"The Katas are the aesthetic principle of Judo. In Katas is found the spirit of Judo, without which, it is impossible to see the goal."

Kano Jigoro.

Kata is the philosophy of the acquisition and the transmission of knowledge of Japanese Tradition. Its origin is very ancient. Kata, a philosophical and pedagogue tool, was chosen by the founder of Judo to insure the transmission of his art.

**KATA OF JUDO**

**ORIGIN, PRINCIPLE AND APPLICATION**

Ji-Ta-Kyo-Ei
Mutual prosperity.
Ji: Oneself.
Ta: The other.
Kyo: Both, All, Mutual.
Ei: Prosperity.


In the Kata this maxim, translates by the will of Uke, to accomplish true attacks so that the technique of Tori can be applied efficiently. So that a technique is successful, it’s real work of collaboration.
The Kata (prearranged form) is:

+ a vector of Japanese culture (conservator of Tradition),
+ a communication tool and reference which weaves an timeless link between generations of those practicing,
+ a means of personal accomplishment.

**From thought to communication**

All species of animals give out and take in information through their five senses. Already before protohistory, primitive “language” was not only heard but also gestual, tactile and olfactory. Body language is probably also at the origin of written expression (pictograms and writings).

Kata is a form of language, allowing humans to communicate gestures between those transmitting and those receiving (called Tori and Uke in Judo). This form of communication insures the transmission of human knowledge without time and space limits.

**Origins of Katas**

In the learning part of an art or technique, the Kata is an essential element of Japanese culture. Its origin is very ancient, it is linked to Japanese Buddhism, and more precisely to the notion of “original waking” (Hongaku).

This element allows us to establish a link with the “Way” (Do).

The principle of this waking was based on the following maxim:

- Form is nothing other than void (Shiki Soku Zeku)
- The void is nothing other than form (Kusoku Ze Shiki)
- Therefore, the mind has no obstacle (Shinmu Keigei).

Since Japanese Middle Ages, the principle of original waking has been impregnated in Japanese thought, in artistic and martial way.

Two elements are essential: body and spirit. The Kata is a learning process of body (which is primordial) allowing entrance to certain spirituality. The Kata goes beyond the notion of model, for it must be transcended.

Assimilation is done by the body but with the spirit. In Budo, the importance of the body and the spirit is often illustrated by the expression “Shin Gi Tai” (spirit, technique, body).

These three elements are indispensable and must be mastered to reach a superior level of competence.

The expression “Shin Gi Tai” already exists in the works of the No theatre, at the time of the Muromachi (1336-1573). It is also a model to follow in Kabuki (the first mention of the Kabuki theatre coincides the year of the founding of the Bakufu of the Tokugawa in 1603).

In the domain of martial arts, the need to teach and transmit techniques out of context of war, is at the origin of the creation of Katas. Each school holds and teaches to a limited number of students precious techniques kept in the heart of these schools (Ryu).

In spite of the development of new technologies of information, the Kata remains today an endless source of reference to Tradition and the timeless link between generations and those who practice the art.
Development of Judo

As for the function and place Kata has in Japanese culture, it’s natural for Kano Jigoro to use Kata in the creation of its teaching in Judo. When he was young, he knew and admired a Ju-jutsu person who came regularly to his home. The latter showed him a Kata but he refused to teach him Ju-jutsu. It’s only in 1877, when he was starting university studies in languages at the University of Tokyo, that he began learning Ju-jutsu of the Tenjin-shi-nya School.

After the death of his teachers he studied the Kito School since 1881.

In 1882, Kano created a boarding school to welcome Students (Kano Juku) and he founded his Dojo of Kodokan. In this place he transformed Ju-jutsu into a new educative practice: Judo. From 1884 and until 1887 Kano perfected the Katas at the base of Judo with Nageno-Kata (then ten movements), the Katameno-Kata and the Shobu-no-Kata (the future Kimeno-Kata). The others Katas (Junno-Kata, Koshiki-no-Kata, etc.) were developed much later, even after the death of Kano (for example the Kodokan Goshinjutsu-no-Kata). The Katameno-Kata comes from a work is considered as a classic of two Kano students, Nagaoka Hidekazu and Yamashita Yoshitsugu (Yoshiaki), both got their tenth Dan. In 1906, the Katas of Judo Kodokan were fixed in their form at Dai Nihon Butokai (an association of the warlike virtue of Great Japan, founded in 1895, at the heart of which Kano was named negotiator in 1900).


