Kōdōkan Jūdō’s Elusive Tenth Kata: The Gō-no-kata – "Forms of Proper Use of Force" – Part 3

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Abstract

Background and Study Aim:

Kata ("Prearranged forms") represent the grammar of Japanese jūdō. The Kōdōkan jūdō syllabus typically contains eight or nine kata. In recent years, Gō-no-kata ("Prearranged forms of correct use of force"), a generally considered obsolete and reclusive ‘tenth’ kata, has become the subject of some renewed interest within jūdō circles. Finding accurate information on the gō-no-kata or locating a skilled instructor of this exercise is very difficult. The purpose of the present paper is to provide a comprehensive study of this gō-no-kata which once formed a part of the standard jūdō curriculum. We aim to remove the confusion and mystery which surrounds the gō-no-kata.

Material/Methods:

To achieve this, we offer a critical evaluation of the available literature and source material on this kata.

Results:

Gō-no-kata is the oldest kata of Kōdōkan, probably predating the two 1885 randori-no-kata. Gō-no-kata consists of ten forms, which depicts a relatively primitive jūdō, still practiced in defensive jūdai position. Its aim was to serve both as an intense fitness exercise as well as to illustrate the basic principle of conquering force with giving way. Despite being popularly thought of as defunct, the gō-no-kata survives today – having initially been preserved in Tōkyō by a small group of senior jūdōka, and now also by a handful of experts abroad.

Conclusions:

The preservation of gō-no-kata, a 10-technique prearranged form that teaches principles of optimal use of force, is primarily the merit of the late Yoshiyuki Kuhara-sensei and his nephew Toshiyasu Ochiai-sensei.

Key words: Gō-no-kata • Jigorō Kanō • jūdō • kata • Kōdōkan

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BACKGROUND

Kata are intended and recognized as a valuable training drill in most Japanese gendai budō art and koryū arts. Kata represent the grammar of jūdō, and without properly mastering them, jūdō is often reduced to a crude conglomerate of isolated throws merely based on power, endurance, and athletic achievement. There are nine kata in Kōdōkan jūdō today, as accepted by the Kōdōkan Jūdō Institute in Tōkyō, Japan [1–3]. Of those nine kata only seven are most commonly performed. Because of this reason one will often find literature incorrectly claiming that there would be only seven or eight Kōdōkan jūdō kata [4,5]. However, other Kōdōkan and non-Kōdōkan kata exist in jūdō. Most of these kata are not well known outside Japan and are rarely taught or practiced [6–8]. One such kata that used to form part of the Kōdōkan curriculum, but no longer features, is the Gō-no-kata 剛の形 ("Prearranged forms of correct use of force"). In recent years, this generally considered obsolete ‘tenth’ kata has become the subject of some renewed interest within jūdō circles. However, much of the information in cir-

1 Gendai budō 現代武道 are modern Japanese martial arts which were established after the Meiji Restoration (1866–1869). In that way they distinguish themselves from classical or traditional or old martial arts (koryū). Gendai budō often are rooted in koryū.

2 Koryū 古流 is a Japanese term that is used in association with the ancient Japanese martial arts. The word literally translates as old school or old tradition. Koryū is a general term for Japanese schools of martial arts that predate the Meiji Restoration (1866–1869) which sparked major socio-political changes and led to the modernisation of Japan.
Gō-no-kata: "Prearranged forms of correct use of force", a physical exercise created by Jigorō Kanō and presumably the oldest jūdō kata, which until recently was often considered defunct.

Our research questions are as follows:

- What is the veracity of various claims made by certain publications that what they propose as gō-no-kata truly represents the historic gō-no-kata?
- Does there exist a gō-no-kata in Kōdōkan jūdō?
- If a gō-no-kata exists, then what is its contents and theoretical foundation?
- If gō-no-kata exists, then who practices it and where can it be observed and learnt?

This final part of a series of three papers will mainly focus on the third and fourth of those four main questions. To address these questions and achieve our purpose, we offer a critical evaluation of the available literature and source material on this kata. Rare material drawn from original and reliable sources will also be introduced to support the drawing of definitive conclusions. This paper offers an important contribution to our knowledge of Kōdōkan understanding, as it has implications for the current jūdō syllabus, and also represents the only critical scholarly study of this kata in both Western languages and Japanese.

