

Midori Yama Budokai: Essays
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Mu Tau: The Modern Pankration, or Greek Martial Art

For more information on this art, read: Mu Tau, the Modern Greek Karate by Jim Arvanitis. I have spoken with an instructor of Pankration, who informed me it is pronounced “Pan cray tee on,” not “Pan cray shun.”

There are those martial arts historians who contend that Pankration, a no-holds barred fighting art from Greece, is the ancestor of all martial arts. The theory is that during Alexander the Greek’s military coups of his known world, he brought the art of Pankration to the countries he invaded. Consequently, the historians claim, the Eastern martial arts owe their development, if not their existence, to the European art of Pankration. Pankration means “all powers.” That is, it included the percussive arts of boxing and kicking as well as grappling arts. Hands, feet, mind and spirit were combined in an all-out combat form. The only things barred from Pankration were biting and gouging – everything else was allowed! This combat art was the cornerstone of the first Olympic games, and was considered the ultimate test of strength, skill, stamina and courage. In 776 B.C., boxing was the first combative sport of the Olympics. Wrestling was added in 688 B.C. and Pankration joined the Olympics in 648 B.C. In the 2nd century B.C., a subdivision, boy’s Pankration, was added. Proof that this was one of the most important of athletic contests was the money awarded. At the tournament in the city of Aphrodisia in Asia Minor (and, yes, that is where the name comes from), the winner of the Pankration was awarded the equivalent of \$60,000. Officials enforced what few rules there were by flogging the violators with stout rods. Predating Brazilian Jujitsu by several centuries, most contests were won on the ground, where hitting was usually ineffective. Probably the most famous bout fought between the champion Arrichion and a challenger, whose name has been lost to time. The challenger jumped onto Arrichion’s back, catching the champion’s throat in a strangle hold with the forearm. At the same time, the challenger locked his legs around Arrichion’s waist. In an attempt to free himself, Arrichion threw himself back, locking the challenger’s ankle with his leg and breaking the ankle. As the challenger threw his hands up in defeat, Arrichion died of the strangulation. The bout was awarded to Arrichion.

Equally famous, was the Athenian, Dioxippus, who won the crown in 366 B. C. He won by default, what the Greeks referred to as *akoniti*, a “walk-over” victory. He was so feared no dared to fight him.

One of Alexander’s Macedonian warriors, Coragus by name, got into a heated argument with Dioxippus and challenged him to a duel. Coragus came to the fight in full armor. He also carried a javelin, lance and sword. Dioxippus arrived in only his birthday suit, body covered with olive oil and carrying a club. Coragus threw his javelin, which Dioxippus easily dodged. Coragus then charged with his lance, which Dioxippus broke with his club. When Coragus attempted to draw his sword, Dioxippus trapped the sword-arm and swept the opponent’s feet from beneath him. When Coragus crashed to the ground, Dioxippus placed his foot on the neck of Coragus, signifying victory. Maybe this is why no one would fight him ...

When the Romans adopted the Pankration, they introduced the cestus, a spiked and weighted glove. The science and skill of the Greeks was replaced by an increase in blood and gore. Pankration was eventually banned for its cruelty.

Warriors of Alexander the Greek introduced the elements of Pankration as far east as India in the 4th century B. C. From there, several versions emerged. It is to be noted that the Okinawan “karate” bears a phonetic similarity to the ancient Greek “Pankration.” In addition, ancient Greek pugilists broke stones with their bare fists, and one was known to have killed not only bulls but lions with his bare hands. Legend has it that some Pankratiasts were able to kick through shields. They also used an “abdominal shout” to lend strength to their techniques. In one fight, Damoxenus struck Creugas with an open hand, held spear-like, with so much force it penetrated Creugas’ side, killing him instantly.

The original form of Pankration is now almost extinct, but the modern Mu Tau has been introduced in its place. Its innovator, Jim Arvanitis, states that Mu Tau “has no precise definition, and is merely a convenient name for an exclusive fighting system.” Mu Tau is actually an acronym for Martial Truths. It both transcends and encompasses all styles, yet is a distinct art within itself. Mu Tau is essentially discipline of the mind, body and spirit. The philosophy of Mu Tau is that combat is the ultimate test of an athlete’s skill, courage, endurance and strength, pitting not only the man against the opponent, but against himself as well. An expert martial artist’s level of mental development is such that his movements are an extension of the mind (“they fit like a glove...”).

