

Midori Yama Budokai: *Hanshi's Corner*

Written by Professor Ron Rogers

February 2015

Ichi go, ichi e: One life, one meeting

“Learn from other people’s mistakes. You may not live long enough to learn from your own.” Kanō Jigorō

***Ryu-ha* or Variant Style of a System**

The term *ryu* refers to a system of martial arts, which includes percussive techniques, grappling techniques, vital point techniques and weapons. A *ryu* is a comprehensive systematic method of offense and defense. *Ha* refers to a branch, or variant style, of that system. The literal translation of *ryu-ha* is “water flows downward and divides.” This refers to a river, or source, flowing down and into other branches. The symbolism has two meanings: First, a new branch may divide from the main source; second, each branch may flow and mingle with another branch, either from the same system or another system. In regard to the martial arts, systems flow down and divide according to the natural conditions within the adoptive society. What distinguishes these *ryu-ha* is their adherence to scientific principles coupled with the society's unique values and traditions. Scientific principles refer to the systematic (hence, “system”) application of all relevant knowledge, both humanistic and technical. These principles are used to develop the best possible use of the human spirit (values and traditions) in the application of the martial arts. Technical proficiency is tempered by ethics inherent in the values and traditions of the host society. The main distinguishing feature between “fighting” and martial arts is based on scientific principles. One advances from instinctive actions (“fighting”) to action with purpose. This purposeful action improves effectiveness against the enemy. One moves from “fight or flight,” to a systematic method of offense and defense. In the context of predominantly Asian martial arts, these principles are developed through the use of *kata*, or prearranged forms. One may distinguish among the different styles, not only by the individual forms, but the variations of those forms. These variations may differ from style to style, or even within the same style, depending on the individual. A tall, slender person will do the same technique differently than his short, stocky counterpart. A system will address these differences in body type, as well as mental attitude. A pseudo-system will insist that everyone do everything exactly the same – a “cookie-cutter” mentality. A jab (front hand punch, or lunge punch) and a cross (reverse punch) share the same scientific principles to develop power. In this way they are the “same.” A slender person will usually develop power mainly through the use of speed, being faster than a heavier person. The stockier person will focus on using his or her weight to achieve the same result. Ideally, the slender person will try to “bulk up” to some extent, and the stockier person will work on drills to increase his or her speed. While these are generalities, they emphasize the difference between a systematic approach and simple technique. Judo is a prime example. Sheer strength may carry a person for a time, but the technician with the same amount of strength will most often win the bout. Again, a system will develop the person's innate skills and seek to improve his or her weaknesses.

The Yo-Yo

Supposedly, the yo-yo originated as a weapon in the Philippines. The name allegedly comes from Tagalog, the native language, and means “come back,” or “return.” As a weapon, it was considerably larger than the toy associated with the name. It also had sharp edges and/or studs to increase its effectiveness as a weapon. It was attached to a twenty-foot rope, and was hurled at the enemy, then retrieved with the rope. One thinks of Mjöllnir, the Hammer of Thor, which returned to him when thrown at an opponent. The Germanic name for Thor was Donner, which, as “Donder,” became one of Santa’s reindeer, and “Thor,” or a derivation, gives us “thunder.” As a toy, the yo-yo is considered the second oldest toy – the first being the doll. It has been known by many names: Bandalore, quiz or Prince of Wales toy (British); incroyable, de coblenz, joujou de Normandie or l’emigrette (French). Joujou means “little toy.”

Boxing and Self-Defense

In a boxing manual, dated 1888, not only techniques, but tactics are discussed. In addition, diet and exercise are also covered. The ring is described as being eighteen to twenty-four feet “of rectangular space.” Opponents are admonished, however, never to have a round ring. When one entered the ring, he was to keep his eyes open and on his opponent. Things to observe were the opponent’s height and length of arm as well as overall condition. One reason for a relatively upright stance was to take maximum advantage of one’s height, as well as being able to move the feet quickly. For the left-foot forward stance, one is advised to keep the left foot firmly on the ground. The left foot would be approximately twelve to sixteen inches in front of the left, and at right angles to it. Even then, the “shuffle step” was the method for advancing and retreating. The greatest admonishment was never to overreach when attempting to strike the opponent. The jab, cross and hook were the same as today. One unique approach was to classify blows in relation to the target. Accordingly, it was stated that there are only four blows in boxing: Left fist to the head; left fist to the body; right fist to the head; right fist to the body. The uppercut (still considered a blow to the head) is given as a counter to the opponent who rushes in. Generally, his head will be down and he will not be able to see the blow coming. In the words of twentieth-century boxer, Muhammad Ali: “Dance like a butterfly, sting like a bee. The hands can’t hit, what the eyes can’t see.” In-fighting was learned for instances of self-defense, as on the street, space is usually limited. Unique methods of disengagement were used. When one was being held by the neck, he was advised to push the opponent away, attempting to trip him with a leg. Two other methods were permitted under London Prize Ring Rules, though not with Queensberry or Fair Play. “Back-heeling,” in which the opponent was thrown by tripping him over one’s heels, similar to *judo’s o soto gari* or *o soto guruma*, and a cross-buttock throw, similar to *judo’s o-goshi*.

