

# Jissen 実戦

The FREE online Practical Martial Arts magazine

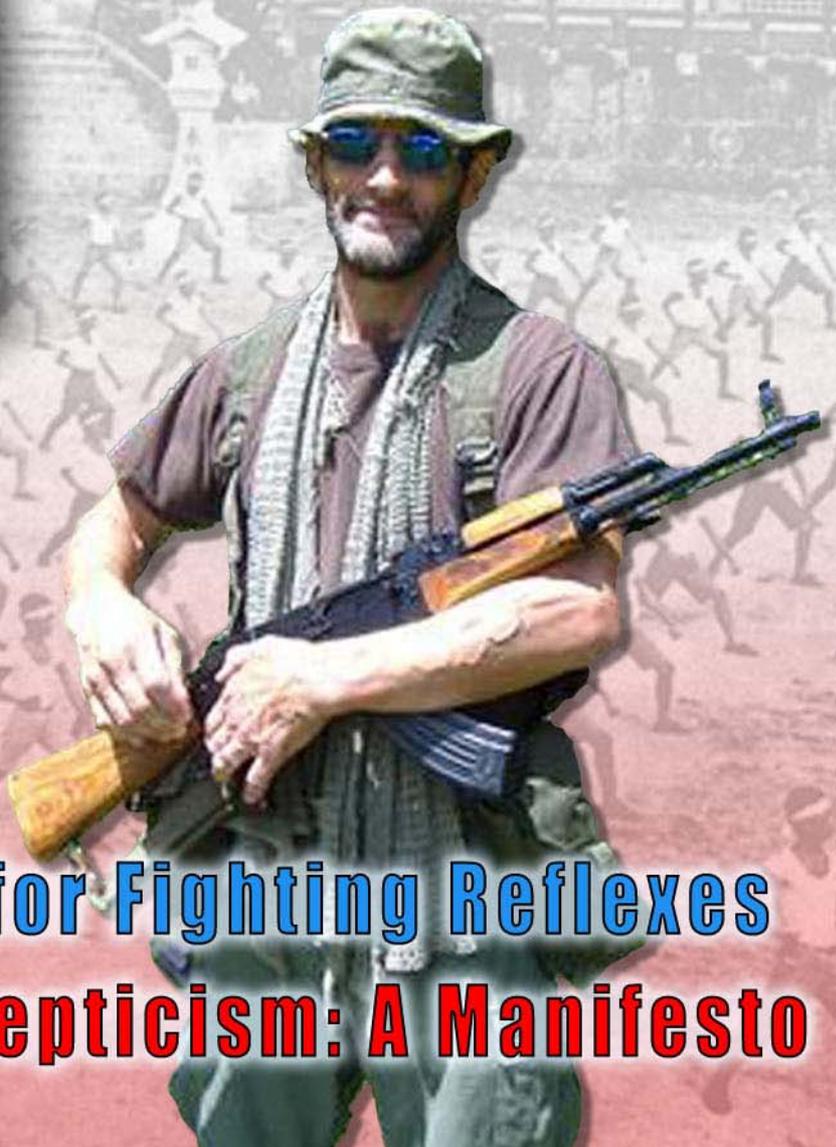
Autumn 2008



Adaptable Karate

How to Survive  
a Knife Assault

Power & Impact



Kata Training for Fighting Reflexes  
Martial Arts Scepticism: A Manifesto

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**W**elcome to the third edition of Jissen! I'd like to start by thanking all of our readers for their enthusiastic feedback and relentless promotion of this publication. The amount of downloads has been fantastic! As you know, this magazine is put together solely with the pragmatically orientated martial artist in mind. It is also our intention to remain 100% focused on articles



which contain genuinely useful information and hence we won't be publishing event reports, personality pieces, etc. This magazine is also firmly committed to being completely free of charge and free to distribute. It is in this way that we intend to remain a wide reaching publication that is of genuine benefit to the reader.

One of the main benefits of using the internet to distribute Jissen is that our costs are much lower than the old print, distribute and sell model. Aside from ensuring the magazine will always be free for the reader (and hence also ensuring a much greater number of readers), another advantage is that we have complete independence as to what we choose to include as we are not bound by what is considered "popular" by distributors, store owners and newsagents. I understand the business need to ensure a magazine ticks the boxes with all those who contribute to its success. However, distributors, store owners and newsagents are not martial artists and we wish to be totally focused on what the martial artist wants. When I look at some of the articles in this issue and previous issues, there is little doubt that some would be deemed "too controversial" or "not mainstream enough" for some of our printed counterparts throughout the world (indeed some of our writers have had articles rejected by our printed counterparts on those grounds!).

It's always been my view that "controversy" is closely related to thought-provoking and that the "mainstream" is not where you'll find the cutting edge. Here at Jissen we know that serious martial artists want to read well written articles on an array of differing viewpoints. This publication has no external pressures so you can be sure of always finding the thought-provoking and the cutting edge within these pages. The paradox is that by refusing to be shackled by notions of what is "popular" and "safe", it's a safe bet that we will remain very popular! You've made it clear what you want and we are totally committed to bringing it to you. Enjoy issue 3 and we'll be back with more soon!

*I - Abernethy*



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# Martial Arts Scepticism: A Manifesto

by Jamie Clubb

*"The fool wonders, the wise man asks."*

- Benjamin Disraeli

Confucianism, Buddhism, Christianity, Taoism and other religious and philosophical ideas have been melded with the practice of martial arts in modern times. However, I would like to suggest that we apply another so-called philosophy. It has some very ancient and respectable roots in the philosophers of ancient Greece and its process is the very definition of objective philosophy. What I am describing is something I believe underlies the thinking of some of the greatest shakers in martial arts history. It is the process of questioning and testing. The philosophy is unique in the respect that it owes no allegiance to any culture and it doesn't subscribe to the beliefs of a single or group of individuals. In fact, this particular philosophy prompts debate within its advocates and especially within the individual. The philosophy I am describing is scepticism and this article makes the case for its inclusion in the teaching of martial arts.

Modern scepticism is generally recognised as a science-based movement that has come to popular attention through its opposition to virtually anything or anyone that has not provided sufficient proof or evidence to support its or their claims. However, it is important to note that it is not just scientists and those with a penchant for science that support scepticism. At the other end of the academic world serious historians have also been attracted to scepticism. At the heart of scepticism is an approach known as critical thinking. This means looking at a subject objectively with a view to testing unproven claims. It is easy for those of us who see the value in imagination and positivity to mistake scepticism for cynicism. Cynicism just means thinking the worst of everything. The cynic has already made his mind up about something and does not seek evidence. In this respect the cynic is just as blinkered as the gullible person. Scepticism is

about questioning, seeking answers and making progress. The sceptic never deals in absolutes. Even so-called facts are accepted as temporary conclusions that are up for reasoned review. To make analogy in self-defence coaching terms, cynicism is as far removed from scepticism as paranoia is from awareness.

Scepticism took the western world out of the dark ages and just as new waves of mysticism wash new fads up onto our hi-tech shores, a steady yet accelerating movement in critical thinking is there to examine, test and debunk where necessary. The world of martial arts presents us with a tangled mixture of claims and ideas that are ripe for sceptical investigation. Leaders and founders of martial arts often become venerated to the point where they are not questioned no matter how far they stray from their original purpose. Concepts and principles then develop into dogma and rituals. Within these subcultures terminology is developed, which further serves to separate the martial artists from the rest of society, along with strict hierarchies and methods used to tie students to their clubs. In extreme examples we have seen full blown martial arts cults develop whereas many others take on more subtle resemblances. Some clubs are simply run by the naïve and the deluded whereas others are run by conmen and charlatans. Martial arts histories become distorted, folk tales, myths and complete fiction become accepted as facts.

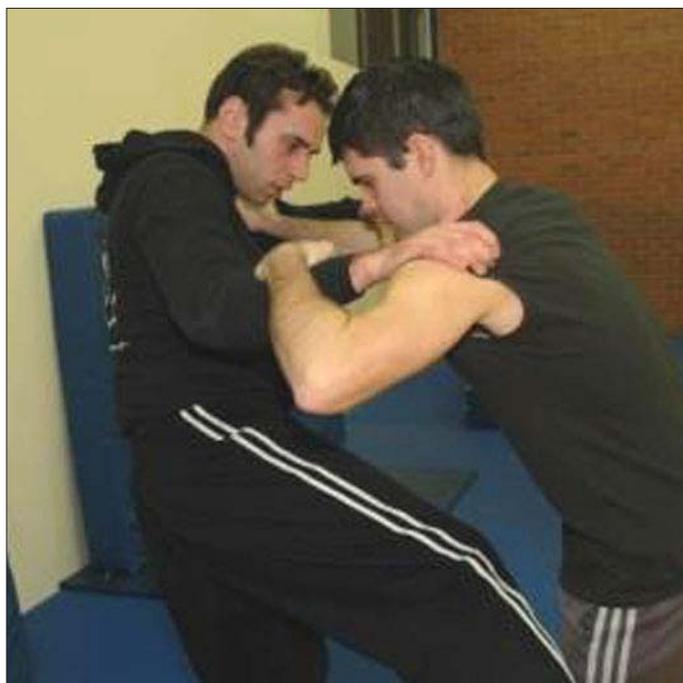
In his book for Marshall Cavendish, "The Way to the Martial Arts", the respected martial arts journalist Peter Lewis describes the evolution of martial arts in a positive light: "Slowly and gradually, mostly through trial and error, fighting became more of an exact science rather than a pure animal instinct". If only this were true of today. The modern world of martial arts has often allied itself with pseudoscience, pseudohistory, superstition, paranoia, New Age beliefs, religious dogma, fakir tricks, outright fraud and outright lies

that have all been passed onto naïve students as facts.

Pseudoscience comes up a lot in martial arts and in different ways. Some pseudoscience is fairly straightforward. This is when claims are made by martial artists that fly in the face of the accepted laws of science. Often the use of the chi (qi) or ki energy falls into this category. The exact definition and western translation of this type of energy is still a matter of cultural and linguistic debate. The cultural part is a separate issue, it is when there are claims being made that it has a direct and measurable effect on physical objects that the sceptic needs to firmly step into the discussion and ask questions and demand empirical evidence.

However, there is another type of pseudoscience in the martial arts world that is less easy to confront. Science is sometimes used as a marketing tool. There are plenty of clubs being taught by coaches who have qualifications in sports science, but it doesn't necessarily mean that their approach to martial arts is logical and reasoned. Likewise context means everything when a technique is being explained in scientific terms. For example, you can explain the effectiveness of virtually any technique that makes direct contact with the human body, but its efficiency is another matter. It is an old logical dictum to recognise that just because something is not impossible it doesn't mean it isn't improbable. Furthermore, scientific terminology and jargon, something we have seen increase in martial arts ever since the culture married the business motivational movement, does replace scientific evidence or methodology.

Pseudohistory in martial arts has helped to give us the numerous prejudices, red herrings and cult-like features that plague the commercial practice of martial arts the world over. Personally I love myths, legends and fables. In the correct context they are inspirational forms of entertainment that can educate and motivate. There is nothing quite like watching a film or reading a story about a fictional hero overcoming adversity when you are feeling down or ill. An allegorical tale, as opposed to a factual account of real life events, can often be a very useful tool for prompting people to think deeply about certain subjects and issues rather than responding a superficial way. The essence of good stories



helps colour our language with metaphors and analogies, but we need mature reasoning to separate the literal from the figurative. Most of all, however, we need simple honesty and a desire to question what seems highly improbable. Pseudohistory is responsible for the over importance placed on martial arts lineages and the propagation of incredible unverifiable claims made about martial arts founders. Even the purposes of martial arts have been distorted through the fictionalization or misinterpretation of history.

Another derivative from pseudohistory is a category loosely termed as “conspiracy theory”. This type of thinking outside the martial arts world has seen some preposterous alternative ideas being presented by dramatic and tragic events in history. Because it is a fact that the practice of martial arts in many countries and cultures were overtly suppressed and therefore covertly practiced, some martial arts teachers today like to claim that certain “deadly moves” are banned and hidden. This can vary from secret techniques being locked away inside the art to the belief that all pressure points are banned from Mixed Martial Arts competition.

However, it is not just misguided and the manipulative mystics of the martial arts world that are the focus of scepticism. The so-called “reality” world of martial arts, an area one would consider was the natural home of martial arts sceptics, are also responsible for making outrageous claims and, furthermore, fuelling misinformation. Many

people involved in the “reality-based self-defence” world have fallen into the same trap as the “traditionalists” and now exhibit similar features. Superstition is replaced by paranoia, mystical or flowery fighting techniques are replaced by a type of “ultra-reality” combative pornography, where sadism seems to eclipse efficiency.

I propose that martial artists should be sceptics and should encourage scepticism. We may not necessarily be scientists, but we should apply a reasoned and logical approach to their training and teaching. The highest regard we can pay to any great person in marital arts history is not to worship them as infallible sources of wisdom, but to carry on the spirit of innovation that made them great in the first place. They stood out from other martial artists because they challenged the order of the day. We must always be sceptical of coaches who discourage criticism or do not promote truly individual research. The job of the coach is to provide students with experiences where they can draw their own conclusions. By all means the coach should use his own experiences as a valid reference point, but one

thing that should be acknowledged is that martial arts is very much an individualized activity and therefore the methods applied by the coach in a certain experience aren't necessarily the best methods for an individual student to apply.

At this stage it is worth pointing out that I do not advocate a “criticism for criticism's sake” attitude. There are certain robust areas we can meet a consensus on, certain martial arts or self-defence facts or laws if you like. They are constantly up for review, of course, but proving them should not be too difficult to do through case studies and in practical activity and providing the correct context is applied.

Despite the “party pooper” reputation it receives, I argue that Scepticism is a positive approach to martial arts training. No one is above criticism and by adopting a “find the flaw” attitude when you train you will quickly learn not to rest on your training laurels. It also means that you and your students are being as honest about your training as possible. This is what good progress is all about and this is what has been behind the continued intelligent development of the martial arts.

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# Differing Visions:

## Why every martial arts class should (and can) contain practical self-defence in its curriculum

by Eric Parsons

Setting goals is important. It is important in everyday life, and it is important in the martial arts. There are always old skills to refine and new avenues of study to explore, and the most efficient way to do these things is by having specific goals in mind for every training session. However, for those martial artists who have taken on the responsibility of instructing students, there is yet another level of goal setting that must be considered – that of the class or school as a whole. Specifically, what should the students be gaining from their training? What are the group’s “Mission Statement” and objectives?

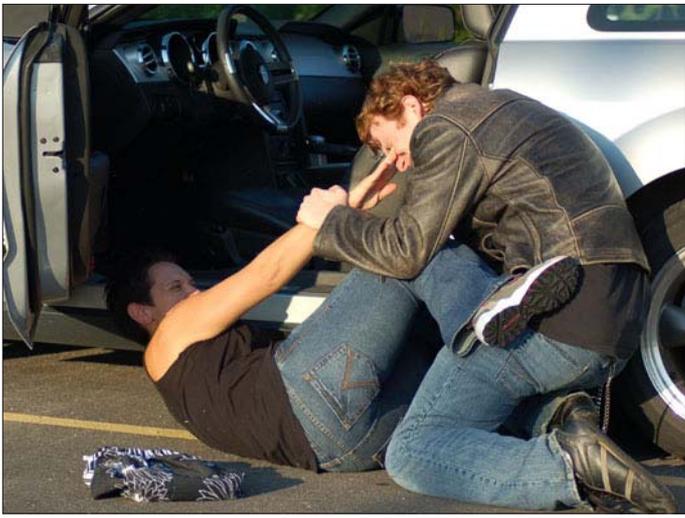
Considering this question is of the utmost importance because different people practice the martial arts for different reasons. Some people come to class simply for the health benefits that they receive from a vigorous workout. Others want to gain discipline, while a third group hopes to achieve some type of spiritual development or enlightenment. And of course, there are those who wish to compete in the sporting aspects of the art, those who want to learn how to defend themselves on the street, and those who hope to maintain and uphold traditions. Granted, most people join a martial arts class with several of the above goals in mind. However, for each student, one of these goals is likely to be primary, while the others will have lower priority. Hence, it is important for the instructor to examine the type of class he/she wants to teach so that the students are clear on what they are getting from their training.

