

Midori Yama Budokai: Hanshi's Corner
Written by Ron Rogers Hanshi Meiyo Kyōju
October 2009
Ichi go, ichi e: One life, one meeting

“Teachers open the door, but you must enter by yourself.”

“You should study not only that you become a mother when your child is born, but also that you become a child.” Dogen

Kime

Kime is a term used by most Japanese martial arts. In *karate* it is usually translated 'focus.' This focus is both mental and physical. Physically, this is an instantaneous tensing of specific muscles at the correct moment during a technique, accompanied by a *kiai* or “spirit shout.” There is a multiplicity of reasons for this. This tension is mostly focused in the *tanden*, or *hara*. This is the area of the lower abdomen, and is the designated point for both balance and breathing. One hears much of “breathe with the stomach,” a physical impossibility, but illustrative of what deep breathing means. In “deep breathing,” one returns to natural breathing. If you watch an infant, who is sleeping, his or her lower abdomen expands when s/he breathes in and deflates when s/he breathes out. This is exactly opposite of how most adults breathe. With *kime*, the muscles of the abdomen are tightened, resulting in less chance of injury. The *kiai* dumps adrenalin, giving more power to the blow, and may also mentally stun the opponent, causing a momentary lapse, which can be exploited. In *judo*, *kime* is often translated as decision, as in *Kime no Kata*, or the *Kata* of Decision. This is one of *judo*'s most interesting *kata*. Although not widely known, or acknowledged, Kanō Jigorō and Funakoshi Gichin were very good friends. Ueshiba Morihei was well known and respected by Kanō. *Kime no Kata* uses the principles and releases of *koryū jujutsu*, followed by *atemi* (modified by Funakoshi's *karate*), and ending with *aikido* locks, based on *jujutsu* techniques. Examples of all three of the major Japanese martial arts may be seen in this one *kata*. *Kime* may also refer to attacking vital points (*kyūsho*). In all cases, finality is implied. With *karate*, *kime* refers to the moment of “one blow, one kill” (“*ikken hissatsu*”). *Judo* uses *kime* to mean the moment the conflict is ended by the decided upon counter measure. The concept of *kyūsho* (“vital points”) is common to *jujutsu*, *judo* and *karate* and, when struck, are intended to end the confrontation.

What Type of Learner Are You?

More importantly, what type of teacher are you? Students learn by three basic methods. The most common is visual. The technique is shown to the individual, and s/he is expected to copy it. A prominent instructor and author contends this method is primarily used by men. The second method is auditory, or learning by sound. With this method, the individual learns by having the technique explained to them. The afore-mentioned instructor/author believes this method to be used more by women. Perhaps thinking of the student being either right-brained or left-brained oriented, rather than male or female, is a better way of categorizing the learning process. This would help prevent gender-based stereotyping, which is already too prevalent.. Finally, one learns by touch – the tactile

method, or physical action. The best way to teach would be to show the technique, explaining how and why it works the way it does, and then have the student do the technique. If one is teaching someone how to teach, having that person perform the technique, and explain it should be required. We have all met the individual who is extremely talented, and can perform a “picture-perfect” technique. But that same individual cannot explain to another person how to do it. In many cases, though not all, the gifted individual does not understand why the less gifted cannot immediately perform what is easy for him or her. It is the teacher who had to work at learning his or her discipline that appreciates the difficulty in learning, and can explain it to the beginner with patience and varied experience. When one does find that gifted individual who can teach at the level of the beginner, intermediate and advanced student, one has truly found a “master.”

