



TRAINING FOR THE REAL FIGHT

by Stefano Maiaso

*Kodokan doesn't really help us understanding judo,
we shall do it ourselves*

(C. Barioli)

**Dai-Nippon Butokukai (Centre of the Martial Art of Great Japan)
Judo Kata Seitei-iin (Committee for the development of kata's judo)**



front, from the right:

Hiratsuka Katsuta of Kagawa (Yoshin-ryu); **Yano Koji** of Kumamoto (Takenouchi-santo-ryu, kyoshi); **Sekiguchi Jushin** of Wakayama (Sekiguchi-ryu); **Totsuka Eibi** of Chiba (Yoshin-ryu, hanshi); **Kano Jigoro** of Tokyo (Kodokan-judo, hanshi); **Hoshino Kumon** of Kumamoto (Shiten-ryu, hanshi); **Katayama Takayoshi** of Kagawa (Yoshin-ryu); **Eguchi Yazo** of Kumamoto (Kyushin-ryu, kyoshi); **Inazu Masamizu** of Kyoto (Miura-ryu).



Back, from the right:

Yamashita Yoshiaki of Tokyo (Kodokan-judo, kyoshi); **Isogai Hajime** of Kyoto (Kodokan-judo, kyoshi); **Yokoyama Sakujiro** of Tokyo (Kodokan-judo, kyoshi); **Nagaoka Shuichi** of Kyoto (Kodokan-judo, kyoshi); **Takano Shikataro** of Okayama (Takenouchi-ryu); **Tanabe Matauemon** of Himeiji (Fusen-ryu, kyoshi); **Imai Kotaro** of Okayama (Takenouchi-ryu, kyoshi); **Sato Hoken** of Kyoto (Kodokan-judo, kyoshi); **Oshima Hikosaburo** of Kagawa (Takenouchi-ryu, kyoshi); **Tsumizu Mokichi** of Wakayama (Sekiguchi-ryu); **Aoyagi Kihei** of Fukuoka (Sosuishitsu-ryu, kyoshi).

...The President (of Butokukai: baron Oura Kanetake) accepted. This was the way the Congress was created with Totsuka, Hoshino and others jiu-jutsuka from different ryu. We started the discussion from the base I have prepared with Kodokan's Shobu-no-kata.

Adding new hon, we established that idori would include 8 of them and tachiai 12. This structure was matching the point of view of Kodokan. The new hon were conceived by me and accepted after being discussed until everybody have agreed on their effectiveness. This form is therefore valid for both the Butoku-kai as well as for the Kodokan.

(Kano Jogoro – Judo and life)

Get to know the jiu-jutsu

Up to the 1860 randori did not exist and the training of jiu-jutsu was based on kata. Techniques of street fighting (shiken-shobu): kicks, weapons, projection, leverage and strangling without control were not allowed in “free training sessions”.

From the other hand, the kata was not seen or practiced like a sequence of techniques. In jiu-jutsu, a technique (hon) was developed from the exact and formal execution to a more rapid and instinctive movement. Katas were real programme of study.

Gokyo-no-kaisetsu used in judo is a kata conceived in the same view of jiu-jutsu: it comprises the same techniques as the student programme in nage-waza but nobody can even imagine to perform it like a sequence. Each technique is studied thoroughly until it can be properly applied in randori.



How was then the training in jiu-jutsu? The technique was performed in a simpler way, it was paid attention to the mental attitude, it was performed in still position and movement, finally it was practiced against more opponents. The final step was to bring the pupil in dangerous places where it was quite easy to sparkle a fight so that the effectiveness of the technique can be assessed. Tells Yokoyama Sakugiro, who arrived at Kodokan with a degree in jiu-jutsu, almost a 'zuishuin' (a colleague) of Kano :

“ Close to the Imperial University, where the street run amongst bamboos' grove, there was a dodgy place, where gambler and all gender of scoundrel use to meet, constantly looking for a fight with passer by or asking for their money. We were of the opinion that that situation was an excellent way to test our abilities so we were used to hid us amongst some bushes and send a young pupil to provoke the mob. We were not thinking of seriously hurting anybody, but just to scary them. So we avoided to hit vital points and we were happy enough with dislocating jaws using the palm of the hand. Victims couldn't even yell while running away. If somebody had to repeat the technique to obtain the expected result, had to train more.

The day after, some of the victims were coming to the dojo to re-allocate the bones. Healing bones (seifuku) is a necessary knowledge for a jju-jutsu master. In this way, we could actually check the ability of the hit on that unfortunate guys. We were quite crazy at that time. Nowadays things are different and that kind of behavior have to be discouraged, even though the reasons we had in the past could be praiseworthy. I am telling this story as a confession from my young ages”

(Yokoyama Sakujiro, Diary)

Around 1850 many schools accepted some sport challenges controlled by strict regulations performed on tatami. Until then, sport practice in schools was only represented by gekken, which was safe as it included the use of *shinai* and *bogu* , bamboo weapon and protections. (The supremacy of Kodokan in ashi-waza was due to the fact that Kano focused his attention on these techniques, generally thought useless in street fighting).

