

Midori Yama Budokai: *Hanshi's Corner*
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January 2010
Ichi go, ichi e: One life, one meeting

Following Are the Concepts of Traditional Okinawan *Shorin-ryu Kata*

The following is based on the teaching of Iha Sensei as taught to his student Matthew Hubinger

"The notes I handle no better than many pianists. But the pauses between the notes - ah, that is where the art resides!" Artur Schnable

Shinken-gata is *kata* done as though in a life or death situation. *Judo* uses the term, *shinken shiai no shobu*, meaning a real fight to the death. *Jissen-gata* is *kata* done as though in a real life situation – a real fight. *Kata* should begin and end with centered *kamae*. This is the *yoi* (preparedness) posture in *shizen hontai*. If you listen to your *kata*, you will notice that you usually pass through *yoi*, when doing transitions. *Kata*, while important for balance, focus and “moving meditation,” is ultimately about survival in an actual combat situation. This implies “*ichi go, ichi e*,” or “one encounter, one chance,” and includes the moral and spiritual consequences as well as the physical. It is this attitude that separates combat from sport.

Chaku-gan, also known as *heihō no metsuke* is the use of the eyes in combat. The warrior's gaze should reflect inner calm in the present moment (*zanshin*) with an immovable heart (*fudoshin*). This is accomplished through *mushin*, which is a mind open to all possibilities – that is, it is “empty” of preconceived thoughts, and reacts to the moment. One takes in the whole environment as “though gazing at a distant mountain” (*enzan no metsuke*). This is sometimes referred to as *bonyari shita hoshi wo miru*, or “looking at a faint star.”

Jiku, is the point of rotation, or pivot point. *Karate* specifies the *jiku ashi*, or foot on which one pivots. Although emanating from the *tanden*, the force will be toward the direction the head points. The hands and feet should move together, as do the knees and elbows and shoulders and hips. If any of these are out of alignment, the technique will lose force, or be ineffective. When stepping or turning, the *jiku* is behind the middle toe or the large toe. If one does a traditional *gedan barai*, the left foot and knee, left shoulder, left elbow and left wrist should be in line. On the opposite side, the right foot and knee, align with the right hip, elbow, shoulder and wrist. One should exemplify the concept of *kiai*, which is usually thought of as a shout, which it may be. The state of *kiai* is volitional yet spontaneous and natural at the same time. The carriage of the body reflects this. The eyes and chin remain still and calm, while the shoulders, hips and feet move together. This is related to *kamae*, or posture. The *kamae* are not poses, they are points between transitions. If the transitions are correct, the *kamae* will happen of themselves. Learn to pass through the *kamae*, moving into the next movement. One should not lock onto the technique, but the feeling and essence of the technique. When in combat, your sphere and that of your opponent/s form a second sphere. This means that your pivot point changes in relation to that of the opponent/s. Consequently, one must have natural, balanced rotation (*enten jizui*). This rotation is directly related to *kime* and *hyoshi*, or timing. If either focus or timing is off, there will not be sufficient force in the technique. Timing is

dependent on *tai sabaki*, or trained body movement. The operative word here is trained! (Untrained movement is known as *ugoki*.) Movement is important because *kata* is not about end points, but transitions, or movements through time and space (*kukan no sabaki*).