Reasons to study and practice Katas

According Otaki and Draeger (cf. Bibliography) the ten principles objectives of Kata study and practice are:

1. To afford a basic training method for Judo.
2. To develop representative basic Judo techniques.
3. To ensure harmonious technical development and wide range of Judo techniques.
4. To ensure harmoniously developed body.
5. To improve mental control.
6. To display the mechanics and spirit of Judo by exhibition.
7. To promote the development of the Judo spirit.
8. To ensure the development of self-defence principles and values.
9. To provide a suitable kind of Judo practice for all.
10. To ensure the preservation of the traditional symbolic values of Judo.

Evolution of the practice of Katas of Judo

In 1878 Kano began to elaborate what was to become Judo. The Randori and Kata were not formed yet.

In 1888, basic Katas are perfected and clearly distinguished from the practice of Randori. In order to understand the Judo, the two practices (Kata: “grammar” and Randori “composition” of Judo) they are inseparable.

Up to Kano’s death (in 1938) the part of Kata will grow in proportion to the part of work consecrated to Randori. After World War II, with the development of the competition (Shiai), the part of Kata in Judoka’s practice, diminishes greatly, and often disappear completely. The Katas are only studied when passing a Dan. This evolution brings about a loss of identity and quality in Judo on a worldly level. The transformation of Judo (way of suppleness) into a form of Gozo (way of hardness) is regrettable and a source of problems in health for those practicing the art, also a downfall of the spirit and the practice of Judo (Ji-ta-Kyo-Ei). Those practicing became fighters who were looking for more than domination of an opponent, to win by any means (strength and opposition).

Katameno-Kata

The Katameno-Kata is the Kata of the forms of control. It has been elaborated under the direction of Kano, following Nage-no-Kata (forms of projection). These two Katas make up the Randori-no-Kata.

The first series is that body control (five Osae Waza) allowing for compensations of the partners actions, in order to develop ones own actions (and not to immobilise by strength with opposition). The second series is that of strangling (five Shime Waza) and the third is that of joint lock (five Kansetsu Waza).

Concerning these three series, Tori must adapt and control Uke’s actions. Constantly, he must have a dynamic and permanent link between Uke and Tori.
Kuzure Kesa-Gatame takes its name of application by Tori, for control of a long and diagonal line crossing the body of Uke. The space of control is similar to the position of a pleat in the prayer garment of a Buddhist monk coming down from the shoulder. The form of Kuzure was chosen by Kano, rather than the fundamental form, because it allows for greater mobility of actions between partners. Like for all Katas, Tori and Uke must apply their techniques continuously, controlled, and with sincerity. Uke must not passively submit to a prearranged form, but must bring coherence of a follow up in his attempts to escape to allow Tori to do his control. Otherwise, the Kata loses its important role of "grammar" insuring the transmission of the tradition of Judo. It is merely an empty shell. Although, trials to get out are not codified, we propose to work on the basis of three trials in the following pages – applied to the Kuzure Kesa-Gatame techniques and shown as an example representing the given principles.

At the present time, the Kodokan teaches seven forms of codified techniques, called Kata:
1. Randori-no-Kata (codification of free training), divided in:
   - Nage-no-Kata (forms of projection)
   - Katame-no-Kata (forms of control)
2. Kime-no-Kata (forms of decision)
3. Kodokan-Goshinjutsu-no-Kata (forms of personal defence of the Kodokan)
4. Juno-Kata (forms of suppleness)
5. Itsutsuno-Kata (the Five forms)
6. Koshiki-no-Kata (ancient forms)
7. Seiryoku-ya-kokumin-tai-no-Kata (Kata based on the principle of maximum Efficiency).
But there exists other Katas: Nage-Ura-no-Kata (forms of counter on projections, created by Mifune Kyuzo, co-founder of Kokusai Budoin, International Martial Arts Federation), Nanatsu-no-Kata (form of Seven), Gonosen-no-Kata (forms of counter), Gono-Kata (forms of hardness), Joshi Judo Goshinbo (self defence for ladies), etc.

