

Midori Yama Budokai: *Hanshi's* Corner
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Titles

Traditionally a *Renshi/Kyoshi/Hanshi* is never addressed by his or her title. S/he may be referred to as Rogers *Hanshi*, Ivie *Kyoshi* to others, but never directly addressed as such.

Judging Form

- *Koshi-sabaki* refers to the concentration of the placement of the hips and pelvis
- *Ashi-sabaki* is the study of the displacement of the feet and legs.
- *Te-sabaki* is the concentration on movements of the arms and the hands.

Regardless of the system, there are certain criteria in judging any form. They are as follows:

- The beginning and ending. Old *sensei* judging traditional forms could usually tell from the beginning bow how the participant would rate. If the bow were sloppy and hastily done, so, probably, would the form be rushed and ill timed.
- Correct balance. If stances were not stable this would mean the technique lacked a firm base from which to be launched. Also, the participant could be easily unbalanced.
- Correct stances. Mentioned in regard to balance, correct stances refer to the proper stance combined with the proper technique. Generally speaking attacks use forward power stances and defenses use withdrawn (rear, cat, etc.) stances to avoid the attack.
- Focus of technique. This means more than fierce facial expression (there should actually be none!) and a loud yell – not to be confused with a true *kiai*. In addition to concentration on the technique, the participant should apply the technique to the correct vital point – and the spectators/judges should be able to see this.
- Transition, or movement. The participant should be able to move from one technique/stance to the next with stability, power and grace. Simply put, the participant should not lose his/her balance.
- Correct technique. If the form calls for a low kick to the knee, the substitution of a high kick – of any kind – should not be substituted. This is quite prevalent due to using incorrect *bunkai*.
- Emotional feeling. The participant should become the form – and this should be apparent to anyone watching. S/he is not “walking” through the form, but actual opponents can be seen/felt – by both the participant and anyone watching.
- Rhythm of form. Each form has its own rhythm, which reflects the correct technique. Generally, slow movements reflect grabs or throws. Swift movements are direct attacks or avoidances.

- Expansion and contraction of the body. This is directly related to correct breathing. Usually, the body contracts as the interim movements (erroneously referred to as “chambers”) are made and expand when the ending movement is performed. In combat the contraction should draw the opponent into the participant’s sphere of influence. The expansion explodes into a “finishing” technique.
- Explanation of the technique and practical application. Movements from the forms are done as two-man drills. When done alone the correct technique applied at the correct vital point should be practiced.
- Eye Contact. One should never lose sight of the opponent. There is a story of an old gunfighter who was teaching a younger man how to draw and fire. The young man practiced and became fast and proficient. However, the old gunfighter noticed that each time the young man drew and fired he blinked his eyes. When the old gunfighter brought this to the young man’s attention, the young man became angry and challenged the old gunfighter. Nothing could dissuade the young man, so the gunfight took place. Although the young man was faster, as he blinked, the old gunfighter moved from the path of the shot and killed the young man. The young man was killed in “the blink of an eye.”

***Tai Sabaki* or movement of the Body**

Kyojutsu Tenkan Ho or manipulating your opponent’s perceptions through the use of deceit or false flattery is part of *senjutsu* or strategy. In fighting this may be done through the use of *sabaki*, or body manipulation. Deceit would be the use of feints and combinations. False flattery would have you deceive the person by having him or her believe they were better than they actually or that you are not as good as you are.

Koshi-sabaki concentrates on the placement of the hips and pelvis.

Good *kamae* is essential and crucial to understanding space, distance and control. Align your hips to the opponent’s when moving in and out of the *kukan*. This makes a difference in breaking the structure of your opponent and controlling his or her body, mind and spirit – everything. This concept ties in with the concept of *kieru* or disappearing while moving in the space. When responding to your opponent with *Mawashi Ashi*, Keep your lower abdomen in line with the opponent, as if you are dancing with him or her and receive him/her with your stomach. React with your breath and center rather than with your eyes and brain. Become the opponent rather than fighting with him or her. *Mawashi Ashi* can be done while responding with *sen* timing. You will be catching the opponent in one timing, while he is attacking. Doing *sen* while switching (*kawashi* or dodging) off the line of attack is called *nuke waza* (avoiding techniques).

Zui Ban or accompanying movement refers to the body center moving and the legs cooperating. The movement of the legs is a function of the center and spine. The legs are soft (hip, knee and ankle joints are free) and do not make isolated efforts but work as one unit. To be able to apply accompanying movement, the concept of *ukimi* (floating body) has to be built into the nervous system. The legs have to be slightly

squeezed toward each other, so the legs work as a unit with each other and with the body center.