However, herein lies the rub, because no matter how clearly the instructor personally understands the class goals and no matter how transparent he/she is in explaining these goals to the class, on some level the students are going to believe that they are learning how to fight, i.e. gaining practical self-defense skills. Even if the instructor goes so far as to say, “In this class, our *sole* focus is to learn how to fight in point-karate (tae kwon

do, MMA, etc.) tournaments. Although some of the techniques you will learn have self-defense applications, most will not. The goal is simply to defeat your opponent under the following rules...”, the student is likely to hear (at least subconsciously), “In this class our sole focus is to learn how to fight \_\_\_\_\_ . \_\_\_\_\_ the techniques you will learn have self-defense applications, \_\_\_\_\_ . The goal is to defeat your opponent \_\_\_\_\_ .”

Now, one might argue that any misunderstandings arising from the above conversation are solely the fault of the student. Perhaps this is true. However, that does not mean they will not occur. How many people remember the start of the cardio-kickboxing/Tae Bo craze? And how many people met students taking these classes who really thought they were learning how to defend themselves? Was this just a case of false advertising – unscrupulous teachers touting false benefits to boost their class numbers? In some cases, probably yes. In most cases, though, it was probably just students layering their own assumptions on top of the what they were truly gaining – a tough cardiovascular workout.

Furthermore, the students’ assumption that they are learning how to defend themselves is completely understandable considering that this is the only goal listed above that the martial arts are uniquely designed to address. If the students want to get fit, they can easily buy a gym membership. If they want discipline, the military is always looking for recruits. If they want spirituality, they can join an ashram. If they want competition, there are a myriad of sporting opportunities available to them, and if they want tradition, there are thousands of books on the subject that can be read without breaking a sweat. However, if they want to learn self-defense, where else would they go but some kind of martial arts class?



## Self-Defence

Therefore, as the students are expecting, at least at some level, to learn how to defend themselves, it is important that every training group spend some time focusing on this aspect of the martial arts. Otherwise, the students might try to put faulty techniques designed for another goal into practice in real situations, potentially risking their lives in the process.

Now, does this mean that all schools must devote every moment of training to “hard” self-defense with no room for sports and no respect for tradition? No, it does not. The key is to incorporate realistic, self-defense training into the classes while still keeping the other goals on the board. Fortunately, this is not too difficult given the right mindset and definitions.

To begin this unifying process, let us quickly deal with those goals that are most easily reconcilable to the others. For starters, any type of rigorous physical training is going to lead to health benefits. Granted, there is some disagreement in self-defense circles as to the importance of physical fitness in self-defense situations. Some individuals argue that cardiovascular health is irrelevant to self-defense since most altercations are quick and brutal, relying solely on anaerobic respiration. However, many other experts believe that being physically fit is a necessary prerequisite to defensive acumen. In the end, though, there is no real reason not to include both types of fitness training into any given class session. Anaerobic exercise is, by definition, accomplished in *short* bursts. Therefore, it can easily be mixed in with other more aerobic activities.

Having dealt with fitness, let us now turn to discipline. Luckily, this goal can also be easily merged with the others, as sticking to any type of strenuous activity and working on it until personal barriers are shattered is going to result in improved self-discipline. In fact, self-discipline is simply one of the things that will be picked up along the road in this type of training – it doesn't matter if the end goal is sport or defense.

Now, some might argue that self-discipline is only one type of discipline, the other type being the “command and obey” discipline seen in some martial arts schools. This is certainly true. However, to my mind, this militaristic-level of discipline, although useful in instilling values in youth, is of limited use to adult practitioners. To begin with, a certain amount of informality is needed to partake in the type of all-out training required to practice practical self-defense. Plus, in a broader sense, most adults are not in the military and, in fact, work at jobs and lead lives where some creativity and a willingness to occasionally go against authority are positive attributes, not character flaws. So, for most martial artists (and people, for that matter), self-discipline is by far the most important type of discipline to have.

Turning to the spiritual nature of the martial arts, this is a topic that is difficult to discuss, as the definition of spirituality is nebulous and likely in the eye of the beholder. Hence, I will spend little time on it. However, it does seem that if people go into a class specifically looking for some type of spiritual development, they will typically be able to find what they seek.

So, having now dealt with the more subsidiary goals, it is time to turn to the big three – sport, self-defense, and tradition - the place wherein the roots of so many arguments lie.

Let us begin by examining ways to reconcile the sporting and traditional aspects of the martial arts. To begin with, it must be conceded that sports are not an historical part of most martial traditions. Granted, challenge matches have likely been fought between martial artists since the first warriors started developing different ways to kill one another. However, these matches were not the goal of the training. Defense – either military or civilian – was. Sport as a primary goal of the martial arts did not come



about until the twentieth century. For example, the rules and competitive aspects of judo were gradually developed in the early to middle parts of the century, culminating in judo's debut as an Olympic sport in 1964. Similarly, the development of free sparring (*jiyu kumite*) in karate is generally believed to have been developed by Gogen Yamaguchi in the mid-1930s.

Hence, if sport was not a traditional part of the martial arts, are sporting pursuits and the goal of tradition mutually exclusive? Not necessarily. These aspects can and are frequently taught side-by-side in many martial arts classes. In fact, the best coaches/instructors practicing these dual goals are extremely adept at melding the two, making sure that their fighters fight in a manner consistent with the style in which they are training, both tactically and strategically.

Since it appears that sports and tradition can work well side-by-side, it is now time to examine whether the goals of sport and self-defense can also co-exist. Many self-defense experts would answer no to this question, arguing that sports, by necessity, take place in a realm of rules, and that by consistently training to follow these rules, the students will become hard-wired into these flaws, attempting maneuvers in a self-defense situation that could prove deadly. For example, a point-sparring technician might subconsciously pull his/her punches in a street situation. A taekwon do competitor might go for a high kick. A judoka might drop his/her hands to gain a grip,

not expecting a strike. An MMA fighter might go to the ground against someone who has a knife. The list could go on and on.

Honestly, such arguments are hard to dismiss. However, other experts argue that, since sport sparring and street self-defense are so vastly different in nature, students are unlikely to confuse the skills required by the two as long as they have adequate training in both. The keys are making sure that the goals of each class session are well-defined and that there is no confusion and crossover between the two. This argument is quite convincing. It should be acknowledged, though, that to successfully teach on both levels the instructor must be someone of high skill, knowledge, and awareness – someone willing to analyze the techniques being taught to make sure that neither class goal gets muddled in the cross-training process.

Finally, let us turn to the question of whether tradition and self-defense are compatible? This question, although seemingly big, is actually quite small. It appears to be so large because there is a continual and ongoing debate on this matter in the martial arts community. However, in truth, the issue is a small one because the argument really comes down to semantics - the question hinging on what exactly is meant by the word "tradition."

Dictionary.com succinctly defines tradition as, "Something that is handed down." Unfortunately, this definition is quite broad and, with respect to



the martial arts, leaves it up to the practitioner to determine precisely what was meant to be “handed down”. Is it some form of strict formality – gis and belts and bowing and knowing the proper things to say at the proper times? Perhaps, but as mentioned earlier, when taken to the extreme such a level of formality does not allow the students (and the teacher) the comfort level necessary to train in such a way as to become truly effective at self-defense. Plus, it can eat up a lot of class time.

Another way in which people attempt to uphold tradition is by purposefully keeping every aspect of training the same and doing everything *exactly* as it was taught to them with no room for variation or addition. However, such an attitude is self-limiting and speaks more of stagnation than tradition. This is the mentality to which Emerson was referring when he said, “A foolish tradition is the hobgoblin of little minds.” Note, the key word here is “foolish”. If a tradition makes sense, by all means, it should be kept. However, if the only reason for doing something is, “that’s the way it’s always been done,” then that is a practice that should be examined much more closely before it is perpetuated further.

In this sense, it is important to realize that all of the old masters changed what they were taught, and often, these changes were not minor. For example, Kanryo Higashionna, Chojun

Miyagi’s teacher and, thus, the progenitor of Goju-Ryu, changed Sanchin Kata from an open-handed practice to a close-handed one. This is a significant difference. In Chinese tradition, it is said that the founder of Baqua only took on students who were already accomplished martial artists and then molded his methods to fit and enhance what the student already knew, leading to different “branches” of the art. Which one of these branches, then, is the “true” tradition? Would a student of one branch be “wrong” to learn from other branches, even if one of the other branches was more fitting with his/her abilities? I think most rational people would argue not.

So, returning to the question at hand, if tradition is not formality and it is not bland reproduction of what has come before, then what is it? Well, examining the definition, what was the primary goal of the past masters, that essential element that they wanted “handed down” to their students and their students’ students? In my mind, this essence of the martial arts was simply the ability to defend oneself. That was their goal, plain and simple – practical self-defense. Moreover, if the means to satisfy this end needed to evolve with the changing times, they were more than willing to make these adjustments. Why should we be any different? Of course, as an added benefit, if this is how we define tradition, then there is no need for reconciliation between tradition and self-defense. The two goals are one and the same.

Hence, the circle is now complete. Of the goals mentioned above, it is clear that self-defense should be a high priority, the essence of any martial art. Why? Because that is what they were developed to do and that is what the students expect, even if they do not fully realize it. Fortunately, all of the other goals can be reconciled to this overarching theme. There is no need to sacrifice enjoyable aspects of one’s training, even if a decision is made to redirect the overall training’s focus. As Shihan John Roseberry likes to say, “It’s all in there.”

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# How to Spar for the Street: Part Three

by **Iain Abernethy**

In this series of articles we are discussing how to make your sparring relevant to real situations. As we've discussed in previous articles, the sparring in many dojos has little in common with real situations. Karateka train for a variety of reasons, so it is to be expected that they will spar in a variety of ways in order to address a variety of goals. If being able to protect yourself is one of your reasons for training, then your sparring needs to be specifically structured so that it has relevance to the street.

In previous articles we have covered six of the keys to realistic sparring. In this final part, we'll be covering the final four keys to making your sparring relevant to the street.

## **Don't limit the techniques or ranges**

Anything goes in a real situation and hence you need to ensure your street sparring isn't limited. As a karateka, you need to ensure that you bring grappling into your sparring. There are a great many grappling techniques in kata and they should be brought into everyday training (see my book "Karate's Grappling Methods"). The more wide-ranging you make your sparring the more realistic it will be.

You also need to ensure that you include the techniques not allowed by the rules. In combat sports, there are two groups of techniques that will be banned. First, there are the techniques that are banned in the name of the purity of the sport, i.e. boxing is about punching so anything that can stifle the exchange of punches is prohibited. All combat sports have similar restrictions in order to maintain the purity of the sport and give the spectators what they want to see. Secondly, there are the techniques that are banned in the name of safety, i.e. low blows etc. All of these banned techniques can be used in a street situation.

A real fight has no rules, and hence you need to ensure you ignore the rule book when you



structure your street sparring. It's pretty easy to ignore the purity-based restrictions, but great care needs to be taken when ignoring the safety-based ones. In some instances you can substitute dangerous techniques for less dangerous alternatives. For example, if your partner secures a grip on the knot in your belt, it's a safe assumption he could also have attacked your groin in the same fashion. Likewise, putting the thumb on your partner's forehead above the eyebrows can be used as a substitute for eye gouges.

Substitutions like these ensure that you develop the skills to use and defend against such attacks. The flaw in this training is that if you're not mindful of the intent of the substitution, you may find yourself using the substitution in the street at a time when you should be using the real technique! As I said in part one of this series, always be aware of the flaws of any drill. Because the alternative is to omit the techniques completely, I feel substitution is the best way forwards.

In addition to substitution, you can also reduce the intensity of certain techniques to ensure safety. For example, if you nip your partner with your teeth, they can be sure they would be

missing flesh if the fight was for real. It is very important that your sparring is closely supervised by a suitably experienced and qualified person when bringing potentially dangerous techniques such as biting and gouging into your sparring. The person supervising the sparring will be able to advise you on substitution, omission and intensity.

By not limiting the techniques or ranges of your sparring you ensure that “blind spots” don’t develop and that your sparring has relevance to a real fight.

### **Emphasize simplicity and high-percentage techniques**

It is vitally important in the street to keep things very simple. The simpler a technique is, the more likely it is to succeed. The more complex a technique is, the more likely it is to fail.

However, it doesn’t always work that way in a dojo or competitive bout between two martial artists. In that environment, using complex and sophisticated methods can catch your opponent off guard. The simple methods will be more easily recognized and countered so it can be advantageous to use methods that are “off radar.” In almost all combat sports, much of what was winning fights a few years ago is now obsolete because it is easily recognized and hence easily countered. Competitors need to enhance, disguise and evolve their techniques if they are to keep winning. Complex and indirect can work fine in the dojo or in sport. The complex and indirect won’t fare well in the street, however.

When sparring for the street, be sure to stick to the basics. Many martial artists inadvertently associate the term “advanced” with “better.” That is not how it works in the street. There is the basic stuff that works; and the advanced stuff that doesn’t work. There are no such things as “advanced self-protection” or “advanced street fighting.” When sparring for the street, keep everything simple and avoid any temptation to get clever.

It is also important to emphasise techniques that will have the greatest effect. A head shot will have a greater effect than a strike to the body. A strangle will finish the fight, but a joint lock may not (you can’t fight when you are unconscious, but you can fight with a broken joint). Methods

such as body shots and joint locks still have a role to play, but priority should always be given to the techniques that will end the fight the quickest.

For street sparring, stick to techniques that are simple, have the best chance of working, and are likely to have the greatest effect.

### **Vary the numbers (real fights aren’t always one on one)**

This is a big one! Dojo and competitive sparring is almost always one on one. Street situations aren’t like that. They can be one on one: they can also be loads of other things. It’s therefore very beneficial to mix up the numbers when sparring for the street.

Successfully fighting off two or more assailants isn’t anywhere near as easy as depicted in the martial arts movies. With enough commitment and ferocity it is possible successfully take on more than one person, but it is never advisable to do so.

The subject of multiple opponents is frequently overlooked in the martial arts world with most training focusing on the one on one scenario. Practising against multiple opponents will help prepare you for if the worst happens. Such training also brings home some really important lessons about how you should face street situations. Some martial artist attempt to justify the lack of training against multiple opponents by stating that successfully outfighting multiple opponents is impossible. It is true that outfighting committed multiple opponents is extremely difficult (not impossible); however, it should also be understood that you don’t need to outfight multiple opponents in order to protect yourself from them.

A few years ago I was teaching street-based sparring drills to a mixed ability group. As part of this session we were practicing two-on-one sparring. At one end of the room was a young, relatively inexperienced martial artist who was visibly nervous at the prospect of having to simultaneously face two opponents. At the other end was a group of extremely experienced martial artists. The members of this group had multiple black belts and were all skilled fighters. This group was actually excited at the prospect of getting to test their skills against two opponents.

When I signalled for the fights to begin, the experienced martial artists went off with all guns blazing ... but invariably were quickly taken off their feet and beaten up by their colleagues. By contrast, the inexperienced martial artist did not want to test his skills. He wanted out of there! He ran all around the dojo and hardly had a punch land on him.

The moral of the story is that when faced with more than one person, don't stay and fight them but instead run away the instant you can. As I said earlier, you don't need to outfight multiple opponents in order to protect yourself from them. Sparring with multiple opponents really brings this lesson home and lets you practice your escape skills.

Sparring with multiple opponents also teaches you a lot about how you should face a single opponent in the street. What begins as a one-on-one situation in the street or bar can quickly escalate. Criminals frequently work in gangs; just because you can't see them doesn't guarantee they don't have backup near by.

As an example of how the possibility of multiple opponents changes things, let's briefly discuss ground fighting. In the dojo taking the opponent to the floor and trying to finish the fight on the ground with a triangle choke or other such technique can work great (**Photo 1**). However, if you use the same methodology in the street, a second person could get involved and you would get stamped flat (**Photo 2**). Fights can go to the ground so it's something you need to include in your training and sparring, but it's never the smart choice in the street.

A friend of mine was once mugged at an ATM by what he initially thought was just one person. He's a big guy and told the mugger to leave him alone (well, that's not what he said, but I have to meet my own editorial standards!). At that point the mugger pointed across the road where his previously unseen colleague opened his jacket to reveal a huge knife. My friend wisely decided to hand over his cash. He could also have hit and run, but I feel he undeniably made the smart choice. However, what would have happened if he'd decided to fight? Or worse yet take the fight



**Photo 1: In the dojo taking the opponent to the floor can work great**

to the ground? I think we can safely say that the initial one on one exchange would not have stayed that way for long and my friend would have been stabbed.

