

Midori Yama Budokai: *Hanshi's Corner*

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Ichi go, ichi e: One life, one meeting

“A man chosen to wield life and death on the battlefield must be an artist. If he isn't, he is simply a murderer.” **Shaka Zulu**

Bunkai: Application of Kata

Two criteria for the application of technique are: 1) That the same technique may be used effectively inside the attack or outside the attack, and 2) that the same technique may be used to a) free oneself, b) be used to apply some type of grappling technique (i.e. an arm lock or strangulation), c) strike the opponent, d) a throw. These are in addition to the basic movement which may be a deflection, or receiving an attack. Also, a strike may be used as a release or as an adjunct to a joint-lock. As examples, think of the *gedan barai*, or lower-level sweep, commonly though erroneously called a block. In the following examples the *gedan barai* is performed with the left arm. In the case of a cross-grip (right hand to right wrist), the *gedan barai* is used to strike the right arm. This would be *uchijakuzawa* or *miyakudokoro*: the inner parts of the forearm where pulsation can be felt (**HC-4** Pericardium Meridian). This is also a site of the median nerve. It lies between the brachioradialis and flexor muscles. Arteries are very close to the surface, rendering the point especially vulnerable. This would be a case of applying the technique to the inside of the attack. If a same-side grip (in this instance, left hand to right wrist) is used, the strike would be to the *hiji* or elbow (**LU-5**). This may stimulate the ulna nerve, or the so-called funny bone, causing pain in the breast and disabling motor function. This was an ancient play on words. Since the nerve is directly over the humerus bone, it was considered humorous. A sharp pressure will temporarily paralyze the little finger side of the hand. This will loosen the grip to a marked degree. Pressure on the elbow will affect the antebrachial cephalic vein and the radial and medial arteries. In applying this movement (outside the attack), the elbow is locked in a straight arm lock, in addition to the blow to LU-5. The right hand pulls the left attacking hand to the right hip (another criterion for application: the pulling hand has something in it!). Using the hammerfist (*tettsui* or *horyu*), the *gedan barai* may be used to attack the opponent's "groin." The strike may also be used against *sanri* (**LI-10**) located about an inch up from the humerus on the thumb side of the arm in a line with the index finger. This is the rounded portion just beneath the radiobrachialis muscle, and is rich in neuroceptors. The optimum transfer is obtained by striking with a "heavy hand" at a 45o angle towards the opposite quadrant of the lower arm. Also affected are the antebrachial cephalic vein and median nerve. As with *Tekki Shōdan* (*Naifanchi Ichi*), the *gedan barai* may also be used as a lower level punch. When done with the motion of *gedan barai* and ending in a lower level punch, the technique is a simultaneous block/strike. As a throw, think of the 90o pivot to the left front, as in *Heian Shōdan* (*Pinan Nidan*). This follows the second lunge punch in the *kata*. The opponent is attacking from the side, implying the use of peripheral vision to see the attack (one of the principles in practicing *kata*). The exponent may withdraw the left foot to the right, and then step deeply forward into a left forward stance. The left arm sweeps the attack aside, as the step is made, and continues

on into a *gedan barai*. This throws the opponent with a form of *Aikido*'s *do-gaeshi* (*sokumen irimi nage*), or trunk overturn. Use these examples for the other basic "blocks." Inside-out (Japanese: *uchi-ude uke*; Okinawan: *soto-uke*), outside-in (Japanese: *soto ude uke*; Okinawan: *uchi uke*) and rising "block" (*age uke* or *jodan uke*).

Nafuda: Name Board

In very traditional *dojo*, the *nafuda* is a method of noting promotions (*shinsa*). *Budoka* are listed by rank, and by when the rank was awarded. Actual dates are not used, but the first to be promoted came before the next, continuing to the newest black belt. Generally, only *yudansha* (black belts) were listed, with the highest ranks to the right of the board, as Japanese script moved from top to bottom and right to left. In other countries this could be listed from top to bottom with the script running from left to right. Originally, this was used in lieu of certificates, and everyone knew who *sempai* (seniors) and *kohai* (juniors) were, as well as their place in the "chain of command." Each name, written on wood, is individually hung on a larger board, so that later additions might be more easily accommodated. The primary reason for listing only *yudansha* is space, as many *dojo* have far too many *mudansha* (non- black belts) to list individually. If smaller *dojo* wished to include the *mudansha*, a separate board would be used.

Kata: Form

Mark Groenewold, in his book, *Karate, the Japanese Way*, gives a great one line definition of *kata*: "Kata is merely fundamentals in action and sequence." Groenewold *Sensei* goes on to state that the best instructional tool is a great *karate* teacher who can demonstrate how to do the *kata* and also how it applies in self-defense. Your Professor Emeritus' Booth *Sensei* constantly expressed, "*Kata is combat!*"

In his small booklet, *Karate, the Mastery of Attack and Defence* [sic], Master Kase informs us that through the use of *kata* a great number of movements may be revealed, as well as "the great secrets of karate." Traditionally, black belts, instructors and great masters attached special importance to *kata*. They believed *kata* directly expressed the teachings of the great Japanese masters who preceded them. More than "mere testimony" to their teachings was a true message from the Masters. For those who persevere, certain secrets will be revealed.

