

Jissen 実戦

The FREE online Practical Martial Arts magazine

Spring 2008



- What is Traditional Karate?
- Are the Pinans "Peaceful"?
- Personal Security
- The Way of Kata
- How to Spar for the Street
- And More!



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EDITORIAL

ISSUE 1 - SPRING 2008

Welcome to the very first edition of Jissen! As many of you will know "Jissen" is Japanese for "actual combat" or "real fighting". This magazine is therefore dedicated to serving all martial artists that approach the traditional martial arts from their original combative perspective. If that sounds like you, then you should enjoy what this publication has to offer!



We'll be bringing you the very best in practical martial arts, no nonsense training methods, self-protection, kata application, physical conditioning, news and more!

Jissen will be published quarterly and is completely free of charge! It exists entirely to facilitate the spread of information between pragmatic martial artists.

Everyone is encouraged to contribute. It does not matter what grade you hold or how well known you are. To contribute to future editions, all you need to do is send us well written articles containing well thought through ideas and information. As well as providing you with quality information from established leaders in this field of study, we also hope to provide a platform for the less well known martial artist who nevertheless has plenty to share (My ego demanded we have "*a big picture of me!*" on the cover of first issue. However, now I've got that out of my system, the next cover is open to all).

This magazine is also free to distribute! If you want to use Jissen as an attraction for your own website, you have our permission to make it available for download. Want to print it off for others? (We've made it very printer friendly). Want to distribute the magazine to your students? That's all totally OK! So long as you're not charging people for it, we are totally happy for you to share this magazine however you see fit with whoever you want! (See details to the right).

It is hoped that Jissen will become the central publication for a strong community of pragmatic traditionalists and will be instrumental in a return to the core values and practises of the traditional arts.

Your thoughts, feedback, contributions and suggestions will all be warmly received! Please never hesitate to contact me at iain@iainabernethy.com. Anyhow, that's enough from me! Enjoy!

I - Abernethy 

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Tradition & Karate

by J.W. Titchen

In this day and age there is a great deal of Karate on offer to potential students. In different countries and different counties/states there are perhaps greater concentrations of particular styles, and some have gained a greater following than others, but they all have a lineage (even if it is through a differently named style) of teachers that can be traced back to a fairly small number of individual teachers in the mid to late C19 on Okinawa.

If we consider the many styles that have come from these individuals – what a heritage they have left us. Is it possible to count all the styles and be sure you do in fact have them all? Then there are styles within styles – still using the same ‘brand name’ but with subtle differences and often their own independent grading systems.

Today there are many pressures on karate teachers that may not have existed for those men in Okinawa so many years ago. An instructor may not be running a club as an income, but he/she still has to bring in enough students to cover the hall rental if there is to be any training at all. There is greater competition for those students with other dojos and other systems. Did the question as to ‘what’ karate is for – self defence, personal development, fitness, flexibility and so forth – vex students and teachers then as much as it does now in our ‘on demand’ and ‘alternative service’ world?

A natural response to this competitive world has been for many instructors to adopt terms to describe the way ‘they’ practise karate as opposed to other styles. Over the years I have seen terms such as ‘practical’, ‘modern’, ‘classical’, ‘sport’, ‘full contact’ and ‘traditional’ used as a means of simplifying core principles and methods and creating distance with competitors. The question I want to raise here is – what *is* traditional karate?

It seems such a simple question. I wonder how many of you immediately pictured a shiny wooden floor and beautiful plain white suits? Tatami mats anyone? Makiwara? A shrine? How many thought of a teacher with just one or two students and how many thought of a nice big class moving as one to the Sensei’s shout? Were the commands



Traditional - but whose tradition?

in Japanese? Did the students spar? Did your mind go to Okinawa, Japan, or the tales of how Karate was in your country when the pioneering instructors introduced it?

I don’t wish to sound glib, but the thing about tradition is that once you’ve done something more than once – it can be classed as tradition. You may want to describe your precise replication of the way your teacher taught you in ‘1970’ as the definitive tradition for your style – but what would you say if someone observing it said “well actually he was quite a modernist and this is how they did it where he came from and how it’s still done there.” Is that just as traditional or more traditional?

What I would like to raise here is that we could say that there is more to traditional karate than physical actions, drills or even kata – there is intent. What was the intent of those men who sought out other teachers and trained and passed on their knowledge? There is no way that you can be Sokon Matsumura, Kokan Oyadomori, Kanryo Higaonna or Chotoku Kyan, you cannot train precisely the way they did or replicate their experiences – but you can aim for the same thing they did. Isn’t that traditional?

Must there be Japanese in a traditional karate class? The Japanese use Japanese because it is their native language. When a Japanese announces the name of a Kata or technique they are thus experiencing something quite different from a non-Japanese speaking occidental doing the same – even if you have a good translation in mind. The use of the Japanese language can lead to confusion over technique (such as translating the word Uke as ‘block’ instead of something more appropriate like ‘receiver’), particularly when discussing items with those practising Chinese or Korean styles. English, on the other hand is a great leveller and promoter of accurate communication between English speaking practitioners of an art. “But it’s traditional to use Japanese!” many might cry. Is it? I don’t think so.

Karate has only been the ‘preserve’ of the Japanese since the second decade of the 20th century – not even 100 years. For the second half of that century it has been practiced by non-Japanese speaking individuals across the world, in fact there are more non Japanese speaking Karateka than native speaking trainees. If we choose to look at the preceding 100 years, from the time period where most of the Kata that Karateka practice were developed, we find that Karate was Okinawan and Chinese, not Japanese. In how many Okinawan dojos were Karateka using the local Okinawan dialect and pronunciation rather than Japanese? These trainees used the language they spoke – they didn’t keep the Chinese names for Kata or techniques, they changed them to their mother tongue. Even the name Karate is fairly modern. How many traditional schools translate this as (and use the Kanji for) the modern ‘Empty hand’ instead of the older ‘China hand’? According to tradition Anko Itosu remodelled and renamed the Chanan kata ‘Pinan’ to make it easier to pronounce. If we wish to follow tradition then we should use our native tongue for Kata names and technique names to ensure an accurate transmission of ideas and knowledge rather than mimicking the Japanese.

Is a Gi a symbol of traditional karate? It is a useful hard wearing garment and students do tend to like uniformity – it ‘gets them in the mood’. It is also convenient for displaying rank – which helps the teacher in mixed ability classes. It is essentially the ‘underwear’ of traditional dress from an age

and culture where people did not have specialist sport/training clothing. The idea was to wear something that came close to everyday dress but allowed you to move and it didn’t matter if it got dirty. We have lost one of those items in moving into the modern world (unless you have very distinct everyday dress). If you put on a tracksuit and sweatshirt you are adhering to the same principles behind the adoption of the Gi.

Now let us consider spiritual teaching. This is a very blurry aspect of martial arts practise. The study of the Karate has, due to its Chinese background, long been linked with the teaching of self-control. Many of the praised mental values of the martial arts are simply facets of the oriental background culture, some of which while uncommon in the West today would have been part and parcel of pre mid-twentieth century English society. The merging of these teachings as part of the Japanese pursuit of Do, ‘way of the empty hand’ rather than ‘China hand fighting system’, is again a relatively modern phenomenon. I do believe in endeavouring to impart through the medium of martial arts training the qualities of humility, respect, self-discipline, and the ability to keep a calm and level mind. The question that springs to my mind is not so much whether their teaching is designed to produce ‘better’ people so much as to produce people less likely to get into fights – the first and most important stage of any real self-defence programme. I do not feel that the teaching of these aspects can be helped at all in any way by using a foreign language. Having taught in schools, dojos, university tutorials and in the military I would say that communication is one of the most important elements of teaching – I cannot see how this can benefit from using Japanese terms instead of appropriate English translations.

What about training equipment? The Makiwara is an interesting training tool. I had one between 1994 – 2004 when I decided I couldn’t be bothered to dig up the 7 foot pole for yet another move. When you think of what was available – it is very clever: it provides resistance – but not so much to damage the joints, provides solo target training and bone/skin conditioning. You can use a Makiwara for more than just punching – but it is limited compared to a bag, or a bytonic bob, or a partner with a good shield or focus mitts. I am certain that if those training tools were widely



From Improvisation

available in the mid to late C19 and of comparable price and quality then they would have been used and recognised as better. The various strength tools that come from China, Okinawa and Japan also show ingenuity – but they are also an example of doing the best you can with the resources available. There are better ways to work now and we would be in keeping with tradition to use them. Would you say that someone isn't traditional because they use focus mitts or punch bags? Would you say that people are not traditional because they don't use Makiwara? It is the development of power, stability and accuracy through striking a target that is traditional – not the target used. Straw tatami or modern mats?

A subject that is quite close to my heart these days is that of armour and physical contact. I accept that in karate it is difficult to safely make contact – that is par for the course and the curse of the percussive element of our art. Some styles discourage paired work as too dangerous, others practice it now but with 'no contact', others still work full contact to limited areas. Some say that in Shotokan sparring is non traditional because

Funakoshi disagreed with it. I'm not aware of evidence that shows his teachers disagreed with it and in this instance a personal preference seems to have started a short lived tradition. If you look at this picture of Okinawan karateka about to do paired work you can see that they are using the best armour they can piece together to enable them to make their paired practise as 'real' as possible. Doesn't the picture of the students in High Gear™ (available from Blauer Tactical Systems) show the same intent? We are lucky that we have much better gear to allow us to use contact safely. For many years I rejected the use of armour because of the limitations on movement that I perceived it to have and the areas of the body still left unprotected, but there is armour available now that protects the majority of the body and allows free movement.

Another element of training that I personally find interesting is the predominance of line work. I trained in a 'traditional' Shotokan school for over a decade and found that this form of training accounted for well over a third of all training time (the other elements were pre-arranged sparring and Kata practice. The parrot-fashion line work that forms so much of modern Karate was a method engineered for the huge University of the early C20 onwards (although it is possible that this method may have first come about when Karate was introduced to Okinawan schools by Anko Itosu in 1910). It is hardly any more traditional as the oft decried Sport Karate championed by Nakayama (in Shotokan).

Kata is a very important part of tradition. Kata is so important that many karate styles make their students learn it for no obvious reason than to have learnt it. Does that interpretation of much of modern kata practise shock you? Are you one of the lucky trainees who spends most of their Kata practise actually applying the moves against a partner? Actually doing something with the kata? When I think of all those anecdotes of the 'master' who knew only one Kata or the person who spent five years learning one Kata, I wonder to myself – how much time did they spend practising it solo and how much time did they spend working it paired? What is more important – the application and intent of the moves or the rehearsal of the moves? When books and videos were hard to come by, solo kata practise as a teaching tool made sense. It makes less sense now because

we can transmit that knowledge in different ways. That is not to say that the lessons and techniques contained in Kata are not still important or useful. My only question is this – shouldn't we always strive to give the student the best method (for them) possible to help them train and remember their drills? Isn't the Bunkai and Oyo ultimately more important than the solo Kata? Wasn't that what it was all about? Isn't that what it's for?

Let us take this train of thought a stage further. If the Kata represent a repertoire of combat principles and techniques, and we drill those techniques and teach those principles, but never actually spend any time training away from the teacher or the class – do we still need the Kata? The Kata isn't going to die out – we are still using all its movements and they are all stored together in books and films. If the solo form is simply a mnemonic, and you are practising the subject of the mnemonic, do you need to learn the mnemonic if you are never going to train alone? What is its use if you are never going to use it? Is the tradition of *how* we remember techniques more important than the techniques themselves? Didn't the techniques come before the Kata? If the movements predate the Kata then isn't the Kata just a learning tool – it may be traditional to do it, but it is equally traditional to use the techniques. By this logic you can still be traditional without doing any Kata at all.

If a Karate style was recognized as having been created in 1890 there are few who would not describe its modern practitioners as 'traditional'. What about if it was created in 1920? 1950? 1980? 2008? There was a precedent of students cross-training and forming their own styles after 10 years of training just as there now is of students merely imitating their teachers and never progressing further. The latter case is unfortunately typical of the more shallow nature of much of modern Karate, the result of the Jitsu (practical fighting) teaching being dropped in favour of sport and moving Zen emphases – the real martial element becoming superficial at best. Although the number of students in Karate has increased the number of serious innovators seems to have remained relatively constant – partly due to the pressure of the 'market brands' and partly due to the fact that few can dedicate enough concentrated time to the furtherance of their art. If we look at three of the foremost figures

in the history of 'modern' karate, Sokon Matsumura, Anko Itosu and Gichin Funakoshi it can be seen that:

All three of them cross trained,

All three of them set up their own schools,

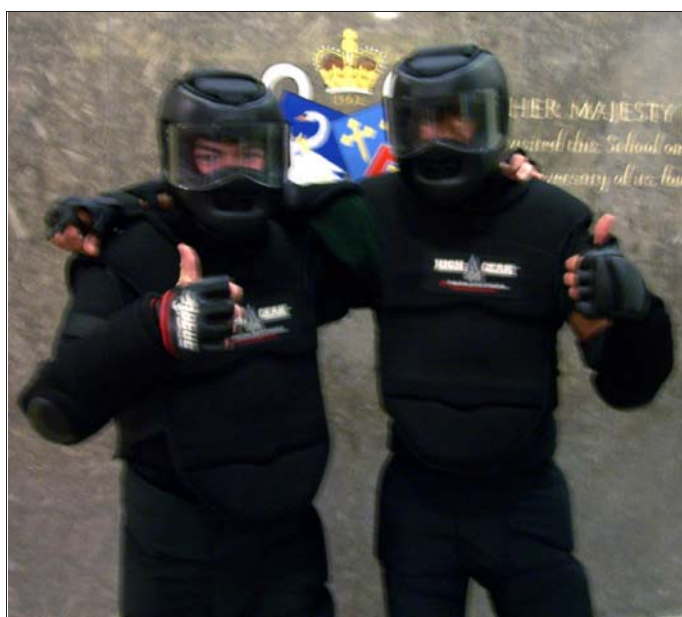
All three of them made alterations to Kata,

All three of them had students who followed in their footsteps and created their own styles,

None of them had what we would recognize as Dan grades awarded in their own styles from masters in their own styles.