In your street sparring be sure to play with the numbers: one on two, one on three, two on three etc. You'll learn a lot about how to approach real situations.

### **Spar when exhausted**

Real situations are very stressful. Your heart rate will go through the roof, you may feel nauseous, your muscle control will be greatly reduced, you will want to be anywhere else on earth, and you may feel frozen to the spot. Being mentally and physically able to deal with these sensations is a key part of preparing for the street.

A good way to recreate these sensations is to fight a fresh opponent when you are exhausted. I don't mean a little bit tired, I mean exhausted! Your heart rate will be high, you may feel nauseous, your muscle control will be greatly reduced, you will want to be somewhere else and

you won't feel like fighting. Not wholly unlike a street situation.

There are a great many ways to exhaust yourself. You can do some intense exercise before sparring, do a lot of pad work, or just spar with a number of fresh opponents back to back. However you go about it, sparring when exhausted should be part of your street sparring. You may not want to go to extremes every session, but you should do it frequently enough that you get used to functioning under stress. If you don't get used to it, all the skills you possess will be rendered redundant by the intensity of the situation.

There are lots of different ways to spar and all have value. Most martial artists train for a wide range of reasons aside from self-protection. However, when training for the street, it is important that your training methods accurately reflect the nature of street situations. I hope the 10 keys we have discussed in this series will help you structure your sparring in a way that is as realistic as possible.



**Photo 2: Use the same methodology in the street and you could get stamped flat!**

# HOW TO SURVIVE A KNIFE ASSAULT? BE CAREFUL WHO YOU PISS-OFF!

by Rev. Arthur Chenevey

**A**dvice? Ah, fools won't heed it and wise men don't need it...so why on earth am I writing this?

There exist great bodies of written *mis*information, depicting systematic applications of unarmed and armed human beings attempting to protect themselves from violent and brutal edged-weapons assaults. The large majority of these methods border on wishful thinking at best and down-right lethal lunacy (to the *defender*) at worst.

Let's understand one thing right here, right now. The author of this article is not selling any method. I wish to shed light on the highly profitable and highly pretentious arena of so-called knife fighting and knife-defense systems and methods.

Often, the methods being marketed and taught somehow attempt to associate these methods, the instructors and/or students with the elite military and elite law enforcement groups, offering an implicit yet very inaccurate verification of the system's validity in safely managing edged-weapons assaults. Just because one teaches to military and law enforcement personnel, either privately or official government contract, does not mean the method is valid. Just because one can state he or she has served under the umbrella of an elite military or law enforcement moniker, does not automatically validate individual expertise for successfully manipulating an extremely belligerent and determined assailant hell-bent on carving his initials in a person's throat.

We must keep everything within a proper perspective.

How many people who teach some form of knife work, knife fighting and/or knife defense have actually survived a determined lethal assault against a knife wielding maniac fully committed to killing with his weapon? In such a case, scars

upon the body and scars upon the mind are a true testimony of one survival skills here.

I have witnessed far more knife-fighting instructors, regardless of the discipline (Oriental, Occidental, Filipino, Indonesian, Apache, Renaissance, Medieval, *ad nauseam*) who offer only a systematic best guess as to how they think they might offer applicable resistance to counter blade attacks.

Some of these theories and best guesses are well-researched, using FBI stats, LEA stats and Security Company stats. They work out the details in their gyms, garages, and back yards justifying their sparring methods as transferable skills. Unless they are using live blades, it's not the real thing—not even close. There are a few instructors who, by profession or otherwise, have had the opportunity to witness knife assaults and draw upon this experience. Many systems teaching knife work, defensively or offensively, are grossly lacking in situationally correct, proactive approaches, simply because these souls have no real understanding of just how brutal and explosively chaotic a dynamic lethal force encounter with a blade is.

Few systems involved in knife applications—defensive and offensive—arrive from actual, personal combat experience dealing with edged weapons assaults. Many argue that their specific systems have originated from the personal experience of their instructors' or their instructors' instructors from long ago. What occurs is that the evolutionary process of teaching in a commercial environment automatically and seriously dilutes the practicality of any genuine combative system when it evolves distant from the battlefield. All battlefield methods must be bolstered with actual violent combat to remain current. I have witnessed first hand some of this now deceased old timers and their students who now teach these methods. What I see being



## Rev. Arthur Chenevey

taught now compared to what the “Old-timer” taught are universes apart—universes.

The harsh reality of knife combatives is that it is, and has always been about one human being killing another. A knife—a blade of any kind—is lethal force. And killing and stopping killing is always about mind-set, not about physical technique.

I have had the opportunity over the past 48 years of being involved in combative environments and acting as a combatives instructor, to observe and bear-witness to, and yes survive the harsh world of lethal force encounters(hot and cold weapons)—not in the dojo or training hall or back-yard groups—but in the real world. Most systems of knife work, regardless of the discipline, that I review, observe and critique today in the commercial martial arts arena are scary nonsense! I make no apologies. What makes good knife work, good knife defense? Understanding the brutal horror of the act of using a knife and stopping this act of lethal force, is the fundamental viewpoint upon which to scrutinize said systems, and whether or not

the system affords you the correct training to develop and hone all the necessary skills of situational awareness leading to avoidance of this violent encounter as your primary tool. If the facility does not use awareness and avoidance and train this awareness and avoidance as the principal defensive weapon against potential knife attacks, then this school has no concept in what a real knife encounter is about. Fragile egos who do not know are running the show...

The knife when utilized by one human being to terrorize or destroy another human being, is by its structure (and we all know structure determines optimum use, i.e. function of a tool) a brutal, fast moving, extreme-close-quarters tool of lethal force capacity.

Rarely do two adversaries square up and fence with their respective blades in some kind of duel for position, justice, lunacy or power. Enraged neighbors may plunge a screw driver into your shoulder or back as you walk away for reasons only he may be able to justify; a husband or a wife may drive a kitchen knife into the respective spouse’s abdominal cavity for assumed infidelity. A rapist may use a razor to the throat of the victim demanding compliance or else. A mugger may use a box cutter to sever the purse strap from the victim’s shoulder, but rarely do two adversaries, equally armed with knives pair up and duel. Even one who is armed with a knife facing one without a knife is rare and easy to manage. There is space and time, so the one without the knife needs to simply run as hard as he can to get out of there and into a safe place. Don’t close with the knife and expect your tapping or parrying or gunting skills to work. If you believe this, as you close, you may find one blade in your liver while another is deployed to sever deep into your carotid.

Professional knife work is about serious ambush and surprise, about taking something of extreme value from another person via lethal force. The possession of value may be life, limb, virtue or property. And if you are on the receiving end of such a professional blade, it’s way too late to be sorry about pissing off the wrong people. Amateur knife work is about rage, uncontrollable anger, and hate picking up what’s available and plunging it into the chest of the perceived source of this misplaced rage.

Military knife work is a truly strange animal. Today's soldiers, elite or otherwise, are shooters—not knifers. At best, the knife is a mere tertiary weapon, and more likely used to clean toe nails, finger nails, or pry-open ammo boxes than to be used as a personal defensive/offensive weapon. Empty-hand skills are learned in some of the more elite units in order for an operative to momentarily fend or ward off the edged weapon to gain entry to the primary or secondary weapon needed to terminate the threat via superior ballistics placement. With Marine and Army units being deployed to maintain peace within an asymmetrical warfare environment against gung-ho insurgents, it is essential for the soldier to become proficient in those specific transitional skills allowing the individual to smoothly and swiftly transit from weapon system to weapon system, or from empty hand skills to weapons systems. These transitional skills must be learned under the kind of conditions (severe noise, smoke, smells, confusions, distractions and resistive violence) that mimic the duress of life and death combat. In is my not so humble opinion that these transitional skills must be ingrained if a soldier is to be classified as completely trained.

An example of the military and where the importance of the edged weapon ranks, in the war in which I had the honor of serving, the enemy, though made out to be a mythical, mystical killer, was a mere mortal like all of us—though often highly competent and efficient killer. The majority of our casualties came from bullets (18,452). Booby-traps accounted for another 7,429. Artillery and rockets claimed 4,909 U.S. lives. Another 8,451 were taken by multiple fragmentation wounds. 943 were murdered within our own ranks, and the weapons of choice were for the murders were firearms and grenades—not knives—though a few edged weapons were used. 50 died from other causes from the enemy, bayonets, bludgeoning, with less than a handful from what could be presumed as blade or machete wounds.

What are the terrorist weapons of choice today? They are the RPG-7 and Improvised Explosive Devices, not knives. Box cutters were allegedly used to hijack the jets that became living guided-missiles, responsible for killing thousands of innocent human beings on that horrifically fateful day of 9/11. Surprise attacks with edged weapon

were allegedly used to procure the weapon of choice—tons of jet fuel. I wonder if one of the modern day martial arts grandmasters of knife fighting had been on any one of those flights, if the outcome would have been different. Hmm.

Law enforcement personal on both sides of the Atlantic must be able to deal with edged weapons attacks, both static threats and vicious and violent assaults. From what BBC recently reported, teenage knife assaults are epidemic in London. Predators attacking prey—the armed against the helpless? That's how knifers work. They don't want to fight fair or duel or spar. They want what they want, and too often they are adept enough to catch the intended victim off guard and unaware—killing with a blade to get what they desire.

Splitting hairs, Corrections officers are the human beings most likely to encounter edged weapons on a consistent basis, and the attacks within such a confined environment are consistently in the form of surprise, committed assaults from assailants with nothing to lose or something to prove. Yet such assaults are very rare against the officers—a more common occurrence is inmate on inmate violence using the blade of some configuration.

Learning contemporary knife fighting has always appeared to be high-end, popular curriculum in the commercial martial arts area, and I can only presume why. Fun, different, easy to teach because of the drills, delusions of security...I not sure.

Learning to deal with surprise knife assaults and lethal force encounters, regardless of your profession, career choice, or duty bound responsibilities will always center around situational awareness. Defense is always about awareness, awareness and more awareness.

The knife is an extreme, close-quarters tool, meaning that the blade's effective lethal range is from your wrist to your elbow, when your elbow is placed against your side and the hand is held out, parallel to the floor. That's not much space between you and the assailant wielding the edged weapon, which also means the assailant must get really, really close to use his tool effectively. If one is aware enough and can pick up that someone is about to draw some sort of a weapon from a concealed carry, the draw can

be fouled and empty hand striking skills against the would be assailant can commence until the threat is controlled and contained. But awareness is need with correct perceptual abilities to see and foul a draw of a weapon before the weapon impacts our personal body.

So when you walk up to a Cash-Machine, check it out first (run some simple recon of the area). Be insightful enough to think ahead so that you will get your cash during the day, and you won't need to use the ATM. Look at the cash machines as a watering hole for predators and when you go to one to get cash, make believe that you are the deer. Modern, walk-up-walk-to conveniences provide predators with more targets and opportunities to strike. And the knife is a terror-inducing tool of great effectiveness.

When five feet separates two people, it takes time and space to close the gap in order for one human to touch another (The 21 feet rule of shooter from knifer that has dominated law-enforcement's knife training paradigms in the U.S. for way too long has no basis in reality, whatsoever. The measurement concept is a bogus principle, and it needs to be re-evaluted). It is this time and space that are the greatest weapons against the blade. As we can see, situational awareness, being vigilant of our surroundings, of where we frequent, of when we frequent an area, and how we go about our day is what allows us **NOT** to be surprised and determines whether or not we will be ambushed by a knife wielding adversary.

Also understand that knife attacks **DO NOT** come from out of nowhere. When we are surprised it is because we failed to accurately perceive and anticipate the existing antecedents that precede any and all attacks. There will be clues—ALWAYS. Whether we discern these clues prior to an attack is determined from our degree of acute sensitivity to these clues.

If we are aware of how we treat people, hopefully, it is with respect but with firm authoritative parameters, we are unlikely to piss-off **the wrong** people who might be so inclined to use a blade to resolve their personal issues with our rudeness. Be careful of who you piss off—simple enough!

Be aware of those with whom you choose to associate. Men and women with deep-seated



personal insecurities, unresolved anger issues, severe emotional disturbances, fragile egos and poor personal identities are often easily triggered into irrational acts of physical expression and violence.

Self-defense against the knife is not about being able to fight against the actual tool. This is crazy at best. Self-defense against the knife is simply about establishing and maintaining a very accurate and acute form of situational awareness; developing a strong and humble sense of Self; being over all polite with the people around you who you do not know; and maintaining a sense of space around you such that, when someone violates this space, you are able to immediately remove yourself from the danger before the danger becomes a problem.

I can already hear it. "Ah, I want to know how to take care of myself. What if I am in a pub and someone pulls a knife on me?"

Well, why did you allow this incident to get this far? What did you do to piss this person off? Be nice, respectable and pleasant. If someone is

taunting you into fighting because he feels a tad threatened with your presence, politely excuse yourself, leave the pub and let that individual feel like the Big Man. Such altercations are merely ego-burps. The Fragile Male Ego is responsible for way too many fights and way to many senseless deaths on this planet. Besides, if something isn't worth dying for, it certainly is not worth fighting over—as every wild and crazy fight may mean someone dies. Can you live with a death on your conscience? Humans can do whatever they want, but that also means they must live with that deed for the rest of their lives.

Feeling like we have to fight in order to feel potent is neither sound motive for fighting nor a sign of one who has grown wise about fighting. I have known too many martial arts instructors who were really superb athletes but miserable people, who ended up dead in a back room, a back alley, in a vehicle, shot, stabbed and/or clubbed to death for pissing off the wrong people. Some of these reported “bad-assed” instructors, who have managed to survive, have wound up in prison for life, finding out just how impractical and inadequate their martial arts knife skills are. And some cannot live with the responsibility of serious harm to others and end their lives themselves.

Once the time and distance between adversaries have dissolved and the blade is roaring down upon flesh, the only hope now is in attacking the attack. To defang the snake, we achieve this by chopping off its head, not pulling it teeth, not whacking at its hands. Violently attack whatever the attacker offers you until he stops. It's all out war, and you may die from your wounds even if you survive the initial altercation.

Some of the greatest misinformation lies around what happens to someone when cut or stab. Biological differences make for a vast variety of responses from the different individuals. I have seen men horribly maimed and mortally wound yet continue to fight and kill the enemy quite effectively and unmoved by their mortal wounds. I have also witnessed men with a mere flesh wound crumble and cry, incapable of carrying on the fight. No one knows how one will react to a wound, nor can we predict how someone else will respond. Expect the unexpected; prepare for the worst.

When physically defending against the edged weapon you better leave all preconceived notions of what should happen and what could happen alone. Focus solely on what needs to be done right here and now in order to keep yourself as safe as possible, all the while stopping the threat by any and all means necessary. Remember, once the circumstance has digressed to physical violence, it's fast, close, and chaotic. One big **DON'T: DO NOT FOCUS** on **trying** to grab the knife hand. You will not succeed if you try. If the hand is there—given to you out of mistake or default or static positioning, and you are able to secure the arm, take the knife arm with a controlling over hook or under hook. However, you better be smashing his face and head with your free hand and kneeing him in the groin and thighs, otherwise, you will lose the securing hand for good. You may even be able to secure a under hooking shoulder-lock takedown, while smash the assailants face with knee attacks. This worked well once, against an overly extended upward screw-driver assault. It was awareness that was able to catch the under hook, circle back step while smashing the face and wrenching the break down into the knee attacks to the face. There was a lack of awareness before and during the approach of this assailant. Luckily, there was enough awareness upon the initiation of the assault, cued by the abruptness of the lurch forward to tell me what he was doing before he was able to do it. Awareness and attitude saved me—not the movements to counter the assault. Without the awareness and the do or die attitude, this article would not be a reality.

The best knife defense is to not let the situation get to this point through situational awareness. Because when it does get to this point, attitude is what wins—not technique. And most of what I have seen over the years passing as knife defenses in the commercial martial arts arena seriously misses the boat of being anything practical or realistic enough to protect the person who has allowed his or her guard to drop enough to be assailed with an edged weapon.

If you fall to the ground, well, that's another article. BUT You better understand good ground grappling basics, and own a hard-as-nails, never-give-up attitude with a deep understanding of how to use a knife with lethal force, because if you fail to fully know and work well in any one of

these areas, and you do go to the ground with someone hell-bent on killing you with a knife—YOU ARE DEAD!!! PERIOD!!!

How do we train for knife defenses? Wow...that's a loaded question.