“ When I was a teenager I was practicing Tenjin-yoshin-ryu. Fights were extremely violent and not so rarely, they could cost the life. When I was going to a tournament, I regularly said farewell to my parents as it was the last time, I was not sure I was going to see them again. During tournaments very few techniques were forbidden



and anyway none of us would have hesitated in using them to defeat the opponent” (id.).

During the Restoration Era (1868) both the schools attended by Kano (Tenshin-shin'yo and Kito) used an exercise called 'ran', which started before the grip and caused accidents to the fingers. The Kodokan-judo selected the safer techniques (collected in the Gokyo) to be specialised in 'ran-dori' (free exercise) which started only after the grip was taken. This gave the possibility to Yoshiaki Yamashita to do 10.000 randori every year (30 per day), copying the seitan of 200 fights of gekken a day recommended by Yamaoka Tesshu.

The story of the congress

The aim of this Congress, for the president of Butokukai, was to unify the jiu-jutsu through the practice of some Kata common to all the schools. Same thing he was trying to do for the gekken (ken-jutsu).

Mr. Kano presented to the participant 15 hon for Nage-no-kata, 10 for Katame- and 14 or 15 for Kime-. He couldn't present Itsutsu- or Ju-no-kata because these two Kata are representing the very morale of judo, which was not shared by the jiu-jutsu. Even less, he could present Koshiki-no-kata, as this was coming from the school of Kito . The jiu-jutsuka convened expressed their opinions on Kime and Katame-no-kata because the supremacy of Kodokan in nage-waza was so strong that would not allow any objection on Nage-no-kata.

...Considering the Kata practiced in the schools, there were movements with no real application in randori. Probably some movements were presented in a simplified way so that people can gradually learn while their real applications were not disclosed. In this way, the Kata is not working properly as its original content is kept concealed.

(Kano Jogoro – Judo and life)

So it happened that Katame-no-kata was increased to 15 hon and Kime-no-kata to 20. Kano wrote that the new hon were conceived by himself, just to avoid possible objections from the judoka and to comply with the objections of the Masters. To kime-no-kata (which already displayed a series of exemplar techniques) were added some hon describing the praxis of training for the real fight.

Clearly, the Jiu-jutsu's masters wanted to save this part so that it couldn't be overwhelmed by the judo as a sport.



We notice that:

- In Nage-no-kata, Kano included the strategy of roppo-no-kuzushi, developed while practicing Kito-ryu with Iikubo;
- Tanabe Matauemon of Himeiji (Fusen-ryu, kyoshi) took his revenge pretending to include in Katame-no-kata a leg-leverage which he has used to wound an opponent. This technique provoked the exclusion of all the ashi-kwansetsu (leg-leverage) from tournaments, by suggestion of Kano to the crown prince. Kano accepted to include this technique just to accomplish the task of unifying the jiu-jutsu.

There would be more stories to tell. Would be interesting to see how the Kata were understood in the Bu-sen, the training school for Butokukai's teachers. We will tell this stories in this series of articles.

Training for the real fight

Following pictures portray Mr. Nagaoka Shuichi in Kime-no-kata. We can notice how the attacks of *tsukkake-idori*, *tsukkomi-idori*, *yoko-tsuki*, *tsukkomi-tachiai* are opposed with the same technique,