**RESEARCH INTO NEWLY DISCOVERED SOURCE INFORMATION ON GŌ-NO-KATA**


The most significant and detailed material on the gō-no-kata can be found in one of the rarest jūdō oeuvres in existence, namely an extensive study of kata completed in 1976 [9] by the late Yoshiyuki Kuhara (1906–1985) (Figure 1). It is the only work that has survived, which
Kuhara is one of the most crucial figures in jūdō kata in the second half of the twentieth century, having personally researched the topic for some 60 years. Kuhara mostly specialized in the Koshiki-no-kata for which he was well acclaimed. He was also probably the most important jūdō performer of that particular kata in full armor, regularly demonstrating it during Kagami-Biraki celebrations and All Japan Jūdō Championships, initially as the uke for Kazuzo Kudō, 9th dan (Figure 3). Kuhara also recognized the importance of koryū and actively promoted its return. To that extent, he is known to have studied and practiced the kata of iaidō.

The study of koryū is consistent with the fundamental aims of jūdō as envisaged by Kanō himself. It is understood that as his life evolved, Kanō realized that jūdō was not a total success, and was heading in a direction (sports competition) that was quite different from what he wanted [6,11]. Towards the end of his life he already anticipated that the increasing emphasis on shiai and dilution of kata would endanger the very concept of jūdō itself. Koryū because of its tradition and because of the impossibility to compete (mortal peril) did not have such a risk, and “cross-training” in koryū would strengthen a jūdōka’s character in areas beyond that covered by a jūdō education only.

After Kuhara died in 1985, his teachings were furthered by his pupil and nephew Toshiyasu Ochiai, now a Kōdōkan 8th dan. Although the Kuhara Shūdōkan dojō no longer exists today, the tradition is continued, including the teaching of some uncommon katas, including gō-no-kata as well as Mifune’s ura-no-kata. Kuhara’s Jūdō Mizu-Nagare [9] had quickly sold out and Kuhara-sensei passed away just a couple of years later. As his dojō disappeared too, his book was virtually never heard of.

Figure 3. Kazuzō Kudō (1898–1970), 9th dan (left), one of Kanō’s last pupils, and Yoshiyuki Kuhara (1906–1985), 8th dan (later 9th dan), here pictured on Sunday, January 16th of 1966, shortly before one of their celebrated performances of Koshiki-no-kata in full armor (From [9], p. 359).

Figure 4. Facsimile with the techniques of gō-no-kata calligraphed by Toshiyasu Ochiai as part of his 1998 instructional booklet [10].

Figure 5. Yoshiyuki Kuhara (tori) and Shōichirō Satō (uke) in hidari-seoi-nage, the fourth technique of gō-no-kata. Note how forceful opposition at first, is channelled into jū or giving way, which provides an opportunity to successfully enter a jūdō throw, in this case, a left shoulder throw (hidari-seoi-nage) (From [9], p. 249).
again, and so no written documentation on go-no-kata was available any longer. Because of this situation, and to support his continued teaching of go-no-kata, his nephew Toshiyasu Ochiai-sensei, in 1998 created an instructional booklet [10] (Figure 4) that from Kuhara’s jūdō Mizu-Nagare only retained the go-no-kata.

The booklet [10] was far easier to reproduce than Kuhara’s complete oeuvre [9], and only preserved from Kuhara’s book information thought to be essential. Kuhara really thus remains its original author. However, Ochiai-sensei did replace the original pictures of Kuhara- and Satō-sensei (Figure 5), by pictures of himself as the tori, and Yūtaka Taniguchi, 5th dan (at the time, 4th dan), as the uke, presumably because the original pictures were in black and white, and because he no longer had the originals; the new pictures in the booklet are in color. That being said, even this newer booklet has never been officially published with an ISBN number, and is currently also only available at Ochiai-sensei’s dojō to his own students. The reason for this is not to bestow a character of esoterism on go-no-kata, but simply to avoid an uncomfortable situation for the Kōdōkan, which is where most enthusiasts and foreigners typically address their questions. Since go-no-kata is no longer part of the actively taught Kōdōkan curriculum, and since the official version claims … would in fact even have been removed from it by Kanō himself, the insistence, particularly of foreigners for information about this obsolete kata, puts Kōdōkan sensei and staff in a somewhat uncomfortable and awkward situation.

Because Kuhara’s original oeuvre and the later booklet compiled or edited by Ochiai, as far as go-no-kata is concerned, are nearly identical, we will consider their contents together here in the same section. Both Kuhara’s book [9] and Ochiai’s booklet [10] are written in Japanese, and the extracts cited in the present paper are original translations. Contrary to Kuhara’s book, Ochiai’s booklet has no page numbers.