I rarely see any martial arts school capable of training the way one needs to train for such life and death scenarios. The military and police SWAT or HRT organizations are the only facilities that possess the funds and opportunity to create genuine simulations of true violence needed for real battle-inoculation and familiarization to lethal force encounters. They use their time and funds, however, for tactical firearms training and what is required to support the advantage of maneuver and fire for their operators during firefights—not knife fights—remember the transitional skills? This supports good tactical firearms deployment.

For any private sector training facility trying to mimic combat conditions, the legal ramifications from negligent accidents would bankrupt a private firm. The majority of private firms offer many contrived and artificial battlefield/street simulations—some highly innovative, but their bottom-line is safety from litigation, then training as best we can from that platform. If practitioners don't know this, what they feel as real is merely

an illusion. It's the difference between knowing we are handling a nonpoisonous black snake verses a poisonous cobra. Knowing what "real is" helps, and we might be able to better guide our visualization of the hard-core difficulties managing lethal force encounters with a knife. This occurs, though, only when the instructor actually is cognizant of the terror of such violence through first hand experience and survival, and can responsibly convey this truth within a safe learning and instructional format.

We can suit up and bang away with rubber knives, aluminum trainers, wooden/rattan sticks or the latest rage—shock knives. We can engage in force-on-force training, going hard with full-tilt boxing, kicking, grappling, throwing and controlling—slamming the bodies hard on and around the mats, in the grass, on the garage floors. It's all necessary training—I do it. But it all falls short of the real thing. And responsible trainers and instructors who know real combat and know this fact about their training's limitations explain this to their students to prepare them for and inoculate them against the horrific nature of Jissen ("actual combat" – editor) with a knife or other edged weapon is involved. This is not about playing; it's about survival...



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# Debunking Taekwon-do Myths

by Stuart Anslow

There are many preconceived notions on what is and what is not part of the Ch'ang Hon system of Taekwon-do. These are brought about by instructors or associations teaching what and how they want, which is not in itself wrong, but it does confuse the student sometimes. Here we explore some of those myths as well as listing what makes Taekwon-do different from other styles, especially its father art, Shotokan Karate.

## Taekwon-do is Mostly Kicks

Taekwon-do is often cited as being mainly a kicking art, but in actual fact it has many more hand techniques than kicks, at a guess I would say the hand techniques outnumber the leg techniques by around 8 to 1 (I once read there are over 2000 hand techniques, but I've never actually counted them to verify this).

W.T.F. (World Taekwon-do Federation) Taekwondo helps proliferate this argument, with its competition format scoring on virtually kicking techniques alone. I.T.F. competition does the same thing although it scores hand techniques more readily, kicks score more as they are considered harder to perform. I.T.F. competitions want to promote this spectacular side of the art as it often looks better than a slug fest using just the hands and shows part of the technical expertise and grace that many Taekwon-do performers have. There is nothing wrong with this and in the main I agree with how I.T.F. based competitions are run, as I too enjoy seeing the kickers perform. However, this *is* competition and many students and especially those who do not train in Taekwon-do can't dissimilate '*this is competition*' from '*this is Taekwon-do*'. Other connotations about Taekwon-do due to its sport side are abound, mostly from other ill informed martial artists, but if we do nothing to change their views, including via our training methods and they do not delve deeper than what they see in a magazine or on a video, this misrepresentation will persist, as it's up to the instructors not the student.



## Taekwon-do is Touch Contact

This is a fallacy born from the semi-contact form of ITF based competition. In ITF competition sparring, contact is supposed to be controlled, though in many of the competitions I have been in as a black belt, the contact levels have varied between medium, to hard, to occasionally full contact. The difference is the rules. The actual rules for ITF competition state '*light contact*' and it is really up to the judge to enforce it. I have never gone into a fight in an ITF based tournament and deliberately gone in with heavy contact. The problem stems from the referees not enforcing rules properly and thus, if an opponent went heavy on me and the referee didn't pull them up, then I had no choice but to give as good as I got.

Those outside of Taekwon-do simply see ITF based competition, with two opponents skilfully controlling their techniques (and it is a skilful opponent that can fight fast and intensely and still control their techniques, as those less skilled rely simply on brute force) and summarize that this represents Taekwon-do as a whole. The fact that in many dojangs, competition sparring is the *only* sparring helps further promote this.

My good friend from Poland, Piotr Bernat, has told me that most Polish competition sparring is

heavy and full contact and unlike WTF sparring, allows punches to the head (Competitors wear the same protective equipment as in any standard ITF based tournament) so even in competition, its not strictly true.

Competition aside, in training I have had many heavy contact sessions with fellow black belts. Seniors in my classes spar from light to medium to heavy contact and are also allowed to use take downs, sweeping, low kicks, trips and throws at the same time, depending on the type of training we are doing.

Hosinsol is often performed with techniques at full power, but stopped short to avoid injury. Obviously one cannot strike full contact to a vital point as it would cause major damage to a fellow student, however the strikes are thrown at full speed and intensity and blocks are often utilized at close to full power unless hitting a joint or vital point.

The pattern applications show the full contact state of Taekwon-do. Techniques are designed to maim, kill or destroy an opponent and without full power, this cannot be achieved, hence why patterns practice and more so, patterns practice with visualization, is so essential to maintaining this element.

### **Taekwon-do Contains No Low Kicks**

Another fallacy born from competition only sparring. Students are geared to think they must always kick above the waist. And whilst this is a good criteria for children, beginners and junior grade students, due to their lack of targeting skills and control, it is not such a major issue to a more skilled student who can chose when to hit hard, where to strike and when to pull a technique for safety. The problem exists and many clubs these days are so competition orientated that they are never allow to blossom into this area which is vital for a full rounded arsenal of techniques. The patterns themselves contain low kicks, so students should be allowed the freedom to train in area's that overlap. Patterns, sparring and hosinsol (self defence) all overlap onto each other forming what is really Taekwon-do, as each on their own are just parts of the whole.

### **Taekwon-do doesn't allow Sweeping**

Again, another myth perpetrated by competition and further enforced by schools that only

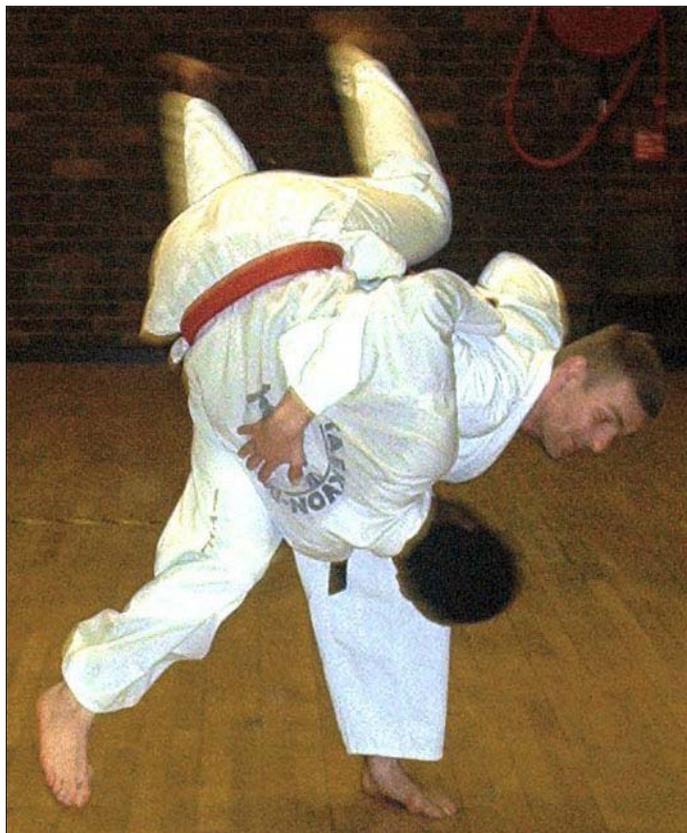
concentrate on competition sparring. Sweeping is as much a part of Taekwon-do as kicking is. Again, even in controlled sparring, sweeping can be practiced by more senior students. Again, the patterns incorporate sweeping techniques, some which are obvious and other which are not so obvious.

### **Taekwon-do doesn't Contain Locking Techniques**

Taekwon-do contains many locks (and breaks) if we study properly. Early in its development Taekwon-do incorporated elements of another Korean art, Hapkido, including many of its joint locks. However, someone deemed much of them either too long, too complicated or not instant enough so they were discarded and those that were kept centred around being quick to apply or causing a break and not just a lock. Many locking techniques can be found within the patterns.

### **Taekwon-do doesn't Contain Throws**

The encyclopaedia of Taekwon-do published by General Choi contains a whole section on throwing and falling. This section contains throws such as hip throws, body drops, even the classic inner thigh throw. If its not being taught to the student, its not because it is not part of Taekwon-do. Deeper inspection of the patterns also reveal many throwing techniques as you will discover.



## Taekwon-do Contains Weapons

Contrary to what you may see in some Taekwon-do schools, Taekwon-do contains no weapons. No weapons training and no weapons patterns. These are extra parts brought in from the outside by instructors, some as a means of enhancing their students knowledge in martial arts, but often as a means of hiding their lack of deeper knowledge and often as is the case these days, simply to charge the students more money.

Taekwon-do was an art designed for soldiers and soldiers carry guns. Taekwon-do was there if they couldn't use their gun (rifle or bayonet) for one reason or another, they didn't carry poles and sticks just in case they dropped their rifles. However, Taekwon-do contains what I like to term 'anti-weapons' techniques and training. These are techniques and applications specifically designed against weapons such as knives, clubs, sticks, poles, bayonet attacks and even against pistols. Many 'anti-weapons' applications are found within the black belt patterns though a student gains an introduction unwittingly as early on as Joong-Gun tul.

All the above 'Taekwon-do doesn't contain...' myths are due to a lack of knowledge in certain areas by instructors or simply because instructors left whomever they were with before gaining a full appreciation of the art. Many modern Taekwon-do books further support this myth by not showing or even mentioning them.

### Taekwon-do Patterns are only for ... (insert here)

Many students are lead to believe that patterns are simply a form of practice for balance, fitness, poise, technique, smoothness and other reasons, totally disregarding the self defence aspects. Though when asked to recite the definition of *Tul* (Patterns) they happily stand there and say "*Tul is a series of offensive and defensive movements set in a logical sequence against one or move imaginary opponents.*"! This is the standard definition of patterns that virtually all students give but still it is ignored! A series of offensive and defensive movements sounds like self defence to me! The word 'opponents' also implies the same!

In the Encyclopaedia, General Choi states '*Patterns are various fundamental movements,*

*most of which represent either attack or defence techniques, set to a fixed or logical sequence*'. He further goes on to mention the other benefits of practicing patterns, but before the extra benefits, it is stated that patterns represent self defence techniques, set out logically to aid the students practice, meaning the foremost purpose of patterns, is the practice of self defence. Besides, does anyone really think someone would spend forty plus years developing a system for balance, poise etc and via so many exercises (i.e. the 24 patterns)!

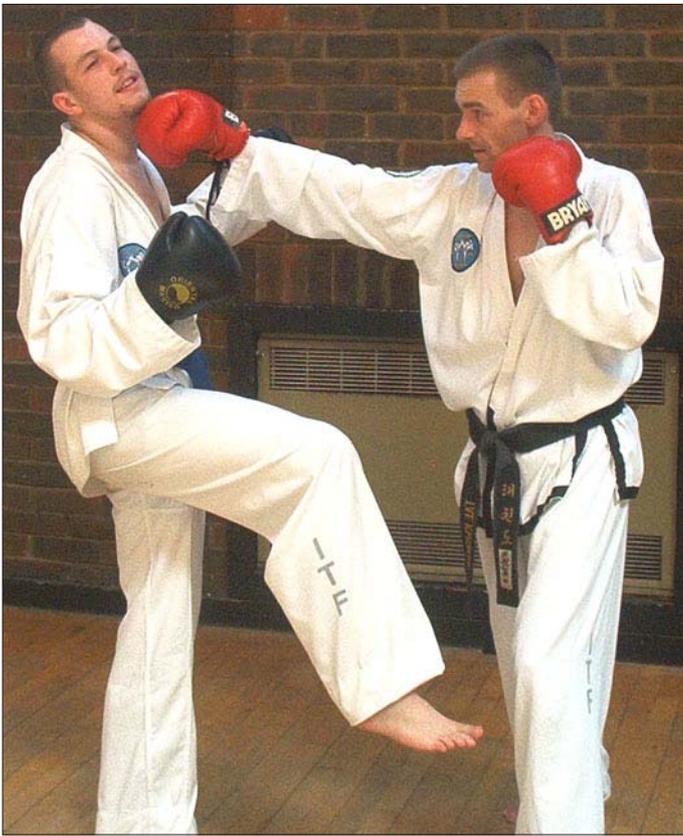
I can see how some may form the conclusion that there is little realistic self defence value in patterns training. The reasons may be as follows:

- 1 - The lack of variety in each movements as to its actual usage
- 2 - The lack of any application beyond blocking and striking (with a few exceptions)
- 3 - The seemingly static stances and pattern movements
- 4 - The basic applications often shown
- 5 - The way patterns don't seem to correlate to sparring
- 6 - The way they are taught in standard classes (as just movements)
- 7 - The emphasis on technical excellence for competitions
- 8 - The opinions of their instructor/group/association, fellow students or other martial artists

This is further enhanced by instructors and organisations, especially in regards to competition and the emphasis placed on technical merit to win gold medals. The spreading of Taekwon-do around the globe also has a part to play in this, as General Choi's first concern was *uniformity* and this is the way pattern seminars have been conducted the world over, with little or no time being given to the self defence value.

### Taekwon-do Patterns are for Historical Purposes

Aside from the definition of *Tul*, which clearly states that patterns are a form of self defence, I cannot really believe that General Choi spent over forty years creating something for historical purposes only. In relation to the above, many feel they are unrealistic and these reasons have led to the conclusion by some groups or instructors



that the usage and practice of patterns are for no more than historical purposes, allowing them to spend less time on them and more time on getting ready for tournaments etc. As a side note, General Choi was opposed to tournaments as he felt they didn't show Taekwon-do in its proper light and that parts of the art have to be changed or forfeited to ensure the safety of the participants and to a large degree he was right. Pattern performances really only show the shell and from that, no one can tell if the egg inside is good or bad or even if it has yolk at all! The focal point of patterns training today is to excel in tournaments and the same is true with regards to sparring being totally tournament based in many clubs – is it any wonder the more underlying benefits of patterns have been almost phased out!

Personally, I had a good tournament career and feel they are both enjoyable and beneficial to students. They even contain a few elements that overlap fighting or self defence and are beneficial to this area as well, like adrenaline management and confidence. But, competition sparring is not fighting and training patterns solely for competition ensures the student misses out on the real purpose of patterns and doesn't allow the student to develop this area any further than stage 1 of patterns training, as listed in the forthcoming chapters.

## **Patterns Training is Dead Training**

Some martial arts that place no value on pattern practice also help to propagate this fallacy by pointing out the above and claiming:

### **Patterns training is rigid, static and dead training, as there are no resisting opponents**

Well they are if they are looked at in that way and have no self defence value above learning techniques and how to distribute power into them, but as you will see in the forthcoming chapters, this is not the way it should be, was meant to be, or has to be!

### **When you spar you do not use the movements/techniques as they are in patterns**

Though this is debatable depending on what you term sparring, as it is largely based on the assumption that all Taekwon-do sparring is performed like competition sparring. It also pertains to sparring being confused with fighting or self defence, but as any self protection instructor will tell you, competition based sparring is far removed from either self defence or fighting.

Competition sparring is just that – for competition. Traditional 'all in' sparring allows greater use of the patterns movements, especially the ones listed in this book, and is more akin to fighting than competition, but is still not the exact environment where patterns are most suited as you will see. This is also discussed in depth in the forthcoming chapters.

### **Patterns don't Work**

Some 2000 years ago, Cicero, a Roman orator listed the '6 Mistakes of Man'. Number 3 was 'Insisting that a thing is impossible because we cannot accomplish it.' It is therefore feasible that though some may see little or no value in the training of patterns it could simply be because they were unable to make them work for them or more likely, were not willing to invest the time and effort to do so, deciding to *quit* patterns practice to concentrate on areas they felt were more beneficial. This is not to say they were wrong, it was their path, it is however wrong to denounce something just because *you* personally see no benefit in it, even when others do. Others simply 'talk the talk' of their instructors without ever actually knowing themselves as they have started an art that has this ethos.

