement' is *ichidan no kairyo*. Ichidan actually means something like 'a higher plane'. So Kano was talking about the necessity for major improvements to the kata.

Kodokan New Japanese-English Dictionary of Judo. Published 2000. Edited by Murata Naoki.

There is no mention of Goju no kata in this either in the Japanese half or the English half.

As can be seen above the presence of Go ju no kata in Kodokan judo literature over the last 134 years or so has been very patchy to say the least.

Nomenclature seems to be a problem. Sometimes the sequences attract the word *kata* in their titles, at other times they do not (eg. Seiryokuzenyo Kokumin Taiiku). At other times the word *Ho* (meaning methods) is added (as with Joshi-goshin-ho) and sometimes the sequences are described as *Renshu* meaning ‘training exercises’ (as with Seiryokuzenyo Kokumintaiiku no Tandoku/Sotai Renshu)

The Kodokan needs to standardise these titles at least for non-Japanese judo people and perhaps start with a detailed listing of what are now definitely Kodokan ‘katas’ and what are not. My large Kojien dictionary lists more than a dozen meanings for Kata. What is the Kodokan’s understanding of the role of Kata in judo and the martial arts and in Japanese culture in general which is often said to be a culture of Kata? The word kata can be written using two different characters but these have no significance according to the Kojien or to the Kodokan New Japanese - English Dictionary of Judo.

We are mostly told that the kata are ‘training’ methods which also illustrate judo principles. However Kano described his construction of the Nage no kata as ‘choosing three workable representatives’ for each set of the kata. Here the use of the word ‘workable’ tips the kata towards kata as training methods. Why for example is the Nage no Kata regularly demonstrated at major judo events (Kagamibiraki etc) and competitions in Japan. Is it to remind us of judo’s principles or that it is a training method? Is it to present judo aesthetically or is it a reminder of precedent (kanrei or zenrei) in other words as it was done in the old days by the ancient masters. Or is it a mix of all five possibilities. A little more explanation is required I think.

Ie-moto/Soke

Finally some words of explanation about the Ie-moto System which I mentioned in the first GoJu no kata article. It has a very long history in Japan dating from the early Heian period which began about 800AD. Ie-moto indicates someone who creates or founds a ‘house’ (*ie*) or ryu of an art or craft or technology. (Another word for Ie-moto is Sōke. The dictionary defines both words by the other word). It is necessary to understand this Iemoto system when thinking about the role of the Kodokan in Japanese judo since the Kodokan is a good example of the system.

Towards the end of the Heian period (794 – 1185) many classical arts and crafts and technologies became the ‘monopoly’ of certain ‘houses’ led by individual masters. From the end of the Heian period the Za or guilds took over this economic role. It was very much to the economic advantage of one ‘house’ to claim to be the one and only true ‘house’ and to be the correct transmitter of the art and it was usual for the art to be passed on by secret transmission (Himitsu Soden) to a member of the family.

Those not related to the 'house' but part of it, were allowed to teach if they had received the Menkyo Kaiden licence. The use of the word licence indicates the economic basis of the system. The method of binding people into the 'house' was carefully worked out (It was said that if you had someone as a student for three years he was yours for life) so that it was in their interests to stay with the system and not set up any kind of rival house.

Ancient and modern Japan has many schools (*ie* or *ryu*) or sects (*ha*) of one sort or another. Consider the 179 recorded schools of jujitsu and the 750 or so schools of Kenjitsu during the Edo period. Perhaps this system is best understood in economic terms. Those who originated a top-quality 'school' often made a living from it and would seek economic protection and 'copyright' of what they did. Martial arts systems of rank or grading would tie in neatly with this.

Many of the best schools of ancient arts and technologies (ancient music, dancing, poetry, flower arranging etiquette, arms and armour production and recreational arts etc) came under the patronage of the aristocracy, various large shrines and temples and the Imperial court but by the end of the Sengoku period (1558) when a long period of civil disorder broke out the aristocratic society teetered on the brink of stagnation and collapse during which time more *ie-moto* emerged and *this system extended into the martial arts and the newly risen warrior society in general.*

Originally the *Ie-moto* system was created to preserve and protect the various arts and crafts and technologies but this preservation drifted into a system which tried to preserve the sole economic rights of a family with regard to their arts etc. In other words it became an attempt to create a monopoly or copyright. In each of the surviving styles and sects the *ie-moto* became like a managing director (or dictator) although there were certain benefits to such a system such as stability and quality control. In other words it became a sort of franchise system. However, in more recent times the *Iemoto* system is widely regarded as having prevented modernization and originality. This was because changing what the ancient masters did was fraught with various problems so little change or innovation occurred. This would seem to be the situation with the *Go no kata*.