Kuhara [9] and Ochiai [10] present the history of the go-no-kata and the rationale for its development. Kuhara, unlike Kawamura and Daigo [12], does not list a creation date for the go-no-kata. However, Kuhara, does opine that go-no-kata may in fact be the oldest Kōdōkan kata. If Kuhara is correct, and go-no-kata is indeed the oldest kata of Kōdōkan, then its creation date must in fact be no later than 1885, since this is the year that Kanō-shihan conceived the original nage-, katame-, and shōbu-no-kata [13, p. 1168]. This is a different from what has been suggested by Kawamura and Daigo [12]. Unfortunately, Kawamura and Daigo [12] do not support their 1887 claim with any references.

The Kōdōkan New Japanese-English Dictionary of jūdō in which Kawamura and Daigo make their 1887 claim [12, p. 142] is in fact a more recent, concise and bilingual Japanese/English version of the earlier jūdō Daijiten, which had 670 pages and was published in Japanese only [12]. Both Kawamura and Daigo were already part of the editorial committee of the jūdō Daijiten. The latter, on page 139 has an entry for go-no-kata, which references two sources [12, p. 139]. The first reference is Oimatsumi [15], the second is Kanō [16], neither of which contain any creation date for go-no-kata, though. The only source that mentions the year 1887 in the same paragraph in which go-no-kata is discussed, is indeed Kanō’s biography.

We note though that Maruyama, known for his historical research into jūdō, does not list go-no-kata as one of Kanō’s achievements in his year overview for 1887 [13]. We have previously (see Part 1) explained that Daigo and Kawamura most likely obtained the year 1887 by misinterpreting a section on jū-no-kata and go-no-kata in Kanō’s biography [17]. It is our opinion that the synonyms of the sentences used in that section, suggest that the year 1887 as date of creation only applies to jū-no-kata, and not to go-no-kata.

It is also unlikely that somebody as meticulous and exhaustive as Maruyama [13] would have forgotten to mention ‘go-no-kata’ as an important creative product of Kanō for the year 1887. In other words, Kuhara’s view (i.e., of go-no-kata being the oldest original jūdō kata and predating both nage-no-kata and jū-no-kata) is very plausible.

There is no doubt that the go-no-kata presents an idea of jūdō in a somewhat archaic form that we are no longer used to seeing. Yet, it succeeds in explaining the basic idea of jū in a very straightforward way understandable by both laymen and novices, where, for example, itsutsu-no-kata does so in a more philosophical, almost elitist way, generally incomprehensible, except to the very advanced jūjutsu.

Kuhara explains that go-no-kata is loosely derived from the Kōb-ryū and Tenjin Shin’jō-ryū styles of jūjutsu and was

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1 Tori: the person who applies a throw or other technique… [12, p. 128]. Uke: the person who receives a technique… [Ibid., p. 131].
3 Recall that the Go-no-kata is Kanō’s creation and did not exist as a complete form in any jūjutsu school.
4 Kōb-ryū: A style of classical jūjutsu from which the throwing methods of modern Kōdōkan jūdō originated [12, p. 91], and [18].
5 Tenjin Shin’jō-ryū: One of the last schools of classical jūjutsu to be formulated… It featured many choking and jointlock techniques, many of which form the basis of a number of techniques in Kōdōkan jūdō [12, p. 127], and [18].
Table 1. Gō-no-kata: “Forms of Proper Use of Force” of Kōdōkan jūdō, as constructed by Jigorō Kanō in 1887 or earlier. From Kuhara [9], and Ochiai [19,20].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Soto-nage</td>
<td>Shoulder Throw</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ushiro-goshi</td>
<td>Back Hip Throw</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Sukui-nage</td>
<td>Scooping Throw</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Hidari-sei-nage</td>
<td>Left Shoulder Throw</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Uki-goshi</td>
<td>Floating Hip Throw</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Hadaka-jime → Koshi-kudaki</td>
<td>Naked Lock → Hip Crush</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Tobi-goshi → Uki-goshi</td>
<td>Jumping Hip Throw → Floating Hip Throw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Ō-soto-otoshi</td>
<td>Large Outer Drop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Ushiro-goshi</td>
<td>Back Hip Throw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Kata-guruma</td>
<td>Shoulder Wheel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

created at the turning point from jūjutsu to jūdō [9]. As such they were based on the principle of self-defense so, in that sense ... not necessarily suited to [modern] jūdō [9].

