

What is Kata?

The book "Kata of Kodokan Judo Revised" 1968 by S. Kotani, Y. Osawa., & Y. Hirose, states that kata are the "systematic formulation of the most fundamental principles of throw, grapple and body attack".

According to Jigoro Kano the founder of judo, kata was the grammar of judo, a skill requirement needed to accompany randori which he considered to be the composition of our sport.

Other descriptions of kata commonly used: kata are 'prearranged forms.' kata are "formal demonstrations." kata are "cooperative practice techniques".

Lets try viewing kata using a different definition, one of which was observed on a popular Judo web site. "Kata is anything that is not the true thing."

Now comes the main question. What is meant by the real or true thing? I will simplify the answer to this question by suggesting that the real thing in judo is Shiai. So how do we prepare an athlete for shiai? Initially we would teach them some break falls, throws and grappling techniques which would then be incorporated into uchikomi and randori. Mixed in with these judo skills would likely be a physical and mental training program.

Now correct me if I'm wrong, but none of the above listed preparations for shiai are the 'true thing.' The skills listed, require repetitive practice, pre arrangement, step by step stage development and cooperation between training partners, all of the things that are taught in formal kata sessions. So could these preparatory skills be classed as kata?

Let's for sake of argument suggest that they do meet the requirements of kata skills and delve into just how well our instructors are already incorporating kata into the organization. How many of you out there still remember the "Saskatchewan Drill"? They even made a video of it. (if anyone has a copy of it please post for us to see again) This drill was devised by Ewan during his first tenure with us and is still taught and practiced in many judo clubs today. Along with that document, Judo Saskatchewan put together a number of short training videos from our 2008 Coaches Retreat that are perfect examples of pre arranged forms and partner cooperation or kata that are helping prepare our participants for all areas of their judo studies.

Go to Judo Saskatchewan's You Tube videos. (the last 25 videos are the Judo Sask. ones)