It is odd therefore to condemn students who cross-train, study hard and develop their own integrated method of training with its own philosophy, or to claim that they are not 'traditional'. Like their predecessors they are living in the present. A new system of Karate can still be traditional – in fact depending upon the methods and outlook of its instructors it could be more traditional than its 'ancestor'.

As students and teachers we develop. We learn new things and gain new insights. There is so much more information available to us in the realm of sports science and human physiology. So much more available to us on the subject of war, crime and psychology. There are so many good teachers of other martial arts that we can learn from. Why is cross training frowned upon? It is traditional. Cross training can bring new ideas and changes and of course these can lead to changes in kata



To Innovation

and training methods. If you look back to the C19 you can see that happening then. I would not support change for the sake of change, but I would not oppose change as a result of new insights. If there was no change and no growth we would not have such a rich Karate heritage or such diversity today.

Consider the training methods at your own dojo and return once more to the question of the nature of tradition. You may be fortunate enough to work on a nice sprung wooden floor, the club may have many competent dan grades and teachers. The spirit of the club may be high and the uniforms pristine (at the start of each training session anyway). All these things represent elements of particular Karate traditions. But I ask this – what is the *intent* behind your training? Is *that* traditional? Does your teacher seek what *they* sought? Do you?

If you were to walk into one of my normal lessons you would hear no Japanese. You would see no lines of white suits. If you see any solo work then you'll see it put into paired practise move for move. You would see the best body armour I can buy being used and evidence of up to date research in physiology and psychology. You would see plenty of work involving focus mitts and kick shields. You might recognise movements from your kata, but you would see them in action. I will quite happily don a Gi to teach in your dojo, but it's not suitable for mine (not least because body armour doesn't fit over it very well). Through all of this I see myself as a very traditional Karateka: I am trying to provide the best self-protection

teaching and training I can based upon the culture I am operating in, aimed for the culture and time that my students are living in, using all the facilities available to me – and that brings a tremendous peace of mind. That is traditional karate.



Am I still traditional? Me demonstrating the highs and lows of a knee strike in mid air while under the influence of pressure induced adrenaline

*Coach John Titchen teaches Defence Attack & Resolution Tactics to students, education professionals and corporate clients and can be reached via his website www.d-a-r-t.org.uk, e mail jwt.dart@gmail.com. He is also a Personal Defence Readiness™ Coach with Blauer Tactical Systems and is available to teach both self protection and Karate Bunkai seminars. The author's new book, **Heian Flow System - Effective Karate Kata Bunkai**, is available on Amazon and through all good bookshops. This article is an expansion of a piece by the author that first appeared in **Traditional Karate Magazine** in August 2005.*

Jissen 実戦

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HEIAN FLOW SYSTEM: effective karate kata bunkai

As a student the author enjoyed the power and grace of kata but was frustrated by the lack of intelligent explanation available for the use of the techniques. The bunkai that resembled the kata was awkward and implausible while the bunkai that seemed effective looked nothing like the actual movements in the kata. Convinced that the movements must have had some form of combat effectiveness originally, he decided to study, cross train and look out of the box himself to find an answer, an answer that led to the drills in this book.

This book takes the 5 Heian Kata and breaks them down into progressively dynamic training and sparring drills to teach students how to effectively counter the habitual acts of street violence. The drills all initiate from movements that simulate the body's natural primal and protective flinch responses to attacks, and teach students how to close and create distance while moving freely between ballistic and grappling techniques incorporating close range striking, trapping, throwing, unbalancing and locking movements that mirror the forms. Each drill is clearly illustrated with photos and explanatory text. The drills interlink so that students quickly find themselves able to move freely from one Kata to another mid attack and defence to respond to the scenario created by their partner. The book also contains a detailed analysis of technique effectiveness, an outline of the history of the forms and a discussion of the nature of violent crime and its implications for martial arts practice.

This book shows how to change kata from a sterile solo exercise into a dynamic form that belongs at the heart of your training. Whether you are interested in competition fighting or want to learn effective self defence, the drills in this book will improve your understanding of kata, timing, distance and repertoire. Heian Flow System will not only change the way you perceive these 'training' forms, but also the way you approach all kata.

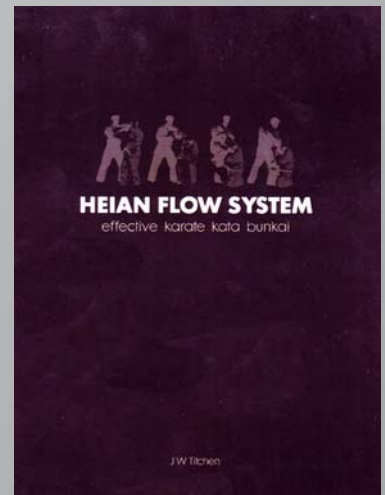
The author has trained in several martial arts and presently holds instructor grades in four separate systems. In addition to martial arts classes he has taught in secondary education, university and the military. His research training as a Doctor of History has always focused his approach to Karate; searching for effective answers to the question of bunkai. He is known for his practical approach to Karate training through his regular column in Traditional Karate Magazine and has taught seminars across the UK and in the USA. In addition to his writing and research he works as a senior officer in the Royal Air Force Voluntary Reserve Training Branch and teaches seminars across the UK between running two dedicated Personal Safety clubs in Buckinghamshire, England

"I recommend the careful study of this work" - Bill Bugar

"Dr. Tichen's current work adds to the body of knowledge of the martial arts and in particular to those who study the Heian Kata" - Rick Clark

"The books that I enjoy are the ones that I feel genuinely add something to the discussion and come at things from previously unexplored angles. This is one of those books." - Iain Abernethy

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"This guy's bunkai (kata application) isn't bulls#it!" - Marc "Animal" McYoung

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"Iain Abernethy brings Karate back into the Real Arena" - Geoff Thompson 6th Dan

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There is nothing “peaceful” about the Pinans!

by Iain Abernethy

In this article I want to challenge some of the commonly held beliefs about the Pinan / Heian series. Although frequently viewed as kata for children or beginners, it is my belief that the Pinan series represent a holistic and frequently brutal combat system. To establish why I believe that to be true, the first thing I want to call into question is the commonly accepted meaning of “Pinan”.

If you were to consult almost every karate book in existence they would tell you that “Pinan” means “peaceful mind”. However, some of my research leads me to conclude that this translation is incorrect.

Pinan (Heian) is written using two characters. The first character “平” is pronounced “ping” in Chinese (Mandarin), “pin” by the Okinawans, and “hei” in Japanese. The character originates from a pictogram denoting plants floating on the top of water and means “flat, level, even; peaceful, clam”. The second character “安” which is pronounced “an” in all the languages mentioned, originates from a pictogram denoting a woman underneath a roof and means “peaceful, tranquil, quiet, content”.

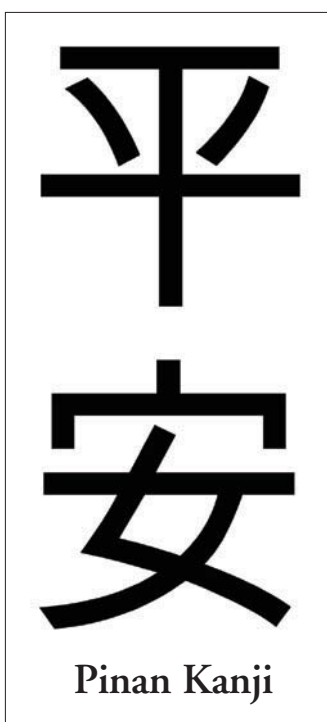
It’s when we combine the characters that things get interesting. In Japanese, the two characters together would be pronounced as “Heian” and would translate as “peace and tranquillity”. However, every karate resource that I have consulted states that “Pinan” (Heian) means “peaceful mind”. A translation of “peaceful” I can understand as it could be taken as a legitimate alternative to the literally correct “peace and tranquillity”; but where does “mind” come into it? There is no character for “mind” in the writing of Pinan / Heian.

In his book *Karate-Do Kyohan*, Gichin Funakoshi – who was a student of Anko Itosu: the founder of

the Pinan kata – says of the Heian kata, “*Having mastered these five forms, one can be confident that he is able to defend himself competently in most situations. The meaning of the name is to be taken in this context*”. This explanation of the name does not make sense with the literal translation of Heian (Pinan). Why would Itosu choose to name his kata series “peace and tranquillity” to reflect their holistic combative nature? There is nothing peaceful or tranquil about defending yourself!

The Funakoshi quote is where I think the mistranslation of “peaceful mind” comes from. The word “mind” is added to reconcile the literal translation and the explanation of the meaning i.e. because these five forms can give you confidence in your ability to defend yourself in most situations, your mind can be peaceful. I feel it’s still a bit of a stretch; however, I could accept that explanation if it weren’t for that fact the characters do not read as “peaceful mind” they read as “peace and tranquillity”. So how are we to make sense of Funakoshi’s explanation of the name?

At the time Itosu created the Pinan series, “karate” was written using the characters for “Chinese” (唐 pronounced “kara” or “to”) and “hand” (手 pronounced “te” or “de”) giving us the readings of “karate” or “tode”. It was when the art spread to Japan that the character for “empty” (空 which can also be pronounced as “kara”) was widely substituted in order to make the art easier to promote in mainland Japan. The Okinawans regarded all things Chinese, to quote Funakoshi, to be “*excellent and fashionable*”. However, this positive view of all things Chinese was not shared on the Japanese mainland at that time. It was for this reason that a subtle name change was felt to be appropriate. It was also at this time that the



kata were given Japanese names by Gichin Funakoshi – the names used in Shotokan – to replace the original Chinese / Okinawan names.

Itosu, as an Okinawan, will have taken pride in the Chinese origins of the art he practised. Itosu was also employed as a scribe by the Okinawan king and was an expert in the Chinese classics. If you consider that when Itosu created the Pinan series, it was before the art had reached mainland Japan; the art was called “Chinese-Hand”; all things Chinese were held in high regard by the Okinawans; that no other kata had a Japanese name; and that Itosu was an expert in Chinese literature; it seems highly improbable that he will have been thinking along Japanese lines when naming the kata series he created and infinitely more likely that he was thinking along Chinese lines.

Now here is the interesting bit: whilst the characters for Pinan / Heian are read as “peace and tranquillity” in Japanese, they mean something different when read in Chinese. The Oxford dictionaries are arguably the ones held in highest regard in the study of language. The Oxford Chinese-English dictionary states that, when combined together, the characters used for writing “Pinan” and “Heian” (平安) mean “safety” or “safe and sound”. Similar translations of “free from danger”, “safe from danger” and “safe from harm” have also been given to me by speakers of Mandarin. These translations all communicate the same sentiment and are in effect interchangeable. To keep things simple we shall settle on “safe from harm” for the purposes of this article.

We have seen that a Chinese reader will not translate the characters as “peace and tranquillity” – as a Japanese reader would – but is instead more likely to read them as “safe from harm” (or one of the alternatives). I believe “safe from harm” to be the reading Itosu intended to be attached to his creations.

Of course, we can’t be 100% sure what meaning Itosu had in mind when naming his kata series. However, to my mind the Chinese reading of “safe from harm” makes much more sense when you consider that art was considered Chinese at that time and that none of the kata had Japanese names. Add to that the fact that Funakoshi tells us the name was chosen to reflect that the fact that the five Pinan kata will enable us to defend ourselves competently in most situations – it is

reasonable to assume that Itosu communicated the reason behind his choice of name to Funakoshi during his instruction – and I feel the case for “safe from harm” is infinitely stronger than the universally accepted, though undeniably incorrect, translation of “peaceful mind” (the characters are not read as “peaceful mind” in any language).

I would expect that Funakoshi himself will have been familiar with the Chinese reading of the characters. As a member of the Shizoku (Okinawan upper class) it was regarded as essential that Funakoshi should receive instruction in the Chinese classics. Funakoshi tells us he received such instruction from both his grandfather and Anko Azato (a friend of Anko Itosu and Funakoshi’s other main karate teacher). Funakoshi also tells us he was encouraged to read the Chinese classics from an early age and that later in life he was employed as teacher of the Chinese classics. I therefore feel confident that Funakoshi will have had an understanding of the Chinese reading of the characters, as well as the Japanese reading.