Kuk Sool Won

In Hyuk Suh founded Kuk Sool Won in 1958. The founder states that when he was young he traveled from province to province in Korea to learn from over one hundred masters who decline to tell their names. In Hyuk Suh was taught the hidden secrets of generations of martial arts, sometimes learning only one special technique from a master. These masters applied science, action, circulatory speed and dynamic energy to the techniques taught to Kuk Sool Won’s founder. In the book, Kuk Sool, In Hyuk Suh makes the statement that Chinese records claim that the ancient Korean martial arts known as Koryo Gi (Techniques of Korea) and Yoo-Kyo (a kind of wrestling) were powerful and superb martial arts forms. He also believes that the Japanese karate, kendo and aikido were probably influenced by traditional Korean martial arts.

The present day Kuk Sool Won system has 3,608 techniques found in 270 divisions. The levels of instruction consist of beginner, intermediate, advanced and black belt levels. Techniques include fist and leg arts, gathering power for defense (kicho chakki), pressure points, and escorting techniques (“come-alongs”). Also included are rope tying, short, intermediate and long staff arts, straight, reverse, double, long and short sword arts. Other arts are palm strikes, fan and cane techniques, circular blocking, internal power, head butting, breathing techniques, empty hand forms and weapons forms.

In many respects, Kuk Sool Won resembles its sister art, Hapkido.

In Hyuk Suh states that martial arts are not something that were founded by any particular individual or group. They started as a natural outgrowth of primitive people to protect themselves and their families. Consequently, all areas of the world have indigenous forms of combative arts.

Sanchin Kata or the Form of Three Battles

Sanchin, or the Three Battles, form is one of karate's oldest forms. It can be traced back to the Go Cho Kune "Kung Fu," or Five Fist Style of Chinese Boxing. Go Cho Kune was devised by a master known as Pang Be Hu, whose real name was Chua Giok Beng. The style receives its name from the five systems Pang Be Hu studied and synthesized into one art. These styles were Tai Cho, Pen Ho, Lo Han, Tai Chun and Tai Shen.

Tai Cho derives from the Shaolin school. Its main emphasis is on proper body postures and form. Tai Cho gives Go Cho Kune its leg arts.

Pen Ho, or White Crane, gives Go Cho Kune the eight hard and twenty-four soft movements of the Pen Ho style. Go Cho Kune has the fingers of the White Crane.

Lo Han Kun is another Shaolin style, emphasizing proper body postures and stability of stances and footwork. Lo Han Kun is similar to Tai Chi and Hsing-I. Its footwork was added to Go Cho Kune.

Tat [sic] Chun Kun, better known as Bodhidharma, gave Go Cho Kune his breathing method and the principles of hard and soft. These came from Ta Mo's books, I Chin Ching and Sui King Chin. Development of the body, and its ability to absorb blows, came from Tat Chun Kun.

Tai Shen Kun, or the monkey form gives agility, ability to hide, jump and evade with acrobatic movements. The palm movements of Co Cho Kune come from the monkey style.

Go Cho Kune is based on four principles: Tun, or adhere (off-balance); To, or execute (hitting, pushing, pressing and slapping); Pu, or lift (to throw); and Tim, or sink (to trap or immobilize).

Sanchin also resembles Sil Lim Tao, or Little Imagination, of the Wing Chun (Wing Tsun) school. Like Wing Chun, *Sanchin* stresses in close fighting, adhering to the opponent (Wing Chun chi sao, or "sticky hands") and direct attacks.

The three battles are of the body, mind and spirit, each of which has three divisions. The history and influence of *Sanchin* is long and varied.

Sanchin intuited scientific theory long before it was posited. For example, making a fist corresponds to the Fibonacci Ratio (discovered by Leonardo Pisano Fibonacci). This ratio is applied to the joints of the fingers: the first joint is 1, the second joint is $1+1=2$ and the next joint is $1+2=3$, finally, the metacarpal bone is equal to $2+3=5$. This ratio is intimately connected to the Golden Mean of the ancient Greeks (and Egyptians). See Mu Tau, above. Not widely known, is the "handspan" method of martial arts, as explained below. This is taken from the *atemi* portion of *An Encyclopedia of Judo* (Jujutsu) by your *hanshi meiyō kyōju*.

All *kyūshō* may be found by using the "handspan" method. This is composed of the full handspan and half handspan. If the hand is stretched, the distance from the tip of the little finger to the tip of the thumb is the full handspan. From the knuckle of the index finger to the tip of the thumb is the half handspan. If you start at a known vital point such as the *miken* [between the eyes], the full handspan/half handspan may be used to find other vital points. If the tip of the thumb is placed on the *miken*, the knuckle of the index finger will touch the *kachikake* [point of the chin] and the tip of the little finger will be above the *hichū* ["Adam's apple"]. If the knuckle of the index finger were placed on *miken* and the hand wrapped horizontally the tips of the little finger and thumb will touch

komekami [temple]. This method may be used to locate all 365 points on the human body. *Kyusho* are generally divided into *jintai kyusho* (*komen*), or vital points to the human body (back of the body), and *jintai kyusho* (*shomen*), or vital points to the human body (front of the body). I have elected to list according to placement on the body; that is, high (*jodan*), middle (*chudan*) or low *gedan*.

