

Midori Yama Budokai: *Hanshi's Corner*

Written by Professor Ron Rogers

May 2015

Ichi go, ichi e: One life, one meeting

“When pure knuckles meet pure flesh, that's pure karate, no matter who executes it or whatever style is involved.”

Ed Parker

The following is an article written by Patrick McCarthy, *Sensei*. If you are not familiar with McCarthy *Sensei*, he wrote, *Classical Kata of Okinawan Karate*, which your professor highly recommends (it includes the third of the “King’s” series, *Wandan* – the other two are, of course, *Wankan* and *Wanshu*). His “Facts of *Kata*” present his views and principles. Even if you do not agree with some facets of his presentation, he requires you to think!

The Facts of *Kata*

By Patrick McCarthy: Originally posted on <http://www.cyberdojo.org/>

I'd like to present some common facts about *kata* for those of you interested in better understanding this historical and cultural phenomenon.

Fact: *Kata* are the time capsules of *karate* whose techniques, when properly understood, reveal practical responses to the habitual acts of physical violence which have plagued the human race from the very beginning.

Fact: *Kata* has "traditionally" served the principal vehicle through which the "secrets" of karate have been handed down over the generations.

Fact: *Kata* are a geometrical collection of defensive and offensive technique.

Fact: The defensive themes and corresponding application principles intertwined within the technical myriad called *kata* unfolded only after untold generations of empirical observation and practical experience.

Fact: It has always been the human body, its unique function and common anatomical weaknesses which have ultimately dictated how personal tools of impact, ways of seizing and methods of transferring both low intensity and higher velocity kinetic force impede motor performance; Knowledge of this “UNIVERSAL TRUTH” (or lack thereof.)

Fact: Based upon this universal truth, man (Chinese, Okinawan, American etc.) has continually pursued different ways through which to learn and improve these infinite principles.

Fact: Chinese spiritual recluses in monastic sanctuaries, dedicated to living in harmony with nature and their fellow man believed that if and when the human condition (EGO) could be harnessed, the need for physical violence could be reduced to pure chance.

Fact: These reclusive architects ultimately identified and catalogue no less than 36 different defensive themes. In an effort to address each of these random yet habitual acts of physical violence, that plagued the plebeian society in which they dwelt. With continued study as many as 72 different variations were meticulously systematized. Ultimately, eighteen individual exercises (called *hsing/kata*) came to represent a total of 108 defensive themes and application principles. Historically, this phenomenon represents the foundation upon which the *kata* of “Okinawan” *karate* unfolded.

Fact: *Kata* are comprised of 5 principal sets of tools: 1. Punches; 2. Kicks; 3. Blocks; 4. Stances; and 5. Strikes.

Fact: Historically 6 kinds of exercises were used to facilitate the development of *kata*: 1. Techniques of punching; 2. Kicking methods; leg maneuvers and associated practices; 3. Posturing, 4. Use of the empty hand, 5. Corresponding tools of impacting and 6. Checking, trapping and blocking.

Fact: The 12 fundamental defensive themes intertwined within *kata* include:

1. Seizing nerves
2. Attacking blood passages
3. Twisting bones
4. Attacking tendons
5. Joint locks
6. Takedowns
7. Throws
8. Grappling
9. Ground work
10. Counter attacks
11. Impacting anatomically vulnerable zones
12. Digging into the cavities of the body unprotected by the skeletal structure

Fact: The 4 fundamental categories of application principles into which these defensive themes fall include:

1. Techniques of restraint
2. Neurological shut-down
3. Attacking the respiratory system
4. Methods of stunning

Fact: *Kata* is like a song in a foreign language; "Unless you understand the language in which the song is sung, its words will forever remain a mystery."

Fact: Long ago, before written language, the ancient tribes of man passed their knowledge on through physical emulation; the very roots of the *kata* phenomenon. This living phenomenon not only served as an excellent vehicle through which to impart existing knowledge, it also provided the very platform upon which more progressive learners could extrapolate and interpolate more improved methods of studying infinite principles.

Fact: The fundamental concept of *kata* is not the commodity of any one specific culture, but rather the product of humanity. As civilization evolved, language developed, and the tribes of man took on individual characteristics, so too did his rituals reflect such changes. Built upon ancient customs, profound spiritual conviction and disciplined social ideology, the *kata* of *Karate-do* is a microcosm of the austere culture from whence it comes.

Fact: If not balanced by moral philosophy and spiritual introspection *kata* is little more than a physical pursuit. One can never get beyond the immediate results of physical training, without looking inward. *Kata* (which is *karate-do*) teaches that the source of human weakness is internal, not external. Hence, the journey must always be inward, not outward. Discovering that the source of human weakness lies within reveals the location where our personal battles must be first fought and won before inner-harmony can ever be achieved and the living of daily life improved. *Karate-do* cannot exist without a body of moral philosophy to govern the behavior of those who embrace its empowering practice. Learning *kata* without its corresponding philosophy creates a terrible imbalance, which is usually reflected in attitude, character and behavior.