When Funakoshi took karate to mainland Japan he came up with alternative names for most other kata (Kushanku became Kanku, Naihanchi became Tekki, Seishan became Hangetsu, etc.) in order to help promote the art in Japan. However, there was no real need to come up with a new Japanese name for the Pinan kata as they have the existing reading of “Heian”. It’s also worth remembering that both languages (Chinese and Japanese) will use the same characters to write the name, and the meaning will be interpreted depending upon the language of the reader (i.e. a Chinese or Japanese reader). It is only when translated into English that all ambiguity is removed.

Funakoshi will probably have understood both readings, and although he promoted the Japanese pronunciation, his explanation of the name would seem to be in reference to the Chinese reading. Funakoshi tells us that the name of the kata series should be understood in reference to their holistic combative nature. The Chinese reading fits perfectly with Funakoshi’s explanation, whereas the Japanese reading does not (unless you mistranslate and add in “mind”, and even then it’s a stretch). Indeed, the fact that Funakoshi says “*The meaning of the name is to*

be taken in this context” seems to be an instruction that the reader is to understand the characters in their Chinese context, as opposed to how the Japanese reader would otherwise read those characters.

Personally I’m convinced that “Pinan” should be read as “safe from harm” and that the almost universally accepted translation of “peaceful mind” is incorrect. To be clear, “Heian” most definitely does mean “peace and tranquillity” in Japanese. However, it is my belief that Itosu intended for the Chinese reading of “safe from harm” to be the one attached to his creations. The Pinan series are kata that will keep us “safe from harm” and hence give the practitioner of these forms the confidence that he is *“able to defend himself competently in most situations”*.

I am aware that this view is potentially controversial and to my knowledge I am the only person to who has suggested this alternative theory to the widely accepted “peaceful mind”. However, by suggesting it, I hope that others will look at the evidence for themselves and come to their own conclusions. This reading, and Funakoshi’s explanation of the name, also has a bearing on the notion that the Pinan kata are children’s or beginner’s kata. I agree with Funakoshi that these kata are a holistic self-defence system and I also believe that they represent a pragmatic summary and restructuring of the methods know to Itosu (hence his choice of name). As the title of this piece states, there is nothing peaceful about the Pinan kata!

Another commonly held belief about the Pinan series is that they were created for children when Itosu began teaching karate in Okinawan schools. It’s certainly true that the kata were taught to children (without their applications), but I do not believe they were created for that purpose. It would be too lengthy to discuss the evolution of the Pinan kata here. I’ll reserve that for the book I’m currently working on. However, what I’d now like to do is look at a couple of applications from the Pinan series that will illustrate the kind of combative methods contained within those forms.

The first time I trained with leading realist Geoff Thompson he explained how the jaw line was effectively the body’s off switch and was the number one target for punches. In order to demonstrate this, and so everyone could feel it for themselves, he lined everyone up and then worked his way down the line giving everyone a tap on their jaw. When it came to my turn, Geoff tapped me on the side of the jaw, everything briefly went black, and I staggered back. I noticed the angle of Geoff’s punch and asked if he had personally found that angle to be any more effective than other angles in his hundreds of real fights? He said no and asked me to clench my jaw again. Geoff tapped me on the front of the jaw, everything briefly went black, and I staggered back. I then ask if he had found coming from underneath to be any more or less effective than hitting the jaw from the horizontal. He said it was just as effective and asked me to clench my jaw again. Geoff tapped me on the underside



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

of the jaw, everything briefly went black, and I staggered back. I then look along the line to see everyone looking back at the idiot who keeps asking to be punched (I'm a slow learner!). I then smile at Geoff saying I have no further questions. Geoff smiled back and continued with his teaching. So the first time I train with one of the world's leading realists, one of the key physical skills he taught was hitting the jaw line from various angles. I think this is the first thing that Pinan Shodan teaches (as well as how to get the arm out of the way to allow clear access to the target). I find that the old masters and modern realists are often much closer in their thinking than the old masters and many modern "traditional" karateka.

In **Figures 1 to 3** you can see the first three moves of Pinan Shodan (Heian Nidan). To deliver

an effective uppercut from the outside it is important that the opponent's arm is lifted high enough in order to ensure the arm does not prevent you from driving through the target (**Figure 4**). In the original edition of *Karate-Do Kyohan*, in the section on throws, there is a picture of Funakoshi delivering a variation of this strike to the jaw of Otsuka (founder of Wado-Ryu) prior to the execution of a "turning swallow" throw. The second motion of the kata shows how to hug the arm in so the back hand can cleanly strike the side of the jaw (**Figure 5**). In *Karate-Do Kyohan*, Funakoshi says of this movement "*pull your opponent closer to you with your left hand and deliver a blow to the side with your right*". This application is in line with Funakoshi's guidance for this motion. The final motion pulls the opponent's arm down to show how the tip of the jaw can be struck with a hammer-fist (**Figure 6**).



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15

Notice how this sequence shows the three angles from which the jaw can be struck (underneath, side and front) and how the non-striking arm is used to clear any potential obstructions (one of the key uses of the non-striking hand in kata).

Although most karateka have abandoned the traditional teaching order of the Pinans – Pinan Nidan being commonly taught first in Wado-Ryu and Shito-Ryu and the names being switched in Shotokan (such that Pinan Nidan became Heian Shodan) – there is a good reason to stick to the traditional order as the bunkai progresses in a logical order and teaches the required physical skills in a logical way. In my forthcoming book I'll explain this fully, but for now I'd like to compare the first few motions of Pinan Shodan with the first few motions of Pinan Godan.

The first three moves of Pinan Godan are shown in **Figures 7 to 9**. Those motions are then repeated on the other side before a “soto-uke” (**Figure 10**) is delivered to the front. These motions are commonly thought of as a block and punch to the left, a block and punch to the right, and then a block to the front (the back hands are given no function). One of the mistakes with interpretation is the common misunderstanding that the angles represent the angle of attack. We all know that getting to an angle with the opponent is an important part of combat. When performing a solo kata we don't have a second person to establish the angle for the technique, so we have

to use the centreline or our previous position. The angles in kata tell us the angle we should be in relation our opponent when applying a technique. Aside from the fact it is common sense, there are also some literary references to the fact that the angles in the Pinan kata show us the angle at which we should apply the technique (Kenwa Mabuni – founder of Shito-Ryu and a student of Itosu – argues this point in his book *Karate-Do Nyumon*).

The opponent has grabbed your clothing. Shift at a ninety degree angle to take you away from any potential punch. As you move, you should smash your forearm on the opponent's arm to disrupt their posture (**Figure 11**). This is the application of the "priming motion" for the "block". Smashing your arm into the opponent's forearm will also set them up for a forearm strike to the base of their skull (**Figure 12**). You should then seize your opponent's arm, in order to keep the opponent close and his posture disrupted, and deliver a punch to the side of their jaw (**Figure 13**). Both the forearm strike to the base of the opponent's skull and the punch to the jaw have the potential to knockout the opponent. However, if they are still conscious, the kata advises us to step in and crank the opponent's neck (**Figure 14**). This is obviously a very dangerous technique and great care should be taken when practising it (which could be the reason the motion is performed slowly in the kata?). The kata then show the sequence to the other side. If the opponent is still not finished off, the kata advises us to secure a grip on their clothing, step forward and deliver an elbow strike to their face (**Figure 15**). This is the function of the "soto-uke".

You'll notice how the first three motions of Pinan Shodan simply show three ways to access and strike the jaw-line; which is an important lesson that you would teach a beginner. Conversely, the start of Godan is a flowing combination that demands continuous control over the opponent and as such is more advanced. The Pinan series is structured such that everything is taught in the right order. To fully explain and demonstrate this, we would need to break down every move and show what each one teaches, and that is obviously not possible in an article such as this. However, in my forthcoming book on the Pinan / Heian Series I will be doing just that. For almost

every combative skill required in the civilian environment, the Pinan series presents a structured and logical progression. The Pinan series is structured such that everything is taught in the right order ... providing we stick to the original order!

Although the characters for "Pinan" are read as "peace and tranquillity" in Japanese, they can also be read as "safe from harm" in Chinese. It is much more likely that Itosu had the Chinese reading in mind when naming his creations. This Chinese reading also fits with Funakoshi's explanation of the name, "*Having mastered these five forms, one can be confident that he is able to defend himself competently in most situations. The meaning of the name is to be taken in this context.*" The bunkai examples covered in this article will hopefully also demonstrate that there is nothing "peaceful" or "tranquil" about the Pinan series and they can indeed keep us "safe from harm".

In this article we have questioned the common translation of "Pinan", called into question the modern teaching order, and hopefully begun to establish that, far from being children's kata, the Pinan kata represent a holistic self-defence system. I hope that you've found this article interesting and that they have encouraged you to examine the combative applications of the Pinan / Heian series in greater depth.

Iain Abernethy

Iain Abernethy is the author of five books and over 20 DVDs on the practical use of karate and the combat applications of karate kata. These items have been translated into other languages and Iain teaches many seminars each year throughout Europe and beyond. Iain's website (www.iainabernethy.com) receives thousands of page hits each day and his online newsletters and podcasts are very popular. Iain is currently preparing his sixth book which is on the combative application of the Pinan / Heian kata

Kiai: the fading cry of the martial artist

by Jamie Clubb

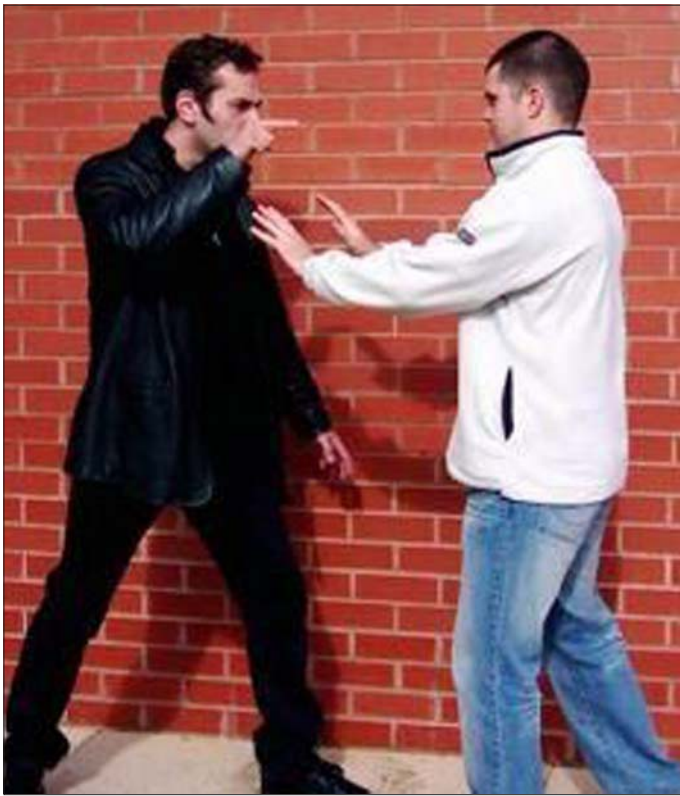
Perhaps one of the most neglected natural martial arts weapon is the voice. It appears to be little more than a ritual in most dojos, dojangs, kwoons or gyms of today. The power shout or “Kiai” in Japanese, “Kyup” in Korean and “Qi He” in Chinese is usually delivered at a relevant part in a traditional drill or to announce the scoring of a point in competition. It has been literally translated into English to mean “Spirit Meeting”, “Energy Attuning” or relating to a physical expression of Chi or Ki energy. In today’s practice of martial arts we see this area of study regulated to a rather redundant position. At best, kiai is used to add vigour to a student’s form. At worst, it is an unconvincing shriek or grunt. When we consider the scope of human expression I believe that the essence of kiai is far more than just a war cry. A modern time requires a more contemporary translation of this very important section martial art training. From my own experiences and from those who have written about and demonstrated effective kiai, I see the practise being defined as “voice with intent.” The power of the human voice is an effective tool that can do a multitude of tasks from releasing inhibition to controlling a wild animal.

Before we look into the various martial applications of the voice let’s compare what certain specialists in kiai have to say about it. The first example that leaps to my mind is the world’s most famous historical samurai, Miyamoto Musashi. He wrote in his “The Book of Five Rings” that there were three kiais: the pre-emptive shout, the in-fight shout and the victory shout. The first scared the opponent or threw him off his guard by causing a sudden rush of adrenaline in his body. This also served as a good way for the shouter to expel any of his own fears or inhibitions as he went in for the kill. The second shout reinforced the physical attacks by giving them a psychological sting. The last, and most debated, shout served as a warning to others.