For a more detailed analysis of Sanchin – and excellent training methods – read *The Way of Sanchin, the Application of Power*, by Kris Wilder.

What is a *Sensei*?

The title of *sensei* is made of two *kanji* (characters). The first, *sen*, means “the future,” “priority,” or “precedence.” *Sei* means, “birth,” “existence,” “living,” “substance,” or “student.” *Sensei* therefore means a life that comes before, or a student prior to the future. A *sensei*, then, is someone who precedes another by having first been a student of the art him- or herself. In other words, you cannot pass on to someone else what you do not have yourself. To be a *sensei* implies that one must first have been a student. All too often this is forgotten or overlooked – by both the student and the *sensei*.

Another way of expressing *sensei* is “one who points the way.” In addition to having had to have first been a student, the student and *sensei* must realize the *sensei* does not teach in the traditional sense. A *sensei* does not teach things; a *sensei* teaches students! What the *sensei* teaches the students is how to learn.

Again, we must look at *sen* and *sei*. The two *kanji* can also mean future life. This implies that the student wants what the *sensei* offers in order to change his or her present life into a future life. But what the *sensei* is offering is not techniques, forms or sparring, other than how they may cause a change in the way the student looks and thinks of life as s/he is living it.

I have deliberately refrained from using the most common translation of *sensei*: Teacher. The word “teacher,” to the oriental mind, has a connotation much greater than one who shows someone how to do a specific skill. Teacher, in this context, is more the meaning of the Jewish rabbi, also (mis) translated “teacher.” A rabbi or *sensei* teaches by example. They live the life, or the way, which they are trying to pass on to another person.

Unlike a coach, or a classroom teacher, the *sensei* does not only teach skills, but a way of life. This is a way of life to be learned from doing and as a peripheral adjunct to the skills, not ending with the mastery of the skills.

A *sensei* points the way to the future life of another by being the example that person follows. What the *sensei* has done shows that it can be done by another, but neither the *sensei* nor student should forget the *sensei* was first a student. Indeed, the *sensei* is always a student and, during any session, the *sensei* should learn as much as the student. If a *sensei* can only pass on the techniques of an art and not its principles, then the art will die. This is because techniques will be forgotten or changed over time. Principles, however, will give the student/*sensei* the ability to (re) create any technique. It will even give the student/*sensei* the ability to create new techniques – to bring new life to a system (a future life, if you will). Remember, the definition of *sensei*.

Practically or philosophically, the *sensei* is more than a teacher or coach. They are living examples of what you can become if you follow the path to which they point. And to paraphrase: do not confuse the *sensei* with the path.

With all of this, perhaps the question has been more practically answered by another *sensei* of *kenjutsu* and *aiki jutsu*:

What is a *Sensei*?

1. The head instructor of any dojo (whether you think s/he rates it or not).
2. Anyone who obviously knows a lot more than you do.
3. Anyone who you think could kill you without working up a sweat.

Okami Karahō Kempō Patch

Hopefully, most of you have learned the meaning of the Midori Yama Budōkai Patch. However, other organizations that have affiliated/joined MYB also have patches with meanings given them. One such is the above mentioned: *Okami Karahō Kempō*, which is now in the capable hands of Laura Lang, *Kyōshi*. She is the head of the *kempō* system, formerly under the leadership of Stan Mattson, *Kyōshi*.

- *Okami Karahō Kempō* is the club founded by *Sensei* Laura Lang. The official MYB club charter is dated 16 December 2000.
- *Okami* is Japanese for wolf. The wolf is a favored animal of Lang, *Kyōshi*, who was born in the year of the dog in the Chinese zodiac.
- The Thunderbolt symbolized the founder and Grandmaster of *Karahō Kempō*, William Kwai Sun “Thunderbolt” Chow. It represents the foundation of the art and is the source of light in the wolf’s eyes.
- The Cobra symbolizes Ronald Moku Alo, *Shihan*, a student of Professor Chow and founder of *Alo Kenpō Karate*.
- The Dragon symbolizes Professor Stan L. Mattson, who was a student of Alo *Shihan* and the founder of *Cobra Karahō Kempō* and *Aiki Jujutsu*. Professor Mattson was a martial artist for over forty years, and was born in the year of the dragon. He was the primary instructor to Laura Lang, *Kyōshi*, designating her as the head of the organization.
- The Pine Tree symbolizes *Koshō Shorei Ryu* (Old pine Tree Style) and its *jujutsu* influence from Reverend Doctor James M. Mitose who introduced his style to Professor Chow.
- The Colors represent the club’s progression of *obi iro* (belt colors): white, yellow, green, blue, purple, brown, black and red.