Cuong Nhu

Cuong Nhu (kung new) Oriental Martial Arts was founded in 1965 by Master Ngo Dong. Cuong Nhu means “hard, soft.” Master Dong combined hard-style blocking, punching and kicking from *karate* with soft, circular movements from *aikido*, Wing Chun (named for Yim Wing Chun, or “forever springtime”), and vovinam (a Vietnamese Art: vo = martial arts; vinam = an abbreviation for Viet Nam). Vovinam was later renamed to viet vo dao, or Viet Nam martial arts way). Master Dong formed his art to meet the spiritual needs of his students. They were to build themselves physically, improve themselves and pursue personal goals to serve society. Cuong Nhu stresses the harmony, or balance, of the hard and soft. This is achieved through the 3-O’s principle: open mind, open heart and open arms. An open mind denotes oneness, an open heart denotes togetherness and open arms denote forgiveness. The goals of the martial artist are responsibility and maturity, self-confidence, patience, empathy, leadership, originality and creativity, communication abilities, public speaking ability, dedication and courage. Strength flows from five sources: physical, mental, inner (*ki*), spiritual and heart (soul). Japanese *karate* techniques are taught as the foundation. *Karate* is perceived as simple, linear and scientific. Chinese and Vietnamese techniques as well as *aikido* techniques are perceived as circular, complicated, sophisticated and more difficult to learn. Consequently, these are considered the advanced stages of training. Master Dong learned vovinam from his brother, Ngo Quoc Phong. Dong’s brother was one of the top five pupils of vovinam’s founder, Grand Master Nguyen Loc. Wing Chun was learned from his two oldest brothers. The Ngo brothers tested their fighting skills on the street by engagement with professional street fighters. Master Dong also received a *Yodan* (4th Degree Black Belt) in *Shotokan Karate*, as well as studying *judo* and *goshin jujutsu*. His *karate* rank was given by Suzuki Choji, a Japanese Captain. His study of *judo* and *goshin jujutsu* were with Lt. Ernie Cates, an American marine. He earned degrees in both biology and chemistry in Vietnam and came to the United States to get his Ph. D. in entomology at the University of Florida. After earning this degree, he returned to Viet Nam, and was appointed President of Da Nang College. After he was placed under house arrest by the communist government, he and his family risked everything to escape to Indonesia. From there they came to the United States in 1977. His beloved wife, Ton Nu Thanh Chau, died in 1992. Their children have all graduated college and hold jobs in their chosen professions. In

1994, Master Dong was promoted to *Rokudan* in *judo*. He continues to develop the Cuong Nhu style and his four children hold advanced black belt ranks in Cuong Nhu.

Practical Unarmed Combat by Moshe Feldenkrais

For those of you who do not recognize the name, Feldenkrais was a unique individual. He was an Israeli psychologist and the creator of the Feldenkrais method, designed to improve human functioning through self-awareness by movement. In the mid- to late 1920's he studied self-defense, including *jiu-jitsu*. In 1933 he met Jigoro Kanō who encouraged Feldenkrais to continue his study of *judo*. He and Kanō became close friends and corresponded regularly. Also, during this time, he earned a Doctor of Science in engineering, working as a research assistant of Nobel Prize laureate, Frederic Joliot-Curie, in the field of nuclear chemistry. In 1936 he earned *Shodan* and in 1938 he was promoted to *Nidan*. He was a co-founder of the Jiu-Jitsu Club de France, which is still in operation today. The book named above was printed in 1942, when he taught self-defense. It was designed to be used on the battlefield by troops. It was during this time, also, that a re-injury to his knee (originally from soccer) on a slippery submarine deck led him to develop his method of somatic movement. He refused an operation, and used movement to heal himself. The book is a 96 page masterpiece of understatement. According to Feldenkrais, he was always asked to show a "trick" which could be used to master any opponent. After much study and research, Feldenkrais developed a complete system of self-defense based on one technique, and its variations. He had only one caveat – it could not be used against anyone wearing a "British tin hat," as its horizontal rim projected backwards. However, the type of hat (read, "helmet") used by the enemy actually helped in using his technique. What was this one technique? The naked choke! In his manual, every movement is designed to place the fighter in position for the rear choke or, what is today styled, "the guillotine." For ninety-six pages, this is the final position for defense against sentries, attempted grabs (entries for "come-alongs"), overhead and underhand stabs with the knife, being threatened from behind with bayonet on rifle, front thrust with a rifle, attempted overhead butt stroke with the rifle, and attempted "front tackle." Today, we may think this overly simplistic, but Feldenkrais taught it to troops who used it under life-and-death threats and survived. He referred to it as efficient, easy to secure, effective against a stronger opponent and safe to use. In short, you could depend on it. A few months ago, as most of you know, a pre-adolescent used this same technique on a pit bull, and choked the dog to unconsciousness. When the dog regained consciousness, it ran off. If you can find any of Feldenkrais' books (There were at least five: three in English; one in Hebrew; one in French), get them. The two on *judo*, *Judo, the Art of Defence and Attack* and *Higher Judo* (on grappling), are excellent.