Kuzure Kesa-Gatame takes its name of application by Tori, for control of a long and diagonal line crossing the body of Uke. The space of control is similar to the position of a pleat in the prayer garment of a Buddhist monk coming down from the shoulder. The form of Kuzure was chosen by Kano, rather than the fundamental form, because it allows for greater mobility of actions between partners. Like for all Katas, Tori and Uke must apply their techniques continuously, controlled, and with sincerity. Uke must not passively submit to a prearranged form, but must bring coherence of a follow up in his attempts to escape to allow Tori to do his control. Otherwise, the Kata loses its important role of "grammar" insuring the transmission of the Tradition of Judo. It is merely an empty shell. Although, trials to get out are not codified, we propose to work on the basis of three trials in Kuzure Kesa-Gatame techniques and shown as principles.

**DIRECTORY OF THE KATAS OF JUDO**

**KATAME-NO-KATA**

Osae-Komi Waza
1. Kuzure Kesa-Gatame
2. Kata-Gatame
3. Kami-Shio-Gatame
4. Yoko-Shio-Gatame
5. Kuzure Kami-Shio-Gatame

Shime Waza
1. Kataju-jime
2. Hadaka-jime
3. Okuri-Eri-jime
4. Kataha-jime
5. Gyakuru-jime

Kansetsu Waza
1. Ude-Garami
2. Ude Hishigi Juji-Gatame
3. Ude Hishi Ude-Gatame
4. Ude Hishigi Hiza-Gatame
5. Ashi-Garami

"In art, their is neither past nor future. An art which doesn't exist in the present can never be ".

*Pablo Picasso*

**Ichigo-Ichi-e**

The Now is a Unique Experience
Ichigo: one.
Go: the instante.
Ichigoe: one.
E: experience, understanding
Preparation and control Kuzure Kesa-Gatame

Tori goes forward controlling Uke’s arm, he places his body in Kuzure Kesa-Gatame. Then he indicates that he is ready to receive the movements of escape from Uke.

Attention: if Tori’s control is incorrect Uke can escape.
Demonstration of the first escape try of Uke

Uke makes a first try to escape by using Tori’s right elbow as a point of rotation to escape.
Attention: if Tori’s control is incorrect Uke can escape.
Demonstration of Tori’s control to prevent the first escape try made by Uke

Tori adapts his control to the escape try made by Uke, by displacing his body. 1. His left leg raised allowing him to hinder Uke’s action. 2. Then return the left leg towards the back, so as to fill the space in the back of Tori (this manoeuvre lessens the risk that Tori will fall back, which Uke is trying to do).
Demonstration of the second escape try made by Uke

Uke makes a second try by using Tori’s movement to try throw him back.
Attention: if Tori’s control is incorrect Uke can escape.
Demonstration of Tori’s control to prevent the second attempt of escape by Uke

In relation with the previous action Tori adapts his control to Uke’s escape try, by moving a little to his left to annul Uke’s action. ① Left leg back. ② Return to hip movement. ③ Push left foot. ④ Accentuation of control with Hara.
Demonstration of the third try to escape made by Uke

Uke makes a third try by using Tori’s belt to pull him and make him roll over his body.
Attention: if Tori’s control is incorrect Uke can escape.
Demonstration of Tori’s control to prevent Uke’s third try

In relation to the previous action Tori adapts his control to the escape try made by Uke, by moving to the right and by using his right hand to prevent Uke’s action. ① Weight shifting by Tori through the hip. ② Control with the hand on the Tatami. ③ Placing the hips. ④ Traction of Uke’s right sleeve. Uke gives up.
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Author
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> Founded in 1952, the Kokusai Budoin, International Martial Arts Federation, is dedicated to providing access to archives of historical information and sources of traditional instruction, as well as the promotion of friendship and cooperation among leaders and enthusiasts of the Japanese martial arts.