Well how does this effect judo, the Kodokan and the *Go ju no kata*? Obviously Jigoro Kano is the original *Iemoto* or *Sōke* of Kodokan judo. In so far as Kano created a 'new' martial art in 1882 and not simply a continuation of Tenjinshinyo & Kitoryu jujitsu he would be the *Ie-moto*. His heirs would be Kano Risei and more recently Kano Yukimitsu. They would be expected as *Kancho* (head of the Kodokan) to have the final say on most matters within the Kodokan organization since their duty is to pass on the true judo. If their father or grandfather thought the *Goju no kata* was unsatisfactory then so be it.

Furthermore the Kodokan as an *ie-moto* type organization has the duty to transmit not only true judo but establish master and pupil relationships and keep control of the grading system (which has been its main source of income for a long time). This would explain why the Kodokan got so agitated when the IJF under President Matsumae and the Butokukai proposed issuing grades. Its ultimate duty is to hand the art on to a true heir in the Kano family.

At this point the iemoto system runs into a bit of a problem because world judo is now run by national and international organizations in which this ancient Japanese economic model has no relevance. This started in 1949 when the American occupiers insisted that martial arts organizations needed to become more democratic. From this emerged the *hyori ittai* principle which is that the Kodokan and the All Japan Judo Federation are two sides of the same coin – a typical Japanese compromise - where presumably the Kodokan maintains its grade awarding monopoly. It would be interesting to find out which other judo bodies in Japan can issue grades and how they relate to each other. To get some idea of this system imagine if the oldest BJA club namely the Budokwai in London retained its original national monopoly of grading and packed the national directing committee of the BJA with its own people. This would be Hyori Ittai.

Well this ie-moto system seems to describe the present judo situation in Japan. It will no doubt endure for many more years whatever foreigners think about it. Japanese judo often gets criticised for being too conservative. It developed the way it has for historical reasons but I think it helps if foreigners have some idea how the system works.

Perhaps one way forward is for the Kodokan to develop into a centre of excellence like the pre-war Kyoto Busen or the Kokushikan where it might lead Japan and the world in the production of world judo gold medallists. Trevor Leggett who trained in Japan before the war told me that the training at the Kodokan was very tough because all the top student dojos were required to train there. This was when the Kodokan had greater control of national judo. In my time the toughness of the Kodokan training fluctuated from day to day depending on which student body turned up. This would not necessarily change the hyori ittai situation but gold medals talk very loudly.

To get back to the Gojunokata, Kano said that it was unsatisfactory and needed major improvement. But do we know precisely what was unsatisfactory and what might have improved it in his eyes? I have seen nothing on this subject. I would have thought that it is up to the promoters of Go no kata to produce this evidence. The fact that one little-known 9th Dan managed to preserve the Kata is beside the point. Kano thought it was unsatisfactory.

The Ju principle

In 1897 Kano voiced his unease about the JU no Ri principle – the principle of softness or yielding in an article in the Kokushi (Patriot) magazine not that long after GoJu no kata emerged. So it would appear he was unhappy with it almost right from the start. His unease came about because, as he wrote, there were many instances in judo where this principle did not apply. A principle that is not particularly universal is not much of a principle I think.

Below I have translated some of his thoughts on the subject which makes for interesting reading. They are taken from the biography of Kano Jigoro published by the Kodokan in 1964 pp 324-332.

‘In the early days of Kodokan judo the theories of combat (*shobu no riron*) embraced by Kano were very practical and individualistic and there was a strong tendency

towards embracing the various ancient teachings. However from Meiji 20 to Meiji 30 (1897 – 1907) when jujitsu was absorbed by judo and judo became unified most of the many ancient theories of combat were summarised under the heading of Ju no Ri or the Principle of Yielding.

As is often stated the principle of Ju as seen in the words ju-jitsu and ju-do stems from a line in the Chinese martial arts classic Sanryaku, namely **Ju yoku go seisuru** - (yielding can overcome/defeat the resistant). The Sanryaku also says **Jaku yoku kyo seisuru** (Weakness overcomes strength), **Ju wa Toku nari** (Yielding is a virtue), **Go wa Zoku nari** (Resistance is harmful), **Jaku wa jin no tasukeru tokoro** (Weakness saves man) & **Kyo wa uramu tokoro** (strength breeds resentment). All of these were written in classical Chinese centuries ago and their exact meaning can only be guessed at. Classical Chinese dictionaries will often indicate in which classic a 'word or phrase' is found and how some venerable scholar interpreted it. There is often quite a gap between the general meaning of a character and how it was interpreted.

