

Midori yama budokai Supplementary Newsletter
Written by Ron Rogers *Hanshi*

“If you have to think about it, it’s already too late!” This was a favorite expression of Wilson *Shihan*. Martial Arts had to be intuitive. If an attack were made, you had no time to plan a defense and/or counter – it was already “too late.”

F. J. Chu writes in *The Martial Way and Its Virtues (Tao De Gung)*: “...*Kata* is the very essence of combat training because it perfectly aligns form and application. The martial artist who performs *kata* correctly sees in his mind the exact execution of a technique as he performs it. The repeated fusion of mental imagery and physical application ensures that the martial artist can truly learn to defend himself. He learns a sense of his own bodily rhythm and the center of his own physicality.”

Chu goes on to state: “In the practice of *kata*, it is the body alone that should be active, while the mind remains passive, watchful and alert. The mind is visualizing rather than participating, so it can monitor the body’s mistakes. The mind becomes a mirror, resembling the smooth surface of a pond, calm and undistracted as the body goes through its rehearsed movements. ...The mental discipline needed in practicing *kata* is also useful in developing a calm detachment during the heat of combat. ...This exhilarating sense of freedom and acceptance allows the warrior to act spontaneously...” The essence of Chu’s thinking is that *kata* leads to what the Japanese refer to as *mushin*, allowing the practitioner to do rather than think – after all, “If you have to think about it, it’s already too late!”

KATA

There are no superfluous movements within a *kata*. Not only does every movement have function and meaning, but also the techniques within a *kata* have more than one application. One should understand the principles underlying the performance of the techniques and realize the techniques themselves are subject to interpretation. Also, one does not have to use them exactly as performed in the *kata* for effective self-defense. *Kata* is combat and needs to be treated as such! One must see the attacker/s and always ask: “Would that technique have stopped the opponent?” The true criterion for interpretation is: “Does it work?”

Shorin Ryu: Pine Forest Style

There has been much confusion about *kata*. Much of it stems from a misunderstanding about the *Pinan (Heian) kata*. Itotsu Yasutsune did create the *Pinan* for schoolchildren, but the misunderstanding comes from why he did. Following is the

Philosophy of Itotsu Yasutsune

1. *Karate* should be practiced not for your own interest but for the protection of your parents, and it is never meant to hurt anyone.
2. *Karate* is practiced to make muscles and bones as hard as a rock and to make arms and legs substitutes for spears, hence it is practical that it will help our military society to come. The First Duke of Wellington said when he defeated Napoleon: “Our victory today was attained in our schoolyards.”

3. *Karate* cannot be mastered in a short time. One to two hours of hard training every day for three or four years will make you master *karate*.
4. *Karate* requires such strong hands and feet that you should practice striking one to two hundred times each.
5. *Karate* should be practiced with your loins straight up, lungs wide open, shoulders down and feet firmly on the ground.
6. *Karate kata* should be practiced with its practical use in your mind.
7. *Karate kata* should be practiced for the idea whether it is for physical training or for its practical use.
8. *Karate* should be practiced with intensity as if you are on the battlefield.
9. *Karate* should be practiced properly for your physical strength.
10. *Karate* masters have lived longer because it develops muscle and bone, helps the digestive organs, and improves the circulation of the blood. Therefore, *karate* should be practiced in physical education courses in elementary schools and up.

It must be remembered that *karate* was introduced into school curricula during a build-up of Japan's military. This is evident from numbers 2 and 8. Also implied is that training should begin early to develop skills within the education courses; see number 3 and 4. *Karate*, as it was to be taught in schools, was to teach a practical (useful) course; see numbers 6, 7 and 8. Number two is particularly ironic in that Napoleon, when told of a country (Okinawa) that had no weapons (obviously erroneous information) or military (the king's bodyguard was discounted) expressed his disbelief that such a place could exist. In Itosu's philosophy he mentions the belief of Wellington that "victory [is] attained in [the] schoolyards."

Prior to its introduction into the schools as a way to inculcate a military mind within the children, *karate* was taught one-on-one from teacher to student. With the educational system and military system in mind, students were taught in a group setting, respect for those of higher rank, discipline and practical applications ("for the battlefield") – that is, they were taught as soldiers in boot camp.