tsukkake-idori

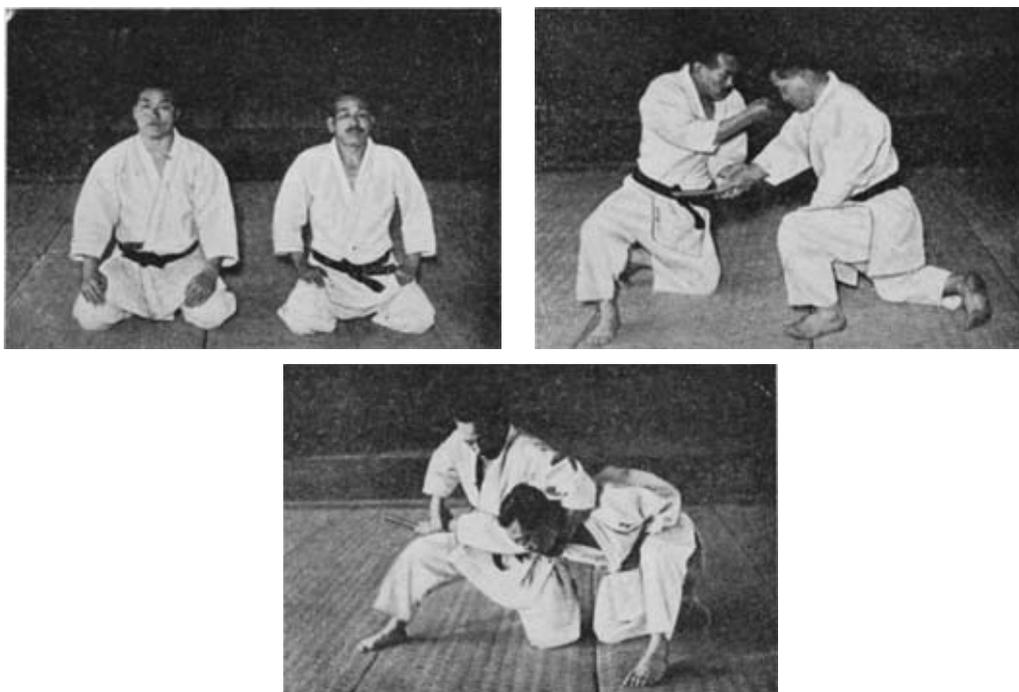


tsukkomi-idori

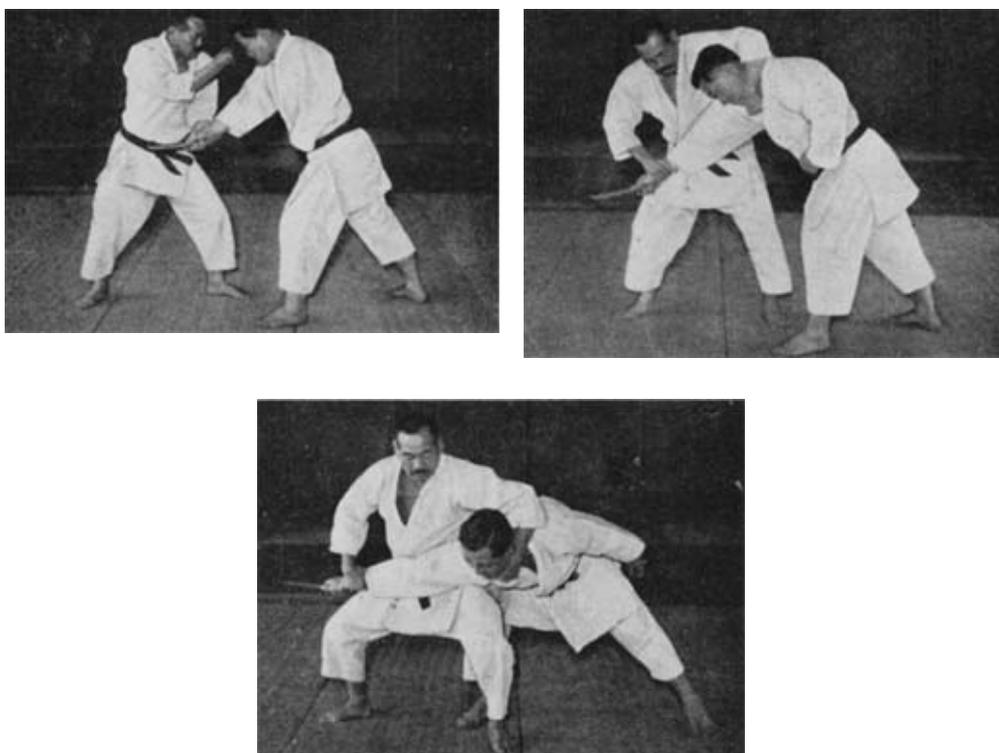




yoko-tsuki



tsukkomi-tachiai





What does it mean this repetition? It is an inheritance from jiu-jitsu of training for street fighting only through the shape (Kata), without free exercise (randori).

In tsukkake-idori, the position kneeling is quite academic. Because it excludes the use of the legs, it is used to focus the attention on the technique performed with the upper part of the body. The technique is repeated with a special exercise, where uke chooses the moment of the attack to take advantage of a lack of attention of tori. Tori can train in this way his mind with mu-shin 'in real time', without fear or desire.

Tsukkomi-idori is an attack carried out with a long, sharp tanto (dagger). The techniques can be developed at beginning by using a wooden dagger before the blade but finally this has to be used. The special exercise of uke choosing the right time for the attack brings to zanshin, the right attention, so much bespoken in Kendo.

The lateral attack of yoko-tsuki introduces tai-sabaki, always from the position kneeling. The praxis will be repeated with the simplified version of the wooden dagger, with the real blade and then with the sudden attack.

Tsukkomi-tachiai finally repeats all the technique in erect position.

