

Three guidelines for the assessment of kata competitions.

Japan Aikido Association Shihan

Fumiaki Shishida

Translated manuscript dated August 30, 2023

This document explains three guidelines for judges to consider when assessing judging in 'kata' competitions.

Kata is a method of training, along with randori, which Jigoro Kano Shihan taught as a means of judo training, and usually consists of dozens of techniques. These kata are generally prescribed by the founder or his organization, and the practitioner is expected to adhere to these methods. The individual techniques are performed by the receiver and the taker of the technique, who follow the procedure of attacking and defending the technique in an unobtrusive manner.

The founder of 'competitive aikido', Kenji Tomiki Shihan, developed these outstanding ideas of Kano Shihan. He recognized the contradiction between the spirit of kata and the spirit of competition, which is the pursuit of victory, but he recognized the movement towards competition and decided to implement it for the sake of the development of this art. However, the history of kata competitions since then has gradually slanted towards the beautification of kata performance through exaggeration and pedantry, and this has led to a greater divergence from the spirit of kata.

Originally, kata demonstrations were meant to express the stages of training, not about competing for skill with the judges' favorability in mind. On the other hand, kata competitions are judged by judges who are familiar with kata and judge the excellence of the kata performance. Although there are inherent contradictions in kata competitions because they have different purposes, the dice are cast and the Association has traditionally conducted these competitions under the name of *Embu Kyogi* or 'demonstration competitions', mainly among university students or at international competitions.

On reflection on the growing tendency towards beautification, the author, with kata competitors in mind, wrote the 'Guidelines on the way of *Embu Kyogi* and evaluation perspectives' (2019) to provide a single norm for the way kata should be performed. Following on from this, in this paper, with judges in mind, three guidelines for judging and evaluation are presented in Table 1. The name of the competition has also been changed to 'kata competition' to more appropriately express the spirit of Master Tomiki's kata.

The judges will evaluate the contents of Table 1 comprehensively and judge the superiority of the product using a separately defined evaluation form or other means.

Table 1: Three guidelines for the evaluation of judging of kata competitions.

three guidelines	Explanation.	supplementary explanation
1. Are basic behaviours mastered?	In performance judging, the elements of basic movements are not looked at individually, but evaluated comprehensively as a gestalt (form)*.	Basic movements refer to the basic skills of both uke and tori, such as <i>metsuke</i> , posture, <i>unsoku</i> or <i>taisabaki</i> , and <i>teगतana</i> .
2. Is the space-time interval appropriate?	The distance, position, timing and the connection between each technique are evaluated for the dignity and flavour that they create in the performance.	Ma refers to the distance, position and timing between the receiver and receiver. Ma-ai mainly refers to positional relationships.
3. Are you exaggerating or being pedantic?	The evaluation is based on the way the techniques are applied, whether there is any false posture in the <i>zanshin</i> , and whether irrational ukemi is used to enhance the tori. In other words, the functional beauty expressed in the pursuit of practicality and the expression of <i>riai</i> or rationale as seen in koryu kata, etc. are evaluated.	The spirit of martial arts differs from the world of sports scoring competitions and entertainment. Miyamoto Musashi, a great swordsman, valued practicality and criticized the big street arts, demanding mastery of the basics and resourcefulness of technique. The third guideline is to carry on these ideas.
*Gestalt: one coherent, organic and concrete whole structure that cannot be derived from its parts. Form. (<i>Seisenban Nihon Kokugo Daijiten</i> , or The Encyclopaedia of the Japanese Language, precise edition, by Shogakkan)		
References. *Kenji Tomiki, Introduction to Aikido (by Baseball Magazine, 1958); Shin Aikido Text (by Tomondo, 1963).		