The belief of *Shorin Ryu* is that *kata* is the most important part of *karate*. This implies the correct way of executing techniques, and is related to the harmony of mind and body. *Kata*, in addition to physical benefits and practical use when learned correctly, should also be internalized philosophically and psychologically. Also, see the second paragraph following *Goju Ryu*.

This was not the first time martial arts were modified for quick learning for the military. Yang style Tai Ch'i Chuan was created from the original (one-to-one) Chen Style so that it could be taught quickly to soldiers.

Matsubayashi (Shorin) Ryu: Kata is the Essence of Karate

Shorin is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese Shaolin; *Matsubayashi* are the Japanese words for *Shorin*

Following are the four basic principles of *kata* in order of their importance:

1. ***Ichi-Gan*** or eyes: perceptions-sight; concentration – *ma ai*
2. ***Ni-Soku*** or balance: foundation; footwork; posture
3. ***San-Tan(den)*** or spirit: desire to do; win; heart; courage; no fear concept
4. ***Shi-Riki*** or strength: physical power; breath

Matsubayashi Shorin Ryu believes that the *kata* exists externally and is brought to life by the performer. When performing perfectly, one becomes the *kata*, thereby ceasing to exist as an individual ego. *Kata* is perceived as more realistic than *kumite* for the following reasons. You never hold back or control your technique and you never concern yourself with your attacker's strategy; just your attacker's technique of the moment. One should learn many *kata* but perfect one. It would take a lifetime to perfect one, possibly two, *kata* and very few attain this goal. However one must strive for perfection. It is believed one must be at least *Yodan* or above to begin perfection of *kata*, although not in all cases. The person makes the rank; the rank does not make the person.

***Shorei Ryu*: Formal *Kata* Should Be Considered a Manual of Techniques**

According to *Shorei Ryu*, the following are the essential factors to be considered when performing *kata* and are to be expressed with harmony and unity:

- Breathing
- Stances
- Shifting
- Pivoting
- Facing
- Accuracy
- Correct Tensing and Relaxing of the Body Muscles
- Strength of Focus
- Strong Snap and Pullback
- Precise Ending of Movement
- Power
- Speed
- Body Rhythm

According to Robert A. Trias: "Before unity can be realized, certain functions and their interrelationships must operate harmoniously. First must come knowledge of the component elements, the principles governing them, and the means of controlling them. Control of respiration and circulation so that they operate harmoniously must be attained before proper tension and relaxation of the body muscles can be expressed. Without these, there can be no balance; without balance, there can be no continuity or smooth flow of movement. When these objectives are realized, they are expressed by precise movement ending, *kime* (focus), strong snap and pullback, accuracy, economy, form power and speed." Master Trias goes on to state: "Thought during action is an obstacle to harmony and unity. Therefore, faith in the principles of softness (*ju*) and emptiness of mind [*mushin*] must replace anxiety and paralyzing thought."

GOJU RYU: KAISAI

Goju Ryu karate promulgates the study of *kata* for the practice of *budo* and a means of physical conditioning. Further, *Goju Ryu* recognizes the difference between sport *karate* and *budo*. The former uses the individual's own speed and force. *Budo* utilizes the

opponent's speed and power. For competition (sport) one may do *shitei kata*, or *kata* chosen by the board, or *tokui kata*, that is, *kata* chosen by the contestant.

In the *koryu kata* (ancient forms) beginners were taught *kyomengi* or apparent movements of techniques (*uchi uke* was an inside to outside block; *shuto uke* was a knife-hand block). However, these were modifications of real fighting techniques "hidden" in the *kata*. The effort to find these "hidden" techniques is referred to as *kaisai* (originally known as *toki to musubi*). The principle for finding these techniques is called *kaisai no genri*, or the theory of *kaisai* (originally known as *toki to musubi no genri*). When a technique from *kyomengi* is found through the effort of *kaisai*, it is known as *kaisaigi*.