The modern maestro of self-defence, Geoff Thompson applied this strategy to modern street warfare. This wasn’t always the traditional single syllable shout. Rather his pre-fight kiai was designed to line his opponent up. It came in the form of either aggressive dialogue that would frighten his adversary into a “flight” response or deceptive dialogue - usually a question - that would engage the adversary’s brain for a split second so that Geoff could get his pre-emptive strike in. The in-fight kiai came in the form of aggressive dialogue used for the same reason as Musashi’s war cries were intended. The post-fight or victory kiai was, in most cases, Geoff’s propaganda to anyone else who fancied attacking him or getting revenge on the fallen man’s behalf. He would shout taunts and challenges to those gathered around in a similar manner as a king’s champion in bygone days would do after a coronation. Many people interpret Musashi’s last kiai as a shout for joy. The text is quite vague over its purpose. No doubt shouting did provide some therapeutic release after winning a fight to the death. Nevertheless I see this as a by-product for the real reason behind the victory shout, which seems more logical to be inline with the manner Geoff used.

Using Geoff Thompson for another example of practical kiai application in its rawest form, I refer to an incident he mentions in his books and videos of “Three Second Fighter” and “The Art of Fighting without Fighting.” He tells the story of a man who deterred three would-be attackers by assuming a low Karate stance and using a loud kiai shout. In Geoff’s words, “the guy couldn’t fight sleep, but he had a good kiai.”

Likewise Dr. Masaaki Hatsumi, the 34th Grandmaster of Togakure ryu Ninjutsu, recounts a very similar tale in his book “Ninjutsu: History and Tradition.” Ninjutsu cultivates the art of a spirited shout into a system they call Kiaijutsu. They depict four types of kiai “The Attacking



Shout”, “The Reacting Shout”, “The Victory Sound” and “The Shadow Shout.” All are designed to distract, dissuade or overwhelm the opponent’s mind by sheer force of intention. The story Hatsumi tells gives an example of “The Shadow Shout.” Hatsumi’s sensei told of a huge martial artist from a rival school, Sekiguchi ryu, entering the Togakure ryu dojo and challenging anyone in the school to a match. A small junior student jumped in to accept the challenge. He was older than even the dojo sensei, but had a much lower rank. The invading student prepared to start his bout when, without any formality, the little junior student “leaped onto the hardwood floor with a roaring shout and a thunderous stamping of feet. Though an older man, the student’s wide shoulders, scar-crossed face, and neck with its bulging veins gave him a fierce look.” The Sekiguchi ryu student stumbled backwards and immediately bowed in submission out of sheer fear. In his “Bunkai-Jutsu” book, renowned applier of practical Karate, Iain Abernethy, gave another example of the famous sensei, Matsumura, who also used kiai to defeat an opponent.

My traditional Jujutsu sensei used to apply kiai as an alternative to a strike when you was try to get someone’s balance or apply a lock. We even practiced using the shout in a drill where a student rushed us. The sudden noise can set of

a responsive signal in your opponent’s brain giving you that split second window to act. In a self-defence scenario there is also the added the advantage of attracting further attention. Therefore a kiai can be turned from a defence weapon into an SOS signal. A child struggling from his abductor can alert other adults to his plight by shouting “you’re not my father!”

Returning the use of kiai as a stalling or reflective weapon, I turned my attention to less obvious martial arts connections. Most animal trainers use the power of noise and, in most cases, their own voice to manipulate the actions of animals. My mother is an animal trainer and comes from a long line of animal trainers stretching back over three hundred years. My father became a world renowned trainer of exotic and dangerous wild animals. They have both told me time and again that the voice is by far the most important tool in training animals. It is even more important than food rewards. Attaching kindly words to food rewards is a method of training known as positive reinforcement that makes an animal feel good about performing certain behaviours on command. A powerful assertive voice can be used to reprimand an animal or as a defensive weapon if the animal should attack the trainer or another animal.

Such comparisons can be applied to teaching children; words of encouragement are used by teachers when effort and improvement are displayed and more assertive tones are used if a child is unruly, disruptive or aggressive. My father takes such methods to extremes. He uses what Geoff Thompson would call a negative fence, when he moves backwards to get a lion to perform a fake attack or “roust.” All the way he calls the lion in a commanding tone drawing the animal forward roaring and lashing out with its claws until he stops, always maintaining a distance between him and animal, uses another tone make the animal rear up and then with a relaxed tone, “aaaalright!”, he sends the lion back to his place. In martial arts the negative fence is used to create a vacuum, where an experienced fighter will draw back in order make his opponent come forward and walk into a strike. Kiai comes in the form of submissive or taunting dialogue.

When we see how animals use their own form of kiai to communicate and as part and parcel of their fighting methods, it is not surprising that

sound is such an important tool in animal training. Tibetan Spaniels were especially used in the Buddhist monasteries for their willingness to bark at any person who came near. These tiny dogs could do little harm to anyone, but their high-pitched barking was enough to alert the pacifist monks to the presence of potential intruders. Of course, some people go a stage further and have small dogs with very deep-throated barks. They seem to be Geoff Thompson and Hatsumi's shadow-shouters of the animal world. In the western world the sound of a deep throated aggressive bark reinforced by the actual image of a slaving Alsatian or Doberman is an example of a human using an animal "fence."

By observing the animal kingdom we can learn a lot about how humans operate on a base level. We can learn how to feel another person's intentions through the sounds that they make. Understanding voice patterns, so often described in Geoff Thompson's self-protection videos and books, helps us gauge a person's intent. For example single syllable words, like a dog's low growl, signals that an attack is imminent. This is one way of understanding why some martial artists refer to kiai as "Energy Attuning."

Many animals use sound before their physical strike, be it a hiss, a growl or a snort. They will often use a particular sound to dissuade an opponent from fighting with them. Sometimes it is aggressive, other times submissive. Once they are fighting, they will reinforce their attacks with further noises. When their opponent is submitted in some way, they will use further noises to dissuade any future attempts at fighting. The comparisons with Musashi, Geoff Thompson and Hatsumi's human kiais are obvious.

Kiai is a very natural tool inherent in us all. You have only look at the rituals of primitive tribes of the world to see how the making of noise is used to signify aggressive intent and strike fear into the opponent. On a domestic level I see it in a somewhat diluted form when we struggle to open the lid of a jam jar. This brings us to the line that distinguished what isn't kiai. As natural and in tune with our instincts as kiai should be I don't believe it is ever involuntary. Therefore a sudden cry of shock or pain is not kiai. I don't believe kiai is ever half-hearted either. Iain Abernethy

writes that kiai should be projected through "your voice, actions, thoughts, feelings and eyes." Have a look at a genuine Maori war dance and you will see a good physical example of pre-fight kiai being expressed with full intent.

Understanding kiai can help us manipulate so many situations. As a training aide you can banish inhibition when you go for those final few reps on a weight or to add power to your technique. The noise shouts down your negative feelings and asserts your control over your body. Whichever way you look at it, the sounds of the mouth are a form of communication either to yourself or to others. As martial artists I believe we should all cultivate our own form of Kiaijutsu. So, rather than allowing kiai to become a relic of your art, a dew claw or appendix of the martial anatomy, that only appears when you want to impress the grading panel or a tournament judge, let's apply it to win all our battles, both external and internal. And remember the beauty with kiai is that you can win a battle before anyone has landed a blow. It really is the often praised art of fighting without fighting.

Jamie Clubb

Jamie Clubb is a multi-faceted martial arts instructor who has worked with biggest names in the realistic self-protection industry. He regularly writes for both Martial Arts Illustrated and Combat Magazine along with various other martial arts publications. He has certification to teach self-defence under Geoff Thompson and Mo Teague (World Combat Arts), and is a British Combat Association instructor under Peter Consterdine and Geoff Thompson.

His DVD series, "Cross Training in the Martial Arts", was the fastest selling martial arts instructional series in Summersdale Productions' history. His system of Clubb Chimera Martial Arts is a revolutionary teaching method that reveals every individual has their own unique style, based on intuition and common sense. Jamie can be contacted via jamie@clubbchimera.com website: www.clubbchimera.com



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The Way of Kata

The Principles for Understanding Kata are Largely Unknown – Until Now!

The ancient masters developed kata, or “formal exercises,” as fault-tolerant methods to preserve their unique, combat-proven fighting systems. Unfortunately, they deployed a two-track system of instruction where an ‘outer circle’ of students unknowingly received modified forms with critical details or important principles omitted. Only the select ‘inner circle’ that had gained a master’s trust and respect would be taught okuden waza, the powerful hidden applications of kata.

The theory of deciphering kata applications (kaisai no genri) was once a great mystery revealed only to trusted disciples of the ancient masters in order to protect the secrets of their systems. Even today, while the basic movements of kata are widely known, advanced practical applications and sophisticated techniques frequently remain hidden from the casual observer. The principles and rules for understanding kata are largely unknown.

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The way of kata: part 1

by Kris Wilder & Lawrence Kane

This is the first of several articles exploring the hidden meaning of karate *kata*. This material is an excerpt of various sections from the book *The Way of Kata: A Comprehensive Guide to Deciphering Martial Applications* by Lawrence Kane and Kris Wilder. The purpose of these articles is to unveil some of the methods of analyzing and understanding *kata* applications to make them relevant and meaningful for modern *karateka*—both in self-defense and in tournament conditions.

What is a kata?

Violence has existed in one form or another since the first cave man bashed his neighbor over the head with a rock or a stick. Combat arts created to defend oneself from assault have been around nearly as long. As martial forms evolved into sophisticated fighting systems, almost all Asian styles began to utilize *kata*. A Japanese word meaning “formal exercise,” *kata* contain logical sequences of movements containing practical offensive and defensive techniques that are done in a particular order. The ancient masters embedded the secrets of their unique fighting systems in their *kata*.

While each *kata* is supposed to be performed in exactly the same way every time, there are almost unlimited combat applications or *bunkai* hidden within each movement. Even more applications can be hidden between the movements of a *kata*. Nevertheless, to the uninitiated, *kata* look very much like complicated dancing. Practical applications and sophisticated techniques remain hidden from the casual observer. There are a couple of important reasons why these mechanisms are not readily apparent.

Why are kata so hard to understand?

First, in 1609 when the Japanese conquered Okinawa, the birthplace of karate, they banned the teaching of both armed and unarmed martial arts. Consequently the Okinawans had to conduct their training in great secrecy. Forms



were passed between master and disciple through oral tradition with nothing written down. Much of the training was conducted indoors, at night, or otherwise shielded from prying eyes.

A second important reason for the secrecy of *kata* is found in the ancient custom of *kakidameshi* (dueling), a tradition where *budoka* (martial artists) in Okinawa routinely tested each other's fighting prowess with actual combat. Techniques not only had to be combat-worthy, but they also had to be held pretty close to the vest. It simply would not do for a competitor to know one's secrets before a fight.

Consequently there was often a two-track system of instruction. The outer circle of students learned basic fundamentals; unknowingly receiving modified *kata* where critical details or principles were omitted. It was a significant honor even to achieve this first level of training, as masters turned away all but the most dedicated of followers. Further, the heads of these martial schools (or martial ways) universally expected instant obedience from students, clarifying little and tolerating no questions.

The inner circle that had gained a master's trust and respect, on the other hand, could be taught *okuden waza*, the secret applications of *kata*. Even within this inner circle, the rules and principles for deciphering all of a system's *kata* were frequently taught only to one student, the master's sole successor, rather than to the group as a whole. Often this instruction was withheld

until the master became quite old or very ill, shortly before his death. On occasion the master waited too long to pass along this vital knowledge and it was lost altogether.

In modern times *kata* was spread from Okinawa to the rest of the world, primarily by America GIs and Allied troops who learned karate during the occupation of that country at the end of World War II. Although locally high unemployment drove the many *budo* masters to teach the Westerners as a means to earn a living, most soldiers were not initiated into their inner circles. Further, even when instructors wished to share their secrets, language barriers often inhibited communication.

Later on, as *budo* was opened up to society at large, it was frequently taught to schoolchildren. Many dangerous techniques were hidden from these practitioners simply because they were not mature enough to handle them responsibly. Consequently much of what made it to the outside world was intermediate-level martial arts, devoid of principles and rules necessary to understand and utilize hidden techniques.

What is the theory of deciphering kata?

The work to uncover hidden techniques in *kata* is called *kaisai*. Since it offers guidelines for unlocking the secrets of each *kata*, *kaisai no genri* (the theory of *kaisai*) was once a great mystery revealed only to trusted disciples of the ancient masters in order to protect the secrets of their systems. Using the rules of *kaisai no genri* practitioners can decipher the original intent of *kata* techniques by logically analyzing each specific technique to find their hidden meanings. The 12 rules of *kaisai no genri* are split into the *shuyo san gensoko* (three main or basic rules) and the *hosoku joko* (nine supplementary or advanced rules).