Kinniku wo nobasu, kinniku wo yurumeru, refers to the tensing and relaxing of the muscles. This concept differs throughout the *ryu*, having different meanings for the *Shorin* based styles and the *Goju* based styles. This concept is directly related to *kokyū-ho*, or breathing. With the *Shorin-ryu*, breathing follows the body. For *Goju-ryu* and *Uechi-ryu*, the body follows the breathing. The traditional method of placing the tongue for breathing is also used against sanguineous stranglers, and was considered a “secret technique” of *Fusen-ryu jujutsu*. The tip of the tongue is placed against the back of the upper front teeth. This opens the back of the throat for the nasal passage. The neck should never be tense and the shoulders should always be relaxed. The spine should be supple and connect the hips to the torso and arms. As with many styles, the toes should grip the floor. When done correctly, the feet should “stick like suction cups.” When executing a movement, the body should move from totally relaxed to focused (*kime* or *chinkuchi*), back to totally relaxed, with a whipping movement. This movement from the center (*seika tanden*) outward is *enshin ryoku* or centrifugal force. (*Kyushin ryoku* is centripetal force.) The *seika tanden* must be strong, and the limbs relaxed until the moment of contact, then they relax again. The elbow must be kept close to the body, preferably touching the ribs, prior to striking. With the elbow/s held this way, the power generated by the hips flows directly to the arm/s. As mentioned before, the *seika tanden* is the center of gravity (CG) for the body. If one thinks of the coupling on a car, this is where power generates outward to the wheels. The same type of power is generated by the *seika tanden* to the limbs. The *hara* (belly) should be pushed forward without tenseness against the belt. When someone moves from the shoulders (common in the Western world), it is called *koshi ga takai-mono*, or “moving with high hips.” As mentioned before, when a Japanese person begins breathing with the chest, rather than the diaphragm (*fukushiki kokyū*), his or her relatives call the doctor, believing the end to be near. Breathing with the diaphragm will develop the stomach muscles, firming them against blows.

Henka* and *Garyu refer to variation and personal style. This relates to the concept of *ri*, as in *shu-ha-ri*. There will always be variation, due to injuries and body type. Personal style is something different. Who is qualified to make changes to the *kata*? Itotsu modified the *Pinan* from *Channan*. Gusukuma modified Itotsu’s versions. Funakoshi stated that what was practiced in Japan was quite different from what he had practiced in Okinawa. Funakoshi’s son changed the *Shorin-ryu* forms to suit Japanese tastes, and Otsuka changed the forms to suit his *jujutsu* background. Originally, the *sensei* matched the *kata* to the individual’s body type. *Kata* were taught to students on an individual basis, and different students could learn different versions from the same *Sensei*. One, who has dedicated his life to the study of the art, may be qualified, but it will be with small steps, and based on his or her experience. Each master develops his or her own personal style (*garyu*) based on *busan*, or creativity. The important thing is that creativity is not sought; no one is original by trying to be different. Regardless of change, or lack thereof, one must enter the *kata* as one transitions from *kamae* to *kamae* and make it his or her own. Use *kata* as a gateway to freedom, becoming relaxed and natural. *Ryusui saki o kisowazu*: “Flowing water competes with nothing.”

Japanese Professional Wrestling

In 1951, Japan's first professional wrestling card was held. On October of that same year, in Brazil, Kimura Masahiko defeated Helio Gracie in "13 minutes of unexciting wrestling." Three years later, in 1954, on December 22, Kimura was defeated by a former *sumotori* called Rikidozan, becoming the first All-Japan professional wrestling champion. Helio Gracie, is the "Father" of Brazilian jujitsu, actually a specialized form of *judo ne waza*, or ground techniques. Maeda Mitsuyo (AKA Conde Koma, or Count Koma, from the Spanish verb "komaru," which means to be in trouble), the "Grandfather" of Brazilian Jujitsu had taught Helio. Maeda was involved at the infamous defeat of another *judoka* by an American wrestler. The other *judoka*, Tomita Tsunejiro, was the higher rank of the two, but was a theoretician, rather than a fighter, and was soundly defeated. What happened next depends on who tells the story. One version has Maeda issuing a challenge, but being refused. The second has the challenge answered, but not understanding the rules, Maeda's shoulders were pinned while he was applying a technique from beneath the opponent. Other versions have Maeda wrestling first, and Tsunejiro being challenged next, because he was the higher rank. The reasoning was: If Maeda was the lowest rank, then a higher rank should be the better fighter. I have never understood this reasoning. Boxers don't expect their managers to beat them in the ring, and football players don't expect their coach to compete, yet the high rank martial artist is expected to beat all and sundry. Frustrated and angry, Maeda left America and went to Brazil. The rest, as they say, is history. When Maeda emigrated to Brazil, he was helped a great deal by the Brazilian politician Gastao Gracie, whose father, George Gracie had emigrated to Brazil himself from Scotland. In gratitude for the assistance, Maeda taught jiu-jitsu to Gastao's son Carlos Gracie. Carlos in turn taught his brothers, Osvaldo, Gastao Jr., Jorge and Helio. Incidentally, the challenge match was at the request of President Theodore Roosevelt, who wanted his secret service to learn *judo*. Roosevelt had studied *judo* with Yamashita Yoshiaki (Yoshitsugu), using a ground floor office of the White House for his workout space. Roosevelt practiced three days a week, eventually obtaining brown belt. The USJA has awarded President Roosevelt the posthumous honorary rank of *Hachidan* in recognition of bringing *judo* to the attention of the public. Had the Japanese *judoka* not lost to the American wrestler, there may have been no Brazilian Jujitsu, today.