The motivation for the creation of the gō-no-kata is attributed to the rapid growth in the popularity of jūdō. With an increasing number of students it became impossible for Kanō to personally teach every new enrolled student and so he created a kata to support the correct learning of the art:

"In the beginning, Kanō-shihan personally taught this kata to his students; but as more students came to him for instruction, he found this harder to achieve. It seems that for this reason he had to establish this basic kata so that his students could learn from it, and not necessarily directly from him. In fact he used to say that there was a great need for it." (…) [9]

The essence of the gō-no-kata is described and a list of the techniques that comprise the kata is provided (see Table 1).

"The kata consists of ten techniques, in which the two [participants] confront each other - at first with the utmost power and later [one] makes best use of the other’s power." (…) [9]

Table 1 shows that seven distinct techniques are practiced in the gō-no-kata. Three of these are repeated with different irimi ("entry patterns") bringing the total to ten.

In essence, the gō-no-kata focuses on functional strength and the application of that strength at the correct time to create the maximum amount of kuzushi, “balance-breaking”. After hard pushing and pulling, the tori surrenders to uke’s attack up to the point where he/she almost loses. However, the tori suddenly regains his position with tai-sabaki (proper body movement & position) and prevails (Figures 5.6). Accordingly, the gō-no-kata is also useful in developing sensitivity to the tension in uke's grip, thereby learning the correct timing for effectively using uke’s own force to either unbalance him/her or move into a position of advantage.

Kuhara [9] and Ochiai [10] explain why the grips and holds of the gō-no-kata are different to the classical sleeve-lapel grip used in jūdō:

“The jūdōgi in those days were unlike those of today and did not cover the elbows or the knees, so the kamaekata (posture) and humikata (ways of holding) were necessarily defensive ones. It often happened that four fingers of one hand were inserted into the sleeve of one’s partner with the other hand taking hold of the collar from the rear.” (…) [9,10].

It is worthy of note that many of the kata’s techniques start with tori and uke clasping each other’s hands in various positions, whilst forcefully pulling or pushing. Additionally, the main body position in the kata is the defensive posture (jigotai) and many of the low-hip movements therein are also evocative of sumō. For instance, for suhai-nage, “scoping throw” (the third technique in the kata) the starting position resembles a standing arm-wrestling match.

The sixth technique in the kata (hadaka-jime/koshi-kudaki or “naked choke/hip crush”), for example, starts with tori being held in riote-dori (two-hand hold) and transitions through both tori and uke using hand pressure grips in a manner similar to sumigaeishi (“corner throw”) as performed in the nage-no kata, before concluding with tori applying the choke.

Inspection of Kuhara [9] and Ochiai [10] also confirms that (similar to the jū-no-kata) there are no completed throwing techniques in the gō-no-kata. Tori prepares for the throwing technique with the correct principles of kuzushi and tsukuri, “body positioning”, but there is no kake, “application”. As such it would have been especially suited to beginners.
The gō-no-kata is thought to be the only jūdō kata intended to assist in the development of actual physical strength (see also higher, under Uenishi) with it being written that Nagaoka-sensei recommended its use before practice as a warm-up exercise. Additionally, Nagaoka-sensei wrote that the kata contributes to increased willpower, physical force, and ki, “spiritual energy”. Kuhara writes:

“I often heard Sakamoto-sensei say that the late Nagaoka (10th dan) used to do this kata before keiko (practice). He probably did this not only for the kata practice but also to prepare himself both physically and mentally for the keiko. Actually, if you make an effort in performing this kata, you can keep yourself in good shape, physically and mentally for the keiko. Actually, if you make an effort in performing this kata, you can keep yourself in good shape, with your waist becoming more stable and more energy flowing to you. I am quite sure that well before you have completed all of this kata, you will begin to sweat even in the coldest season.” […] [9].

Kuhara [9] and Ochiai [10] then give an indication of the gō-no-kata’s demise, as well as the instrumental role played by two elderly koryū jūjutsu sensei (Fusatarō Sakamoto 酒本房太郎 and Shōichirō Satō 佐藤昇一郎). Finally, Kuhara [9] reproduces limited relevant writings by Nagaoka- and Samura-sensei, unfortunately though without bibliographic details:

“It is true that these ten techniques were, in those days, among the best known basic forms, but conversely there are [now] relatively few people who know about them, and still fewer who can practice them.

As far as it is known, Fusatarō Sakamoto-sensei of Tenjin Shinjō ryū, 9th dan (age 88), and Shōichirō Satō-sensei of Sissorshitsu-ryū, 8th dan (age 82), are the ones who can practice them today. It is known that those two elderly masters once exhibited the kata in public at a Butoku Festival in Kyōto.”11 (…) [9].