Fact: The fundamental principles upon which the theory and application of *kata* rest can be explained in both Western science and Eastern tradition.

Fact: *Kata* can be: 1. An interesting alternative to conventional Western physical fitness; 2. Practiced as one part of a rule-bound sport; 3. A conduit through which defensive themes and corresponding application principles are imparted; 4. Meditation in motion.

Fact: Ritualized practices are invariably reinterpreted to meet the numerous and varying demands of that generation's more progressive teacher/learner. When such a phenomenon occurs, the interpretation invariably leaves a signature residue representing the understanding of the person/s responsible for it.

Fact: Aims and objectives must always be supported by corresponding training methods. If *kata* was forged to be used against a fighter in an arena, warrior on the battlefield or any other kind of MUTUAL confrontation, its configuration and training method would be diametrically different to the way they are. This does not preclude that application principles cannot be used against the said adversaries, but only suggests that they were originally developed, and constantly improved upon, for the expressed purpose of being used by average people against someone who had little or no understanding of such application principles.

Fact: In an attempt to establish teaching curriculums for the body of knowledge possessed, various *kata* were brought together by various *Uchinanchu* (Okinawans) in an effort to produce a personal delivery system.

Fact: I spent years in the field at the source/s collecting and analyzing the oldest versions of "Okinawan" *kata* and studying how and what anthropological forces effected their growth and subsequent direction.

Fact: I amassed a plethora of accolades from Okinawan and Japanese *karate* masters alike testifying to the extent of my research.

Fact: I am completely confident in the knowledge that I presently command and have worked diligently to produce an easy but effective and systematized way through which to imparting such knowledge to any and all like-minded people interested in learning. The *kata* I teach, (*Taisabaki* 1-6, *Happoren*, *Chokyu*, *Nepai*, *Hakutsuru*, *Ryushan*, *Rakkaken*, *Wando*, *Yara Kushankun*, *Matsumura Passai*, *Aragaki Seisan*, *Aragaki Niseishi*, *Aragaki Sochin*, *Aragaki Unshu* etc.) their corresponding defensive themes & application principles are among the oldest traditions in *Koryu Uchinadi* and trace their lineage back to Kojo Taite (1837-1917), Aragaki Seisho (1840-1920), Xie Zhongxiang (1852-1930), Wu Xianhui (1886-1940), Tang Daiji (1887-1937), Higashionna Kanryo (1853-1917), Kiyoda Juhatsu (1886-1967), Hanashiro Chomo (1869-1945), Miao Xing (1881-1939), Oshiro Choji (1887-1935), and Kinjo Hiroshi (1919).

Fact: In today's segregated international *karate* community there are a plethora of "standards" and no end to indiscriminate learning.

I wonder what French Mathematician & Philosopher Henri Poincare knew about *karate* when he wrote (in his "Hypothesis of Mathematics," 1905), "Science is built upon facts in the same way that a house is built with stones, but, that the mere collection of facts is no more a science than a pile of stones is a house."

Understanding *kata* is simply a matter of facts.

With respect,

Patrick McCarthy

More (Than You Wanted to Know) About Colors

When you want to place the color directly before the object, there are two methods for doing so. For the colors *aka* (red), *ao* (blue), *shiro* (white) and *kuro* (black), add an “i” at the end of the word: *akai*, *aoi*, *shiroi* and *kuroi*. [I know; white and black are not colors, but let’s make things simple!] This makes the words true adjectives. The second method is to add “no,” with the following colors: *midori* (green), *murasaki* (purple), *daidaiiro* (orange) and *nezumiiro* (gray): *midori no*, *murasaki no*, *daidaiiro no* and *nezumiiro no*. These colors are the description of something (*murasaki* literally means the color of a plum; *daidaiiro* is “the color of an orange”). In the first instance, a red dictionary would be *akai jisho*; in the second, “*nezumiiro no tsukue*,” means a gray desk.

When “*ma*” (“true”) is added as a prefix, the spelling may change, as well as the depth of the color. *Makka* (*ma* + *aka*) means “bright red,” *masshiro* (*ma* + *shiro*) means “pure white,” and *makkuro* (*ma* + *kuro*) means “jet black.”

When you can’t decide what to call a color, use “-*ppoi*,” which translates to “-ish,” in English. That is, *midorippoi* means “greenish”; *kiiroppoi* means “yellowish.” With the “-*ppoi*” suffix, the colors are true adjectives.

Oliver Goldsmith

It is amazing at the synchronicity of events. A favorite quote from the Japanese proverbs is, “Seven times down; eight times up.” The English poet and author, Oliver Goldsmith, expressed the same thought, when he wrote: “*Our greatest glory consists not in never failing, but in rising every time we fall.*”

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