

Midori Yama Budokai: *Hanshi's Corner*

Written by Professor Ron Rogers

January 2015

Ichi go, ichi e: One life, one meeting

“From white belt to black belt you shape the tool; at black belt you start to learn how to use it.” Anonymous

Tachi: Stance

All too often we mimic stances without realizing their tactical value. First, you must decide what you are trying to do when defending against the opponent's attack. When you are trying to draw the opponent toward you, the back stance, or a derivative, will be most effective. You will be off-balancing the opponent to the front. When you meet the opponent's force by “jamming” the attack, the front stance and similar stances are more effective. In this instance the off-balancing is to the rear. When dropping the opponent directly in front of you the horse stance will be the best. This is downward *kuzushi*, which, with upward *kuzushi*, is usually over-looked, as neither is one of the “classic eight.” As an instance of upward *kuzushi*, think of *Aikido's tembin nage*. Pressure is applied to the rear of the opponent's elbow, lifting him or her onto the toes, prior to the forward throw. For downward *kuzushi*, the best example is *Aikido's kote kudaki*, in which the opponent is taken directly downward, prior to being pinned face-down. Incidentally, with *tembin nage*, you are “jamming” the attack by stepping forward as you apply pressure. With *kote kudaki*, you are drawing the opponent toward you as you drop his or her body downward. If you continue to hold the wrist and force the opponent lower, the concept of lowering the body, as in a horse stance, will be applicable. If the intent is to force the opponent onto his or her stomach, then a stance with movement to the rear is most applicable. Regardless of the art, if techniques are not working, check the stance first.

Yudansha: Black Belts

Your Professor has written before of the reality of time between Japanese promotions versus the stated lengths. In 1883, the first two persons of any art to be awarded *Shodan*, or first degree black belts, were Tomita Tsunejuro and Saigo Shiro. This was in the art of *judo*, as the ranking system, as we know it, was first established by Kano Jigoro. They were also the first to receive *Nidan*, or second degree black belts. They received them one year after receiving *Shodan*. In 1885, two years after receiving *Shodan*, and one year after receiving *Nidan*, Saigo skipped *Sandan* and was promoted to *Yodan*. In all fairness, Saigo was probably one of, if not the best, fighter of *Kodokan*, so the rank was deserved, even is not in a stated time frame. One could argue that this was the genesis of the *batsugun* promotion, based on competitive ability, rather than technical proficiency. One could also argue that if a person could beat any other person, s/he possessed technical proficiency – at least for the techniques used. *Batsugun* is often translated as “distinguished,” so a *batsugun* promotion is a “distinguished promotion.” That is it is distinguished from a regular promotion by outstanding competitive ability.

In regards to the black belt, they were not a symbol of *dan* grade until 1886 or 1887, and certificates of rank were not awarded until 1894. Prior to this date, Kano announced the

grades or they were posted on a board in the *Kodokan*. One theory of the use of the black sash used by Kanō is that he borrowed it from high school sports. Advanced competitors in swimming were distinguished from beginners by a black ribbon tied around their waist. As an educator (and innovator) Kanō would have known this, and possibly adapted it for *judo*. The red and white checked belt of *Kodokan*'s *Rokudan*, *Shichidan* and *Hachidan*, are believed to have been derived from the colors used in the *Genpei War*. The *Genji* used white flags and the *Heiki* used red flags. *Kodokan* still celebrates its *kohaku shiai*, or red and white competition. Another theory derives from Kanō's affinity with Chinese literature, especially that of the *I Ching*. The red and white may be indicative of the theory of *in* (yin) and *yo* (yang), showing a balance between the soft and hard.

In Japan, the *kyū* ranks are all white belt, although some individual schools use brown for the top three *kyū*. The colored belts with which most of us are familiar were first used in Europe (the Kawaishi method of *judo*), and then brought to America. When your *hanshi* began in *judo* (and *karate*), there were two white belts, one green belt and three brown belts before the black belt. When he worked out in Okinawa, the *judo* school used only white and black belts, but permitted him to wear his brown, as it was given to him by his instructor.