M & M’s...”Melts in Your Mouth, not in Your Hands”

During the Spanish Civil War, Forest Mars, Sr., saw soldiers eating chocolate candy covered by a confectionery shell. On March 3, 1941, Mars received a patent for his process, and adapted this idea for troops during WWII, who complained that the chocolate in their rations, melted in their hands and got on their weapons. Mars is the

first “M,” the second “M” being Bruce Murrie, son of William F. R. Murrie, who was president of Hershey chocolate. Since Hershey was in charge of the rationed chocolate during WWII, the company had a monopoly on what the troops received. The practicality of the chocolate with the candied shell proved so popular, it led to greater production. Two wars gave us one of the most popular candies of today. (M & M was known as “the candy of the millennium,” since MM in Greek means “two thousand.”)

Robert Trias: Father of American Karate

Robert Trias first came into contact with the martial arts while serving in the U.S. Navy. He was a Navy champion middleweight boxer when stationed on Tulagi in the British Solomon Islands in 1942. He met Tung Gee Hsing, a Chinese missionary of Chan (Zen) Buddhism. Tung was a teacher of Chinese Hsing-I and Japanese *Shuri-te*, which Tung had studied with Motobu Choki. Trias was awarded his *Shodan* (1st degree black belt) on July 10, 1943. One of the distinguishing features of *Shuri-ryu* is the extensive use of bone strength. Correct body alignment for the bone power must be present. Three or more points must meet in a direct line with the center of gravity of the body, utilizing the balance of muscle and bone, before the execution of any technique. This is done with a pronounced twisting of the hips in a coil-like springing action. Philosophically, *Shuri-te* uses the strength of the dragon, the bone strength of the tiger, both inner and outer strength of the leopard, the hidden, spiritual strength of the crane and the strength of the lower abdomen, exemplified through breathing techniques. This last is associated with the serpent – just as the breathing exercises of yoga are associated with serpent power.

Later, Trias studied *Tenshin Shinjo Kenpo Jujutsu* from Hoy Yuan Ping, whose instructor was Hashinosuka Fukuda. In addition, Trias received *Rokudan* (6th degree black belt) from the *Kodokan*. On his return to the United States, Trias began teaching in his backyard in Phoenix, Az. In 1946, he opened the first *karate* school in the United States, while serving with the Arizona State Highway Patrol. He not only used his knowledge while an officer, but taught *karate* to his fellow officers. He founded the United States Karate Association (USKA) in 1948, and was liaison with China, Japan Okinawa and Korea. Another *karateka* instrumental in the growth of the USKA was John Keehan. Trias and Keehan were instrumental to the rapid growth of *karate* in the U.S. Although Keehan studied various styles, he considered Trias his *Sensei*. The rules Trias set up for the first world *karate* tournament are still used today with slight modification. Trias referred to his style as *Shorei Goju-ryu*, *Shorei Ryu* and *Shuri Ryu*, and received *Judan* (10th degree black belt) from Master Gima Makoto, a chief instructor for Funakoshi Gichin, in 1983. Before his death in 1989, he named his daughter as his successor. He was the author of, *Karate is My Life*, *The Hand is My Sword*, *The Pinnacle of Karate*, *The Supreme Way* and *Render Yourself Empty*.

The Quarterstaff

The quarterstaff was a common weapon for Britain. Probably it's most famous advocate is John Little, better known as “Little John,” the adversary of Robin Hood, who became his most devoted follower. There are two theories as to the name. The first, states that it was held with the right hand in the middle of the staff, and the left hand a quarter of the way from the end of the staff – hence “quarterstaff.” The most probable theory is that the name referred to a fight without the use of a lethal sword or knife. In medieval England

such a fight was referred to as a “quarter,” which meant “to give mercy.” Just as their Japanese counterpart, the *bo*, they were used to swing, arc and poke. They ranged from six to nine feet in length. Modern adaptations include the military pugil stick, made famous by the Marines as a training aid for rifle and bayonet. Incidentally, some historians posit the theory that both Robin Hood and Little John were based on William Wallace in an effort to Anglicize one who actually fought against the English. Both Robin Hood and William Wallace were outlaws, and both fought against the rich to help the poor. Wallace was reputed to have a mistress named Marion Braidfute (some historians state they were married); Robin Hood's love was “Maid Marion.” Some historians believe Wallace, reputed to be six feet seven inches tall was also the prototype for Little John. Others believe he had a smaller brother, named John – hence, “Little John.” As an aside: the Scottish baron who seized Wallace and took him to Edward for execution, was John Monteith. Your Professor's wife, Garie, was born Garie Estelle Monteith.

