

Midori Yama Budokai: *Hanshi's Corner*
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February, 2009

Vajramushti: One Whose Clenched Fist is Adamant

The translation of the (east) Indian fighting art is interesting. Adamant comes from adamantine, literally meaning diamond-like. As a diamond is the hardest substance known, something adamantine was seen as indestructible or the ultimate in hardness (power). Vajramushti was the first known recorded system of systemized combat. Combat has been around since two men coveted the same thing. Systemized combat is another thing. This system of combat is found in the Buddhist work, *The Lotus Sutra* (*Fa Hua San Ching* in Chinese and *Hokke Kyo* in Japanese). The Chinese version mentions it as a pugilistic form of combat. The Japanese version presents it as a form of *Sumo*. However, since the earliest bout of *Sumo* ended up with one of the participants being stomped to death, I guess they're not that far apart. *Kata* is also mentioned in the *Lotus Sutra*. It is called *Nata* and means a manly dancer, or performer. The uniqueness of being mentioned in the *Lotus Sutra* lies in the fact that Buddhism is the only major religion (if not the only one, major or minor) that has not espoused war, or over which a war has not been fought. I guess I should mention that the *Lotus Sutra* should not be confused with the *Kama Sutra*, although both are interesting in their own way. Vajra-mushti is divided into four distinct types; The First is *Dharanipata*, in which the loser is brought to the ground. *Asura*, a free fight in which there is only one foul, that of striking below the chest. The first man downed is the loser. Considering what happened in the first *Sumo* bout, this is probably a good safety feature. *Nara* was the third type. In this a person could announce that he surrendered whether he fell or not. Finally, the ultimate form of (east) Indian combat was *Yuddha*. This was similar to the Greek *Pankration* in that the loser had the possibility of being killed. As was also true of the *Pankration*, very few participants actually were! Vajramushti was restricted to the Brahmin caste of *Jethis*, or professional wrestlers. As percussive techniques with the hands were allowed, a cestus-like weapon was worn on the right hand. It is written that even the king worked with weights, swords and wrestling, not unlike Henry VIII of England, who was reputed to be an unbeaten wrestler. One wonders what would have happened to someone who did beat him. *Babur* (not to be confused with *Babar*), the founder of the Mongol dynasty was one of the great wrestlers. This was no doubt due to his strength. He could run a considerable distance at a very fast pace while carrying a man beneath each arm. Muslim influence in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries brought a form of wrestling that used groundwork, but vajramushti remained the predominant, and popular, form of wrestling. However, by the nineteenth century Muslims dominated the art. Also, by the nineteenth century, every boy knew something of wrestling, and there were even women wrestlers who traveled throughout India, taking on all comers.

I highly recommend *Asian Fighting Arts* by Donn F. Draeger and Robert W. Smith; also *Koei-kan Karate-do* by Brian Frost.

***Yokeru-Koto* or Evasions**

The following are included in *tai sabaki*, or body movement. These movements (evasions) are an integral part of *Shotokan Karate-do*, but are rarely taught to any but advanced students. Essentially they are movements away from the attack utilizing the

same directions as *judo* uses to teach *kuzushi*. Generally, *hiraki ashi* (*judo*'s *tsugi ashi*) is utilized for the movements. If moving to the rear, the rear foot moves first, followed by the front foot. When moving to the front, the front foot moves first, followed by the rear foot. Occasionally, *ayumi ashi*, or regular stepping, may be used. However, *ayumi ashi* usually results in less control and balance of the body. Only three evasions, those in heavy letters, are the ones most commonly used by *Shotokan*.