The Importance of Kata

The link between *judo*, past and future, is embodied in the accurate teaching of *kata*, which is in the now. The totality of *judo* has been preserved in *kata*, especially the techniques designed for self-defense. Kanō held that *judo* training consisted of both *kata* (forms) and *randori* (free-practice). These were meant to compliment each other, as *kata* was to be for the development of *judo* and free practice the test of that development. Specifically, *kata* was to be used to demonstrate the principles of *judo*. This training was designed to examine techniques under ideal circumstances. In this way, the essence of the technique could be internalized. Ideally, *kata* was designed to unify mind, body and spirit, the ultimate goal of any martial art. Many *judo* exponents contend they have experienced moments of enlightenment and insight as a result of “perfect” *kata* performance. *Kata*, done correctly, requires focus, awareness, attention to detail and self-discipline. It is also designed to teach correct movement, timing and coordination. Most of the higher ranked Japanese teachers emphasize the importance of *kata* and consider *Randori no Kata* to be essential for the highest level of training for success in contest. If techniques cannot be applied under ideal conditions, what level of success would be present in competition, when one is not dealing with anything close to ideal conditions?

In regard to karate *kata*, one exponent has stated that the moves are like notes and the *kata* is the song. However, if one doesn't understand the language the song is in, it will always be a mystery. When your *hanshi* asks that you “listen” to your *kata*, he is requesting that you hear the song.

Randori no Kata is comprised of *Nage no Kata*, or Forms of Throwing, and *Katame no Kata*, or Forms of Grappling. In a few universities and in Europe, a third *kata*, *Gonoson no Kata*, or Forms of Counters, is included.

***Puroresu* or “Pro Wrestling”**

This is Japan's version of the World Wrestling Federation. Many of its moves are similar to those in shoot fighting. Japan's first wrestling star was Rikidozan, and coincided with

the advent of television in Japan in 1951. Although Rikidozan was the first star, Japan's first pro wrestler was Matsuda Sorakichi. Two variations in this form of pro-wrestling involve the ring. While most bouts are in the square ring, known to all fighters, there is also a six-sided ring in Japan. Another variation of Japan is the use of barbed wire instead of rope. As with WWE's "Divas," there is a female branch known as *joshi puroresu*.

European Martial Arts and Religion

A little known fact is the influence that Christian monks had on European martial arts. Germanic monks were well known for practicing martial arts as a sport, a pastime, a means of improving their fitness and as a defense for their churches and religious beliefs. Some were so skilled in unarmed wrestling matches, knights were unwilling to challenge them for fear of losing face. This was also common to Svebor, an ancient Serbian combat art. Svebor has strong links with the Serbian Orthodox Christian religion. It is noted for efficiency and practicality, eschewing aesthetics. The art includes head-butts and stone throwing. It also includes, leaps, jumps, falls, rolls, arm strikes and other techniques which are directed at knocking men from horses. One of the favored weapons was the broad ax. In the 1500's a detailed illustrated manual was written by Fabian von Auerswald. This manual described, in detail, joint-locking techniques, throwing methods, and pin holds, as well as ground grappling and other wrestling tactics. One of the more violent forms of Western wrestling is Lancashire wrestling. The only prohibition is the deliberate breaking of bones. ["Deliberate" being the key word!] The only way to win is to force the opponent to submit [centuries before BJJ]. As there were no rounds or breaks (in time, not bones) the fight continued until one opponent gave up. Obviously, physical fitness and conditioning were essential. Cornish Wrestling ("Wrasslin" in the local dialect) is similar to *judo*. The opponent must be thrown so that both shoulder blades and buttocks hit at the same time ("four pin throw"). Grabbing or breaking the fingers is not allowed, and no grip can be taken below the waist. The wrestlers ("wrasslers") take a vow before the match begins, usually in the Cornish dialect. Part of which is given here: "On my honor and the honor of my country, I swear to wrestle without treachery or brutality."

