



The Judo Compass

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Kata and the Way of the Sword

Once you definitely understand the principle of swordsmanship, the ability to defeat a single person at will means the ability to defeat all the people of the world. The spirit of defeating one man is the same for defeating ten million men. A commander's strategy, which requires him to make something large out of something small, is comparable to the making of a giant Buddhist statue from a foot-high scale model. I cannot write in detail how this is done. The principle of strategy is to know ten thousand things by having one thing.

- Miyamoto Musashi (c. 1584 - June 13, 1645)

Japan's "Sword Saint", Musashi, was a complex thinker. His *A Book of Five Rings* has provided an ongoing resource for battle strategy, for physical combatants and Wall Street money managers alike.

The quote above speaks to maximum efficiency via minimum effort. It is a simple, yet complex philosophy. So, the spirit of making one throw succeed is the same for making all throws succeed. This is the secret to the value of kata. The katas are predicated on this principle. The katas, when thoroughly studied and regularly practiced, provide the spirit of "defeating one man".

From the katas, which equate to "something small", we can craft the something large that is our randori, and eventually create our own "personalized" judo.

In creating our judo, we take our skills and formulate strategies, as well as tactical responses. Here again, Musashi provided two interesting principle in one statement. They are in bold.

*Since ancient times Strategy [Hyoho] has been included among the juno [ten skills] and hachigei [eight arts] as rikata [profitable measures - divine favour in Buddhist Law, **in other words the way benefiting oneself and others.** Truly, rikata is one of the arts, although it is not just limited to standard sword techniques. **The true value of swordsmanship cannot be seen solely by means of sword techniques.***

First, he speaks to the mutual benefit and welfare concept. Then, he says that the value of swordsmanship [read "judo"] cannot be seen only in its wazas (techniques). One must find the value of the endeavor both within it, and without. In kind, kata is not merely the doing of skills. Much more can be gained from it (and from randori, and overall judo training). The katas require an approach to judo that is essential to the full attainment of these values.



Kata Becomes You

When learning kata, the student typically goes through these stages, or something akin to them. Nage no Kata will serve here.

1 Emulation

We see, we copy. We try to copy details as they are interspersed.

2 Recollection of order

Now, the frightening task of remembering what comes next. It is like being in a drama production and hoping to not forget ones next line.

UNFORTUNATELY... Here ends the pursuit for most judoka. If the first two steps are accomplished, it is often sadly enough to satisfy demands for whatever rank the kata is required.

If the judoka is fortunate, the pursuit goes beyond this, and delves into the following:

- 1 Walking right
- 2 Applying kuzushi relative to movement
- 3 Applying tsukuri relative to movement and timing
- 4 Implementing kake with complete control
- 5 Finding the essence of kata being used in your randori

An Heroic Perspective on Nage no Kata

The first throw, Uki Otoshi, epitomizes judo, and mirrors the Units of Strength example. At the onset, uke attacks with force, and tori yields, causing uke to both recover and continue to push. Tori perpetuates the yielding to off-balancing, and on the third step applies judo. The fulcrum point of the throw is *air*. Bodies do not collide. Tori does not even need to look to see if uke is vanquished, but stays solidly in place, dominant.

The second throw, ippon seoinage, demonstrates both samurai ju-jutsu and modern usefulness of judo for self defense. Uke's powerful overhand strike is deftly slip-blocked and controlled, devastating uke with his own force.

Then, what appears as a move of strength, kata guruma, the full lifting of uke up onto the shoulders, is accomplished with maximum application of physics, balance and control. And where force would fail, judo skill succeeds.

This is the first set, and it is fully judo representative. And... this is only the beginning.

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