At this point uke attacks with his fist or with a dagger choosing the time and the location. Tori and uke are working with free movements, keeping anyway the focus on that specific attack and that specific defence. It's the same Kakari-geiko (special randori) of the judo.

Tori faces two or more opponents, the rule being that they can not attack all in the same moment.

“Mr. Sato told me an episode occurred in the Ishin period. A day, three jiu-jutsuka came to challenge Master Iso. The three came in the tatami together, surrounding him. In a first moment the Master was controlling them but when they attacked him all in the same moment by atemi, he felt ahead. Everybody admitted his courage.

It's not easy to fight without rules; if the opponents are more people but in different time-frame, one may try it. It is not possible to face three contemporary attacks”
(Kano Jigoro, Judo and life)

Comparison between: tsukkake-idori...



a tsukkake-tachiai



On the contrary, tsukkake-idori and tsukkake-tachiai, are different techniques even if the name is quite similar.

Being understood that the technique adopts the name of the attack, and that the technique used in this case is not hadaka-jime, but an abrupt dislocation of the trachea, the mastership requires that uke keeps to the established attack, whereas tori can choose the response.



This choice of action offered to tori but not to uke is the highest expression of the kata in jiu-jutsu. The training was all about this. Then, the free exercise was practiced in the streets, but it wasn't randori : it was shiken-shobu .

Other hon of Kime-no-kata are extremely interesting and we will tell the story behind them in future. Now we'll insist in looking at the Kata from a different perspective as it was taught to us in order to show it in an exam or a demonstration.

We can understand what is the Kata and how it was used testing its efficiency.

Jiu-jutsu transmitted the experience of shobu-ho (the culture of fighting) through the use of kata. The free exercise (ran) characteristic of judo spread only after 1860.

Autobiography of Mr Kano “ *...I have learned jiu-jutsu from masters experts of the Bakufu period. The jiu-jutsu of some time ago was only practicing Kata. Randori appeared only in the late Bakufu period, therefore is relatively a short time since jiu-jutsuka started practicing randori. Before Ishin period the majority of schools practiced only Kata without randori. My masters of Tenshin-shinyo and Kito-ryu were both practicing Kata and randori. That's the way I was formed. Looking at the effectiveness reached in the past and using the logic, I realised that jiu-jutsu must not give preference to Kata rather than to Randori. The Kata is like the Grammatik of a text, randori represent the content of the text*”.

The application of the Kata

Escalating through the technique, the progression used in kime-no-kata shows us how is it possible to reach the right frame of mind and spirit to face a street situation.

First I isolate the pure technique, in the Kata I assume the position kneeled so that the movements are limited;



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Tsukkake is practiced from slow to fast, until that point when uke will choose the right moment to take tori unawares; the *present time* (mu-shin: control of mind, without fear nor desire) is experimented in this way.



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Once obtained a good result, we go for tsukkomi, always kneeled to neglect the movements and focus only on the technique; firstly I use a “domesticated” tool (i.e. a wooden dagger), then I start using a real, sharp blade obtaining the right concentration (zan-shin, the correct attention, which regards heart and spirit);



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Yoko-tsuki introduce stai-sabaki, which allows to face more opponents. I use the exercise of choosing the moment, using a blade, varying the angle...



[video](#)



[video](#)

Tsukkomi-tachiai is firstly performer with tori and uke still, at the distance prescribed by the Kata; then tori faces uke who moves and chooses freely time and angle of the attack; the attack is mandatory the same but uke has the freedom of seeking a lack of attention of tori. This exercise echoes kakari-geiko;



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At this stage will be possible to insert variable fists' attacks, leaving uke to ttrack suigetsu in the abdomen (like in tsukkake-idori), or jinchu (like in tsukkake-tachiai), applying a different technique;



[click here to see the video](#)



At expert level, I can up-grade the exercise by letting uke use different attacks of fists, blade or having two uke...



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The sequence we have reported (tsukkake-idori, tsukkomi-idori, yoko-tsuki, tsukkomi-tachiai) can be diversified in a number of way and applied in general.



[click here to see the video](#)

This is one of that case when *“the real content (of the Kata) has been kept conceived”* , but only to all of those who are just interested in passing exams, not to whom is seeking kime.

Studying a Kata just to pass an exam doesn't make progress. In this way, the Kata will be performed thinking: *“This is self defence... how limited where those ancients who were always fighting while having a tea, kneeled!”* . If the Kata has to develop and train kime, the techniques can not be performed in sequence; each technique has to be rather used in an intelligent manner. The mistake was (is) done when considering the Kata as purely demonstrative, functional to circumstances requiring it to be performed without pausing mind and heart on a single technique.



The language used by the Kata has to be understood, it has been developed during 400 years of experience.

I should not generalize but I have the impression that nowadays the Kata is missing the spirit, if compared to the one performed some time ago... (Kano Jigoro, Judo and life).