"Women and Savat in Ancient Gaul"

The heading and following paragraphs are from the publication, "Naginata," a small, little known and less appreciated "perzine" issued by Jessica Amanda Salmonson.. Some of you may remember Ms Salmonson's Tomoe Gozen trilogy: *Tomoe Gozen, The Golden Naginata, Thousand Shrine Warrior*, about a 16th century woman samurai. Tomoe Gozen was an historical personage, although the books are more akin to science fantasy (the trilogy takes place in an alternate universe). A "perzine" is a "personal magazine" for a select group. It is similar to a "fanzine," or a magazine for the fanatic of

a specific item or group. And, yes, that is where we get the word “fan,” as “a fan of the Crimson Tide.” I quote, from “Naginata,” number 7, printed in 1981, as follows:

“Savat, the French form of foot-boxing which has been displaced by the likes of Judo and Karate, is presumedly a turn-of-the-Century martial art developed by a street-fighting man. But an interesting mention of foot-boxing is made in an ancient Roman text by Ammianus Marcellinus as he describes the fighting methods of women of Gaul:

“A whole troop of foreigners would not be able to withstand a single Gaul if he called his wife to his assistance who is unusually very strong and with blue eyes; especially when, swelling her neck, gnashing her teeth, and brandishing her sallow arms of enormous size, she begins to strike blows mingled with kicks, as if they were so many missiles sent front the string of a catapult.”

While an intriguing statement, one wonders what blue eyes have to do with being “unusually very strong,” and are her “enormous arms” muscular, or simply large? Does the statement mean that generally women were very strong, and the Gaul women were unusually very strong. The women of Gaul and Savat is the old “chicken and egg” conundrum: Did the fighting women of Gaul influence Pancration, or was it the other way around? In any event, the mention of fighting with hands and feet at that period of time is interesting.

Also, we must remember that one of the most proficient fighting styles was developed by a woman! Ng Miu (or Ng Nui) taught Shaolin Ch’uan Fa, or Shaolin Temple Boxing. One of her students, Yim Ving Tsun (or Yin Wang Chun), developed Ving Tsun (or Wing Chun Pai), Eternal Springtime System. This was after watching a crane and snake fight, just as the legendary founder of T’ai Chi Ch’uan, Sang Feng Men (or Chang San-feng). Wing Chun, of course, is the art made famous by Bruce Lee.



While on the subject of female warriors, let’s not forget the *kunoichi*, or female *ninja*. To the left is the *kanji* for “woman.” In *Romaji* this is “*onna*.” The word, “*kunoichi*,” used for female *ninja*, is derived from this character due to wordplay. *Kunoichi* is not a word in everyday Japanese. If the strokes of *onna* are divided, you get the *hiragana* for “*ku*,” “*no*,” “*ichi*.” The stroke to the left, looking like the vertical “V,” or the right side of our “K,” is *hiragana* for “*ku*.” The stroke to the right, looking like a large comma, is the *hiragana* for “*no*.” The single horizontal stroke in the center is actually *kanji* for “*ichi*,” or “one.” The strokes for *onna*, or woman, were divided into *ku-no-ichi*, understood by the *ninja*, but unknown to Japanese speakers. In essence, *kunoichi* was the *ninja* “word” for “female,” derived from the actual *kanji*.

Any or all of this information may be copied for students if desired. All that’s asked is that acknowledgment of authorship be given.