“… thanks to the writings of Nagaoka, 10th dan, and Samura, 10th dan and thanks to the valuable advice from Sakamoto-sensei, I could manage to organize this. Fortunately, Sato-sensei and Sakamoto-sensei had the same material and additionally their bodies as well as their minds had remembered the kata very well. I wish to say ‘thanks’ to those two teachers.” (…) [9].

“In the past there were many who tried, in every way, to pass down this kata to subsequent generations as a precious heritage—but they were unsuccessful. Sakamoto-sensei regretted this and he asked me to do this [instructional book] and he was always willing to support me whenever I was in need of help.” (…) [9].

It is not a coincidence that the sensei involved in the preservation of the gō-no-kata in the past had strong ties

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11 Sissorshitamōryū 双水執流, or “The School of the Pure Flowing Waters” is a koryū bōjutsu school that focuses on kumi-uchi jūjutsu and kodō-no-naturi, inajutsu and kenjutsu. The shitsu (史流) in Sissorshitamōryū in Japanese kanji is a more modern pronunciation from the Meiji-era, whereas Sissorshitamōryū is the Bakumatsu-era pronunciation.

12 Fusatarō Sakamoto was born in 1884 and died in 1978, whereas Shōichirō Satō was born in 1890. We do not know precisely when he died. Satō-sensei also obtained Kumi-uchi Makurashō of Sissorshitamōryū in Tokkyū under Hyakutarō Matsu’s 松井房太郎 before entering the Kōdōkan. It is equally unknown when exactly the demonstration took place to which Kuhara is referring.
to koryū, as koryū practitioners are much closer to what jūdōka were in the early 1900s than to the sports-oriented ‘grapplers’ of today.

1995 (December) – Yukata Shimizu – Hiden koryū bujutsu [21]

In the December 1995 issue of Hiden koryū bujutsu, an article appeared by Yukata Shimizu, entitled: Kōdōkan jūdō no kata to jissen [The kata and real fighting of Kōdōkan jūdō] [21]. In the article, Shimizu devotes approximately three quarters of a page to gō-no-kata. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first modern day article which also lists all ten techniques and provides valuable background about this kata. The contents of the article as well as the techniques listed as part of gō-no-kata, are entirely in line with Kuhara [9]. Unfortunately, this valuable article is neither referenced, nor annotated, making it impossible to trace its sources. This is a pity, given that Shimizu offers an interesting point of view which seems to suggest a connection between gō-no-kata and Tenjin Shin'yō-ryū jūjutsu. Since no other known document provides much insight into the origins of gō-no-kata, it would have been interesting to explore this link further, in particular, because jūdō is known to have extensively borrowed katas from this school rather than nage-waza. One of the most noticeable characteristics of gō-no-kata is the ubiquitous presence of the jūdōi defensive position. However, according to Maruyama [13] and Kudō [22], the jūdōi position of Kōdōkan jūdō originates in Shiguchiyū-ryū, and not in jūdō’s standard parent schools Tenjin Shin'yō-ryū and Kōdō-ryū.

1999 – Antony Cundy – HOP-LITE [23]

Hoplology12 was very much the spiritual child of Donn F. Draeger, and today the International Hoplology Society attempts to further his work. It also produces newsletter, called HOP-LITE. In the Fall 1999 issue of this Newsletter [23], Antony Cundy in an article describes a demonstration of the gō-no-kata performed by Toshiyasu Ochiai and Yukata Taniguchi under the auspices of the Dōyūkai13 道友会 (the “Jūdō Friendship Society”):

“…the exponents take a grapplers embrace, and then attempt to push each other forward; they then reverse their efforts and attempt to pull each other forward. The pushing procedure is then resumed until the predetermined winner breaks from the pushing action, and utilizes his partner’s momentum to execute a shoulder throw.” [23, p. 1].

It is clear that the gō-no-kata being described by Cundy [23] relates to the same authentic form and based on similar sources as what was described earlier by Kuhara [9]. This is confirmed by Cundy’s list of techniques that make up the gō-no-kata, which is identical to the one provided in Table 1.

Cundy reports that an amateur video of a demonstration of the gō-no-kata had been created by Ochiai-sensei and that he (Ochiai) was apparently deluged with requests for the recording. Cundy also refers to the possible production of a gō-no-kata instructional manual – it is this item that was reviewed in the previous section.

It is our understanding that it was not only Ochiai-sensei who became swamped with requests for copies of the gō-no-kata recording. Sources suggest that the Kōdōkan too became overwhelmed by similar requests, whereas they were not involved, nor had they endorsed the film or even the kata, which “officially” for them does not

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12 “Hoplology” is a science that studies human combative behavior and performance. It began taking shape as an academic field of study in the 1960s under the direction of Donn F. Draeger.