Much information given above is derived from *The Way of the Warrior, Martial Arts and Fighting Styles from around the World*, by Chris Crudelli.

TaeKwonDo Hyung

For those of you who practice (or have practiced) Choi Hong Hi's system of Tae Kwon Do, here – in his own words – is the meaning and significance of each pattern. Information is from his book, *Taekwon-Do: The Art of Self-Defence*. Choi's style was the Ch'ang-Hon Yu, or Blue Cottage School.

Chon-Ji (Chon-Ji) means literally the "Heaven and Earth." In the Orient, interpreted as the creation of the world or the beginning of human history. Therefore, it is the initial pattern played by the beginner. This pattern consists of two similar parts – one to represent the Heaven and the other the Earth.

Tan-Gun (Dan-Gun) is named after the holy Tan-Gun, the legendary founder of Korea in the year of 2334 B.C.

To-San (Do-San) is the pseudonym of the patriot, Ahn Ch'ang-Ho (1876 – 1938) who devoted his entire life to furthering the education of Korea and the independence movement.

Won-Hyo (Won-Hyo) was the noted monk who introduced Buddhism to the Silla Dynasty in the year of 686 A.D.

Yul-Kok (Yul-Gok) is the pseudonym of a great philosopher and scholar, Yi I (1536 – 1584 A.D.), nicknamed “the Confucius of Korea.” The 38 movements of this pattern refer to his birthplace on 38° latitude and the diagram represents “scholar.”

Chung-Gun (Joong-Gun) is named after the patriot An Chung-Gun, who assassinated Hirobumi Ito, the first Japanese governor-general of Korea, known as the man who played the leading part of the Korea-Japan merger. There are 32 movements in this “pattern” to represent Mr. An's age when he was executed at Lui-Shung prison (1910).

T'oi-Gye (Toi-Gye) is the pen name of the noted scholar, Yi Hwang (16th century A.D.), and authority on neo-Confucianism. The 37 movements of the pattern refer to his birthplace on 37° latitude, the diagram represents “scholar.”

Hwa-Rang (Hwa-Rang) is named after the Hwa-Rang youth group which originated in the Silla Dynasty about 1350 years ago. This group eventually became the actual driving force for the unification of the three Kingdoms of Korea.

Ch'ung-Mu (Choong-Moo) was the given name to the great admiral Yi Sun-Sin of the Yi Dynasty. He was reputed to have invented the first armoured [sic] battleship (*kobukson*) which was the precursor of the present day submarine in 1592 A.D. The reason why this pattern ends up with left hand attack is to symbolize his regrettable death having no chance to show his unrestrained potentiality checked by the forced reservation of his loyalty to the King.

Kwang-Gae (Kwang-Gae) is picked after the famous Kwang-Gae T'o Wong, the 19th King of the Koguryo Dynasty, who regained all the lost territories including the greater part of Manchuria. The diagram represents the expansion and recovery of lost territory. The 39 movements refer to his reign for 39 years.

P'o-Un (Po-Eun) is the pseudonym of a loyal subject, Chong Mong-Chu (1400 A.D.) who was a famous poet and whose poem “I would not serve a second master though I might be crucified a hundred times” is known to every Korean. He was also a pioneer in the field of physics. The diagram represents his unerring loyalty to the King and country towards the end of the Koryo Dynasty.

Kae-Baek (Ge-Baek) is named after Kae-Baek, a great general in the Paekche Dynasty (660 A.D.) The diagram represents his severe and strict military discipline.

Yu-Sin (Yoo-Sin) is named after Kim Yu-Sin, the great general in the Silla Dynasty who was instrumental in uniting the three kingdoms of Korea. The 68 movements refer to the last two figures of the year 668 A.D., the year of the unification of the whole Korea.

