

Midori Yama Budokai: *Hanshi's Corner*
Written by Ron Rogers *Hanshi Meiyō Kyoju*

May 2013

Ichī go, ichī e: One life, one meeting

Kyuzō Mifune and His Study of Judo

Mifune Kyuzō, *judo* master, was born 21 April 1913 in the city of Kuji, prefecture of Iwate, Tohoku-chihō (Tohoku region), on the island of Honshū, Japan. He was noted as a brilliant, but restless, child in a family of seven brothers. He began *judo* at the age of thirteen at secondary school, and was to continue it at Waseda University. At the age of fourteen he defeated nine high school opponents successively. This began his later study at the *Kodokan* with Kanō Jigorō. In July 1903, at the age of twenty, he was sponsored by Yokoyama Sakujiro. At this time, one was only accepted into *Kodokan* after being sponsored, having an interview with Kanō, and signing a blood oath. Mifune actually did not know anyone at *Kodokan*, but literally camped out on “Demon” Yokoyama’s doorstep until Yokoyama agreed to sponsor Mifune. Mifune dedicated himself to *judo*; so much so his father stopped helping with finances. Mifune supported himself and earned enough to enter the University of Keiō for a business degree in economics. His *judo* was such he attained the rank of *Nidan* within two years of entering *Kodokan*. His *Shodan* was earned after fourteen months, and a short four months later, he achieved *Nidan*. By the time he was twenty-nine, he achieved the rank of *Rokudan*, having fought in many *Kohaku Shiai* (Red and White tournaments) and never lost. At the age of thirty he married a hometown lady, chosen by his father, and continued teaching *judo* for the next twenty years. Many *judoka* stated that because of her support of Mifune’s love of *judo*, she should have received at least half of his rank. When he was 40, he was challenged by a 6 foot, 240 pound sumo wrestler. Mifune, 5'2" tall and 100 pounds, finally threw the wrestler with his trademark "airplane" throw, *kuki nage* or *uki otoshi*. He ate sparingly, slept on a Western-style bed, and did not smoke. In 1937 at the age of fifty-four, he was awarded *Kudan* by Kanō Jigorō. After Kanō’s death in 1938, Mifune continued at the *Kodokan* as one of the main instructors. On 25 May 1945, at the age of 62, he was recognized as a *Kodokan Judan*, the fourth of eighteen persons to achieve this rank. He was known for what may only be known as exquisite *judo*. Mifune combined harmony, biomechanics, synchronicity, flexibility and power in a form of *judo* that was exceptional. His techniques were noted for timing, movement and smoothness of style. He was exceptionally adept at *kaeshi waza*, or countering techniques. He emphasized *kuzushi* (off-balancing), *shintai* (displacements), *kata* and *randori*. Mifune made even the most difficult techniques of the *Gokyo no Waza* look easy, as well as elegant. With a height of 5'4" and a weight of 101 pounds, Mifune excelled, even against champion *judo* players, and students contended he was more feared than loved. In 1956, at the age of seventy-three, his book, *The Canon of Judo*, was published. Within its pages, Mifune wrote of his philosophy, the history of *judo* and its techniques. The expansion of *judo* throughout the world was due greatly to the influence of Mifune. It was also Mifune’s influence that *judo* was developed as a sport for the Olympics. Mifune coached many foreign *judoka* at the *Kodokan*, and they carried this knowledge to their countries. The story is told that one visiting American performed *tai otoshi* differently due to his body type. Mifune asked him (a *Nidan*!) to show Mifune (a *Judan*!) how to perform it. Taken

aback, the young man did as asked and was even more surprised when Mifune asked if he (Mifune) was doing it correctly. When Mifune was satisfied the technique was “correct,” he was confronted by a high ranking *judoka* who wanted to know how Mifune could have asked and American *Nidan* to teach him. Mifune asked, “What rank are you?” to which the *judoka* replied, “*Hachidan*.” Mifune then asked, “What rank am I?” to which the *judoka* replied, “*Judan*.” Mifune answered, “That’s why I’m a *Judan*.” In December of 1964, at the age of eighty-one, Mifune was diagnosed with cancer of the trachea and passed away in 27 January 1965. E.J. Harrison, in his book, *The Fighting Spirit of Japan* writes about an anecdote as told to him by Yokoyama Sakujiro: “I remember during the early part of January, 1909, I went to a certain restaurant, accompanied by Mr. Kyuzo Mifune, a fifth Dan teacher of the Kodokan. We noticed in one corner of the room a group of thirteen young fellows drinking sake, while in an adjoining apartment there were an elderly couple and some other visitors taking food. The members of the first-named group were seen to be putting their heads together at frequent intervals and to be busily whispering, at the same time casting glances in our direction. I did not take any special notice of what was going on, nor did I suspect that they had any designs upon us. Mr. Mifune and I went on chatting over our drinks. Presently one of the rascals approached us, calmly picked up my overcoat and hat, and tried to make off with them under our very noses. Of course I remonstrated, when the thief, evidently bent on picking a quarrel, insisted that the coat and hat were his property. A warm altercation arose, in the midst of which he assumed a threatening attitude, and was speedily joined by half a dozen of his comrades from the other side of the room. There being no alternative, Mr. Mifune took a hand in the game. He avoided unnecessary roughness, but in less than a minute he had them all down with a succession of swift blows. Then the rest of the gang set upon me, but I knocked them down one after the other, and the affair was over in less than three minutes. As our victims regained consciousness they lost no time in making themselves scarce, but we detained one of them, and forced him to confess. He admitted that their object had been to extort money from us by intimidation. They had been misled by our good clothes and had imagined that we would be easy prey. We let the fellow go instead of handing him over to the police, as we considered he had received punishment enough at our hands. After the rascals had gone the old couple who had been interested spectators of the occurrence told us that they had just witnessed for the first time in their lives a practical display of jujutsu and were amazed at the wonderful feats which experts were able to perform against such odds.” What is to be noted is the phrase, “he had them all down with a succession of swift blows,” and, “I knocked them down one after the other.” Obviously, *atemi waza* was the method of choice in an actual confrontation!