The Ju principle above was based on the thought of the Chinese Taoist philosopher Lao Tsu who regarded Ju as a fundamental law of the universe. According to him in an absolute world opposites such as soft and hard, strong and weak etc etc merge and disappear. If you look at the scrolls of the jujitsu schools many sought to explain their techniques only at this absolute level.

In the Yoshin-ryu for example, it was left to the individual to gain an understanding through the old poems such as: The pine (moving) in the wind is not broken by the snow.

In the Shibukawa-ryu the concept Ju was regarded as meaning obedience, meekness or docility.

In the Jikishin-ryu (**Gai Ju Nai Go**) was advocated. This means Outside Soft and Inside Hard. This is somewhat similar to the Go & Ju concept of Chinese martial arts. Furthermore In Hardness Yielding is found and in Yielding Hardness is found. (**Go Chu Ju-Ari & Ju-Chu-Go-Ari**)

In Kodokan Judo and the Kito Ryu it is stated: Control strength by being weak, control resistance by yielding, win by abandoning one's strength and using the enemy's strength.

In the Tenjinshinyo-ryu it says be obedient and weak and move where the spirit takes you (like the wind-blown leaf?)

There were many jujitsu ryu which did not go much beyond these universal abstractions. They also tended to embellish and exaggerate the idea of Ju. Consequently people widely believed the most generally explained principle of Ju to mean - not opposing the enemy's strength at all but adapting to that strength in order to win. This abstract universal interpretation of JU led to other excessive interpretations such as strength was not necessary in ju-jitsu/do or that all one had to do to win was give way or go with the opponent's force - in other words a sort of physical pacifism.

To summarize one can say that the Ju principle as in Taoism is either interpreted in its wide *absolute* or universal sense or in its narrow *technical* sense. The Ju interpretation which adapts to technique by not resisting whether in Kata or Randori, is the narrow one. Although Kano advocated the Ju principle of yielding in general his thoughts on the Sanryaku line (Ju Yoku Go Seisuru) took him in a different direction.

At this point Kano makes a distinction between two Chinese-Japanese characters. The first is JU and Yawara(kai) meaning soft or pliable, and the second is WA and Yawara(kai) meaning harmony or soft, or judo/jujitsu (yawara was one old name for samurai unarmed combat later known as jujitsu then judo). Yawarakai is the adjective form which means soft as in the soft cushion.

Bear in mind that the word jujitsu did not suddenly pop up unannounced throughout the whole of Japan. There was already quite a wide variety of words used to depict samurai unarmed combat eg. Torite, Kumi-uchi, Taijitsu, **Yawara** and **Wa-jitsu**. The word jujitsu slowly emerged over a period of one hundred and fifty years and firmed up after being named by the Tokugawa military government as one of the six compulsory martial arts (*rokubugei*) the samurai had to train in. According to Kano it seems that when the early 'unarmed combat' teachers were looking for a name to denote what they did they mostly went for the JU character, possibly because of the prestige of ancient Chinese philosophy, and not the WA/Yawara character. Kano it seems favoured the WA/Yawara character. If Kano had gone more actively for Wa/Yawara we might now all be doing Yawara or Wa-do. Kano says in one lecture that he chose the prefix ju for his new art (ju-do) out of respect for his former ju-jitsu teachers.

Another fact to consider is that Wa is also used to mean the country of Japan so use of this word might have been an attempt to distance itself from the Chinese martial arts. It would seem that the tendency to use the Chinese Ju –Yawarakai character became stronger and stronger and judo has had to live with the universal and abstract meanings of the word ever since and that the Wa-yawara usage has languished.

Kano went on, 'Judo is completely different from Sumo in that it is a method of training with high principles. Foreigners on hearing this applaud these principles and say judo is a sublime practice unlike any other in the world. [This appreciation of judo by foreigners seems to have been important to Kano. One of the earliest of these was Lafcadio Hearn who wrote about Kano's judo and taught at the same high school in Kyushu in 1891-93]. Hearn was much attracted to the philosophy of Herbert Spencer and it seems very likely that he talked to and influenced Kano about this]. [I think that Hearn possibly had a rather rosy pacifist notion that yielding and meekness would always triumph over combat]. Kano had some lengthy contact with Ferdinand Buisson of France who was a noted educationalist and pacifist, when he first went to Europe in 1889. At this point Kano brings in another principle/phrase also in classical Chinese namely **Ju Yoku Sho Sei-suru** or **Ju Sho Sei** for short. Here the new word Sho (victory) is introduced. This phrase probably translates as yielding or non-resistance can secure/or leads to victory.

Kano goes on to explain that this Ju-Sho-Sei principle can be seen when the opponent attacks with force and this is answered not by directly opposing it but by absorbing

and testing and using just sufficient force to see whether the opponent puts his body in a dangerous position or not and whether a suitable technique can be applied to it.