13 The Dōyūkai is a close affiliate of the Kōdōkan. The Dōyūkai organizes jūdō tournaments conform to the pre-War classical format and the minor contest scores that feature in modern international championships do not count. Ample time is also given to nage-waza. Nowadays the Dōyūkai is placing great emphasis on kata, and in this subject their level of expertise is at least equal, or comparable to that found in the Kōdōkan. Moreover, the kata being studied include those which are not usually practised elsewhere such as the Nage-no-kata waza and the Gō-no-kata.

14 Ochiai-sensei is now 8th dan.
Cundy concludes his article by promising that in the near future he would write a detailed follow-up paper on the gō-no-kata:

“In a future in-depth article on the Go no Kata, I intend to examine the kata more closely, introducing important figures involved in its preservation. Further, I will hypothesize on why the kata were developed by Kanō Jigorō, and why then it was almost lost to later generations.” (...) [23, p.2].

To date, to the best of our knowledge, Cundy never realized the promise he made nearly ten years ago and no such follow-up article or any other information has been published since his brief HOP-LITE article. However, there can be no doubt whatsoever that the gō-no-kata described by Cundy is the genuine article, and no doubt that Ochiai-sensei is truly a master of the form. Perhaps the present paper precludes that our hope would remain in vain, and perhaps this paper might serve as a worthy sequel to Cundy’s 1999 text [23]. Where precisely Cundy got his information, has remained a source of curiosity. He does not does not identify his sources, and the reclusiveness of the kata makes one wonder how he found out. Cundy does not confirm in his article that he would have been actually present himself during the demonstration in 1985. Fact is though, that in November of 1999 the Jūdō Daijiten was published by the Kōdōkan [14]. Cundy’s paper [23] was published in late fall of that same year (1999).


The Jūdō Daijiten or Judo Encyclopedia [12] is a large work (approx. 670 pages) written in Japanese, that contains numerous biographical, historical, and bibliographical entries. Unusual for works on jūdō, is that the Encyclopedia is actually referenced. The information it contains in its two entries, is mainly quoting the information contained in the November issue of Yūkō-no-katsudō [16], which we have already considered at length (vide supra).

Rare, however, is its detailed list of the techniques contained in gō-no-kata [12, p. 463]. It lists as a source for these techniques, an obscure work entitled Jūdō Techo 柔道手帳, which literally means “Judo Notebook”, and of which the date of publication is listed as the year 1999. No author is mentioned.

Undated – Gianna Giraldi – Go no kata [24,25]

In an undated web-based article on the Italian website freeBudo.com, Gianna Giraldi presents an article that heavily draws on the material of Ochiai [10]. For this reason it serves no purpose to critically evaluate Giraldi’s article.

The interested reader is, however, directed to view Giraldi’s article as it features three-color photographs of Ochiai-sensei performing techniques from the gō-no-kata, namely sukui-nage (“scooping throw”), uki-goshi (“floating hip throw”), and also a typical opposition of force posture. These photographs also feature in the original Ochiai booklet (see [10]).

It is worthy of note that Giraldi’s article has recently been unofficially translated by Llyr C. Jones [25] and made available on the Judo Info Internet website. In doing so, Jones has endeavored to keep his translation as faithful as possible to the Italian original, and has not corrected any factual errors; Caveat lector – there are some. However, when there is any ambiguity or doubt, precedence should be given to the original source [10] as presented in this paper.

Additional content found in Giraldi’s article are a well balanced overview of kata in jūdō and a correct statement that the majority of the writings that generally discuss the gō-no-kata are full of inaccuracies.


During a personal conversation with Ochiai-sensei in August of 200616, he alluded to a new booklet in Japanese on gō-no-kata he was thinking of creating, that would be produced more professionally and be made commercially available. Just three months earlier, Ochiai had welcomed a group of jūdō kata enthusiasts from Germany in his dōjō. The German group expressed the wish to have an accessible study text of gō-no-kata to support their practice after their return home, and they were presented with a copy of Ochiai’s 1998 booklet [10]. The booklet was reproduced in German under supervision of German kata guru, Klaus Hanelt [19], and this in a very near way, and presented to Ochiai for approval. Despite this somewhat awkward position (= being

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16 Ibid.
presented with a book you have supposedly authored, yet never seen before ...), Ochiai considered that at least the advantages for the jūdō community would outweigh the disadvantages, so he did not object.