The body center is the base from which the legs are moving. It has to be stable and moves only as much as it needs to.

Itsuku, literally being glued, stuck or stiff refers to a condition in which one becomes entrapped in his or her opponent's movements. The opponent controls the fight. This is obviously a condition to avoid. The legs get stiff, heavy, and not responsive. Usually when we try too hard, the breath stops or rises. Even when we are not moving the breath has to interact with the feet, and there must be potential energy present.

Ashi-sabaki is the study of the displacement of the feet and legs. This includes the way of moving your feet to move your body when you hit. *Ashi sabaki* includes *ayumi-ashi*, *okuri-ashi*, *hiraki-ashi* and *tsugi-ashi*. *Ayumi-ashi* is moving your feet backwards and forwards in big steps to move quickly. *Okuri-ashi* is moving quickly in various directions in small steps. *Hiraki-ashi* can be used to hit your opponent or avoid their strike while moving to the side. Finally, *tsugi-ashi* is used when you need to hit your opponent from a long distance. *Kihon*, places most emphasis on the movement of the body. In practice this involves the complete mastery of *ashi-sabaki*. If one is small in stature and lacking in physical strength they inevitably have to compete at a disadvantage with larger opponents. Such training will show the importance of *ashi-sabaki*. Begin leg and footwork training with both hands placed on the hips. This will emphasize the movements of the feet and hips. The basic stance and movement of the body are first taught as purely technical. Spiritual and psychological aspects, or the related points in *saho* are omitted at this stage.

Stand with the tips of the toes on both right and left feet pointing straight forward and the feet together.

Pivot on the heel of the left foot to open the left foot out 90 degrees counter-clockwise.

Using the point on the sole of the foot directly at the base of the toes between the second and third toes, rotate the heel of the left foot 90 degrees in a clockwise direction.

As a result of the above adjustment the distance between the left and right feet will be about shoulder width and the line of the heel of the right foot should be the same as the line of the of the ball of the left foot.

Also teach that:

The heel of the left foot should be raised to a degree where the ankle is at a natural bend.

The heel of the right foot should be raised to one paper width from the floor.

By this the position of the feet will be such that the floor is gripped with the soles of both feet at the base of the toes.

Next teach the following,

Relax the "four springs" of the arch of the foot, ankle, knee and hip joint (see *zui ban*, above).

Place the center of gravity between the right and left feet.

By placing the body directly above this basic foot positioning/stance and getting students to jump lightly without bending the knees too much, students can be made to understand this foot positioning/stance.

Next carry out forwards, backwards, right and left movement. I get students to move *Mae* (front), *Ato* (rear), *Migi* (right) and *Hidari* (left) as I call out these commands.

Points of attention for Tai Sabaki, or Movement of the body, are as follow:

Kick out with the foot that is opposite to the direction of travel.

Don't allow the ball of the foot to leave the floor (even if it does leave the floor it should only be by the slightest amount).

The body (center of gravity) should move in unison with the moving foot.

After the moving foot has landed, pull the kicking foot up to the basic foot position/stance.

After moving, the center of gravity should always be placed between the right and left feet, and you should be ready for the next command without allowing your posture to become disturbed.

Once the student can do parallel movement of the body smoothly with an opponent, add *hiraki-ashi* to the instruction.

For *migi hiraki-ashi*:

1. Step forward to the right diagonal with the right foot, pushing off with the left foot.
2. At the moment the sole of the right foot at the base of the toes has landed, use that point of the foot as a pivot point (*jiku ashi*) and rotate in an anti-clockwise direction (about 30-45 degrees) centered on the waist.
3. Quickly pull the left foot in behind the right foot to return to basic stance.

For *hidari hiraki-ashi*,

1. Step forward on the left diagonal with the left foot, kicking out with the right foot.
2. Quickly pull the right foot in behind the left foot to a position of linear symmetry with the standard basic foot position/stance (i.e. with the left foot forward). Repeating this training without using the arms, then move from an on guard position until it can be performed smoothly.

Ayumi-ashi is moving forward and backwards in the same way as walking normally.

Don't lift your feet too high and use *suri-ashi* (brushing foot)

Move your center of gravity horizontally as much as possible. You are centred at your waist.

Move without letting your *kamae* break down, and without your upper body or guarding posture swaying.

Okuri-ashi moves the foot closest to the direction in which you want to move, with the following foot immediately following behind the lead foot. This should be done without allowing it to become slow or be left behind

When moving make sure that your heel doesn't touch the floor
Also, follow the points listed for *ayumi-ashi*.