History however, speaks for itself, as for every credible instructor that denounces patterns as not working or as dead training, there are hundreds or more acknowledged masters and highly regarded students that went before them, that saw them as the complete opposite, enthused their benefits and trained them to extremes, many of these masters are legends in the history of martial arts but others still live and breathe, putting into practice everyday the benefits of their arts patterns or kata, in fact, one of the senior police trainers in Okinawa is an expert in kata applications and this is how he teaches the officers under him.

I have yet to hear of a highly accomplished patterns or kata master, suddenly denouncing the training of them and if they did, this would carry far more weight in my mind than someone who has never placed a concerted effort into patterns study or effort in training that area in the first place. Only one who has in-depth knowledge of something in the first place can denounce it as useless!

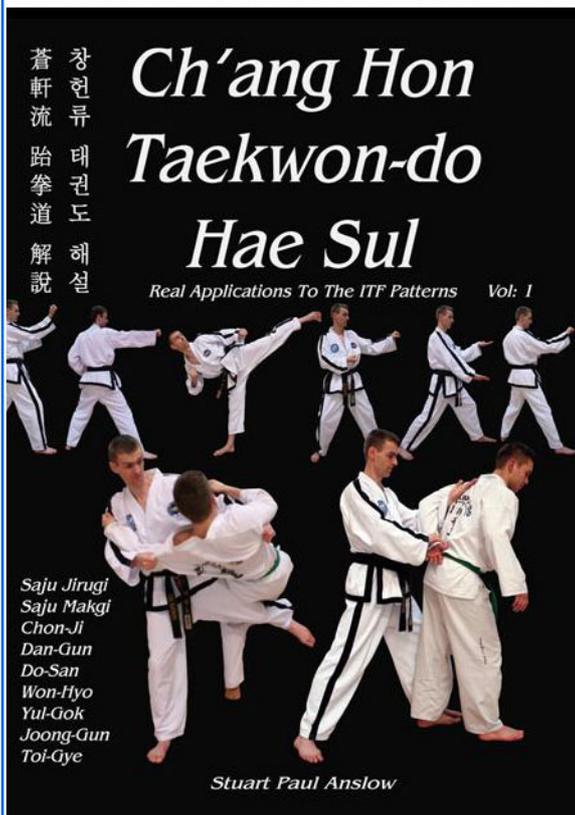
### Making Patterns Come Alive

The problem is that often, due possibly to the reasons mentioned above, that the patterns are

not studied or taken to the depth of training that they could be. Students reach 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> dan and feel they are advanced, whereas 1<sup>st</sup> degree is just the start of training, meaning the student has a good grasp of the basics. The student then feels that patterns are repetitive, or wonders what's the point of simply learning new sets of movements with no basis and drifts towards competition or sparring and finally feels they are a waste of time and effort, simply doing them because they are a student in a Taekwon-do class, to prepare for tournaments or in order to pass their next dan grade. For some students, this is often short lived as they decide their time could be better served in other areas of training. All this can be rectified by following the training methods detailed in Chapter 5 of my book "*Ch'ang Hon Taekwon-do Hae Sul: Real Applications To The ITF Patterns*" and a new appreciation of the patterns can be gleamed, as the real benefits of pattern training becomes apparent.

Reproduced from the book "*Ch'ang Hon Taekwon-do Hae Sul: Real Applications To The ITF Patterns*" with permission specifically for Jissen magazine.

**Available from Amazon.co.uk, Amazon.com and other online book stores**



Reading through the pages of this book makes it abundantly clear just how much thought, time and effort Stuart Anslow has put into examining the ITF patterns.

Not only does this book detail applications for the motions within these patterns, it also explores the background to each form and, perhaps most importantly, it also details the thought process that gave rise to the applications shown.

Stuart has a clear and engaging writing style and the book is beautifully presented. I feel certain that this book will have Taekwon-do practitioners looking at their patterns from a new angle and with renewed enthusiasm.

Ch'ang Hon Taekwon-do Hae Sul should be in the library of all practitioners of ITF Taekwon-do. Read on, learn and enjoy!

- Iain Abernethy 2006 5th Dan Karate (British Combat Association and Karate England).



**"The most important book published on TKD since the encyclopaedia."**

**- John Dowding, 3<sup>rd</sup> degree, ITF**

# Adaptable Karate:

## The three stages of kata analysis: Part 1

by Chris Denwood

**E**very part of every movement in every kata holds a valuable lesson in the development of pragmatic combat for self-protection and more. Each of these lessons need to be learned, then understood and then expanded positively with the open questioning attitude of 'what if'? Only then can we experience the traditional forms fully and come to enjoy a shining glimpse of the true potential they hold.

It's commonly agreed that the phenomena of kata was a way of recording the most effective fighting principles of a particular style, system, strategy or individual and the huge increase in the understanding of effective *bunkai* (analysis) over the past few years has certainly helped to provide strong evidence in support of this idea. When I'm teaching *bunkai* during a seminar or lesson, participants often come up to me and ask why sometimes my applications bear very little resemblance to the actual technique(s) performed in the *kata*. I may for example demonstrate a particular application and state that it's from *Chinto kata*, even though there may be no such similar looking technique performed within the form itself. It becomes obvious to me that a number of participants seem somewhat let down by this because they believe that what I'm teaching is blatantly dissimilar to the movements of the form. However, when I explain the method of my madness, most come to agree with my idea and are then able to see the 'concealed' relationship between the form and function of the application for themselves.

In response to a number of requests, I thought it would be a good idea to write a short article about the generic, but critical 'three-stage' approach to generating applications from *kata*, which will hopefully answer most of the questions related to this issue. Before I go any further though, I have to point out that this approach to *bunkai* is simply my own personal interpretation of what I believe to be true. It works very well for me and for many others who hold the same or similar views. Nevertheless, please take my words in the way in which they're intended - with an open mind and in a fashion that does not go

in any way towards degrading the views or opinion of others, especially those who may no doubt be more highly skilled and experienced than you or me. This is not an approach that's been invented recently, but something that has always been there and becomes apparent only through the complete, combative study of traditional forms. The method is classified and structured through the Japanese words of, *omote*, *henka* and *ura*. Let's first look at each of the three stages, then gain an appreciation of how each can be applied and see how all three can be brought together to form a comprehensive strategy for deciphering karate *kata*.

One thing that you'll notice straight away is that at no point have I begun to categorise either the initial learning, the ongoing perfection of the *kata* movements or other important training strategies such as drilling the applications in different environments or testing them against 'un-compliancy'. Even though these aspects are both useful and vital to the complete study of *kata* (and should therefore never be disregarded), I feel that they are not strictly part of the *bunkai* phase of learning. The three stages of analysing *kata* as detailed below deal only with how an individual would correctly interpret the movements contained within the form in a technical way. Rather than clouding matters, I think that like an umbrella, the training methods used to accentuate your findings and make them more functional should be considered to be overarching and ongoing 'necessary additions' to be used in conjunction throughout, rather than being discrete stand-alone components along the way.

So, after the initial learning of the movements within a particular form, the *karate-ka* is usually then ready to start his or her study of the applications contained within. Of course, the general term for this analysis is called *bunkai*, with applications or interpretations being referred to as *ohyo*. Since this is only a relatively concise article; rather than focus on a whole *kata*, let's briefly analyse a series of commonly taught movements from the *pinan (heian) kata* series

of *Anko Itosu* and see how they can be interpreted using each of the three stages. Please bear in mind though that for the sake of this article we are only dealing with a single application from the opening sequence of *Pinan Godan* (from *Wado Ryu*) as demonstrated in pictures 1 to 4.



*bunkai* but in actual fact, it outlines only the first part of your *kata* analysis. For *kata* to be useful in the realm of self-protection, they need to (and of course do) have a very practical meaning. For something to be practically useful, it needs to be adaptable. Why? Simply because combat itself is never certain and the nature of fighting should

### The first stage: *Omote*

To begin to understand the movements from the *kata*, we need to first appreciate the 'ground rules' on which these apply and probably more importantly, what would constitute a bad or impractical application. Examples of these rules would include aligning the movement as a response against the typical real street attack, rather than the educated attack of another combat expert (i.e. head high kicks and long-range *gyakuzuki's* are out), or making sure that from the onset, the application gains almost immediate advantage over your antagonist and maintains this throughout (i.e. from conception to completion). I could go on and on about the rules associated with pragmatic *bunkai*, but I'm assuming that with the substantial material already covering this subject readily available, you will be at the very least appreciative of the idea. From this initial foundation, we can then construct an application using the first stage of *omote*.

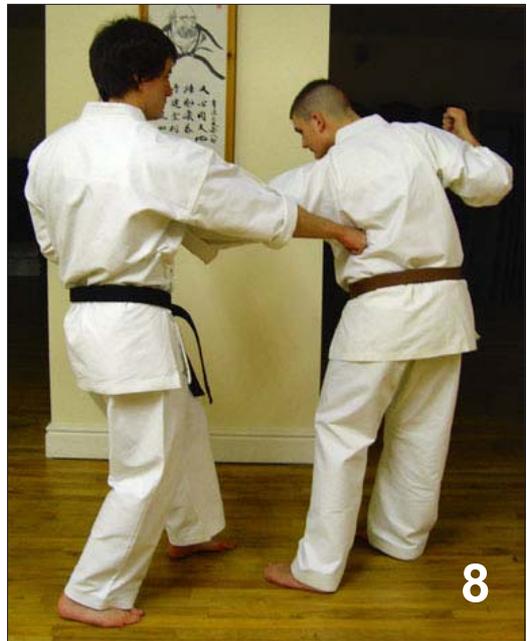
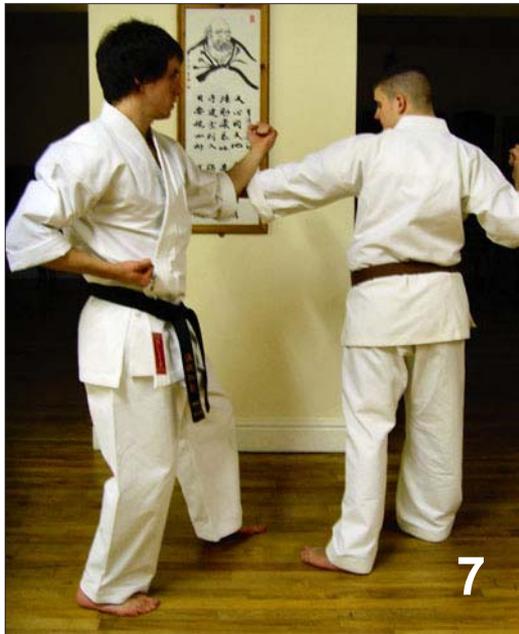
The word *omote* can be defined as 'outside' or 'front' and represents what can be seen in a movement readily and easily. Unfortunately, this is usually the end of the road for many who study

always consider the potential for change. That said though, within the *omote* stage of analysis, we tend to briefly embrace that luxury of a pre-defined sequence and look at what the movements of the form physically provide us with as they are presented.

A typical application at the stage of *omote* can be seen in pictures 5 to 11, which show a release from a wrist grab, counter, seize and choke. There are a couple of points to highlight here. Firstly, you'll notice that both upper limbs are being used in a positive way. Secondly, that the application uses the stances as transitional movements as opposed to static or stationary postures. These are both important points to consider in the analysis of *kata* movements and it's vital to emphasise that fact that all practical and efficiency aspects (not only these) should be used where possible during even this first stage of *bunkai*. Applications that have no practical use or do not provide a meaning for all significant movements should not really be considered at any stage; not even at *omote*.

### The second stage: *Henka*

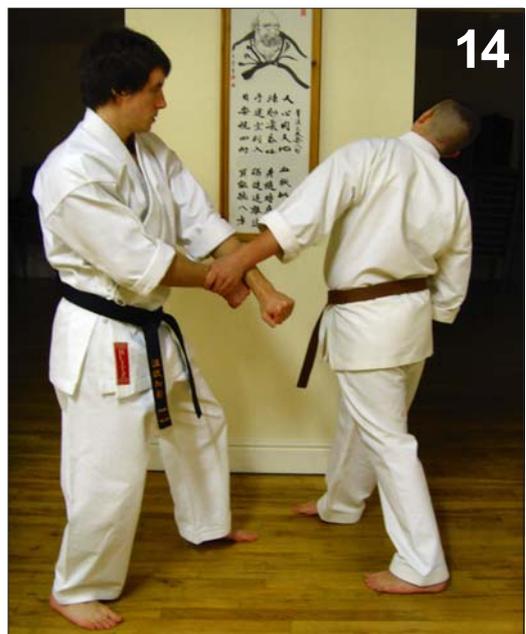
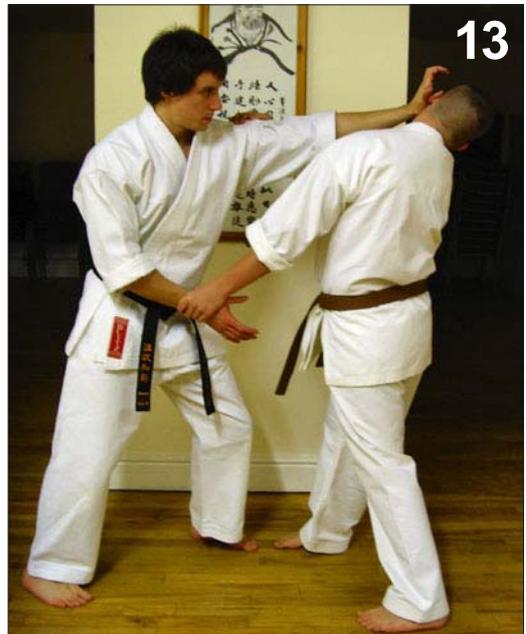
*Henka* means 'change' or 'transform' and represents the next level of *kata bunkai*. It is based on the idea that the many slight differences

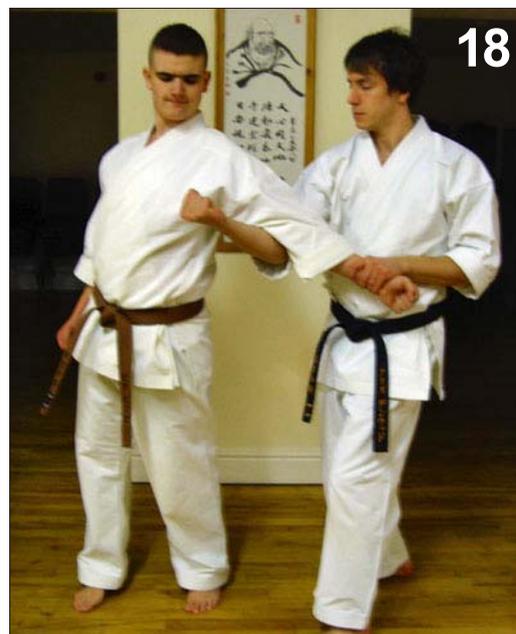
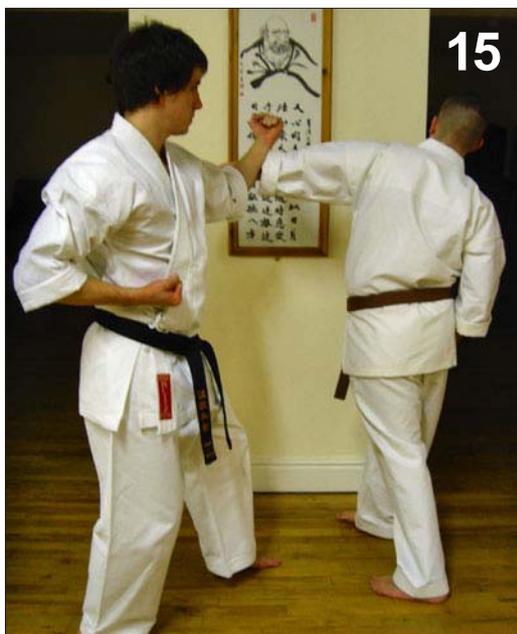


that can be seen in the same *kata* throughout a number of styles are simply nothing more than variations on a theme. We also know that during the modernisation process of *shuri-te*, *Anko Itosu* made slight alterations to a number of the traditional forms in order to make them easier to learn. It's also thought that a number of the original hand weapon formations were changed to the commonly used fist. This seems to make sense because many of the Chinese forms that pre-date karate heavily use open hand movements, whereby the more modern interpretations of the forms tend to focus more on closed fist techniques. The *Naha-te kata* of *Sanchin* is a typical example of this (since both 'closed' and 'open' versions of this kata are practiced). There's nothing to suggest that these small changes went as far to degrade the *kata* in any way, it just illustrates the human urge to adapt according to a particular purpose, approach or preference.