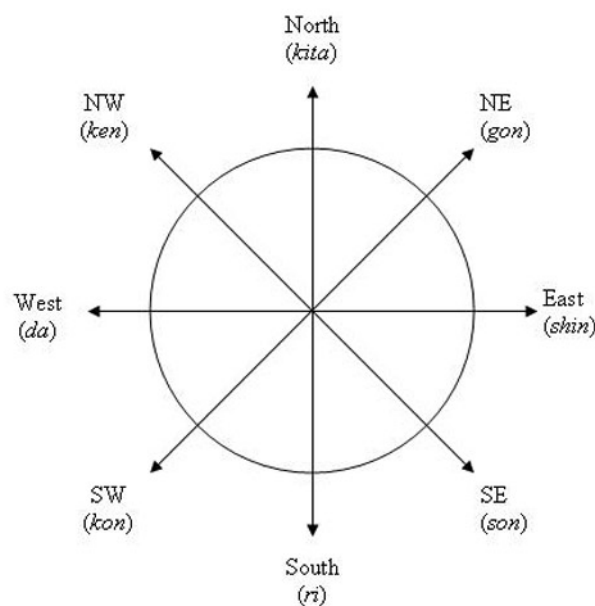
We will briefly describe the first and second rules in this article and then explore more rules and principles for understanding *kata* in subsequent articles. The first rule of *kaisai* is, "Do not be deceived by the enbusen rule."

Rule 1: Don't be deceived by the enbusen rule

"The rule of enbusen was created in order to make kata concise. This was the first rule the ancient masters created for the last stage of kata."

— Seikichi Toguchi

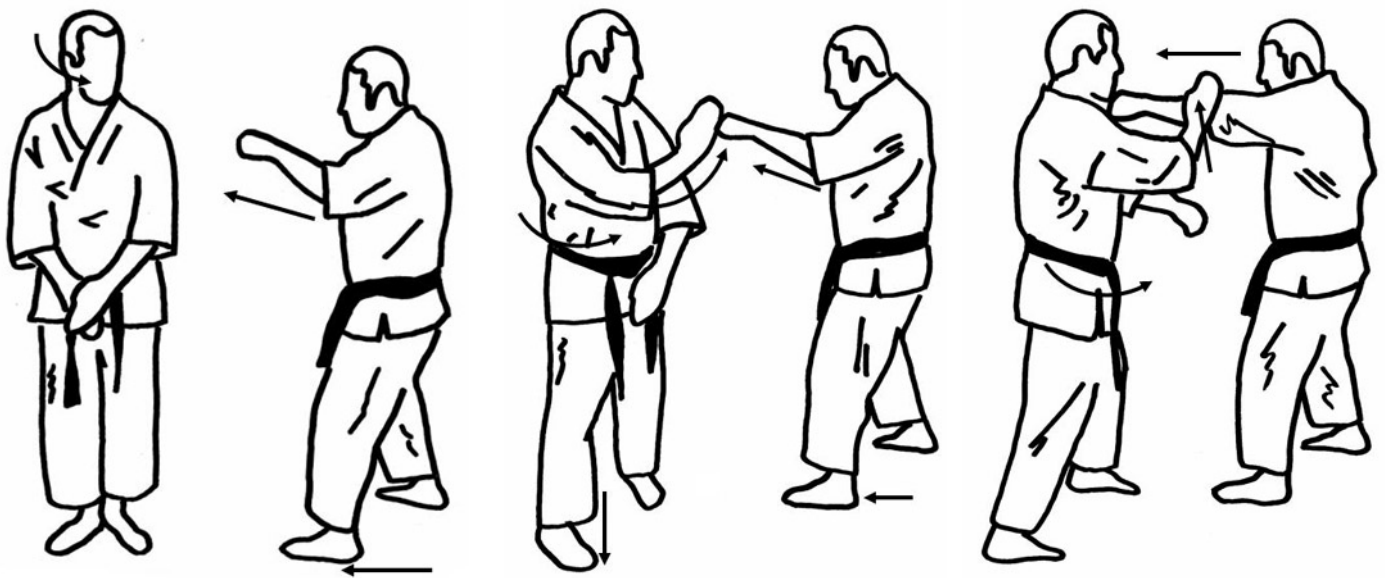
Enbusen literally means "lines for performance" of fighting techniques. *Kata* are choreographed using artificial symmetry to ensure that the practitioner never takes more than three or four steps in any one direction, a process of conserving required practice space. These short movements obviously have nothing to do with real fighting situations. Techniques performed to the right do not necessarily imply an opponent on your right side. Similarly, attacks performed to the left do not necessarily mean that the practitioner is fighting against an enemy on his or her left side.



Enbusen (lines of performance)

For example, at the beginning of *gekisai kata*, an elementary Goju Ryu form, practitioners turn left and head block. While one may occasionally be surprised by an attack, violence tends to escalate so we generally see it coming. Does it seem logical then, that the first movement of a basic *kata* would make an assumption such as responding to an ambush by turning toward the attacker? Perhaps, but more than likely not.

A closer examination of this movement indicates that the turn actually moves the practitioner off of the attacker's line of force. That is the real meaning of this turn. Get off line, shifting your body out of the way, then block (simultaneously of course). That way you are twice as likely not to get hit. If the shift fails, there is still a block. If the block fails, there is still a shift.



Gekisai : begin the kata by looking to the side.

Shift off-line, moving your body away from the attack.

Check/block the opponent's strike.

This redundancy is important for inexperienced new *karateka*. Viewed in that light, this turn obviously has nothing to do with what direction the attack is coming from and everything to do with moving to avoid the opponent's main force. The *enbusen* for this, and every other movement in *kata*, must be analyzed before proper applications can be accurately interpreted. Do not be deceived by the *enbusen* rule.

The second rule of *kaisai* is, "Advancing techniques imply attack, while retreating techniques imply defense."

Rule 2: Advancing techniques imply attack, while retreating techniques imply defense

"If *kata's hyomengi* [apparent movements of fighting techniques] are not for real fights, how then do we find clues of real fighting techniques in it? The second rule [of *kaisai*] gives us the answer." – Seikichi Toguchi

As Rule number 2 states, *kata* technique executed while advancing should be considered an attack, even if it appears to be defensive. Similarly, those techniques executed while retreating should imply defensive or blocking techniques, even if they look like attacks. The first half of the statement, "advancing techniques imply attack," seems fairly obvious, as pretty much everyone understands the

definition of an attack, yet it can be a bit obscure during performance of a *kata*. In *seiyunchin kata*, for example, there are two sections showing forward-moving *gedan uke* (down blocks) performed in *shiko dachi* (sumo or straddle stance). In one case the practitioner's right hand is in chamber (at his or her side) while the left hand executes the downward block. One might consider it somewhat odd to step forward in such a low, immovable stance while blocking downward.

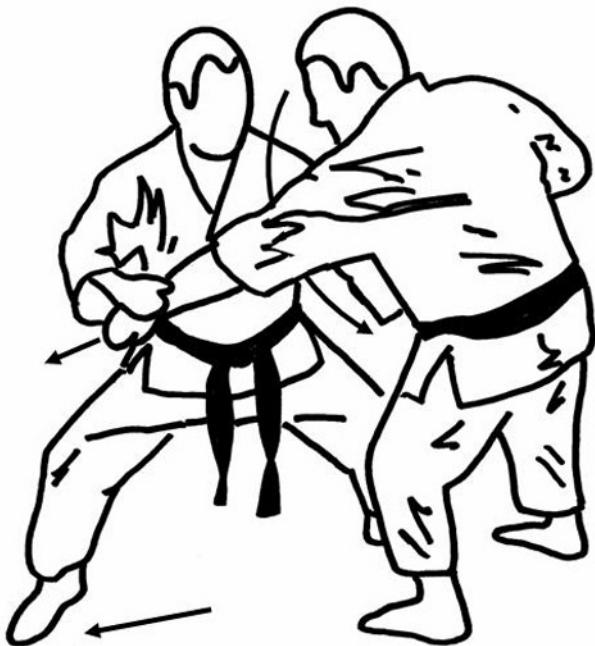
The most commonly attributed application or *bunkai* for this movement would be a simple down block as shown in the figure to the top left of the following page. Using *henka waza* (variation technique), the movement would more than likely be shown retreating rather than advancing as performed in the *kata*. This is because blocking while moving forward is somewhat counterintuitive (later on we'll discuss more about the fallacy of even considering defensive techniques "blocks" at all).

There is nothing inherently wrong with this example. Indeed, it is a viable, if basic, technique. In almost every case there is more than one "correct" interpretation for any movement in a *kata*. While this simple explanation may be acceptable, however, it falls far short of being all it could be.

About the authors: Lawrence Kane is the author of Martial Arts Instruction (2004) and Surviving Armed Assaults (September, 2006). Kris Wilder is the author of Lessons from the Dojo Floor (2003). The two collaborated on The Way of Kata (2005), the book from which this information was summarized. If you'd like to obtain a copy of The Way of Kata book the easiest way is to order it from Amazon.com. Lawrence can be contacted via e-mail at lakane@ix.netcom.com. Kris can be contacted via e-mail at kwilder@quidnunc.net.



*Seiyunchin: basic shiko dachi (sumo stance) with gedan uke (down block).
The defender is on the left*



*Seiyunchin: arm grab, pull/groin strike.
This is an offensive interpretation of
what initially appears to be a defensive
blocking technique. The defender is on
the left, attacker on the right*

A much more powerful interpretation of this movement is necessary to make a streetworthy application you could use in a real fight. After all, if all you do is block a determined opponent will continue to attack until he or she either lands enough solid blows to crush you, or you do something better than basic blocking to stop him or her. Logic dictates, therefore, that the simplest interpretation of this sequence is, at best, sub-optimal.

Where does a more advantageous interpretation come from? Why the second rule of *kaisai*, of course. According to Rule 2, this *kata* movement must reflect an offensive rather than a defensive technique. Using this rule, the *kata* application can become usable in a real life situation. On the bottom left of this page is a more realistic *bunkai* (fighting application), one that could be used in a real fight.

While this is but a single example, the same principle applies to any movement where you advance while performing a *kata*. Important nuance lies in the second half of the statement too, "retreating techniques imply defense." This concept is not quite as simple as it sounds. In actual combat, there is no retreat. A perceived retreat is really a technique executed to control distance.

You may move your body away from an opponent, but only to better your position or control the attacker's movement. An imperative to remember in a street fight is to "always give pressure, give pressure always." Through this commandment, your hands or feet will always be in contact with the enemy. Disengaging cedes momentum to your opponent, allowing him or her to control the fight. Since he who controls the momentum of a fight ultimately wins, that is just not something that *kata* would teach us to do.

Furthermore, there really is no block in traditional martial arts. The word *uke* in Japanese translates most accurately to "receive" than it does to "block." Your defensive technique receives the attack and makes it your own. Once you own the attack, you can do with it what you will. A hard block (defensive technique) has the potential to drop an opponent just as easily as any offensive strike. Defensive techniques are supposed to be fight-stopping movements just as much as offensive techniques clearly are.

On-Ko-Chi-Shin

by Chris Denwood

In traditional karate circles there is an old Japanese proverb that explains we should all aim to examine and take lessons from those masters who have gone before us, and then use our individual experience as a basis to create new knowledge and opinions thereafter. This maxim is summed up using the four kanji of 'On', 'Ko', 'Chi' and 'Shin' to remind us of the importance of not only respecting our past, but also of realising our own unique potential to expand and develop positively towards future growth.



Fig 1: Otoshi Uke. The fundamentals of karate are all important in order to build a strong foundation

Karate's historic roots are in part, shrouded in mystery due original emphasis on oral transmission and the fact that a significant proportion of historical karate evidence in Okinawa was destroyed during the Second World War. Unfortunately, this means that a large part

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On-Ko-Chi-Shin:

Examine that of the past, and create new knowledge, experience and opinion thereafter

of the modern study of the art has to be based around the principle of reverse engineering. That is to use what little information we do have, to work backwards in order to come closer to what may or may not have been originally practiced. Generally speaking, the recent popular interest in kata bunkai is largely based around this idea and also a genuine belief in three historical truths. The first is that karate was originally intended for use as a civilian self-protection system. Secondly, that kata was seen as the most important part of practice and lastly, that the time spent studying these kata spanned many years of intense training. From these particulars we are able to obtain a number of 'sign posts' that will help direct our analysis further towards a common goal.

Now inevitably, we may find that as a result of our analysis, many applications are developed that were never even considered by the founder(s) of the kata themselves. Because of this, some people tend to believe that this process (based heavily on individual opinion) goes in some way against the grain of karate's historical past. In addition, while some also may accept the clear benefits that sound kata analysis provides the practitioner; they still only resort to see it through 'modern' eyes and not from any firm historical or traditional point of view. While this may be true in a number of aspects, I personally find this notion hard to agree with entirely for the simple reasons that (1) the realities of empty handed combat (in essence) haven't altered at all since the conception or early development of karate and (2) even the very first pioneers of Okinawan karate were known to have

practiced and passed on forms that had been handed down through many former generations, such as those kata with historical roots in China.

What I'm trying to say is that even though our modern analysis may fail to reveal an original or historical application for a technique to which the creator of the kata had in mind, it nevertheless displays an adaptable or malleable approach to the art. This not only falls in line with how we should effectively train for self-protection i.e. not to be inherently limited, but it is also (ironic as it may seem) a traditional practice in itself. At the end of the day, karate was born out of a desire to become safe from physical harm and as generations past, that which was deemed useful was retained and that which wasn't, discarded. For that reason, traditional karate to me is simply a fine representation of the natural human ability to adapt or evolve towards the achievement a challenging objective by the simplest possible means. I would presume in some circles this may be called laziness, but really, it merely expresses the innate human efficient adaptation to adversity. If a karate-ka chooses to develop his/her own individual applications through sound bunkai,

then is this not just the same and therefore by definition, just as traditional as the original? In addition, are we not also successfully applying On-Ko-Chi-Shin?