Yamashita Yoshiaki

Yamashita was the nineteenth member of Kano's *Kodokan Judo*, joining in August of 1884 at the age of nineteen years. Three months later, he received *Shodan* (you read correctly – three months, at nineteen years of age!). In two years, he had earned *Yodan*, at age twenty-one, and in 1898, he was promoted to *Rokudan* at age thirty-three. In 1935 he received a posthumous *Judan*, the first person to do so. In 1946, the British *judo* pioneer E.J. Harrison, who studied *judo* at the *Kodokan* around 1905, told the following story of Professor Yamashita's practical fighting skills. "Yamashita fell foul of a coolie in the upper room of a restaurant and promptly threw him downstairs. The coolie returned to the fray with fourteen comrades, but Yamashita calmly sat at the head of the stairs and as fast as the coolies came up in single file, owing to the narrowness of the passage, he simply

choked them in detail and hurled them back down again. In the excitement of the moment he was rather rougher than was strictly necessary, and so broke one man's neck. The rest fled in terror, carrying off their dead and wounded. Yamashita was arrested, but as he was easily able to prove that he had been one man against fifteen he was, of course, acquitted. Nevertheless, the Kodokwan [sic] temporarily suspended him for his conduct, which was deemed unduly violent." Yamashita came to America at the request of American businessman, Sam Hill (no jokes, please!). Hill's son, James Nathan, was "sickly," as spoiled and selfish was then known, and Hill wanted to build character in the son for which he had not the time due to a ten hour work day. Yamashita's wife, Fude, taught the Washington elite, including the daughters of the vice-presidential candidate and a former governor of Mississippi. Yamashita was introduced to President Roosevelt, by Japanese naval attaché Lieutenant Commander Isamu Takeshita. Lt. Cmdr. Takeshita had, in Japan, convinced Ueshiba Morihei to move to Tokyo in 1935 to teach his *Aiki Budō*, as *Aikidō* was known then. Roosevelt readily agreed, as he had already studied *jujutsu* with James J. O'Brien. O'Brien had been a constable at Nagasaki's Umegasaki Station from 1895 to 1899, so legitimate.

The Japanese Jiu-Jitsu, the Ex. Supt. Of Nagasaki, Japan Pres. Roosevelt, is with many of the little different from While working Roosevelt's were his sons, his the Japanese naval of War, William Secretary of the Pinchot.

From: "Professor Yamashita Joseph R. Svinth.



AFTER DRESSING THE PRESIDENT SHOWED PROFESSOR DONOVAN SOME JIU JITSU.... (THE DOTTED LINES INDICATE MR. DONOVAN'S HANDS, AFTER BEING SHOWN)

his instruction was O'Brien's book, *Secret Science, Demonstrated by Police at and Instructor of* still relevant today, techniques shown, what is taught now. with Yamashita, training partners private secretary, attaché, Secretary Howard Taft and Interior, Gifford

Goes to Washington," by

[As unusual as Yamashita's promotions were, they were unmatched by that of Ishikawa Sensei, with whom your *hanshi* had the privilege of working. At Ishikawa's first *shiai*, he competed as a white belt. At the end of the *shiai*, his performance was such that he was promoted to *Yodan*. From beginner to 4th Degree Black Belt!]

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