Hiraki-ashi : When moving forward to the right keep your right foot facing your opponent. Move your right foot diagonally forward and follow with the left foot so that your left waist rotates back to the left and you end up facing your opponent correctly. Moving forward left, back left, forward right and back right is done in a similar fashion.

Make sure the following foot comes up to the correct position. Do not let it lag behind, nor have it move too far forward.

Move your center of gravity from the waist.

Tsugi-ashi : Move your left foot up to the position of your right foot and then immediately move your right foot forward in a big step in the same manner as for *okuri-ashi*.

When initially bringing your left foot up you might tend to stop. Avoid giving your opponent a chance to attack by making sure you move your right foot forward as soon as your left foot has come up.

Do the entire movement in one breath.

Shikaku Ashi Sabaki or square foot movement,

Shikaku Ashi Sabaki comes into play when moving from one position to another. A martial artist needs to be able to do so smoothly and efficiently. By picturing yourself standing on a square, with your left foot on the left rear corner, and your right foot on the right rear corner, you can work your movement by pivoting your right foot to the left front corner, then the left foot to the right front corner, then the right foot to the right rear corner, and finally the left foot to the left back corner, you now end in the position you began. This pattern gives you two forward pivots and two backward pivots. These are the same pivots, with some variation in distance between the feet, to accommodate actual combat conditions. This is a basic exercise in learning *judo*, and is referred to as *mae sabake* and *ushiro sabake*. You would use these movements (pivots) to execute most hip throws and many counter joint (*gyakute*) techniques. Movements should perfectly match your moves in actual throwing or joint locking.

The pattern should be practiced using both *Shizentai* and *Jigotai*. It should also be used using *Hidari Shizen Tai* and *Migi Shizen Tai*, since this is the more realistic position you would probably find yourself in, in actual combat. In order to practice the *Hidari* and *Migi* variations of the *Jigotai*, all you need to do is look at a forty-five degree angle and raise the hands in that direction and you have 'taken' those stances.

Once you have mastered the ability to move smoothly and with balance in the *Shikaku Ashi Sabaki* pattern, it is important to see how the footwork can be used to make throws and joint locks that much more efficient. However, one of the main points in Japanese thought is simply, don't think too much. Analyze how the footwork can improve your performance, see the connection between the training form and the reality of technical application, but do not become obsessed with trying to make the training work.

Te-sabaki is concentrating on the arms and the hand movements.

Suigetsu, the Solar Plexus

Although known in the eastern fighting arts for centuries, Robert “Ruby Bob” Fitzsimmons brought this to the western hemisphere’s attention. Ruby knocked out James “Gentleman Jim” Corbett on March 17th, 1897 in Carson City, NV, using the first pure left hook in boxing history in round 14. Corbett had beaten John L. Sullivan. The fight was witnessed by some of the wealthiest men in America as well as Bat Masterson and Wyatt Earp. Earp had referred an earlier fight of Fitzsimmons against Tom Sharkey (Fitzsimmons lost due to a call made by Earp). Fitzsimmons was one of the first men to win three titles. He won the Light Heavyweight when he was 41 (1903 against George Gardner). Fitzsimmons won by decision in the 20th round. He won the World Middleweight against Jack (Nonpareil) Dempsey, for whom the later Jack Dempsey was named. This was on 14 January 1891. The Heavyweight title was from his fight with Corbett. This made him the world’s first triple world champion. Having worked as a blacksmith gave him tremendous strength. He once hit a boxing bag so hard he broke it. Newspapers made much of his name, relating that “Fitz” meant the “left hand of God.” In 1893, in one night, he knocked out seven men in 19 rounds. All of the men weighed over 200 pounds, one at 6’7” and 240 pounds. Fitzsimmons never weighed more than 170 pounds and fought at middleweight for his entire career. McCallum wrote, “He moved with a shuffling gate. He stood flatfooted. His timing was perfect. He had a superb sense of distance. His punching therefore was deadly accurate.” His fight with Bob KO Sweeney is believed to have been the first fight captured on film. Fitzsimmons retired from boxing at the age of 52. He is now a member of Boxing’s Hall of Fame, The International Boxing Hall of Fame and New Zealand’s Sports Hall of Fame. Note that Fitzsimmons used many of what we think of as eastern methods. He, as a middleweight, fought and beat heavyweights. He did this by excellent timing, “superb sense of distance,” and accurate punching. He was also noted as great strategist, using “ring savvy” and not standing toe to toe. He had all the hallmarks of a great fighter: timing, distancing, accuracy and strategy.

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