The second stage of *henka* allows the practitioner to become more open minded and accept the possible slight variations to the movement in order to see other options that may not have been considered at first. It also takes into account the fact that the movements in the form represent the heart of the application and therefore in many cases do not reference initial strikes, finishers or other subtleties that may have been either purposefully omitted (on the basis that these are common strategies throughout combat), or as a result of the 'aesthetic' modernisation of the form itself.

To give some examples of how the idea of *henka* can be applied to your analysis, please consider the variations shown in pictures 12 to 18 from the same part of *Pinan Godan kata* as previously described above. Here we can see the initial attack being made 'less formal' as a response to an attempted groin seize and the additional use of accentuating strikes before attempting to escape the wrist grip as per the *kata*. In addition, the second movement of the form (*chudan gyakuzuki* - mid-level reverse punch) is shown in slightly different ways (pictures 16 to 18), by considering the possibility of 'what if'? Here, the outline of the form is being maintained, however the weapon formation (i.e. fist, grab or open hand strike etc), the height (i.e. *gedan*, *chudan* or *jodan* etc) and the intention (i.e. as a strike, lock, or throw etc) are being questioned. This allows us





to become more adaptive in our analysis and instead of a limited number of 'direct applications'; we can now start to appreciate the fact that the intention of the *kata* movement could be used against a variety of situations.

Applying the stage of *henka* to your study will greatly increase your understanding of not only the form, but of the truths that surround the general process of karate training. In other words, it allows you to appreciate how the practical aspects are 'stitched' together in the art. *Henka* still has its limitations though, because you are still only left with what I call a 'box of tricks'. For instance, collecting ten thousand applications is of no use if you can't appreciate and malleably use the common principles on which these techniques rest. Equating to principles is by far the most useful way to train because it is the techniques themselves that are a product of the principles you've learned. This is where the third and final stage of technically analysing *kata* comes in.

So far I've suggested that *kata* should be a process of learning, rather than a single entity in itself and I've begun to explain the classical three-stage method of technically analysing the forms. In the second and final part of this article, I intend to look at third stage of *ura* and discuss how we can align our training towards the historical truth that each single *kata* represents a complete fighting system or style in its own right. If we can equate our learning in this specific way, then even the complete understanding only a couple of forms can easily be enough 'food for thought' to last us a whole lifetime!

# 英 悟 空 手 道 協 会

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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.

## The Way of Kata

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

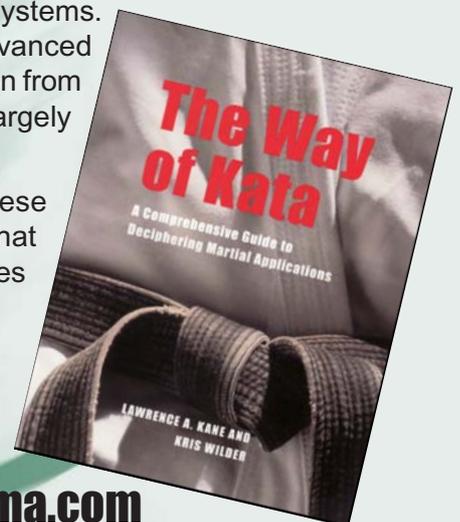
The ancient masters developed kata, or “formal exercises,” as fault-tolerant methods to preserve their unique, combat-proven fighting systems. Unfortunately, they deployed a two-track system of instruction where an ‘outer circle’ of students unknowingly received modified forms with critical details or 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.

This groundbreaking book by Kris Wilder & Lawrence Kane unveils these methods, not only teaching you how to analyze your kata to understand what it is trying to tell you, but also helping you to utilize your fighting techniques more effectively—both in self-defense and in tournament applications.

*“This comprehensive book bridges the gap between form and application in a realistic, easy-to-read and easy-to-apply manner” –*  
Loren Christensen, 7th degree black belt

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# The Way of Kata: Part 3

by Kris Wilder & Lawrence Kane

This is the third 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.

## Principles deciphering kata

In the previous articles we discussed that kata applications are rarely obvious and that there are a series of rules that can help practitioners decipher hidden techniques. We briefly discussed a number of the rules of *kaisai no genri*, the theory of uncovering hidden techniques in kata.

We will now shift our focus to some of the principles that form the philosophical context within which valid kata applications can be identified. They apply to most any martial art form that uses kata, particularly striking arts such as karate. These principles differ from the rules previously discussed in that they apply broadly to all techniques rather than to deciphering an individual kata movement.

To put it another way, the aforementioned rules are tactical in nature, deciphering practical applications from the specific movements of any particular kata. The principles we'll delve into now, on the other hand, form a strategic context within which practitioners can identify what types of applications work and thus weed out invalid interpretations of *bunkai* (fighting applications) from any kata. In order to make full use the rules, one must understand the principles, the foundation upon which they are built.

The first two of 15 principles will be covered in this article and then we will then begin to explore additional principles for understanding kata in subsequent articles.

### Principle 1 – There is more than one proper interpretation of any movement

*"In actual combat it will not do to be hampered or shackled by the rituals of kata. Instead, the*

*practitioner should transcend kata, moving freely according to the opponent's strengths and weaknesses."* – Gichin Funakoshi

There is more than one proper interpretation for any movement in kata. As Morio Higaonna wrote, "None of the movements of the kata is restricted to one application—in a real fight the variations of each application are unlimited." Of course there are some interpretations that are better than others. Practitioners are frequently taught only basic *bunkai* (fighting applications) and/or *kumite* (sparring). With a little creativity most can figure out *henka waza* (variation technique) on their own. *Okuden waza* (hidden technique), on the other hand, requires a "secret decoder ring." Its applications are rarely obvious.

The principle of more than one proper interpretation is really about creativity, thinking outside the box. We bring it up to spur your experimentation. According to Iain Abernethy, "it is a grave error to insist that a kata movement has only one single application. Each kata movement has many possibilities. To limit oneself to a single *bunkai* for a single movement is limiting to both the individual and the art of karate." He is right, of course. In fact the death of each master during ancient times held the risk of irrevocable knowledge loss. One of the original three branches of Okinawan karate *Tomari Te*, for example, is pretty much a lost art today.

When a practitioner learns to apply various principles and rules to decipher kata, such knowledge should be passed along, at least within that practitioner's school. While we acknowledge that newer students should not be overwhelmed with esoteric knowledge, nor should immature practitioners be taught lethal applications before they are responsible enough to handle them, there are very few truly valid reasons for instructors to withhold "secret" techniques from their advanced students.

Experiment! Have fun with your kata. Learn what works and what does not. Look for the best application for any given technique as it applies to you—your unique physical characteristics and body type, your mentality and emotional approach

to combat, and your other predilections. Decipher and share secret techniques amongst other practitioners of your style. What works best for you may not be best for them. On the other hand, you might just find a new interpretation that works even better than whatever you came up with on your own. Keep an open mind.

## **Principle 2 - Every technique should be able to end the fight immediately**

*"Bombs do not choose. They will hit everything."* – Nikita S. Khrushchev

The art of striking an opponent, whether it is in hand-to-hand combat or a technological warfare, is always based on two principles: accuracy and energy. Accuracy is simply hitting your target. Energy is the amount of power you can project into that target.

The most classic example of the trade-off of accuracy versus energy was found in the cold war between the United States and the former Soviet Union. The United States decided that it could strike multiple targets with just enough warheads to totally obliterate each one. The country's leaders spurred the development of precision guidance mechanisms that could deliver lethal cargo within inches of an intended target. Today's ubiquitous global positioning satellite (GPS) systems are an offshoot of that military technology.

The USSR, on the other hand, had less technical skill, albeit substantially higher than most other countries in the world. They chose to simply strike with as much mega tonnage as they could get into the air, destroying the target and everything for miles and miles around. A deficiency in accuracy for the Soviet military was solved through the development of bigger bombs. It was a trade off.

Hand-to-hand fighting works in much the same way. The more accurate you are, the less energy you need with each blow. Most members of the martial arts community have met an elderly practitioner or someone of small stature who can shatter bricks, boards, or bodies with effortless grace. As accuracy and energy converge, the results can be devastating. Each movement of a kata is designed to cause serious bodily harm to your opponent in the shortest amount of time possible. This is most obvious with strikes, but that is not the whole story.

Most times that you "block" an aggressive motion you are actually striking your opponent. At the very least, a good defensive movement should make

your opponent think twice about continuing to attack you. Any time you touch an opponent you should use that opportunity to damage them. We have witnessed more than one real fight where a martial artist broke, hyperextended, or dislocated his attacker's arm with a blocking technique. Defensive movements that stop or redirect an attack are just as likely as strikes to put the opponent out of the fight.

Offensively or defensively, if you have accurately attacked an aggressor's vital area you can elicit pain, temporary paralysis, dislocation of a joint, knockout, or even death. Eye, ear, throat, solar plexus, knee, and ankle blows can cripple or kill someone. Punching a person in the stomach, on the other hand, may just piss him or her off. All useful applications cause physiological damage to vital areas. It is critically important to understand where these areas are and how your kata techniques target them.

Acupuncture requires a high degree of precision as you are using a tiny needle to stimulate the nerve. A karate strike, on the other hand, does not need to be nearly as precise. In general the harder you hit, the larger the area you affect. Every movement in kata is designed to hurt someone. If you aim at a vital point, strike vigorously, and miss slightly, it really doesn't matter all that much. To go back to our opening analogy, you do not necessarily need the pinpoint precision of a U.S. nuclear missile if you hit hard enough like a larger Soviet bomb.

All blows should be full speed and full power every time. Realistically, it's only a feint if an opponent blocks it. We have seen many tournament fighters throw halfhearted fakes that would have connected had they put sufficient zip on their first strike. Instead, they were focusing on the follow-throughs that were ultimately blocked—laughable faux pas in a sparring competition; deadly mistake in a real fight.

The proper defensive mindset is "him, down, now!" You simply cannot mess around in a real fight and walk away unscathed. The ancient masters understood this all too well. They could not rely on modern medicine to repair damaged cartilage, stop internal hemorrhaging, or stave off infection. They intentionally designed every offensive movement (and many defensive ones as well) in every kata to immediately end the fight. Perceived applications that do not do this are simply wrong. In such cases there is a better, more

realistic application still waiting to be uncovered. You just have to find it. Every technique should be able to end a fight immediately.

### **Principle 3 – Strike to disrupt; disrupt to strike**

*“Whether fighting an enemy armed or unarmed, keep him on the defensive. Chase the enemy with your body and your spirit. This is excellent strategy. You can easily open targets for yourself with a little effort, but then you must have the courage to go in and kill the enemy without delay. You must be totally resolved when you are fighting; otherwise you will easily lose. By constantly creating difficulties for the enemy, you will force him to deal with more than one thing, giving you the advantage in killing him swiftly.”* – Miyamoto Musashi

Your attacker is rarely going to stand there like a makiwara (striking post) and let you apply your techniques unopposed. You need to disrupt him or her in order to be able to strike and strike to disrupt. Get the opponent off balance, upset his design, and move in for the kill.

This sounds ruthless, but it has to be. Remember, if there were any way to avoid a confrontation, we assume that you would have already taken it. The Chinese sage Lao Tzu wrote, “There is no glory in victory, and to glorify it despite this is to exult in the killing of men.” As a trained martial artist, the only fights you get into are those that are completely unavoidable. That means that the aggressor really wants to hurt you. Your life is on the line!

There are several philosophies about how to attack the body. The two fundamental versions are multiple attacks versus one hit, one kill. Multiple fast attacks from many angles can overwhelm an opponent to the point that his defenses can no longer function. One strike delivered to a vital area with sufficient power, on the other hand, is all that is needed for a victory. Both philosophies are valid and built into the strategic foundation of various arts.

When placed in a defensive situation the human body reacts by covering its vital areas. Those vitals can be best described as the centerline of the front of the body, or the conception vessel. The conception vessel runs down the exact center of the body from just underneath the lower lip to the area in front to the anus. Damage to the conception vessel rocks a person to his or her core, physically.

Today much emphasis is placed on core body strength. Whether in the National Football League,

the Canadian Football League, Major League Baseball, Premier League Soccer, competitive weight lifting, professional ice skating or even Pilates, core body strength is pushed because it provides the foundation for most physical actions. In attacking the conception vessel, or “cracking theceptor” as it is sometimes called, you are attacking with intent to destroy your opponent, to render him or her unable to respond with further attack. There are several means to crack the conception vessel; however, we will focus on striking since it is the most common.

As kids, our most common defense against attacks by older siblings or unruly classmates was to turn away, bend over at the waist, hunch our back, and cover our head with our arms. Occasionally we might move our hands around hoping to swat away a blow. This response is rooted in a natural reaction. These vital points, or soft bits, need to be protected and the very structure of the human body predetermines the way in which it protects itself. We get small and cover up. The mind then uses this natural pattern to fire off assisting signals to accomplish the goal of defense and, ultimately, survival.

People block, defend, or cover with their arms in the same way in which they eat, from outside to in. Again, this inward motion uses the body’s natural response of getting small and covering up. That is why inward blocks are faster than outward ones.

Try this drill with a partner: One person will attack (tori) while the other defends (uke). At first you will work outside-in, and then repeat the exercise inside-out. In both drills, tori pokes uke’s chest gently yet swiftly with his finger (almost like trying to tickle the uke). At first uke will start with his arms up and out to the sides, like the classic stance of surrendering to the police. With each poke, the uke drops his hand down and in to block. From this starting position uke should be able to stop or deflect every attack fairly easily, especially if he reaches forward and intercepts tori’s attacks very close to tori’s body.

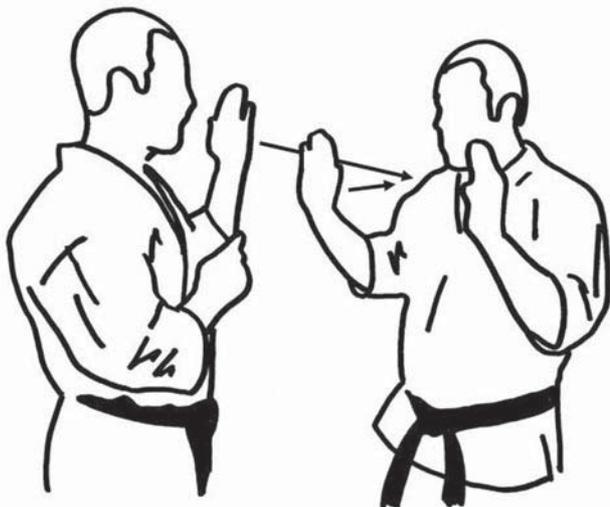
From this benchmark, tori will change his attack and aim for uke’s shoulder. Once again uke will try to block the attacks. Rather than down and in, his arms will move up and out. This should be significantly harder. Movements outward away from the core are always slower and less natural than movements in to protect it.



Tap Drills 1: Start



Tap Drills 2: Inside



Tap Drills 3: Outside

Now, let's get back to the philosophy of overwhelming assault versus a single killing strike. If you need to hurt someone severely, putting them out of a fight, you need to attack his or her core, the best defended area. Whether you use a single attack or a million, you must disrupt the opponent's natural reaction in order to reach a vital area. Practically, it is always best to assume that you will need more than one successful strike to end a fight. After all, there are several documented cases of criminals continuing to attack police officers after being shot multiple times. Bullets tend to hit a bit harder and sink a bit deeper than fists. If it takes less strikes to put down an attacker than expected so much the better.

Either way, "strike to disrupt/disrupt to strike" is a very effective methodology for breaking through an opponent's defenses. If you try to punch someone in the face, for example, odds are good that he or she will block it. Even untrained individuals are instinctively good at protecting their heads. Stamping on a person's foot or kicking his or her ankle first, however, causes the head and hands to follow the pain. The person involuntarily looks down and flinches inward. This usually opens up a shot to the head. You strike the foot, disrupting the stance and concentration. This disruption affords you an instant of opportunity to attack the head.

Most kata work the body: striking to disrupt, and then using the temporary disruption for an even better strike. Attacks to the feet, knees, or ankles, slaps to the ears, and assaults to the hands, wrists or elbows are all obvious disruptive strikes that are much easier to achieve than attacking the core directly.