Thus, since 2007 a new and usable text, and this in a Western language (German) is available to the public [19]. There is little sense in further critically analyzing the text, as it is a mere translation of Ochiai’s 1998 booklet, complete with pictures of the authentic gō-no-kata and helpful comments and notes to study the katas. The translation is done well. Though this 35-page booklet is officially published (Verlag Dieter Born, Bonn) and has a proper ISBN number17, it was still printed only in limited numbers and is not commonly available in a bookstore, which makes ordering it, particularly if outside of Europe, not an easy thing to do. Awaiting the publication of De Crée [6], which contains detailed descriptions and history of 17 existing jūdō katas, including gō-no-kata, at the time this paper went in print, Ochiai [19] represents the best alternative.

Since the publication of Ochiai’s German booklet on gō-no-kata [19], his privately published new Japanese booklet has appeared too [20]. This booklet [20] is very well taken care of, with the same pictures as printed in Ochiai [19], though they appear in a larger format and somewhat clearer. Unfortunately, this new booklet too, has restricted availability and cannot be purchased in stores.

For those, who desire to have just a brief guideline in English to studying gō-no-kata, Mōri [26] produced a short eleven-page summary of Ochiai’s 2007 booklet [18], which is distributed for free, and contains both brief instructions and reproduced pictures. It has also been noted that during a recent gō-no-kata clinic which Ochiai-sensei taught abroad18, compact syllabi on gō-no-kata were distributed, which contain black-and-white handdrawings of progressive gō-no-kata movements [27].

THE FUTURE OF GÔ-NO-KATA

Through the modern medium of the Internet, knowledge that gō-no-kata truly exists and is not extinct, has already reached many jūdō kata enthusiasts, some well informed, others less well informed. For those who think that practicing gō-no-kata will suddenly make one win contests or that it contains some secret knowledge towards invincibility or spectacular defenses against dangerous arms, disappointment will be the outcome. For those whose commitment it is to further their lifelong learn-

18 This clinic was organized by Nenbu Yudanshokai and sanctioned by the United States Judo Federation (USJF) and took place on Sunday, February 3rd of 2008 in Norwalk, CA. This was the first time ever that Ochiai-sensei taught a katas-clinic outside of Japan.
**no-kata.** Whether that implies that one day it might be taught again, is not known. As one can imagine, the Kōdōkan is not exactly the most progressive and liberal organ in the world, so likely somewhat more water will flow through the sea before this happens …

Nevertheless, the fact that gō-no-kata is finally publicly mentioned, recognized, and given a place again as one of the existing official Kōdōkan kata in a recent publication by Toshirō Daigo, the Kōdōkan’s Chief-Instructor and foremost authority on kata, is encouraging [3, p. 21–22], even if that does not yet equal that it is featured again as part of the taught syllabus.

**Conclusions**

Serious research into the gō-no-kata is a very difficult endeavor. There is a dearth of major written sources on the kata, and what is commonly available is often unverifiable, incomplete, ambiguous or factually in error.

While research into this area remains ongoing, there exists sufficient and even ample evidence that indicates the gō-no-kata is not, nor in any form has ever been a kata of blows, but an exercise examining the principle of efficient use of force and resistance. The literature indicates that the movements within the kata focused on the direct resistance of force (with force) right up until the very last moment when the force is overcome by skill, strategy and body movement. For this and other reasons, including methodological as well as their complete absence of any sources substantiating their claims, we firmly would dismiss as false any claim by Parulski [28,29], Muilwijk [31,32] and others that the gō-no-kata is even remotely based on a blend of jūdō and karate, and that it supposedly would have been composed jointly by Jigorō Kanō and Gichin Funakoshi. Moreover the series of exercises as presented by Parulski [28,29] and copied by Muilwijk [30–32] must be classified as a contemporary hoax lacking any historic substance or roots in either Jigorō Kanō or any of the other great jūdō masters of the past, or … even in any jūdō-specific principle.

Based on the original comments provided by Kanō-shihan [16,33], as well as Nagaoka- and Samura-sensei, and the substantive research and notes by Yoshiyuki Kuhara-sensei and preserved by Toshiyasu Ochiai [10,19,20], it is understood beyond any doubt that the gō-no-kata was and is a special and never completed set of exercises (ten in total) for two people devised by Kanō-shihan, that combined several aims:

Jūdō Education: The gō-no-kata provided a framework for the correct learning of the basics of jūdō without throwing. It teaches how to use force effectively, without relying on force as one’s primary means to conquer an opponent.