Shuhari is another term used in Japanese martial arts that represents the path taken by a student (with respect to his/her teacher) towards the lifelong individual mastery of an art and seems to fit quite well with idea of On-Ko-Chi-Shin. Each of the three characters define a particular stage of training that a student undergoes along with the teacher/student relationship that accompanies each part. All stages are mutually dependent on each other and therefore, no part is achievable without either the past experience or future aspiration of the others.

The first stage, 'Shu', means 'to protect or obey' and represents the initial/basic training for the karate-ka. During this process the student will attempt to copy the teacher just as a small child would copy their parent. Although their individual physical make-up may differ slightly, a large emphasis on correct or unwavering kihon is still encouraged in order for the student to develop



**Fig 2: A typical modern day long-range karate application.
Not at all practical, however good kihon is still enforced**

'strong roots' and a solid foundation. The more technically correct a student can be during the period of 'shu', proves to be a great asset for future development in the art.

'Ha' means 'to detach or digress' and describes the phase of training after a strong foundation is built and the student begins to break free from the binds of the fundamentals in order to apply the principles learned in ways more akin to their individual interpretation or aspirations. Here, the student starts to become more malleable and uses a questioning attitude to uncover answers that may have been previously 'unclear'.

The rank of shodan is sometimes referred to as the transition between 'Shu' and 'Ha', but in reality, this period is usually a much slower, progressive affair. Some people for instance may not reach this level in their training at all, despite becoming a very senior grade. It's a harsh and unfortunate reality that what you have around your waist has no real relevance when it comes to expressing this type of accumulated experience. In addition, it becomes quite easy to misinterpret the freedom experienced at beginning of 'Ha' to indicate some form of self-mastery. As a result, we see many students completely separating from their association after only a few years or a single Dan (rank) in order to set up schools on their own. Nothing could be further from the truth, it is something that must



Fig 3: Another 'classical' type application – this time using more close-range practical analysis to help make the movement come alive

be resisted, since a strong bond must still always be present between the student and teacher – at all but the most advanced stage.

'Ri' represents the last part of training and means to 'leave or separate'. Again, this stage is widely misinterpreted to mean that the student becomes the expert and therefore no longer requires the teacher. In actual fact it's not that the teacher becomes useless, it's the role of the teacher that changes to more like that of a council or 'detached observer'. The student has managed to absorb everything from the teacher and may even have surpassed him/her in both skill and knowledge. This is a very positive occurrence for both parties because it will mean that the art can constantly strive and flourish in a positive way. Without any students attaining this level, stagnancy of the art will surely set in. At this point in time, the student will most likely be a high ranking teacher in his/her own right and with their experience able to visualise a clear progression for the art that both the student and teacher have made a lifetime commitment to.

Going back to the proverb On-Ko-Chi-Shin, we can easily see relationships within every stage of Shu-Ha-Ri. During the period of 'Shu', teacher and student must both have the greatest respect for the fundamentals that bind the art together and that have remained solid since the art was conceived. In addition, the teacher is 'creating the new' by beginning to proactively shape a new life in the martial ways. It is therefore important for the teacher to be mindful and responsible enough to teach with honesty and integrity.

Once the student has reached the stage of 'Ha', it becomes very critical that he/she maintains a deep respect for kihon, since this is the crucial time that the leash is slackened in order for a more adaptable process to take place. It therefore becomes very easy at this level for a student to lose his way. This is a time for initial experimentation/creation based on the underlying principles so that a glimpse of an individual approach to the art can be seen by both the teacher and student. The teacher at this point should be very open to allow the student to 'walk off the straight and narrow', with a light shining brightly enough so that it becomes easy to find a safe way back.

If a student ever becomes competent enough to reach the level of 'Ri', then the integration

between what is old and what is new can be easily seen. Just as a pond becomes stagnant without a supply of running water; any system will become stale without the flow of new ideas or opinions. From this we can see that what is 'old' and what is 'new' really aren't a million miles apart. After all, a pond is still a pond no matter how much the eco system may have evolved within it. It's crucial to remember that one would simply not survive without the other since they constantly build upon themselves. So for those who believe that true traditional karate is not in any way innovative by nature, then think again.

Every human being gifted with physical life on Earth has the potential to make good use of the precious time they have. Learning from the past is productive because it allows you to move towards your aspirations without making the

same mistakes as those before you may have. Living in the past however is something completely different and in actual fact creates nothing at all. Why would you want to live something that's already been, when you can have the chance to live something that's desperately yearning to breathe.

To properly equate to the historical roots of karate would mean to respect what we have learned already and through this respect, gain aspiration to develop new ideas and methods. From a practical point of view, which karate should really always advocate – you can't get much more traditional than that!

Thanks for taking the time to read this article; I sincerely hope that you found it both useful and worthwhile.



Fig 4, 5, 6 & 7: Using the principles gained in a more pragmatic and free-flowing way in a response against a typical clinch hold

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Chris Denwood 4th Dan is Chief Instructor of the E.S.K.K. With over 20 years experience in martial arts, he is a regular contributor to 'Traditional Karate' and 'Combat' Magazines, gaining very positive reviews. His enthusiastic approach to karate has been driven by a genuine urge to uncover the core principles surrounding the art and his work is fast becoming increasingly popular with men & women of all martial backgrounds.

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Taekwon-do Patterns & Self-Defence

by Stuart Anslow

Contrary to what many are told, I don't believe patterns as a whole were designed as fighting at all, well not what most would consider fighting. To me, patterns are the first instances of self defence, not fighting, not squaring up, those first few seconds when someone grabs your arm (but has darker intentions), thus the heavy emphasis on training them over and over, to make movements instinctive in these instances (hence visualization is essential to correct solo patterns practice). Of course, applications can be used within a fight should the situation occur, but they mainly concern themselves with first instances rather than a fight, where, if all goes well, the fight is actually over before it begins fully and if not, this is where sparring, real sparring, all in sparring, comes into play (Traditional sparring allows all manner of techniques from strikes to throws). Patterns are more akin to one step and

hosinsol than free sparring, especially the competitive form of free sparring practiced in many dojangs.

Pattern applications are not fighting, neither is sparring, fighting is fighting period. Real self defence should last 1 to 5 seconds or less - after that it's a fight! The idea behind patterns is to make that 5 seconds count. Consequently, when 'in fight' so to speak, opportunities can and do present themselves, its up to the student to capitalize on them! Running through patterns over and over with no basis won't help, learning, practicing and testing applications will!

The applications shown below are taken from Joong-Gun tul. It involves just 3 techniques and moves forward by two stance lengths. The first two techniques are commonly known as blocks, with the last referred to as a punch (strike). Over the page we see it as it looks in the actual pattern, during solo practice:





The combination we are using starts with Kaunde Palmok Daebi Makgi (Forearm Guarding Block) in L-Stance (Niunja Sogi), followed by Sonbadak Noollo Makgi (Palm Pressing Block) in Low Stance (Nacho Sogi) and finally with Kyockja Jirugi (Angle Punch) in Closed Stance (Moa Sogi)

In the pattern itself we could practice all this from the previous movement, but as discussed in other sections of the book, in the real world we are more likely to be in a neutral, non-aggressive stance, using a fence etc. When we break down the previous picture into its combative applications (move by move) we see the following:



An opponent starts to become aggressive. Shouting, swearing and posturing aggressively as the student puts up a fence



The situation quickly develops and the aggressor becomes frustrated and moves forward to attack, grabbing the defenders 'fenced' arm to move it out of the way to initiate a strike



The defender quickly steps forward to nullify the attack, performing Kaunde Palmok Daebi Makgi to lock up the attackers arm and off turn him to render any strike ineffective.



The immediate follow up is the next motion in the pattern (the chamber). Used to push the attackers shoulder down and pull on the attackers arm



The actual pattern technique is brought into play, locking the opponents arm behind his back



Keeping hold of the attackers arm, the defender slips round and chokes the opponent out. The opponents arm is still held and pulled across his back

It starts by the defender (the student) being shouted at, then grabbed by the aggressor and finishes with the attacker being choked out! The pictures are slightly off-set in the hope that you can see how the applications flow from one to another. You will notice that there are no actual 'blocks' or 'strikes' at all! Remember, this should all happen in a few seconds or less and performed with speed and with surprise on our side (another important factor)! The book also offers alternative applications to these techniques.

The bottom line is that patterns taught with no real application knowledge in ITF or any other schools have little use but to help make technique better, but with minimal realism due to lack of resistance or simply poor applications. Visualization in solo patterns performance cannot be emphasized enough, but drilling applications is equally important. Do not expect that by simply memorising this combination and then trying it out that it will work immediately against a resisting opponent, because without repeated drilling, with a partner, until its ingrained, it wont!

Knowing The Application Isn't Enough

The master said, "I will not be concerned at men's not knowing me, I will be concerned at my own lack of ability." - Confucius

We can look at training applications in the same way as training a single technique. To get a grasp of a technique, you need to practice it over and over, the more you do it, the better it gets, the same applies to applications. When an instructor teaches a student a side piercing kick, they break it down to teach the basic elements, then it is practiced, only then it can be applied, but even the most technically correct side kick has no value if it can't be used to hit the target, this is where partners come into play, at varying levels of resistance until you are able to shoot off your side kick at full speed and hit your opponent. It's not applied via sparring straight away... the mechanics need to be learnt in order to think less and deliver faster, almost instinctively. So when practicing applications we must learn the mechanics, practice the applications over and over, then apply them to resisting partners at varying levels of resistance. If you know the

application, you no longer have to think about it, so it can be applied quickly without thought when needed, the more you practice the better it becomes!

Applications do need partner work, with varying levels of resistance, then the field needs to be widened in scope, as it is almost impossible to apply an application to a fully resisting partner if they know exactly or even partially what you are going to do. This is where hosinsol comes into play. You may also like to consider 'kata based sparring' or in our case 'pattern based sparring' a term coined by English martial artist Iain Abernethy.

I feel patterns were simply drills of one, two or a few movements, that were meant to be practiced solo and with partners. By combining lots of small drills into a pattern, they were easier to remember and allowed practice when solo, allowing someone to train when not at a school or club or when in a suitable location like a park or at home etc.

Back then, when Taekwon-do was formulated, competition was low or non existent, pads weren't invented and ways of training/fighting safely were not modern like today, thus it was considered a safer environment to train what was considered dangerous moves (i.e. arm breaks, finger jabs etc.) that pertained to these first instances. With the advent of sport, sparring evolved to be safer

and thus fighting (in training) has evolved to be safer as well, and sadly in many schools the only form of sparring practised now is sport based competition sparring, which although highly enjoyable, disallows most of the pattern applications as they are too dangerous because of the target areas (vital points) or had to be struck to an ineffective area (as far as actual combat is concerned). Modern patterns training has evolved to a point where apart from not knowing proper applications or even any real application, the emphasis is again on winning competitions, so placing your block X amount of inches from the floor at X angle, is more important than what that block actually is for.

Properly taught patterns still retain many benefits if trained properly, and both patterns and fighting work hand in hand for combat. Patterns (with visualization) is a valuable resource for self defence, after all, you cannot practise an arm break over and over without going through a multitude of unhappy partners, even in hosinsol you must pull your movement before your partners arm is broken, pattern practice allows the full motion, with follow through. Patterns do not replace partner work, pad work, fitness work, basics, fundamental training, sparring, hosinsol or live opponents, they run concurrent with them, with each overlapping and complimenting the other, forming the whole: what we know as Taekwon-do.

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Mike Liptrot is one of the UK's premier grappling coaches. A full time international judo coach, Mike started training in Judo at the age of six. Thanks to the massive influence of legendary Judoka Tony Macconnell, Mike had a successful competition career, competing in his first International at sixteen years old. Presently the Chief Coach at the Kendal Judo Centre (an official Olympic facility to be used by international players in preparation for the 2012 games), Mike is in charge of all the instruction and coaching from the youngest to the oldest member including recreational players to top class competitors. Mike's teaching is in great demand and he recently produced his first DVD on Judo. Please visit Mike's website for training tips, seminar details and all the latest news.

Personal Security

by Peter Consterdine

I thought it might have some value to move back a pace or two from the physical aspects of physical confrontation. At the end of the day when it comes to having to defend oneself, the number of techniques we should have in the armoury can be reduced to less than the fingers on one hand; even less if we are committed to pre-emption!

So if all we did was train for close quarter engagements, we really wouldn't have to train for long at any one time. Those who train with me know that, in fact, my training is not centred around purely defensive tactics - just the opposite in fact. My weekly martial arts is high level traditional, freestyle and full-contact drills (see 'Training Day Volume 1 and 2' DVDs). The work and delivery of technique has obvious 'spin offs' and can spill over into the CQB box, but I'm not doing it for that.