Ch'ung-Jang (Choong-Jang) was the given name to the great General Kim Dok-Ryong of the Yi Dynasty about four hundred years ago. This particular pattern ends with a left hand attack which signifies that he died in prison at the age of 27 on a false charge which unabled [sic] him to demonstrate his full capability.

Ul-Ji (Ul-Ji) is named after the great general Ul-Ji Mun-Dok in the Koguryo Dynasty in the 7th century A.D. The diagram represents his surname.

Sam-Il (Sam-Il) denote[s] the first of March. It is the historical date when the independence movement of Korea was started in 1919. The 33 movements of this pattern stand for the 33 patriots who planned the independence movement.

Ch'oi-Yong (Choi-Yong) is named after the famous general Ch'oi Yong who was the premier and commander in chief of the armed forces toward the end of Koryo Dynasty

(14th century). Although he was executed on a false charge by one of his subordinate commanders, General Yi Song-Gye, who became the first king of the Yi Dynasty, he was very popular and greatly respected by all the nations through his loyalty, patriotism and honest poverty.

Ko-Dang is the pseudonym of the patriot Cho Man-Sik who dedicated his life to the independence movement and education of Korea. The 39 movements of the pattern show the number of times of his imprisonment as well as the location of his birthplace on 39^o latitude. *This pattern is not included in Choi's Encyclopedia of Taekwon-Do.*

Se-Jong (Se-Jong) is named after King Se-Jong, the Great, who invented the Korean alphabet in the year 1443 A.D. and who was also a meteorologist. The diagram represents “King,” and the 24 movements refer to the 24 letters of the Korean language.

T'ong-II (Tong-II) denotes the unification of Korea which has been divided into two. The diagram represents the homogenous race.

In this book, General Choi also includes the fifteen basic forms as taught by *Shotokan*, though with different spellings. Just as Funakoshi did, Choi separates them into *Sho-rin Ryu* (So-rim Yu) and *Sho-rei Ryu* (So-ryong Yu). These include Hei-an Pattern I through V, Bat-sai Pattern, En-bi Pattern, Ro-hai Pattern (actually Gankaku!), Kouh-Shang-Kouh Pattern, Tet-ki Pattern I through III, Jit-te Pattern, Hang-getsu Pattern, and Ji-on Pattern.

In Choi's later work, *Encyclopedia of Taekwon-Do*, he includes the following Patterns:

Eui-Am is the pseudonym of Son Byong Hi, leader of the Korean independence movement on March 1, 1919. The 45 movements refer to his age when he changed the name of Dong Hak (Oriental Culture) to Chondo Kyo (Heavenly Way Religion) in 1905. The diagram represents his indomitable spirit, displayed while dedicating himself to the prosperity of his nation.

Juche is a philosophical idea that man is the master of everything and decides everything, in other words, the idea that man is the master of the world and his own destiny. It is said that this idea was rooted in Baekdu Mountain which symbolizes the spirit of the Korean people. The diagram represents Baekdu Mountain.

Yon-Gae is named after a famous general during the Koguryo Dynasty, Yon Gae Somoon. The 49 movements refer to the last two figures of 649 A.D., the year he forced the Tang Dynasty to quit Korea after destroying nearly 300,000 of their troops at Ansi Sung.

Moon-Moo honors the 30th king of the Silla Dynasty. His body was buried near Dae Wang Am (Great King's Rock). According to his will, the body was placed in the sea “Where my soul shall forever defend my land against the Japanese.” It is said that the Sok Gul Am (Stone Cave) was built to guard his tomb. The Sok Gul Am is a fine example of the culture of the Silla Dynasty. The 61 movements in this pattern symbolize the last two figures of 661 A.D., when Moon Moo came to the throne.

So-San is the pseudonym of the great monk Choi Hyong Ung (1520 – 1604) during the Yi Dynasty. The 72 movements refer to his age when he organized a corps of monk soldiers with the assistance of his pupil Sa Myung Dang. The monk soldiers helped repulse the Japanese pirates who overran most of the Korean peninsula in 1592.