Physical Education: The gō-no-kata required using one’s body with precision, especially in the practice of using both focused strength and yielding at critical timings during jūdō techniques.

Physical Culture: Practice of the gō-no-kata assisted in the development of physical strength itself, in a time that power training devices were nearly nonexistent.

Psychological Benefits: It was believed that practice of the gō-no-kata contributed to increased willpower and "spiritual energy” in the sense of mens sana in corpore sano [a healthy spirit in a healthy body].

If indeed both kata were established in 1887, as suggested by Kawamura and Daigo [12]14, then it is appropriate to conclude that the gō-no-kata and the jū-no-kata were created as a complementary pair, as follows:

Jū-no-kata: Simplified, in the jū-no-kata, the jū (softness) question is responded to by jū (softness). Specifically, the jū-no-kata starts with jū and ends in jū.

Gō-no-kata: Likewise, in the gō-no-kata, the gō (hardness) question is first responded to by gō and then subsequently by jū (softness). Specifically, the gō-no-kata starts with gō but ends in jū. Thus the gō-no-kata adheres to a fundamental tenet of jūdō namely that softness controls hardness in the end.

Both kata convey the meaning of jū-no-ri, i.e. the core principle of jūjutsu whereby one avoids opposing an opponent’s force and power directly in favor of using it to one’s advantage. They also accord with jū yoku gō wo sei suru 柔能克剛を制する, a core principle of jūdō which can be translated in a number of ways – softness overcomes hardness, flexibility overcomes stiffness, gentleness controls strength or win by yielding.

Despite being popularly thought of as defunct, the gō-no-kata survives today having initially been preserved in Tōkyō by a small group of senior jūdōka under the guidance of Toshiyasu Ochiai, and now also by a handful of experts abroad. The knowledge of two elderly koryū jūjutsu sensei and the writings of Nagaoka- and Samura-sensei supported its limited preservation (Figure 8).

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*This is, however, doubtful. As suggested by Kuhara [9], gō-no-kata is likely the oldest jūdō kata, and must thus predate 1885, the year in which the old 10-technique nage-no-kata was completed. Jū-no-kata, which is far more refined, was created years later, in 1887, and probably only then paired up with gō-no-kata, to form what was then known under their common name gō-nō-kata.*
Additionally, having been obscured for many decades the *kata* is now experiencing a minor renaissance in that it is taught and performed on an annual basis at the Kōdōkan *jūdo* Institute by Ochiai-sensei under the patronage of the Dōyūkai.

Kanō’s own writings indicate that he was not satisfied with elements of the *gō-no-kata* and therefore abandoned, or at least, delayed its development. Furthermore, like with *Itsutsu-no-kata*, Kanō never found the time afterwards to rework, revise or expand the *gō-no-kata* and accordingly it must be considered as unfinished. However the writings also confirm that Kanō did not reject the *kata* in its entirety or its practice, unlike what some claim; so the *Kōdōkan* is overstating the case when it suggests otherwise. It is most likely that it is precisely this which devoted *jūdō kata* practitioners such as, for example, Ochiai-sensei, found out too, and why he continues practicing and teaching *gō-no-kata* having seriously reflected on what it entails and how it can be properly incorporated into *jūdō* training. Consequently, we as authors of this paper, advocate the practice of *gō-no-kata*, and we do so for all of the reasons explained above, as well as because we believe that in a time when the message, aims and principles of Kanō’s *jūdō* under impulse of the International *jūdō* Federation become increasingly diluted in the light of its ever increasing emphasis on *jūdō* as a performance sport and popular media circus, *gō-no-kata* helps explaining and restoring what *jūdō* is and was about.

Finally, we applaud Toshirō Daigo-sensei’s recent paper [3] in which he included *gō-no-kata* as a legitimate and existing Kōdōkan *kata*. We hope that it will soon be reintroduced in the Kōdōkan’s formal teaching curriculum of *kata*.

Japanese names in this paper are listed by given name first and family name second, instead of traditional Japanese usage which places the family name first.

For absolute rigor, long Japanese vowel sounds have been approximated using macrons (e.g. Kōdōkan) in order to indicate their Japanese pronunciation as closely as possible. However, when referring to or quoting from the literature, the relevant text or author is cited exactly as per the original source, with macrons used or omitted as appropriate.

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**Figure 8.** Yoshiyuki Kuhara (left) visiting the retired Kaichirō Samura, 10th dan (right) and wife in Kyōto, at the occasion of Samura-sensei’s 80th birthday in 1960 (From [9], p. 345).