What I always believe supports the close quarter, pre-emptive work, is the 'soft' issue and that is Personal Security. I always preach that the physical component of self-defence should never be divorced from personal safety issues as ultimately the physical won't save your life as you are likely to be taken by surprise. Pre-emption only works when you are properly prepared for what's about to unfold in front of you.

The principles of being in that prepared state have never changed. To AVOID a threat you have two ways to go: FIGHT or FLIGHT. The fight or flight syndrome as it was called was developed back in the 1930s by a psychologist called Cannon. Either choice should be instinctive and, of course, if you see the threat in enough time, you should always take the opportunity to get away from it. If you can't, you will have to fight, but neither will be an option if you don't see it coming.

Those of you who have read my book *Streetwise* will know that I always present this concept as a pyramid and supporting AVOIDANCE is EVALUATION. It is being able to evaluate whether our environment has turned



threatening. The evaluation stage is where we start to make decisions based on how we believe our environment is turning against us. At this time, if you believe there is a credible threat, then stress and fear will start to play a part and your instincts should move you towards threat avoidance. This means, however, that you have managed your environment to the extent that you have escape options, either in terms of places to go or distance from the threat, which will buy you the necessary escape time.

However, all the above is dependent upon the bottom, supporting, section of the pyramid - AWARENESS. If we walk about on 'autopilot', which 99% of people do 99% of the time, then we are effectively 'looking but not seeing'. Constant awareness is a mental state that's not possible unless it's trained and there simply isn't the space here to discuss how we achieve a constant state of awareness (read the book!). But, very simply, being constantly aware of both our environment, and people within that environment, can make us alert to changes. Awareness is like any technique that we want to become a part of us and to emerge instinctively and, very simply, it needs to be honed through countless practices, so as to make it a permanent state.

I've already mentioned being alert, and whilst alert doesn't form part of the pyramid, it is an

integral part of awareness. Simply being aware is not enough, because we need to know what to be aware of! Would you know when your environment has changed to your disadvantage? Would you know what non-verbal clues to pick up from people? Alertness is a product of education and knowledge about the intricacies of personal safety.

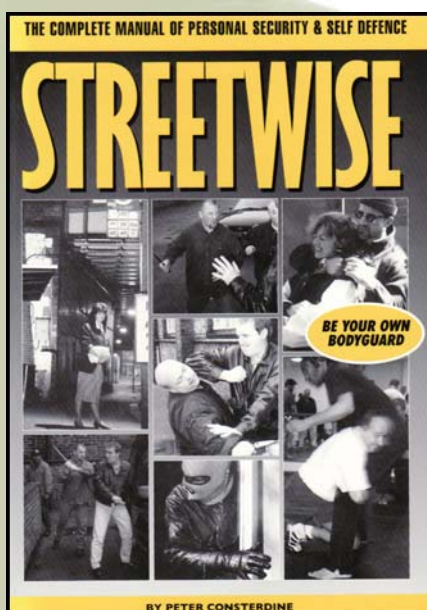
So, working back up the pyramid; by being Aware, we have permanent 'Situational Awareness' and through knowledge and training we should detect threatening changes; these are then Evaluated as either Immediately Threatening, or something which needs watching; preparing us for either Fight or Flight, in other words, avoidance if what we have perceived and evaluated proves to be a threat. So now we're prepared, can face the threat and be ready to overturn their POA (plan of action).

If, for example, it's a potential mugging, it is likely to end there because clearly you can no longer be taken by surprise. If it's a more serious and committed threat you can physically intervene much sooner because you have assessed someone's intent.

So, for me, Close Quarter, physical work, does not happen out of the blue, it's simply the last and, hopefully, small piece of a much larger jigsaw. Turning to face a threat and walking towards it is often very unsettling for the person who is threatening you and they simply lose all initiative. If you believe that having to strike or kick harder is solely the answer to personal safety, then you're some way off the mark. Work hard at understanding these 'soft' issues and concepts and you should, in fact, need to punch less.

Peter Consterdine 8th Dan Karate: from a martial arts career that began in traditional karate, Peter spent over 8 years on the Gt. Britain and England karate teams, fought full contact and was a founder member of the Shukokai Karate Union (SKU). With a specific interest in defensive tactics and practical martial arts, Peter has authored some of the foremost books on Self Defence and Specialist Security. A director of his own security company, Peter has toured the world on consultancy and protective assignments.

Streetwise



This manual is not another 'martial arts in jeans' type self-defence book! Streetwise combines the detailed concepts and procedures from the world of Executive Protection, with the very best of physical self-defence.

Streetwise by Peter Consterdine is the most comprehensive manual covering all aspects of Personal Security and Self-Defence. This is a book for instructors, students, police officers and anyone interested in the vast subject matter.

The book has been broken down into two parts. Part one deals with the very detailed subject of personal security and studies the complex psychology and procedures for awareness training. Importantly, this section looks at the perceptions of crime and all practical procedures to be adopted, in the street, in the home, the vehicle and at work.

Part two deals with the physical aspects of confrontation. From 'conflict resolution' through to striking and kicking combinations, this section leaves no stone unturned in the search for the correct approach to street survival.

www.peterconsterdine.com

The bunkai of basics: part one

by Matthew Miller

It is generally accepted that prior to the adoption of karate into the Okinawan school system, and then into Japan, teaching was much less formal than now, and classes were certainly smaller, consisting generally of a few, specifically selected students.



Large classes, and possibly the influence of military type drilling practices, led to the use of basics as we see them today – ordered rows of students performing a single technique repeatedly to the count of the instructor.

When looking for suitable techniques to perform in this manner, the obvious source was the one used as the primary teaching method up until this point – the kata. So the vast majority of the basic techniques carry with them the application principles embodied in the kata.

Clearly, there are a number of basics which do not originate from the kata. As an example, the reverse roundhouse or hook kick is not present in any traditional kata (to the best of my knowledge), and was introduced late in the development of modern karate. As such, it probably is exactly what it appears to be – a kick, requiring little in the way of analysis.

Those that do originate from the kata, however, have a wide variety of potential applications, and it is these that I will discuss in this article.

The Value of Basics

When considering basics, the question is often asked – do we need them at all? Clearly, they are not required, since prior to the early part of the twentieth century, they did not form a major part of karate training. It is arguable that the use of the makiwara was a form of basics practise, but this is different to the ‘punching and kicking to air’ that constitutes basics today.

There are many things that basics are not. They are not a great way of learning to hit something hard. They do not translate, in most cases, directly into fighting or sparring techniques. They do not (sorry folks) impart mystical powers, supreme serenity or mastery of the martial arts.

What they do, and do well, is to isolate and abstract certain fundamental movements that are important within the martial arts. By removing the target, a great deal of the complexity of the technique is reduced, allowing the practitioner to concentrate upon their own body positioning, alignment and awareness. By providing an absolute ideal for a given technique, the practitioner must raise their body awareness to the point where they can conform to this ideal reliably without external reference.

This is somewhat similar to the practise techniques used in many other sports – golfers practise their swing, either without a ball or on a driving range. As with basics, their target – the hole – is removed, but this allows the technique to be isolated and focussed upon. This translates to improved skill in the actual game.

This is a reasonable argument for practising technique without a partner – but why not just use kata? Here, I feel the major argument is one of quantity. In most cases, a single technique will appear a relatively small number of times in each kata. Kata therefore provides a great method for practising a wide variety of techniques and the transitions between them, but is not ideal for developing the individual technique. This is where

the isolation and focus of basics is ideal.

So, to summarise, basics allow the practitioner to isolate and focus upon a single technique, developing the action in a way that can translate to improved performance in either a fighting or sparring situation. It is important to note, however, that to improve fighting or sparring, you must also fight or spar. Golfers don't just practise their swings, and whilst sprint training will assist a footballer in their game, it is not a substitute for matchplay – basics are thus potentially valuable, in context and as part of an overall training strategy. They are not essential – many great fighters survive perfectly well without them – but they can assist in developing technique.

Why find bunkai for them?

This gives a possible justification for practising basics – without requiring any explanation or application. So why bother with one? Why not simply regard the basics as an exercise in developing body movement and fundamental technique?

Again, there are a number of reasons for this, both from the perspective of the teacher and the student.

Most karate instructors will have been asked “what is this for” on a number of occasions, and many students will perform techniques with more commitment if they have a rational explanation or application for the movement. By providing a series of plausible applications for the movement, the student is motivated to practise it.

This leads to a further benefit, which is that of visualisation. Whilst practising the movement without a target or partner simplifies it, it also reduces its direct applicability. Visualising the application in detail can help remedy this by rehearsing the application mentally if not physically.

A third benefit is that bunkai for basics can provide a smooth introduction to more complex and involved bunkai from kata or sequences of moves. Just as isolating the basic movement in linework has benefits, so isolating the application to the single movement for the purposes of practise will allow this to be focussed on.

By providing multiple applications to each basic movement, the ability to view the principles behind the movement should also be developed.

These multiple applications for each movement will also provide the karate practitioner with tools to decipher kata applications more readily – an area of great interest to many.

Finally, and probably most obviously, providing bunkai for the basics enriches practise. It provides another way to rehearse and develop the skills necessary for fighting. Since each basic movement is relatively simple, the applications are also relatively simple and can be taught and assimilated in a relatively short time. This provides a way to integrate application practise into the traditional class format with a minimum of disruption.

The idea of providing bunkai for basics is in no way original – in fact books, such as Rick Clarks excellent “75 down blocks” have been published just on this subject, and any book on bunkai will necessarily contain applications for the basic movements within their kata sequences. There is, however, one major difference between bunkai sequences taken from kata, and bunkai for basics; in the case of the kata, the bunkai sequence should always finish the opponent. Since each basic technique is only one aspect of these bunkai sequences, it may not in itself be a finishing technique, but rather lead to one.

So, this provides the background to the approach, but until applied to suitable techniques, it remains only theoretical. The next section provides an example of this method used to analyse one of the first karate techniques taught – the head block.

The basic technique

The basic technique is performed in a front stance. The front knee is bent and the foot straight forward, whilst the back leg is straight with the back foot angled out at 45°. The feet are shoulder width apart.

The rear hand is held in a fist, palm upwards, against the hip. The front arm is raised above and in front of the head, with the elbow bent and the fore-arm angled upwards with the wrist in line with it.

When stepping, the back foot moves directly forward whilst the hips and front foot are kept straight forward. This causes the heel of the front foot to progressively rise as it transitions into the back foot. To this point, the hands are maintained as described above.

At the completion of the step, the hips are twisted and the heel dropped so the foot points at 45°. Simultaneously, the rear arm travels until the forearm is almost vertical and across the opposite side of the body, with the palm facing towards the body. The forearm is then rotated outwards as the arm is raised to the completed block position; the opposite arm is withdrawn inside the blocking arm to the hand on hip position.



Head Block 1



Head Block 2

Bunkai

The first application is probably the simplest, and one of the most effective. The upward forearm movement is driven under the chin of the opponent. The strength of the technique is accentuated by the strong step forward and hip twist of the front stance. If performed with sufficient force, this can be a knockout blow. However, even if the blow is mistimed or weak, it can still be used to drive the head back, unbalancing and disorientating the attacker.



Forearm Smash

One of the great virtues of this technique is that it does not require accuracy – the forearm is a large surface and hitting with any part, from the fist to the elbow, will still work.

In its most basic form, this can be used as a pre-emptive strike, but there are a number of variations to this that allow its use against a number of attacks.

The technique is particularly effective against a grab. If the lapel or shoulder is grabbed, then the rear hand is used to secure this grip, and the preparatory movement for the headblock driven into the elbow of the grabbing arm. This bends the arm, pulling the attackers shoulder forward and reducing the possibility of a strike by the opposite hand. The front hand is then driven along the grasping arm and into the chin of the attacker. The strike is again accentuated by the forward step, and also the securing of the attackers arm preventing their moving away from

the blow. The use of the attacker's own grabbing arm as a guide to the target further reduces the need for accuracy in this technique.

Against a wrist grab, the grabbed hand is simply rotated to the hikite position, again drawing the attacker forward. If the grab is with opposite hands – say left to right – then the technique is the same as above, with the defender using the preparatory movement to strike into the elbow. If the grab is with the same hand, the preparatory movement of the block strikes the back of the elbow hyper-extending the arm, prior to the final block movement being driven into the side of the jaw.

In each case, if the step forward is sufficient and the drive of the forearm continued through following contact, then it will be possible to throw the attacker.

Against a double grab – either a choke attempt or as a prelude to a headbutt – the headblock movement is also useful, with some modification. Since the arms of the attacker are across the body, the preparatory movement is not possible, but the arm can be moved up and across the throat, accompanied by a step forward. This will limit the possibility for a headbutt, and drive the opponents head backwards. As a variation of this movement, the blocking hand can be inserted into the attacker's lapel and used as a lever to drive the forearm across the neck. Meanwhile, the rear hand can be used to grasp one of the attacker's hands, peeling the grasp.

There are a number of potential follow-ups to this technique, but if the first headblock is sufficient to break the grasp, then a further step through and headblock, used as a forearm smash, provides a direct use of the step through movement from one headblock to another.