For more information, read [Kyuzo Mifune in Wikipedia](#).

Kyusho-Jutsu

Kyusho-Jutsu refers to the art of pressure point (*shinkei chusu*) fighting. Simplistically, a pressure point is a place where energy can be transmitted most effectively into a nerve or cluster of nerves, connecting two or more major nerve pathways, or where major nerves join together (nerve cluster or plexus). Ideally, when such an area is struck, the pain signal may affect more than one nerve pathway. For example, if a pressure point on the arm is struck all three major nerves of the arm (radial, medial and ulna) may be affected. The pain caused should be disproportionate to the force used, and there should be three

reactions to the force: it causes pain, it causes dysfunction and it produces involuntary, predictable reflexes. These are the same points used in acupuncture. Theoretically *kyusho-jutsu* will require less power to be affective, as the brain receives the signal, which is amplified by the multiple nerve routes. The pressure points used in *kyusho-jutsu* are the same points used in acupuncture to manipulate the flow of vital energy (*ki*). Acupuncture uses these gates to increase or decrease the flow of energy in order to restore a healthful balance within the body. *Kyusho-jutsu* utilizes these same points to disrupt the flow of energy in order to render the opponent helpless. The original methods were used against armed assailants, and points were used with the intent to kill (*kan dokoro*). Concurrent with *kyusho-jutsu*, one should also know *katsu* for “energy restoration” of the individual.

Traditional Kohaku Shiai

Judo in the 1950’s, and in some instances, into the 1960’s, did not use weight classes. However, contestants were lined up into two teams, beginning with the lightest and continuing to the heaviest. Sometimes rank and experience was taken into consideration. Matches began with the light weights and continued upward. The winner of each match stayed out and fought the next challenger until he was defeated or until there were no more challengers. The largest person, if he won, would be permitted to fight back down the line for a limited number of matches. The person at the end with the most matches won was declared the winner. This was actually a combination of three types of modern *shiai*. First, you had the red and white teams (*kohaku*), then the “winner stays out,” (*kachinuki shiai*), and finally, “round-robin,” or *soatori shiai* (this is implied by “winner of most matches is declared the winner,” but in a very limited fashion). Your *hanshi meiyō kyōju* recalls that in 1961, brown belts fought brown belts. His recurring opponent was Truitt Honeycutt, a seventeen year old, six foot three inch, two-hundred, and twenty-five pound *judoka*. Your *hanshi* was nineteen years old, five foot seven inches and one-hundred, twenty-eight pounds. Much was learned because of this style of contest! In the 1970’s a recurring opponent was five foot, ten inches tall and two-hundred, seventy pounds of solid muscle. Your *hanshi*’s height was the same, but he weighed all of one-hundred, forty pounds by this time. Wilson *Kancho* worked with your *hanshi* and when he threw the *judoka* all four feet left the mat. With the fall, dust actually fell from the fluorescent light fixtures.

From: An Encyclopedia of Judo by Ron Rogers – Part Five of Six

Kumi kata

- 2.2.2.1 ***Kakae kubi*** or encircling the neck. This has two basic versions:
 - 2.2.2.1.1 [Ushiro] *Kakae kubi* or rear encircling of the neck, which is used for such throws as *koshi guruma* and *kubi nage*.
 - 2.2.2.1.2 *Mae kakae kubi* or front encircling of the neck, which is used in strangulations or variations of sacrifice techniques.
- 2.2.2.2 ***Obi dori*** or gripping the belt. This is the *oyo waza*, or practical application technique, of *obi kumi kata do*. This is the fighting version of *jun ni toru tokoro*. The grip is used to do a variation of *hikkomi gaeshi* known as *obi dori gaeshi*. *Hikkomi gaeshi* is itself a variation of *sumi gaeshi*. To throw a left side throw, *tori* reaches over *uke*’s right shoulder with the left arm, gripping *uke*’s belt in the

center – the “*obi dori*.” *Tori*’s right arm hooks underneath *uke*’s left arm, and the left leg is used to spring *uke* upward front inside *uke*’s right thigh as in *sumi gaeshi*, or *hikkomi gaeshi*. However, it is the grip of *tori*’s left arm in which we are interested.

2.2.2.3 *Ushiro eri* [*dori*] or gripping the rear lapel. Also know as ***kata-ushiro-eri*** [*no kumi kata*]. This is an application of *eri kumi kata do*. It is used mostly for [*eri*] *tsurikomi goshi* (also called *sasae tsurikomi goshi*), although it can be used by the heavyweights for almost any throw to the front, such as *harai goshi* and *uchi mata*. It is designed to be used for lifting (as in *tsurikomi goshi*) or in pulling (as in *harai goshi*). In the former, *uke* holds the body upright; in the latter, *uke* is crouched in a defensive position.

2.2.2.3.1 *Migi kata-ushiro-eri* [*no kumi kata*] or gripping *uke*’s rear lapel with the right hand as *tori*’s left hand grips the outside of *uke*’s sleeve.

2.2.2.3.2 *Hidari kata ushiro eri* [*no kumi kata*] or gripping *uke*’s rear lapel with the left hand as *tori*’s right hand grips the outside of *uke*’s sleeve.

NOTE: ***Ashi mochi*** or seizing the leg is also a fighting grip. However, its applications are limited (generally) to outside gripping (as in *morote gari*) and inside gripping (as in *mae te guruma*). Refer to the throws listed or to *zubon kumi kata do* for more detail.

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