Modern Savate

Although savate rank is usually denoted by a colored sash, or more commonly a colored stripe around the cuff of the gloves, there is an older system that is still used. It has much in common with the traditional Oriental ranking system. There are three levels: Eleves, or students; disciples (intermediate) and donneurs, or teachers. Today's savate consists of fourteen hand strikes, use of the head, shoulders, elbows, knees and hips. In addition, training is done with firearms, whips, staff and razors. As with their Oriental counterparts, the disciples train fulltime, form a close relationship with the teacher and are introduced to his teachings about life and his philosophy. Savate was taught to the military of the United Kingdom and the United States under the name of “Automatic Defense.”

***Kogeki Henkei* or Variations of Attacking Methods**

Jujutsu, as taught by Wilson *Kancho*, was a very comprehensive art. Included below are some of the unique methods of his system. Think of these in relation to the times: AIDS and STD's were not that prevalent, or even known, so some of the methods given would not be practical for today – although just as effective!

Atama or *hitai waza* involved techniques using the head as a weapon. When one realizes that the head is about the same size and weight as a bowling ball, its effectiveness becomes readily apparent. However, one uses these techniques in a life and death situation, only. The reason is that even used as a weapon, any blow to the head carries the risk of concussion! It does not matter if something hits the head, or if the head hits an object, concussion is not only possible, but probable. First, was the *zu-zuki* (*mae atama ate*), or thrusting with the head. This was most commonly used as an adjunct to *morote gari* or a variation thereof. The head was thrust into the stomach or solar plexus as the legs were scooped up. A variation was to snap the head forward, usually onto the opponent's nose. Your professor consistently broke two pine boards with this technique. Next was *ryokado* (*ushiro atama ate*) or rear head butt. The rear part of the skill was snapped backward into the target. Again, this was usually the opponent's nose. Third was *yoko atama ate*, or smashing with the head to either side. This carried the greatest risk, due to the danger of hitting at the temple area, rather than with the heavier part of the

skull. Finally, there was *ago atama ate*, or a rising strike (smash) with the head. This was usually upward beneath the opponent's jaw. Another technique was the use of the chin, not as a strike, but with a grinding pressure into the opponent – usually to the sternum.

The hips could be used to strike backwards (*ushiro goshi ate*), which is best seen in some of the *karate kata*, such as *kanku dai*, or to the sides with the iliac crest (*yoko goshi ate*). There are exponents of the martial arts, especially in the Philippines, who can shatter a concrete building block with such a strike!

As a means of defense, the teeth were once considered formidable weapons. They still are, but with the caveats mentioned above, they are limited in today's world. Their only justification would be that one knew s/he was going to be killed, regardless. The choice would be: now or (possibly) later! There were three basic methods: biting off (*kami kiri*), crushing with the teeth (*kami kudaki*) and tearing with the teeth (*kami saki*). The first was usually directed toward the nose, but under given circumstances, other appendages could be targeted. The second was usually directed toward the fingers, rendering them inoperable (although I know of one instance where the finger was actually bitten off!). The third was used to bite into, and tear off, pieces of flesh as a distraction.

The nails could be used to thrust (*tsume sashi*), especially into the eye/s, or to claw (*tsume kiri*) sensitive parts of the body. *Tsubaki*, or spitting, could be used to temporarily blind the person, or enrage them, with the intent of capitalizing on their rage. Even facial expressions, or *hyojō*, could be used. A person with a “thousand yard stare” should be taken very seriously.

A unique application was the use of the queue, or “pigtail.” Small hooks could be woven into the end and swung as a whip, tearing the flesh (*tombo uchi*). A second use was that of a garotte, which was particularly effective, since the tensile strength of hair is great (*tombo jime*).

The *kiai*jutsu or art of *kiai* could be used to “freeze” an opponent, giving a second to counter attack or get away. Some exponents could ostensibly knock out their opponents with such a shout. Since a high C can shatter glass, it is not beyond the realms of possibility.

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