The headblock can also be used against a strike or extended limb – in ways other than its common application against a straight punch. The preparatory movement for the block can be used as a deflection for an incoming strike, followed again by a forearm smash. This is a short distance technique, and can often be used opportunistically. The opponent's limb is felt against the inside of the defender's forearm, and the technique taken at this point, rather than being actively sought out.



Grab 1



Grab 2



Grab 3



Punch 1

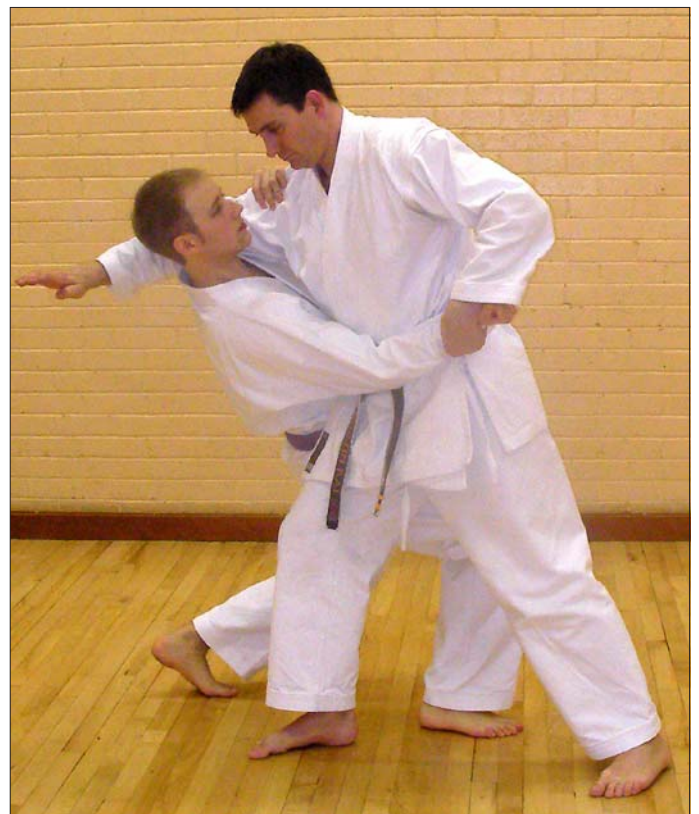


Punch 2

Alternatively, the block can be used as a simultaneous check and strike. The forearm of the block is used against the upper arm of the attacking strike, whilst the fist is rotated into the attacker's jaw. Again, this is a close in technique – the block or check is against the upper arm of the attacker, rather than the wrist.

There are also a number of applications for the headblock that do not use a strike, and may be useful in situations where controlling the opponent is more appropriate than damaging them.

The first is a throw. The step forward of the block is used to step outside and behind the attacker's leg. The attacker's arm is either trapped across the body, or drawn to the hip by the rear hand to a hikite position. The blocking arm is then driven around the neck, the bicep forcing the head backwards, arching the attackers back. The front leg of the stance prevents the attacker stepping back to regain balance, allowing them to be thrown.



Throw

A similar approach is used with the second technique with the defender stepping outside and behind the attacker's leg. In this case, the attackers arm is pushed from the outside across the defenders front shoulder. The blocking arm then travels around the attackers neck, giving a choke between the attackers own arm and the blocking arm. The combination of the trapped arm, choke and overbalance provides a strong controlling position.



This short article presents a small number of applications to the head block, and I hope this provides some insight into the possible uses of this fundamental movement, and the vast depth that can be found in even the simplest karate technique. At the same time, this analysis is far from comprehensive – there are many more applications for this move and I would urge you to explore them!

Bunkai for sequences from kata have become an accepted practise for many karateka – extending his approach to basics as well provides a series of building blocks that can be used to decipher kata, enriches the solo practise of the basics, and provides an enjoyable way to focus upon fundamental movements.

I hope you enjoyed this article – I will be continuing the series, “Bunkai for Basics” soon.

Matthew Miler



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By Matthew Miller

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How to spar for the street: part one

by **Iain Abernethy**

Almost all martial artists include sparring in their training. However, there are many different types of sparring and there is some debate as to what types are most realistic. Indeed, some question if sparring has any relevance to self-protection situations. To my mind, the amount of relevance that sparring has to the street is determined by how that sparring is structured.

In the majority of karate dojos sparring is based on the rules of modern competition. If your aim is to win tournaments, then obviously you need to base your sparring on the nature of competition. There is nothing wrong with competitive sparring in itself. The problem occurs when people believe that such sparring will also prepare them for the street. It doesn't. There are many reasons why competitive sparring and indeed other types of sparring are not relevant to the street. We cover these reasons as we progress through this series of articles.

An ever growing number of clubs are embracing kata-based-sparring. The kata, when correctly understood, are all about close-range civilian combat and include the full range of combative methods. In the past I've written at length about the need to gain live experience of applying the methods of the kata. I coined the term "kata-based-sparring" for this type of training and I'm pleased to say that it is growing in popularity. The kata were designed to record the techniques, principles and strategies of civilian combat and hence kata-based-sparring is very relevant to real situations. However, in this series of articles we will not be discussing how to make sense of kata or how to practise applying their lessons in a live and none compliant way.

Although everything we will be discussing in these articles has relevance to kata-based-sparring, the inclusion of how kata relates to real situations would greatly broaden the scope of this discussion. We will therefore focus

specifically on how to structure sparring so that it has genuine relevance to real situations.

From the onset it is vital that you understand that fighting is what happens when self-protection has gone bad. If you are truly serious about keeping yourself safe on the streets, it's not fighting you should be focusing on, but awareness and avoidance.



The way I break down self-protection for my students is as follows: 95 percent of self-protection is awareness and avoidance skills coupled with a healthy attitude to personal safety. If you are unable to avoid a situation, you need to be able to control the dialogue and distance, strike pre-emptively, and use the opportunity to escape. This ability to control a situation before it becomes a fight makes up 4 percent of self-protection. The remaining 1 percent is the fighting

skills that you fall back on when all else fails. In my experience, it is common for martial artists to overly fixate on fighting (the last 1 percent) and hence they are not effectively addressing the issue of self-protection.

The point I'm making here is that you can be one hell of a fighter and yet still be incapable of keeping yourself safe. If your awareness skills are poor, you'll be taken out before you are even aware there is a threat. You simply won't get the opportunity to use your fighting skills.

Consider that no matter how good a fighter you are, there will be people who are better. The way to keep yourself safe from more skilled fighters is very simple: don't fight them! Avoid the situation entirely, and if you can't, control distance through talking with your hands (keep them between your assailant and yourself), use dialogue and deception to facilitate a first strike and use the moment of confusion to flee. In this way it can be possible to protect yourself from people you may not be able to out fight. However, if all that fails then you have no option but to fight.

As we've established, in this series of articles we are looking at training for that last 1 percent should all your other skills fail; it is therefore not appropriate to discuss in detail awareness and pre-emption. The reason I mention them is that it is vitally important that the sparring methods we are going to examine are viewed from the correct perspective. Remember, fighting skills aren't the key to self-protection: *fighting is what happens when self-protection goes bad.*

Having established where sparring and fighting fit into the grand scheme of things, the next thing we need to briefly cover is the nature of the environment we are training for. In these articles we are talking about the street and therefore the nature of the street will determine how we should spar to prepare for it. If we look at the sparring used in the various combat sports, it is immediately apparent that many differing methods of sparring exist. They vary because what is needed to win varies. What is needed to win is determined by the rules, and hence people sometimes assume that seeing as there are no rules in the street, getting rid of the rules will make sparring like a street situation. However, it's not that straight forward. Aside from the lack of rules, there are many other things that make a street situation what it is.

A detailed discussion on the nature of street situations is beyond the scope of this look at sparring; however, here are a few key points that we need to consider:

- *The vast majority of street situations take place at close-range*
- *Real fights often involve multiple assailants and weapons*
- *Real fights are fast, frantic and chaotic*
- *Real fights do not resemble a skilled exchange between two martial artists*
- *In a real situation, you need to keep things really simple*
- *The fight may begin without warning (awareness being the key to ensuring it doesn't)*
- *Deceptive or aggressive dialogue will frequently precede any physical exchange*
- *Real fights are terrifying and wholly unpleasant (assuming you're not a psychopath!)*

To make our sparring relevant to real situations, we need to ensure our sparring considers all the things listed above. When they are factored in, sparring can be quite a bit different from what is seen in most dojos. This does not mean other types of sparring have no value: far from it! As a martial artist, it's very likely that you will train for a variety of reasons and have an interest in many aspects of martial training. It is therefore entirely possible that you'll spar in more than one way: different types of sparring for different aspects of your training.

You may spar in one way for a straight fight with other martial artists, and another way for the street. Some argue that by sparring in more than one way you may inadvertently use the wrong method at the wrong time. I can follow this logic. However, it's my view that the dojo and street environments are so radically different that it is unlikely you'll mix up the various methods so long as you keep the various types of sparring totally separate and are 100% clear on what you are training for at any given time.

Having covered some of the key issues, it's now time to look at the first way to make your sparring relevant to the street.

Important Note: All sparring is potentially dangerous and must always be closely

supervised by a suitably qualified and experienced person. If you don't have such supervision, don't try out the methods we're going to discuss!

Be aware of the flaws of any given sparring exercise

No matter how realistic sparring is, it is never real. We are always making compromises in the name of safety. If we didn't, every training session would result in the majority of students going to the hospital! We need to introduce necessary flaws into training in order to ensure we can train safely. Without these flaws, training would be just as dangerous as the street; which kind of defeats the whole point of training. It won't make our lives any safer; it will just expose us to many more life-threatening encounters!

If you do any of the following you've introduced a flaw into your sparring: train on mats, wear sparring gloves, use a gum shield, limit contact levels, omit techniques such as biting, eye gouges and groin attacks, allow you or your partner to end the fight by tapping out or submitting, etc. Changes such as these will make training safer and more productive, but they also move it further away from a real fight. The trick to ensuring this drift from reality is minimized is to be very aware of the flaws and their effects.

By way of example, let's say you and a partner were about to engage in heavy contact sparring. In order to maximize safety, one precaution you may take is to wear boxing gloves. Before you start sparring, you should think about the flaws that donning the gloves has introduced:



- *Your fists are now much bigger than they would be in reality and hence your hit rate may increase*
- *You can hide behind the gloves to protect yourself*
- *You can't grab or effectively set up a datum and neither can your partner (by datum I mean using one hand to locate and control the opponent's head so the other hand can strike more accurately during the chaos of combat)*
- *The blows have less of an effect than they would in reality*
- *The nature of the gloves means that open-hand strikes cannot be delivered*
- *Grappling techniques are severely limited*

By being aware of the flaws introduced by any safety considerations, you ensure that the reality of the street stays at the forefront of your mind. Sparring is a means to an end; it is not the end in itself. Being aware of the flaws in sparring also helps keep that distinction clear.

It's not just safety that introduces flaws. You may also purposefully introduce some limitations to enhance certain skills. As an example, when sparring you may wish to isolate striking from a clinch. You limit the sparring to striking from a clinch, and therefore throws and takedowns would not be allowed. It's my observation that as soon as you limit what techniques are allowed – which can be a very useful training method – people forget about the methods that have been omitted and hence leave themselves vulnerable to them. So even if you've agreed not to permit throws when working on clinch striking, you should still ensure you don't get into bad habits by being aware of the flaw you've introduced.

Start with deceptive or aggressive dialogue; not formal etiquette

Competitive and dojo sparring often begins with a formal show of respect. Street fights don't start that way. They are frequently preceded by deceptive or aggressive dialogue. To be adequately prepared for the street, you need to have exposure to such talk so that it does not faze you.

Deceptive dialogue occurs when the assailant closes the gap between you by asking for directions, the time, a light for a cigarette, etc. He will appear friendly and unthreatening until

its time to become physical. Awareness, controlling distance and trusting your instincts are the key to dealing with this.

Aggressive dialogue is when the assailant will scream, shout and swear in an attempt to intimidate you.

The aim of this aggressive behaviour is to get themselves pumped up enough to physically attack, and to hopefully overload you with fear so that you freeze and are unable to effectively deal with the situation. If you're not used to such naked aggression, this method will probably work and render all physical skills you have redundant.

When sparring for the street, begin the fight with one person (or more) taking on the role of the bad guy. They should close the gap with either aggressive dialogue, or deceptive dialogue that will switch to aggressive. It's important to make

the dialogue and associated body language realistic. Push, shove, splay your arms, shout and swear. Although it's training, as the bad guy you should attempt to intimidate your partner in the same way a real assailant would.

The other person should attempt to control distance and talk the situation down. Sometimes the bad guy may decide to back away without the situation getting physical. On other occasions, either party can begin the sparring when they feel it is appropriate.

In this first article we've introduced some of the issues surrounding real situations and sparring. We've also covered two of the key ways to ensure your sparring has relevance to the street. In part 2 we'll cover four more keys to making your sparring realistic. That's it for this issue! Thanks for taking the time to read this article.



Aggressive dialogue is when the assailant will scream, shout and swear in an attempt to intimidate you

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