The three main principles of *kaisai no genri* are known as *shuyo san gensoku*. In addition there are *hosoku joko* or supplemental principles. The *shuyo san gensoku* are:

- Don't be deceived by the *Embusen* Rule. The rule of *embusen* (performance line) was created to make *kata* concise. (The starting point of a *kata* is referred to as *kiten*. Originally, *kata* began at this point and ended on or around this point.) Also, the number of steps (*unsoku* or footwork) in any direction was a maximum of three.
- Techniques executed while advancing imply attacking techniques. Those executed while retreating imply defensive or blocking techniques. The real meaning of *kyomengi* when advancing is one of attack even though it seems to be one of defense. Conversely, when *unsoku* is used to retreat it should be considered a defensive technique even though it seems to be one of attack.
- There is only one opponent and s/he is in front of you. As originally conceived, *kata* was a two-person tandem sparring form (*yakusoku kumite*) – the *kumite* of one against one. When *kata* was rearranged to be done alone, it maintained the original concept of one-on-one combat. The reality of street fighting is that you cannot defend against simultaneous attackers. You must defend against one at a time. Consequently, one must "see" the attacker in front of you and interpret the form accordingly. There are rare exceptions for an opponent to the rear, but the majority deals with an opponent to your front.

Kaisai may be discovered through the deductive method (*en-eki-ho*) and the inductive method (*kino-ho*). Deductively, one finds *kaisaigi* from *kyomengi* through logic and analysis by following the rules of *kaisai no genri*. With the inductive method, one seeks a usable technique for a particular fighting situation. In this method, the *kata* is compared to a mathematical formula or equation. The specific situation is similar to a number or value inserted into the formula. In the same manner, one searches for *kaisaigi* by applying a specific fighting situation to *kata*. With either method, one must prove (test) the technique for efficiency in actual combat – does it work? This is done through *kaisai kumite* or two-man tandem *kumite*. This is the converse of the evolution of *kata*; rather than building *kata* from *yakusoku kumite*, we find the meaning of *yakusoku kumite* in the *kata*. Finally, when one can spontaneously and freely use techniques as needed and when needed one has obtained *kobu no jutsu* (the art of attack and defense).

*All terms were coined by Miyagi Chojun.

In Japanese, the phrase *Hyaku Hachi no Bonno*, refers to the 108 evils (defilements) in human nature. Conceptually (or ideologically) these may be overcome or dispelled

through *shugyo*, or austere mental and physical training. Many Buddhist temples are reached by climbing 108 steps. These are related to the *kata Suparinpei (Hyakuhachi ho)*. These steps are sometimes divided into two flights of 54 steps each. These are related to the *kata Gojushihō*. In others, they are divided into three flights of 36 steps. These relate to *Sanchin* and *Sanseiru*. Finally, they may be laid out in six flights of 18 steps each, which is related to the *kata Seipai*. Climbing each step is symbolic of the elimination of one of the 108 evils, each of which retards the progression of self-improvement or attainment of one's full potential. Upon reaching the top, one may attain *satori*, or enlightenment – that is, “9.” It is interesting to note that 108 may be divided by 9, giving the number 12, the highest rank of MYB. Also worthy of note, the Eagle Claw Kung Fu system created by Ngok Fei developed the 108 Locking Hand Techniques.

Shotokan: Kata no Ju Yoso (The Ten Elements of Kata) by Kanazawa Hirokasu

Master Kanazawa believes that the only way to master the true meaning of *karate* is through a thorough understanding of *kata*. This requires practice every day until insight into both the spiritual state of perfect selflessness and the practical application of the techniques is learned and assimilated. To this end, master Kanazawa presents his Ten Elements of *Kata (Kata no Ju Yoso)*, which include the traditional three elements (*Kata no San Yoso*) espoused by Master Funakoshi (indicated with an asterik *).