Modern Karate/Traditional Karate

Probably the greatest difference between traditional ("old style") *karate* and its modern counterpart is intent. Originally *karate* was practiced by persons who lived in and for the spirit of *karate-do*. This related to the necessity for a means of defense against the untrained person who might assault them. The reason for training was...training. Modern *karate* is practiced as a sport and by anyone who wants to enjoy it as a recreation. The difference is that of the soldier or law-enforcement officer and the competitive shooter. The first two learn to use a calibrated weapon in order to save his or her life or the life of others. The second practices to compete in a sport. The mind-set is totally different. Many years ago a TV star believed he was the fastest "quick-draw" around, and challenged others to a contest – at targets, of course. A highly decorated soldier of WWII, including the Medal of Honor, stated he would accept the challenge if

they faced one another with live ammunition. The offer was declined. The star was thinking in terms of sport; the soldier in terms of combat. There is a vast difference in attitude and philosophy. It should be noted, however, that modern *karate* has led to more scientific training methods and a more organized curriculum.

Speed in Techniques

When speaking of “speed” in applying a technique, the following criterion is used: Do not measure the time from when the attack begins, but from the point in time when the opponent becomes aware that an attack is being done! This is why “tels” are so important to eliminate from the movement. There should be no superfluous movement when performing any technique, whether defensive or offensive. This is the reason the “cover” in *karate kata* is so important. It utilizes three principles to eliminate extraneous movements. One hand/arm receives and deflects the attack as the second hand/arm makes a counter-attack at the same time. The movements of the “cover” are based on natural movements of the body to protect oneself. It places one in the best position for a “finishing” move. *Judo kata*, done as a training aid and not as an exhibition, teach the exponents the best possible movements necessary to unbalance and throw the opponent. The thought is if one cannot perform the technique under ideal condition, how may one expect to perform them under the pressures of competition or actual combat. *Kata*, aka “shadow boxing,” should instill reflexive actions. True, the movements must be tested in sparring, but without muscle memory the application of any movement is limited if even possible. The ideal is for the exponent to perform a technique without hesitation and from less than ideal position. Again, *kata* is helpful is used as a training aid. The *karate Ten no Kata* is used to learn movement from any position (although basic ones are used at first). From the standardized ready position, the *karateka* should make the same movements from leaning positions, and eventually from having the hands in the pockets – all without any “tels!” There will always be those individuals with natural skills and speed of a sort that even with “tels” they can bring about their favorite technique. They are, however, in the minority, and for the average exponent – “practice, practice, practice!”

***Kansetsu Waza*: Joint-locking Techniques**

Joint locks, whether against the arms or legs, have certain characteristics which enable them to be done more efficiently. First, the joints may be hyper-extended, as with the elbow or knee. This is done by turning the joint inward or outward. Second, the joints may be twisted beyond their natural tolerance. In both instances there is a method to effectively feel where the pressure should be placed. With the arm, the thumb is the indicator. With the leg, the heel is the indicator. Consider hyperextension first. Against the elbow or knee, pressure ideally goes toward the direction the thumb or heel faces. In the case of the elbow, if the thumb faces upward, then pressure is most effective when applied upward as in *tenbin nage* or *gyaku seoi*. Conversely, if the thumb is pointed downward, then *ude gatame* or *waki gatame* are most effective. Pressure against the knee goes in the direction the heel faces. Actual entry would be opposite the direction the pressure is applied. *Waki gatame*, for example, would be applied against the little finger side of the arm, but actual pressure would be directed toward the thumb side of the arm. If the arm is turned, then adjustments must be made accordingly. The thumb

and heel also indicate which direction to twist the joint. *Ude garami*, or the “figure 4 arm lock,” would twist the thumb outward, as in *hontai* (basic) *ude garami*, or inward as in *ude garami V* (*shita ude garami*). In the case of the knee, the heel would be twisted outward or inward. In the case of *kata ashi hishigi*, it is the twist which compels the opponent to surrender or, in cases of actual combat, for the knee to sustain damage. One may wonder why your Professor Emeritus has chosen the heel, rather than the large toe in the case of the knee. The answer is simple body mechanics. When the arm is bent, the direction of the forearm is upward; when the leg is bent, the direction of the lower leg is downward. Pressure must be exerted accordingly.

Tsuki Waza: Thrusting Techniques

Essentially there were four recognized thrusting methods given in traditional *karate*. They are as follows: *Chokuzuki* or direct thrusting, which was done at three levels. These were *jodan chokuzuki* or upper level direct thrusting (head level), *chudan chokuzuki* (mid-level direct thrusting (torso) and *gedan chokuzuki* or lower level direct thrusting (lower abdomen and groin). Next was *agezuki/tsukiage* or rising thrust, otherwise known as the “uppercut.” Third was *furizuki* or swinging thrust as exemplified in *Tekki Shodan*, movements fifteen and twenty-nine. Finally, *wazuki* or circle thrust, now known as *mawashi zuki* or “roundhouse.” *Wazuki* was originally taught as a follow-up move if *chokuzuki* was received. The straight thrust was converted into a circle, moving around the opponent’s *ude uke* (receiving arm). Note that the designation is based on the manner in which the technique was done.

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