The idea is to work your way in, and then crack the conception vessel. To ensure clarity, it is important to understand that such actions can and usually should be simultaneous rather than consecutive. For example, the aforementioned ankle kick/head strike can be performed with a simultaneous right to left kick and left to right strike, a kind of scissor movement. Furthermore, good stances allow a practitioner to assault an opponent's legs with his or her own feet and/or knees simply by moving forward while simultaneously attacking with hands or arms.

Read more from Kris Wilder at his blog, "The Striking Post." at [www.thestrikingpost.blogspot.com](http://www.thestrikingpost.blogspot.com)

# Kata Training for Fighting Reflexes

by J. W. Titchen

**R**eflexes can be a tricky term when discussing martial arts and fighting as a large number of martial artists do not distinguish between actions that are under their conscious control and actions that are not.

When you go to the doctor and have a medical and he/she taps your knee with a hammer and your leg twitches, that is a reflex. When your tongue is depressed and you gag - that too is a reflex. You are not consciously controlling it and you cannot stop it. Do we have similar reflexes applicable to combat? The answer is yes, the flinch. The body is hard wired to protect itself from danger and given the right stimuli, your flinch reflex will kick in. Your eyes will shut briefly and your hands and forearms will attempt first to move to cover the command centre (or perceived area of vulnerability) and second to push away danger

I use the term 'right stimuli' here because the body only flinches when the brain consciously or unconsciously perceives danger. You might note that you rarely flinch in sparring or hardly ever see flinching in the ring. This is *where Blauer Tactical Systems' A-SAP model explains what is happening.*

Whether you flinch or not as a course of action is determined by your AWARENESS which is empowered by your consent and skill. Consent can be subdivided into professional and personal - whether you are in a situation by choice/profession or not, and whether you are mentally primed to be there. The consent to participate for money and/or enjoyment in an arranged ring fight and the consent to be in an argument that escalates into a fight or an unprovoked assault/mugging late on a Saturday night are quite different beasts. In most real fights one of the participants never really consented to be there, and the catch up mental game that can ensue until they accept that physical response is the only solution will slow their reactions <sup>(1)</sup>. Skill can also be divided into scenario specific and attack specific. Here you can see how your awareness is highly empowered in the dojo - you know the rules, the etiquette and the techniques - there are no real surprises, you even know you are unlikely to get deliberately injured. The scenario and skills form a comfort zone that empowers your



awareness. The scenario of being jumped in the dark, of being subjected to verbal abuse at station/bus stop will change the tools that you will want to use, and if you haven't trained the scenario you may be too shocked to even use any skills. In the same vein the pre-fight ritual for such a scenario will be different to that of a dojo or competition, as will the way the attack is made. If you have trained for a particular scenario and attack and you have mentally given yourself 'consent' to engage then your awareness will be high and you are more likely to be able to make conscious as opposed to reflexive responses to the stimuli.

Awareness can also be reduced as well as empowered. The SPEED, AGGRESSION and PROXIMITY of a stimulus will reduce AWARENESS leading to a greater likelihood of a flinch reaction.

The good news is that you do not need to train the flinch - it is built in. The bad news is that if you are spending time working other methods of intercepting attacks then in the one instance when you will truly need them, when you are SAP-ed, you've spent a large amount of your time honing a fairly redundant skill because you will flinch rather than perform that complex motor skill.

Now if there are movements in Kata that mimic the flinch - will practicing them improve your reflex? No. Practicing them will improve your ability to fight because following the 'fake' flinch in the Kata you move from that position into a combative application. Thus what Kata can do is help you make a transition from a natural hard-wired

protective movement into a trained combative movement seem reflexive.

This could be the most important thing that Kata gives us. There are clear differences between the movements in sparring and in Kata and the key to those differences is that both are reflections of differing scenario and attack specific skill sets. The awareness created in the sparring and sport arena makes redundant the employment of natural movements that the body will use in a 'real' arena (and if you've pulled off your sport techniques in that arena then either you hit first or the other guy telegraphed his intentions so clearly or attacked so weakly that your AWARENESS was never SAP-ed). Kata by contrast often mimics (though now in stylised form) the flinch and then practices moving from that to a combative strike. If you look at the set up for all of Karate's receiving techniques - Age Uke, Shuto Uke, Uchi Uke, Gedan Barai and so forth you can see an arm extended to ward away danger and in many cases a hand attempting to shield the head.

There is an intrinsic problem here that Kata gives us the drills and skill sets needed to move from a natural position in a self defence fight while sparring improves our timing, hand eye coordination, reactions and conditioning, while failing to properly prepare us for what our body will do under an extra dojo/mat situation when someone attacks with none of the pre-contact cues that sparring provides. Kata's weakness is that we are using it as a solo exercise rather than taking its movements into the paired area of training. Kata techniques do not work so well in sparring because the stimuli and attacks that they are often paired with are all wrong. Kata based 'sparring' should be against habitual acts of violence. There is a truism in the joke that the Shotokan Kata *Wankan* is a solo recreation of movements that were originally intended to give a more productive experience as a two person exercise.

If we are to make Kata a reflexive exercise then we need to be able to use its initiation point in reflex based techniques. As a result we need to mimic

the flinch. To train the almost-reflexive movement from hard-wired flinch to combative counter the



Kata training needs to be paired. All the Kata drills I use initiate from either a flinch based movement against a habitual act of violence or a 'failed' Kata attacking/controlling movement following a flinch based movement. As a result with the *Heian Flow System* I created an extensive Kata based sparring repertoire where techniques fit together like lego and you begin to unconsciously shift between techniques and strategies according to stimuli. Iain Abernethy has also produced an extensive Kata based sparring repertoire for students to work on and Bill Bugar (*Five Years, One Kata*) produced a guide as to how to turn your

Kata into a two person training regime to create a fighting system. The information that modern Karateka need to bring their Kata training alive is out there and steadily growing. When you consider how much time you've spent drilling Kata solo, you may find it's time you did them justice by taking them to the next level by experiencing their use as two man training systems.

*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](http://www.d-a-r-t.org.uk), email [jwt.dart@gmail.com](mailto:jwt.dart@gmail.com). He is also a Personal Defence Readiness™ Coach with Blauer Tactical Systems and an accredited instructor with the National Federation for Personal Safety and is available to teach both self-protection, use of force and the law, physical restraint 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.*

**Note 1:** When I describe 'physical response' as the only solution in this context (one of an actual fight as opposed to an argument) I mean the recognition that all attempts at negotiation and/or retreat have failed and that the other person will hit first unless you do. Almost all fights can be avoided by keeping appropriate company, avoiding locations where trouble is likely to happen, learning good communication skills and displaying appropriate body language.

# 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.

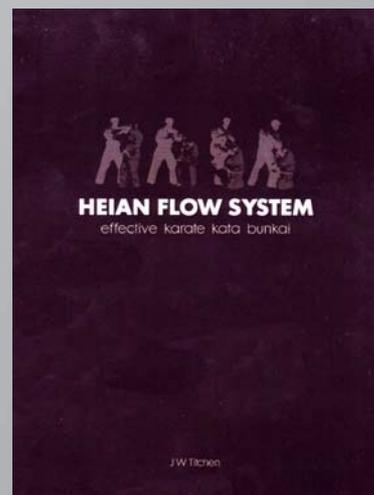
The author has trained in several martial arts and presently holds instructor grades in four separate systems. In addition to martial arts classes he has taught in secondary education, university and the military. His research training as a Doctor of History has always focused his approach to Karate; 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 Burgar

*"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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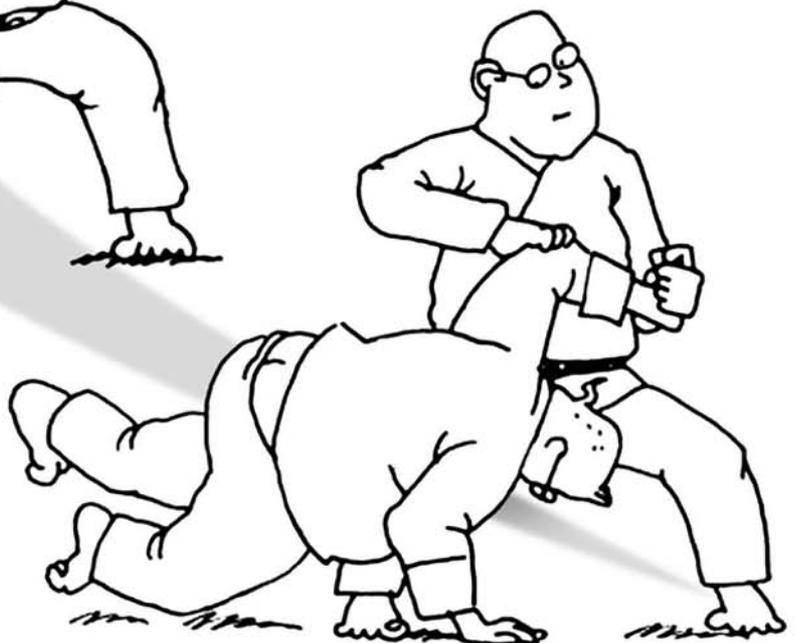


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# Creating an Effective Application – Do San

by Matthew Sylvester

Many people are still of the mind that patterns are something completely removed from practical self-defence or street situations. They practice them to perfect their technique, to gain focus, to get their next belt and to keep fit. These are all worthy and valid explanations. They do not help the student on what should be their true path through the martial arts, self-preservation.

Patterns are not merely exercises of the body and mind. They are not dances to be performed to the best of your technical ability, although good technique does mean good application of technique under pressure.

Patterns are codified ways and means of incapacitating opponents. They contain techniques and combinations of techniques, designed to at the very least injure an opponent. Let me clarify three things.

1 - A technique can be anything from twin forearm 'block', to walking stance, to a side kick. A combination therefore contains either, or, or all of these.

2 - A punch to the face hurts, a sidekick to the side of the knee injures.

3 - Patterns were not designed to be used at sparring distance. They were designed with 'in your face' situations in mind.

The systems of old used one pattern as the basis for everything, it is only since systems were merged and belt tests were introduced with the constant striving for 'progress', that more and more patterns were added. This is why Tae Kwon Do now has 24 patterns.

The earlier patterns of Tae Kwon Do are by far the most dangerous, and contain by far the greater number of techniques designed to injure, maim and kill an opponent.

The sequence below illustrates clearly how 'wedging block, front kick double punch' can be used in a street situation. For clarity's sake, the distance between attacker and defender have been artificially widened beyond that of 'conflict

distance'. The photos were taken in one go, using a multiple exposure shot hence the movement blur. This is captured as is, hence the opponent's face in picture three as he encounters the block. In the first three photos the defender moves into the chamber for the wedging block using it to intercept a haymaker swing punch.

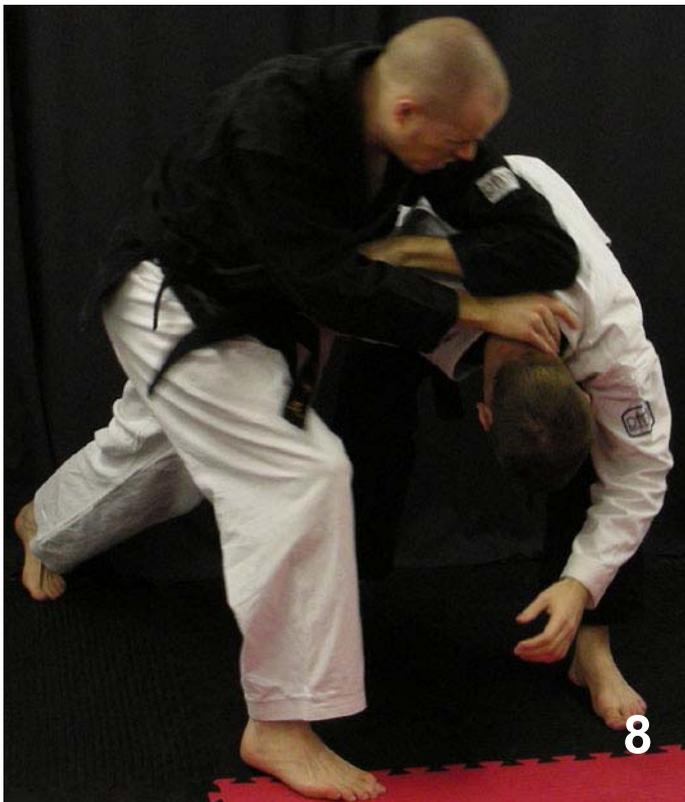




The left hand grabs for the opponent's wrist area whilst the right hand/forearm runs up their arm and into their neck points. This allows a good basing for the kick through their lead leg and also shifts their weight back off their front leg. If it's too posted then the kick does not achieve full potential. The blow to the neck should also stun them at the very least. In the final photo of the above sequence I am using the outer forearm to check them (photos 4 to 6)



Rather than go into the double punch combination neck break I have gone for an elbow to GB20 on the back of their head at the base of the skull. This will drive them down into the ground and at the very least stun them (photos 7 & 8).



## Critical Analysis

So now we move on to rating the actual technique. For the sake of the article I'll use the following. Very Bad - Bad - Good - Very Good - Excellent. It's up to you whether you use this or not or just go with pro's and con's. Before writing this article I hadn't actually sat down and gone the various steps set out by Bill in order to rate it in such depth so let's hope it scores well!

### Proactive

This is not a proactive application. I'm actually allowing my opponent to attack me in order to apply it and so scores the lowest possible. The immediate grab and follow up however allow me to not only gain control of the opponent but to strike into a vulnerable area.

Rating: Good to Very Good

### Keeps initiative

As with above this scores lowly to start with but then reaches the higher end of the scale as you continue to strike and control the opponent before taking them to the ground.

Rating: Good to Very Good

### Maximises Safety

Protection of the head is good as both hands are up and in front. My forearms are cutting in and I'm pressing towards his attacking arm whilst stepping in so I'm unlikely to take a hit from my own hands bouncing back. My stance is rooted and my weight distribution is even. I'm not on the outside but I'm covered, rooted and well-balanced.

Rating: Excellent

### Maximises Redundancy

The technique can still work even if one hand doesn't do the work properly. I can still block the technique and it really doesn't matter that much if I miss either the grab, strike or knee because the other two will allow me to keep going. If they're swinging with their other arm as well then my right hand can be used to block that and I flow into right outer forearm block followed by left cross/palm/elbow.

Rating: Excellent

### Workable with adrenaline

Nothing here is technically difficult. The right hand strike and left hand grabs are also pure nature

and there's no fine motor skill required to do either. The kick is kept nice and low and both the kick and punch could effectively be flailing techniques, they're still going to work to some extent. Aspects of the opponent are kept in view all the time with my head moving in accordance to the active hand/foot. Initially though, I am slightly to the left side rather than straight on.

Rating: Excellent

### **Works with instinct**

I'm instinctively 'covering' my head/face with both my hands and doing so with a natural flinch response, e.g., if something comes towards your face your hands come up.

Rating: Excellent

### **Maximises Predictable Response**

I know that if I put this application in hard his arm is going to be dead and drop to the side. The strike into the neck is going to hopefully stun him and weaken his legs whilst making sure that his head keeps turned away from me.

Rating: Excellent

### **Unbalances the opponent**

Both the initial response and the kick can unbalance the opponent. The initial technique may well cause him to bounce off of your arms with his arm going down and causing him to stumble backwards. The kick requires very little strength in order to completely floor the guy.

Rating: Excellent

### **Leads the mind of the opponent**

The initial response can stop him dead through pain and inability to use his arm. The strike to the neck can stun him and takes his eyes away from his target and will start him thinking about defence. The kick to the leg sends him crashing face first into the pavement. He's not going to be thinking about attacking you once you get started.

Rating: Excellent

### **Low Maintenance**

This is simple to do it. The initial response is a flinch, followed by what can be reduced to a flailing strike into the neck and a front kick. Complete novices can do this perfectly well.

Rating: Excellent

### **Range**

This starts from outside of the fence so hopefully gives you decent warning of the attack coming in and works well within the range of the swinging punch. The step in closes the distance greatly.

Rating: Excellent

### **Simple**

There is nothing advanced or complex about this technique. It's easy and fast to perform.

Rating: Excellent

### **Transferable Skills**

You're practicing a flinch covering of the head, outer forearm, grab and a front kick. All of which are found throughout the pattern Do San.

Rating: Excellent

### **Overall Balance of Pattern**

If I was solely studying Do San this is not the only technique that can be applied to a right swinging punch as the starting movements of the pattern have a good response to this attack as well.