1. *Yoi no Kisin* is the spirit of getting ready. The mind and will are concentrated and directed toward the opponent. This is preliminary to the execution of the *kata*.
2. *Inyo* (Yin Yang) is the active and passive side of the *kata*. One meaning is to always keep in mind both attack and defense.
3. * *Chikara no Kiyojaku (Ki Yo Zaku)* is the way in which strength is used. This refers to the degree of power used for each movement in relation to the body's position.
4. * *Waza no Kankyu* refers to the speed used for each movement in relation to the body's position.
5. * *Tai no Shinshuku (Karada no Shinshuku [Shinshiku])* refers to the expansion and contraction of the body with each movement in relation to the body's position. This is directly related to *kokyu*, or breathing.
6. *Kokyu* is the method of breathing (breath control) in relation to the posture and movement in *kata*.
7. *Tyakugan* are the aiming points (*kyusho*). When performing *kata* you must keep in mind the purpose of each movement.
8. *Kiai* is the shout used at critical points; literally, energy meeting. This indicates the culmination of *kime*, or focus.
9. *Keitai no Hoji* refers to correct positioning for each technique. This is indicated in both movement and stance.
10. *Zanshin* is remaining on guard after execution of a technique. In *kata*, this is the completion, or *Tome* (back to *Yoi*), until one is remanded to relax (*Enoy*).

These elements must be well understood to obtain the greatest benefit from the practice of *kata*.

Learning *Kata*: The Five Phases (*Isshin Ryu*)

The founder of *Isshin Ryu Karate* (One Heart Style of Empty Hand) was Shimabuku Tatsuo. Master Shimabuku combined what he believed to be the essential *kata* of *Shorin Ryu* and *Goju Ryu*. He first studied with his uncle in *Shuri Te*. Later, he trained formally with Kiyon Chotoku in *Kobayashi Ryu*. He also studied with Miyagi Chojun in *Goju Ryu*, returning to *Kobayashi Ryu* with Motobu Choki. His beginning *kata* was *Seisan* [*Hangetsu*]. *Seiuchin* was the second *kata*, followed by *Naihanchin* [*Tekki*] (*Shodan* only!), *Wansu* [*Enbi/Empi*], *Chinto* [*Gankaku*], *Kusanku* [*Kanku*] (*Dai* only), *Sunsu* and *Sanchin*. *Sunsu* was the creation of Master Shimabuku, who believed he had combined the best of the first six *kata* into one. *Isshin Ryu* teaches that *kata* is learned in five phases:

- *Ara-kezuri* (Beginning) is the first phase. The *kata* is separated into sections in order to make it easier to learn. The form is learned solely for the form; that is, remembering all the moves in the proper sequence. No attempt at *bunkai* or *oyo* is given. One may think of having “mastered” 30% of a *kata* at this point.
- *Naka-kezuri* (Middle) is the second phase. The *kata* is practiced and polished as the *karateka* develops an understanding of the techniques contained within the *kata*. Proper stance, position of the “blocks,” and the correct angles of attack are studied in this phase. This phase is sometimes considered the most difficult in that it can become routine. Ideally, the *karateka* becomes more inquisitive about the form/s s/he is practicing. The movements are presentable but lack timing and focus. This represents 50% of the “mastery.”
- *Hoso-kezuri* (Top) is the third phase. If the first two phases have been studied and assimilated, the *karateka* has developed a desire to strive for ultimate perfection and more knowledge. *Kiai* should be understood in this phase. Another area of development is *chakugan*, or focusing of attention – that is, the intensity of the gaze. This is directly related to *kime*. Also, the *karateka* can now understand his progress. With each additional *kata*, the *karateka* should add more speed and power. Each *kata* has qualities that must be exhibited by the *karateka*. Without the “feeling” inherent in each *kata*, the *kata* becomes a “meaningless jumble of arm and leg movements without purpose or direction.” One no longer has to think about what movement is next. Wilson Kancho referred to this as “being able to perform the *kata* while having a conversion.” This level is 80% of mastery.
- *Shiage* [also: *Shiyagi*] (Having Reached the Top) is the fourth and final phase. Intense training should have now become a habit, and the *karateka* recognizes the result of study is worth the effort. S/he now begins teaching others how to effectively perform the *kata*. The *kata* is complete, both physically and mentally. It is now instinct. “Mastery” is now 100%.
- *Jenzutzi* is a stage beyond “mastery” of a *kata*, and may be thought of as 110% capability.

***Koeikan* Training Hints**

Katachi as the “soul of kata,” has already been mentioned in a previous Newsletter. It is the aura of energy generated by a superbly performed kata, which synthesizes the body, the mind, the emotions and the spirit into the reality of the application in motion. Following are the nine training hints followed by Koeikan practitioners.