Hanshi,

I would like to get your opinion on something that I have thought about. Now I know a lot of senseis have their own opinion about kata and its purpose. Whether conditioning, body control, movement, or bunkai. It is my belief that they’re all in kata.

From reading the book, *The Way of Kata*, before we had separate basics and kata. There was kata. Before we had Shotokan, Goju-Ryu, Shorin-Ryu there was kata. It told the story of the kata, Chinto (Gankaku), named after a shipwrecked Chinese man on Okinawa. The kata was created from his fighting style. If this story is true, then here we have a style hidden in kata. Not a kata that is in a system. I have also read the book, *Karate-Do, My Way of Life*. Funakoshi never spoke of any style, only that he practiced kata on a daily basis.

I guess what I am trying to say is kata came first. With the additions of body training “Santiago’s way,” which I will say is needed but maybe not so extreme to base a style out

of beating the heck out of each other. But, yes, in fights you will get hit and you need to be used to getting hit. If you look at all 26 Shotokan katas do they all look like what Shotokan is known for. Some look more Chinese based and not Japanese.

Well I think I have spoken enough about the subject. Love to hear what you have to say. Due to training with Hanshi Kennedy I come up with weird subjects to talk about it seems like.

Jason Babiuch

Jason,

Since you asked, and realize it's exactly that -- my opinion -- here it is.

When I first started *judo* and *karate* with Booth *sensei*, he stressed the functionality of *kata*. He realized it was good for balance, basics, movement and combinations. However, he stressed the practical defense found within the movements, and between the movements. As he was my first *sensei*, what he taught stayed with me. So ... for me, *kata* is combat. Sparring is a game; with contact it is a rough game, but a game nonetheless. Combat has only one rule -- survive. Sparring has many rules, most of which go against the very things that work in real combat (knee breaks, strikes to the eyes, throat, kidneys, etc.). The reason the *makiwara* was used was because with *kata* and the *makiwara* you not only didn't have to pull your punch, you were encouraged to strike as hard as possible.

Wilson *Kanchō* also taught the effectiveness of *kata*, especially Eagle Claw. For Wilson *Kanchō*, the Eagle Claw was very combat effective, and this is the way he taught it.

My whole effort has been to reinstate the effectiveness of *kata* for street fighting and combat. Almost everything I teach is *kata* related. As I believe I have stated in one of my "newsletters," most old masters only taught one, two, or at the most, three *kata*. Each *kata* (the old ones) had defenses and counterattacks for all attacks. Instinctively, we know this. Most of us have a *tokui kata* (favorite form), but few of us have more than three we really like, enjoy or do regularly, though we may have a working knowledge of others. I don't know if this answered your question, or not, but it is my opinion about *kata*. (To answer your question: My favorite *kata* are *Enbi* (*Empi/Wansu*), followed by *Hangetsu/Seisan* and *Tenshō*.)

You are correct in that Funakoshi referred to what he taught as "*karate*." As in the *Shotokan* history newsletter, it was Funakoshi's students who gave it the name "*Shotokan*." And, originally, this was the name of the place where it was taught, not the style. Funakoshi stated that he did *Naihanchi* (*Tekki*) for three years, before learning another form. Further, he only brought the basic fifteen forms from Okinawa to Japan. It was his son who added the other eleven. Also, Motobu Choki, who was not friendly with Funakoshi, did only *Naihanchi*, and he was reputed to be the greatest fighter of his day! I mention this, because two *karateka* who were not on good terms, practiced the same form. There had to have been some merit to it.

Ron

Roberto asks: WHY DO WE OPEN OUR FEET WHEN WE BOW?

Roberto,

There are no stupid questions – although, sometimes there are stupid answers.

The *Musubi dachi* (Informal Attention Stance) is one of a group (including *heisoku dachi*, *heiko dachi*, *hachiji dachi*, *teiji dachi* and *renoji dachi*), that are referred to as *shizen tai* or natural stances.

Musubi dachi gives a feeling of being relaxed but alert. This is more so than with *heisoku dachi*, which is suitable for resting but not for vigorous action. The feet form a trapezoid with the front line longer than the back line, giving a more stable stance. Actually, if lines at the sides of the feet were extended backwards, you would have the strongest geometric position: a triangle. Additional stability can be achieved through contraction of the lower abdominal and leg muscles. This slightly decreases the angle of the knee.

It is the first of the foot positions for transition to other stances, and may be used as the starting position for kicking or sweeping.

Primary reasons are that it is the first to be used for transition, and is more stable than *heisoku dachi* (try bowing from *heisoku dachi*, and feel how disoriented you are).

As *karate* (at least in Japan) was para-military, the stance was probably influenced, in part, by the informal attention stance used by the military.

Ron

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