- ***Ushiro ni yokeru koto*** or evasion by stepping to the rear. Although the most widely used it is the least effective. You may avoid the opponent's attack, but you are not in an advantageous position to launch a counter-attack. Either you or the opponent must take a step before another attack may be made.
- ***Hidari ushiro naname ni yokeru koto*** or evasion by stepping diagonally to the left rear. Realize that you may be stepping to the outside (preferred) of the attack, or to the inside, depending on the relative positions of the bodies. There are only two real advantages over stepping directly to the rear. The opponent's attack may over-extend and the distance necessary to launch a counter-attack is slightly less than to the direct rear.
- ***Migi ushiro naname ni yokeru koto*** or evasion by stepping diagonally to the right rear. The same criteria apply as for the preceding.
- ***Mae ni yokeru koto*** or "jamming" the attack. You are really not evading in this case, other than evading the full force of the technique. By stepping forward you prevent the opponent from developing power. Unless you are larger and/or stronger (which is usually not the case!) you should not use this one.
- ***Hidari mae naname ni yokeru koto*** or evading by stepping diagonally to the left front. *Shotokan* uses this to refer to the fact you have evaded to your left side. This is the same principle as *aikido*'s *irimi*. However, *Shotokan* teaches to evade by stepping left with the left foot (*irimi*), then steps in (*fumi dashi*) with the right to counter-attack. Depending on the relative distance between you and the opponent, the second step may be unnecessary.
- ***Migi mae naname ni yokeru koto*** or evading by stepping diagonally to the right front. In *Shotokan* parlance, you have evaded the technique by stepping to your right side. Again, *Shotokan* steps to the diagonal with the right foot, then forward with the left foot to attack.
- ***Migi yoko ni yokeru koto*** or evasion by stepping to the right side. This should place you in a position to attack with a side kick or similar technique directly to the side. Again, the opponent should over-extend and be off-balance.
- ***Hidari yoko ni yokeru koto*** or evasion by stepping to the left side. The same criteria apply to this as to the preceding.
- The movements given above are also known as *kaishin* (step dodge) or *hiraki mi* (opening the body or open-legs rotation).

Other methods used, but not usually taught are:

- ***Kusshin*** (or *otoshi mi*) whose literal translation is body dropping. It is known in boxing as bobbing. If you are not familiar with the term, think of the plastic float on a fishing line. When you catch a fish, the float bobs up and down.
- ***Yoko-furimi*** is literally side swinging body. It is known in boxing as weaving. You are moving the top part of the body from side to side to avoid the blows. If you or any of your children have ever made potholders, moving the elastic

from one side to the other is weaving. If you sail or fly, think of the ship or 'plane as yawing.

- *Sorimi* means withdrawing the upper body. This is a form of weaving in which the feet remain in place and the upper body, especially the head, is moved backward away from the blow.
- *Hiza otoshi* or knee dropping refers to kneeling on one knee to avoid a blow to the upper body. This would place you in a position for an uppercut to the opponent's "groin." It's a form of *otoshi mi*.
- *Fuse mi* or taking cover by going to ground. This is the drop used in *Kanku Dai* and *Unsu*. This is the ultimate form of *otoshi mi*.
- *Hikimi* means pulling body. You withdraw the hips slightly to avoid – usually – a kick. This is one of the applications of *neko ashi dachi*, and is the last movement in *Hangetsu*.
- *Tobimi* or *tobi sagari* means jumping body. This is shown in the *kata*, *Meikyō*. You avoid an attack by jumping to any of the directions mentioned above. The jump may be direct or you may include a turn.

Joseph Louis Barrow

And who, you ask, was Joseph Louis Barrow? He was born May 13, 1914, in La Fayette, Alabama, the son of Barry Jerry Barrow, a sharecropper, and Lilly Louis. He died on April 12, 1981 in Las Vegas, Nevada. He was better known as Joe Louis, the Brown Bomber, a heavyweight boxing champion and considered to be one of the greatest in boxing history and one of the 100 greatest punchers of all time. He was a world champion for 11 years and 10 months and held the heavyweight title for over 106 months, more than anyone else before or after him. He had twenty-five successful defenses of the title. He participated in 27 heavyweight championship fights, a record which still stands. In 1934, as an amateur, he won the Michigan Golden Gloves, the National AAU and the Chicago Golden Gloves Tournament of Champions. In the same year he turned professional, making his debut on July 4th, knocking out Jack Kracken in the first round at Bacon's Arena in Chicago, Illinois. In 1935, Louis fought 13 times, creating history. He knocked out the former world heavyweight champion, the 6'6", 265-pound Primo Canera, in six rounds. Louis then knocked out the iron-chinned former heavyweight champion Max Baer in four rounds. Before losing to Louis, Baer had been knocked down only once, by Frankie Campbell. (Upon getting back up, Baer hit Campbell so hard, and beat him so badly in the 5th round, that Campbell died.) Louis also knocked out Paolino Uzcudun, who had never been knocked down or out before. Louis fought Braddock, the "Cinderella Man," for the heavyweight championship. Despite a knock down by Braddock in round 1, Louis defeated Braddock by KO in round 8. Joe Louis was now the heavyweight champion of the world. Joe Louis had lost to Max Schmeling prior to this match in 1936 and Germany touted his defeat as proof of Aryan superiority. When Louis was given the chance at the title rather than Schmeling, it was taken to court. Schmeling lost. The later rematch between Joe Louis and Max Schmeling is one of the most famous boxing matches of all time, and is remembered as one of the major sports events of the 20th century. When the rematch was scheduled, Louis retreated to his boxing camp in upstate New York and trained incessantly for the fight. A