1. Kata should be practiced on a regular basis. This leads to practical use of the movements, even out of context. Koeikan practitioners believe it is useless to simply memorize the pattern.
2. Kata should, on occasion, be done in slow motion (like Tai Ch’i). In this way, each movement may be fully realized. One cannot “cheat” on a movement when done slowly; if it is done improperly, one will know and can correct it.
3. The kata should be done one technique at a time, and each technique should be practiced individually a number of times. One should not rush the learning process.
4. A partner should be used in applying the movements in an actual attack. Experimentation should be used for variations that are applicable in actual combat.
5. When learned, the entire kata should be performed against multiple attackers.
6. One should never rush through kata. It should be performed exactly and precisely.
7. Kata that presents the greatest difficulty should be practiced more.
8. Give attention to even the minutest details. (Your hanshi attended a clinic in which the oi zuki (lunge punch) was taught. At the end of the first day, the proper position of the zenkutsu dachi (forward-leaning stance) had been “learned.”)
9. Each kata should be continually practiced, even after new kata are learned. Never consider that you have “know” any form completely.

Kyokushinkai: The Ingredients of Kata

Grandmaster Oyama Masutatsu, the Japanese name of Korean born Choi Young-I, founded *Kyokushinkai*. Oyama studied the Korean art of Tae Kyon before relocating to Japan. Such was Oyama’s ability, he received *Shodan* by his second year in middle school. In Japan, he studied with Funakoshi Gichin, of *Shotokan*, and Yamaguchi Gogen (The Cat), of *Goju Ryu*. By the age of seventeen, he was ranked *Nidan*, and by the age of twenty, he was *Yodan*. A dedicated martial artist, Oyama also attained a 4th Degree Black Belt in *Kodokan Judo*.

1. **Position:** This includes practical and theoretical knowledge of stances (*tachi*) and techniques (*waza*).
2. **Balance:** This is the means of controlling body position (of both self (*jibun*) and opponent (*aite*!)) both stationary and moving.
3. **Co-ordination:** One can perform techniques with controlled balance in any given position.
4. **Form:** All techniques are executed with good position, balance and co-ordination.

5. **Speed:** One increases the rhythm (*choshi*) of performance without loss of form. Rhythm may be defined as movement characterized by the regular occurrence of strong and weak elements.
6. **Power:** The strength of the techniques is increased to their full potential.
7. **Reflex:** When one successfully understands and develops the concepts of position, balance, co-ordination, form, speed and power, s/he will reach a stage (through constant repetition) in which the techniques become natural movement.

Kyokushinkai refers to *karate* in the following manner: *Karate* is a language composed of three levels of literacy. Basic techniques (*kihon*), are comparable to the letters of the alphabet. *Kata* is the equivalent of words and sentences, or learning to speak. Finally *karate* conversations are analogous to *kumite* (sparring). In *Kyokushinkai karate*, *ma-ai* (time and space relationship) is based on three distances: [The first distance of most schools is *chika ma*, or near interval. One can attack or be attacked without s/he or the opponent having to take a step.] The first for *Kyokushinkai* is *so-ou-ma-ai*, or one step (also know as *issoku-ittō no ma*, or *uchi ma*). The second step is *yudo-ma-ai*, or one and a half steps. Only *Kyokushinkai* teaches this. It is a median distance formed by taking an extra half step backwards. You are to utilize this to induce your opponent to step closer and possible fall into a planned trap. The final distance of *Kyokushinkai* is *Gendo-ma-ai* or two steps, also know as *to ma*, or distant interval. This may be utilized to plan the next move.

Satsui o kanzuru

In the Fall Newsletter your *hanshi* wrote of *busai*, or martial awareness. The epitome of that awareness is *satsui o kanzuru*. This is sensitivity to the vibrations of murderous intent. We read of two modern warriors who possessed this sensitivity. The first warrior was Ueshiba Morihei and the second Funakoshi Gichin. There is an actual test in *ninjutsu* in which the candidate is seated in *seiza*. Another individual approaches from the rear and raises a sword with the intent of striking the seated person. To pass the test, one must move from the path of the sword stroke. A literal “pass/fail” test.

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