This principle, easily understood by all, applies to all methods of closing with the opponent or entering into attacks (*irimi*¹). However the object of judo contest training is to win. Beating the opponent by using the yielding Ju principle is after all only one method within JU SHO SEI. Do not forget that at times this involves entrusting oneself to what the opponent does.

When the principle of Ju Sho Sei is realized/understood it can be applied to throwing, ne-waza and atemi-waza. In 1891 when Hearn watched Kano teaching he wrote about Kano and his jujitsu and praised the Ju principle 'which wins by not opposing'.

Kano went on to explain the principle of Ri further saying, 'Let us suppose we have two people and one of them uses his full force to attack the other. If this is resisted and the attacker has superior power he will destroy the other. The stronger one only needs sufficient power to destroy the other.

However if B does not resist the charging attacking power of A and adapts to it by pulling his body back he preserves his stability and A will stumble forward since his pushing power is not supported by anything. This is the meaning of Ju Yoku Go Seisuru.

In this extreme case even if A has greater power than B, A will stumble forward and B will remain stable as before and the victory will belong to B. This is the meaning of Ju Yoku Go Seisuru.

Originally it was inevitable that the strong ones would defeat the weaker ones but in such a case as above the weaker one can triumph over stronger one. This is an example of when the opponent comes thrusting forward. Even when both become entangled in striving for victory the Ju principle takes the stage.

The idea of not opposing the opponent by yielding and entrusting oneself momentarily to what the opponent does is a means of eventually gaining victory

When the true meaning of winning by yielding is realized not only can it be applied to throws, groundwork and atemi but to battles and all the affairs of man.

As above Kano explained and analysed the theory of judo under the heading of The Ju Principle.

“However, eventually doubts about the Ju principle arose and Kano began to feel that there was something not right about it”.

To summarize at this point, the somewhat flowery abstract principle of yielding was used for a range of situations when offering no resistance at all (turning the other cheek) brought about victory or one in which the opponent went flying as in uchi-

¹ Irimi means 'entering the body or inserting the body'. In Aikido it has a specific use and also in Sumo neither of which make much sense in judo.

mata sukashi but also using it as a means to (enter) the opponent's space and look to see what technique could be used. As Kano pointed out if the Ju principle is faithfully followed, no movement at all by the opponent would inevitably mean no movement by the defending party. Kano goes on to suggest other situations in judo in which the Ju no Ri principle is of no use.

Most jujitsu was based on and carried out under the Ju principle in order to defeat the opponent. It was also applicable to all the day to day affairs of man. However Kano eventually came up against the fact that there were many occasions in both attack and defence which could only be dealt with by theories outside the yielding principle.

Kano giving examples of situations which could not be explained by the Ju/Yielding principle divided them into physical and mental ones.

Physical situations.

For example when you are strongly grabbed from behind, under the JU principle there is no escape – there is no way to adapt to the opponent's power. There are a number of ways of responding to a strong hug from behind but there is no adaptation to the opponent's power. Similarly if an opponent grabs your throat from the front there are answers to it but they do not involve adapting to the opponent's power.

Furthermore if judo technique is always limited to complying with or adapting to the opponent's force there is nothing that judo can do if the opponent stands still. Even if you merely think about catching the opponents hand you cannot even lower your hand. All one can say is that it should be done with a minimum of force.

Mental situations.

Next Kano considered the mental processes and their connections. When the opponent attacks you vigorously you have no time to think out new means to deal with it. You have no choice but to choose to reply to it with your old tricks which naturally float into your mind based on previous experience. If the opponent does not attack but only defends, your mental workings and new thoughts will not appear. Furthermore when one has decided to try a technique on the opponent you must not hesitate or doubt whether you should do this or that but be resolute in your decision to try a technique. At the same time think about all possibilities and try moving around, doing techniques lightly and even though there may not be better methods one must not be idle in thinking about them and producing them.

From all these illustrations, all methods of attack and defence are very difficult to explain with the simple JU principle. It is evident that whether considering the mental or physical aspects, that a new basic principle is necessary to cover the huge variety of judo technique.

From about the period 1897 – 1907 Kano relied less and less on the JU principle to explain his judo. For example in 1900 he wrote in the Kokushi magazine, 'The number one requirement for nagewaza is the mobilization of *minimum* force in order to throw the opponent how and where one wishes. In his explanations of the practical application of judo principles he wrote, 'People should put to work their God-given spiritual force to demonstrate as widely as possible meritorious deeds for the world and mankind.

In a future article I will make further translations on the *Seiryoku Zenyo* principle which followed on from his considerations of the JU principle above.

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