few weeks before the fight, Louis visited the White House, where President Franklin D. Roosevelt told him, "Joe, we need muscles like yours to beat Germany." Louis later wrote in his autobiography, "I knew I had to get Schmeling good. I had my own personal reasons and the whole damned country was depending on me." Comedian Dick Gregory jokingly said that it was "probably the first and only time in history that a black man could end up being a white hope." The fight lasted two minutes and four seconds. Louis battered Schmeling with a series of swift attacks, forcing Schmeling against the ropes and giving him a paralyzing body blow. (Schmeling later claimed it was an illegal kidney punch.) Schmeling was knocked down three times, and only managed to throw two punches in the entire bout. On the third knockdown, Schmeling's trainer threw in the towel and referee Arthur Donovan stopped the fight. Ironically, while most people associate the German Schmeling with the Nazi party, he never joined it, and indeed once refused to accept an award from Adolf Hitler. His resistance of the Nazi party made him a hero in post-war Germany, and he became a life-long friend of Joe Louis. Their rivalry and long-lasting friendship is the main focus of the 1978 TV movie *Ring of Passion*. In all, Louis made 25 defenses of his heavyweight title from 1937 to 1949. About his fight with world light heavyweight champion Billy Conn, Conn, smaller than Louis, said that he planned to "hit and run," prompting Louis's famous response, "He can run, but he can't hide." This was one of two of boxing's most famous quotes, both created by Louis. The second was "Everyone has a plan until they've been hit." After 12 rounds, Conn was ahead on points, only to be knocked out by Louis in the 13th round. In 1952, Louis was invited to play in the San Diego Open on a sponsor's exemption, and became the first African American ever to play in this PGA Tour event. Louis performed as a professional wrestler in the 1950s and 60s, and as late as 1972. Joe Louis died at age 66 of a heart attack in Desert Springs Hospital in 1981. Ronald Reagan waived the eligibility rules for burial at Arlington National Cemetery, and Louis was buried there with full military honors on April 21, 1981. Because of his efforts to fight Jim Crow laws, the fist on a monument was symbolically aimed toward the south. His life and his achievements prompted famed New York sportswriter Jimmy Cannon to write "Joe Louis is a credit to his race - the human race." Joe Louis lives on in popular memory. A not very well known fact is that in 1944, during a promotional tour of Liverpool, England, Joe Louis (as a publicity stunt) actually signed for Liverpool Football Club as a player. As of today the records still state, that he was on the books and is classed as having been a Liverpool player. So, Joe Louis was the first in many ways to improve the condition of black Americans. During WWII, Louis convinced the U. S. Army to let black men attend Officer's Candidate School. He was the longest reigning champion in boxing history, and another boxer who influenced later President Ronald Reagan (remember Dempsey?). And – he made Liverpool famous, long before the Beatles. Remember the article on Martial Arts Ads? Charles Atlas, as part of his ad, offered a small booklet with instructions on how you could improve in different sports. One of the articles was by Joe Louis. I have long since lost that booklet, but I remember that it had very good and informative articles. Please note also that he was born in the author's state and died in the founder's state – living (?) proof of synchronicity. As an aside, the writer of this article was named for President Reagan. The author's mother thought Ronald Reagan (the actor) was one of the most handsome men she had seen. Consequently, she wanted her son to be the same, so he was to have been named "Ronald Reagan Rogers." Rogers' father wanted

a Jr. – “Rufus Lee Rogers, Jr.” A compromise was struck – he would be named Ronald Lee Rogers ... thank God! Rufus Reagan Rogers would have been a little much!

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