Rating: Good

So, after looking at the technique in-depth I'm relieved to see that it's basically 'excellent' and one that I should continue to train in and drill rather than discard. If it had scored lower then I would have willingly discarded it for another technique that scored higher as discarding a technique should be looked at in a positive light. If I only have a few techniques to use against a higher number of attacks then I'm less likely to freeze whilst my brain searches through a myriad of techniques in order to respond and I'm therefore becoming a better self-defence exponent.

It's important to bear in mind however that this is my technique in that it works for me and my body threw it out without thinking. Ray on the other hand performed a left lazy rising elbow block to my arm (completely covering his head as he did so followed by what was basically a left lower outer forearm, a slight step in and straight right cross to throat. This is straight out of Sajo Jirugi and Chon Ji, something that he has drilled in a lot more than other techniques. That is his technique. You may well find something completely different and if you do, please let me know what you find!

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Dear Readers,

Following the many requests we have received, our next issue we will be including a letters page! If you have some feedback on the magazine or some thoughts on the practical side of the martial arts, then please feel free to write to us via [jissenletters@iainabernethy.com](mailto:jissenletters@iainabernethy.com). We obviously can't promise space in the magazine for all the letters we receive; however, every letter will be read and we will feature the best letters in the next issue! I hope you enjoy the opportunity to have your say in Jissen and I look forward to hearing from you soon!

All the best,

I - *Abernethy* 

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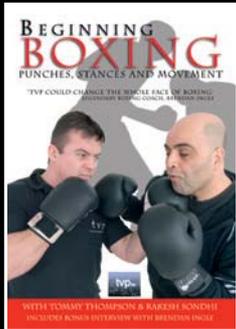
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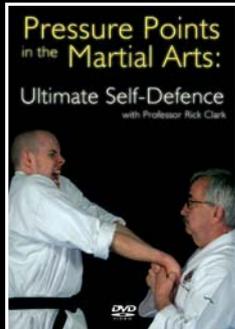
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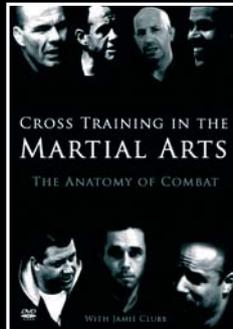
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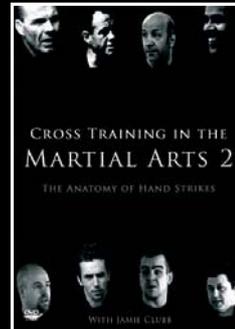
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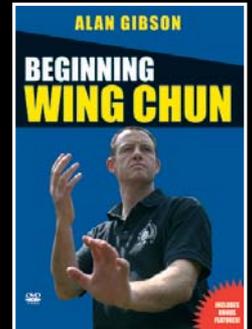
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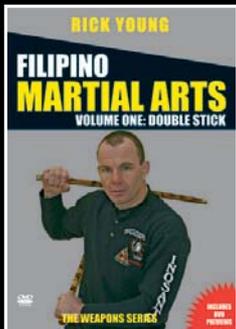
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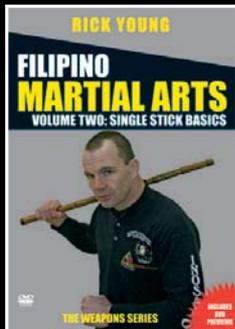
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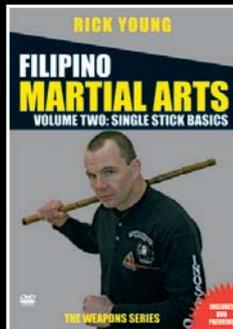
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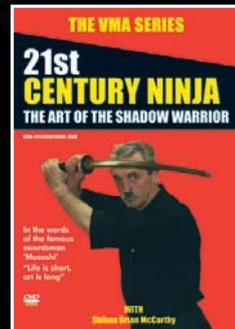
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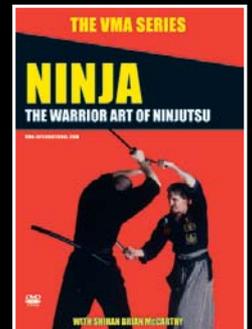
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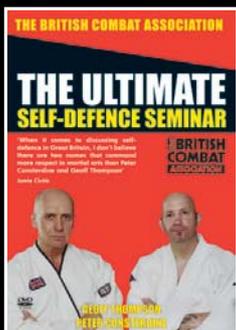
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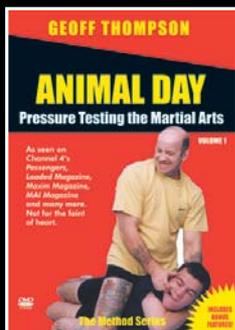
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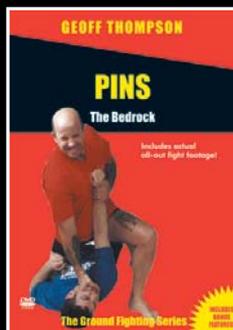
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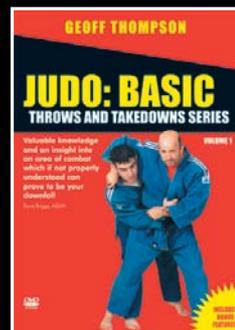
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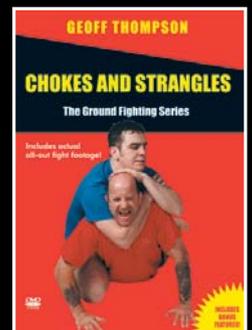
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# Power & Impact

by Iain Abernethy

In this article we will be covering the basic principles of power generation and the use of impact equipment. In order to fight effectively it is vital that you can deliver powerful strikes. The ability to hit hard is also the most important skill when it comes to the physical side of self-protection.

Many self-protection situations will be preceded by an exchange of dialogue which will typically take place at “punching distance”. With correct training we will be able to actively take control of a situation, in the dialogue stage, through the use of a powerful pre-emptive strike.

In the book *Karate-Do Kyohan*, Gichin Funakoshi – the founder of Shotokan Karate – wrote, *“When there are no avenues of escape or one is caught even before any attempt to escape can be made, then for the first time the use of self-defense techniques should be considered. Even at times like these, do not show any intention of attacking, but first let the attacker become careless. At that time attack him concentrating one’s whole strength in one blow to a vital point and in the moment of surprise, escape and seek shelter and help.”* This is very sound advice for self-protection. Hit hard when the enemy does not expect it and then get out of there! The key physical skill in all of this is of course the ability to hit hard. Even if the situation should develop into a “fight”, you need to be able to deliver powerful strikes in order to bring the fight to a quick conclusion.

Karate is an art based upon the “one-blow, one kill” concept – i.e. every single blow, no matter how many we actually throw, is capable of being a fight finisher – and hence one would expect that powerful strikes are something that all moderately experienced karateka would possess. However, the modern practises of too much “air punching”, not enough impact training, and the influence of point sparring have produced karateka who are unable to strike with real power.

It is the transfer of bodyweight that makes a strike powerful. When a strike hits the target, the entire bodyweight of the striker must be behind

that strike if it is to have fight-stopping power. An arm accounts for around 6% of the average person’s bodyweight. Striking with the arm alone will result in a very weak punch.

One of the main reasons why karateka may deliver “arm only punches” is that modern point sparring inadvertently encourages moving the striking hand as quickly as possible in order to “get the point”. Because the speed of the hand and arm are overemphasised, the body motion is frequently curtailed and this results in an “arm only” punch.

Of course, most karateka are encouraged to twist their hips into the punch when sparring. However, this twist is normally done in a way that gives extra reach to the punch – in order to bridge the gap between the combatants – as opposed to rotating the hips in a way that effectively transfers bodyweight. Extra reach is something that is not required in the close-range combat associated with live situations. This “twist for reach” doesn’t add much power to the punch. The resulting impact, what little of it there is, is again predominately down to arm movement alone.

In much of modern karate training, due to the emphasis on point scoring, the hand is often the first thing to move when a punch is thrown. Alternatively, it is also very common to see the hand and hip move at the same time. Both ways are ineffective if the aim is to generate real power. A powerful punch needs bodyweight behind it. Because the hand can move faster than the mass of the body, the body needs to move first so that the hand makes contact when the body motion is at its peak. The most effective way to generate power is therefore to move the hand last.

To generate fight-stopping power we should move the feet first (if appropriate), then the hips, and finally the hand. The body moves and then the hand transfers the resulting movement of the bodyweight into the opponent. If the hand moves first or at the same time as the hip, the bodyweight has either not moved or has only moved a small amount at the time the hand



makes “impact”. There is therefore an insignificant amount of bodyweight to transfer and the impact will be chiefly down to the arm motion alone. The resulting punch will be very weak.

Another common error when delivering punches is to twist from the centre of the body so that one side of the hip travels forward whilst the other side is going backward. When pivoting from the centre – even if the timing is correct and the arm is the last thing to move – the nature of the hip movement means that a significant amount of bodyweight is travelling in the opposite direction to the punch. This is not really of any great concern if the aim is simply to get the hand to the target. However, to punch with power at close-range, you should pivot from the side of your hip so that the whole of the body is travelling in the direction of the punch.

We have already established that in much of modern training the movement of bodyweight is not emphasised anywhere near as much as the speed at which the karateka can get their hand to the target. The result of this practise is punches that lack power. In the past, when karate was practised solely as an effective combat system, one would expect the body mechanics to be geared towards developing maximum impact. If we are looking for real power, we should ignore the mechanics used for modern karateka vs. karateka sparring and instead analyse the mechanics of the traditional punches found in the kata.

One of the first karate techniques I was ever taught was the “Junzuki” or “Oi-Zuki”. This punch

is found throughout the kata and is frequently the first basic punch taught in most karate dojos. As a slight aside, the way in which the majority of karateka are taught to apply Junzuki is far from practical. However, this not a fault of the punch itself; the problem is a widespread misunderstanding of how the punch should be applied. It’s not the purpose of this particular article to look at the application of the punch itself (see my Applied Karate or Bunkai-Jutsu DVDs). What I want to examine in this article is the body mechanics of the technique.

Junzuki was taught to me as a fluid motion where the feet move first, then the hips (pivoting from the side of the hip), and then finally the hand moves to deliver the punch (there are some great diagrams and text that explain this technique in detail in Shingo Ohgami’s “*Introduction to Karate*”). The fundamental concepts introduced by this technique, and other traditional punches, should always be adhered to. We should always move the feet in the direction of the punch, either by stepping or hitching (if appropriate) and then pivot from the side of the hip. Now that the body is in motion, we move the arm to transfer the generated energy into the opponent. The motion of the hip, and the delay of the hand, means that a torque is generated in the torso and hence the hand will be dynamically whipped forward.

It’s also important to note that the impact is made as we are moving. Therefore any stance should be considered the end of the technique: not the start. We don’t assume a stance to throw a technique. We assume a stance as we are throwing a technique. The stance is where the weight ends up after it has been driven through the target.

I must emphasise again that in order to effectively transfer the movement of the bodyweight into the target, the hand (or whatever striking surface is being used) should move last. When emphasising that the hand should always move last, some people worry that the technique will be “too slow”. You should understand that the hand is only “delayed” for a tiny fraction of a second before being dynamically driven forward at high speed due to the torque in the body. And if you don’t “delay” the hand, in an attempt to get the hand to the target as quickly as possible, it will do nothing to the opponent when it does get



to the target! To strike with real power, you need to stick to the principles demonstrated by kata.

At this point I'd like to quickly mention that in many dojos the "power mechanics" of the traditional punches have been contaminated by the "speed and reach mechanics" of modern sparring. This means that not all karateka will teach and practise the traditional punches in the way outlined above. However, the majority of the high ranking karateka that I've trained with do teach punching in this way.

For karate to be practised as a practical combat system, we need to adhere to the power principles of correctly taught kata, regardless of whether the punch in question is a traditional punch or a modern variation. When practising your strikes be sure to move in a way that gets your bodyweight behind them. By sticking to solid principles of power generation you will be able to strike with real power and ensure that you practise karate as a practical fighting system.

Personally I've never come across anyone who can hit as hard as Peter Consterdine 8th dan. Nor have I come across anyone who can communicate the principles of power generation as succinctly as Peter. If you are serious about wishing to hit hard, I strongly recommend you check out Peter's "PowerStrike" DVD.

In addition to understanding the basic body mechanics of power generation, we also need to ensure that we put our knowledge into practise against impact equipment. In the past, all karateka made use of makiwara and other such impact equipment. However, in many modern dojos the only thing that is ever struck is the air. I'd now like to move on and look at the various

types of impact equipment available and how we can make use of them to increase the power of our strikes.

Before we move on to look at these pieces of equipment in turn, I feel a word of caution is in order. The incorrect delivery of techniques against a striking surface can result in severe injury. Please ensure that you receive tuition from a qualified and experienced instructor before undergoing this type of training.

### **Makiwara**

Although there are numerous types of makiwara, the main ones are the standing type and the hanging type.

The standing makiwara is predominately used to develop hand and arm techniques. Through the repeated striking of the makiwara, the hands become conditioned, technique is improved and the karateka's ability to deliver effective strikes is vastly increased. The standing makiwara is a great training tool, but its main drawback is its lack of versatility. The target is always at the same height and distance, hence accuracy is not developed and the practise of combinations is severely limited. I'm not saying that you should not use the standing makiwara – because as I said, it's a great piece of equipment – but it should be used in conjunction with the other items discussed in this article.

The hanging makiwara is less common than its standing counterpart, but it is still a good piece of equipment. The hanging makiwara was predominately used to practise kicks, but it was also used in order to develop thrusting punches.

### **Focus-mitts**

The focus-mitts – also referred to as 'Hook & Jab Pads' – are a great and versatile tool to aid in the development of your striking skills. When used correctly they will improve your power, accuracy, versatility and your stamina (if used for long enough). There are no doubt some who will say that the focus-mitts are not a "traditional" piece of equipment and hence they don't belong in the traditional karate dojo. Whilst it is true that the formulators and developers of karate didn't use focus-mitts in their training, that doesn't mean that we shouldn't! Whilst it was relatively easy for the karateka of the past to get some rope, straw and a wooden post to make a makiwara, it

would be impossible for them to get the modern materials needed to make a pair of focus-mitts. If the masters of the past had been able to access focus-mitts, I feel confident that they would have embraced them as a way to enhance their striking skills.

The main advantage of the focus-mitts over other pieces of equipment is their versatility. The person wearing the mitts can position them so that the majority of striking techniques and combinations can be practised. The focus-mitts are a great piece of equipment that can help to develop impact, footwork and accuracy.

The focus-mitts are my favourite piece of impact equipment. However, they do have their limitations; particularly when it comes to kicking. Focus mitts are OK for practising roundhouse and groin kicks, but they cannot be used effectively for side and front kicks.

### **The Punch-Bag**

The punch-bag is arguably the number one piece of equipment for the development of power. The mass of the bag means that it can be used to practise practically all of the techniques found within the traditional kata. This includes hand strikes, punches, elbows, knees, head-butts and kicking techniques. The bag is great for developing impact, footwork, combinations and stamina. However, the punch-bag is not that useful for developing accuracy due to its size.

For the karateka, a fairly long bag is best (about five or six feet in length). A standard boxing-style bag will be too short. Although boxers never hit below the waist, a great many karate techniques do. In particular, it should be remembered that in live situations kicking techniques should be delivered below waist height (although there are benefits to the practise of high kicking in training); hence we need a bag that is long enough to allow us to practise combinations that include both high and low strikes. The bag is a great piece of kit that is a real confidence builder. It is one thing to perform a movement against the air, but it's something else entirely to actually hit the bag with it and feel its effects. Through bag-work you will be able to ensure that your techniques are effective and can develop large amounts of impact when required.

### **The Kick-Shield**

As its name suggests, the kick-shield is predominately used for the development of kicking techniques. However, it is possible to use the kick-shield to develop elbows, knees, punches etc. One of the advantages of this piece of equipment is that the person holding the kick-shield can move around and this makes the actual placing of the strikes more realistic. Because kicks are so powerful, it is vital that the person on the receiving end holds the shield correctly.

Another advantage that the kick-shield has over other pieces of equipment is that you get a much better appreciation of the true effect of the blow because you can observe the effects upon the person holding the shield. If you deliver an elbow strike to the shield that knocks your partner off their feet, it's a pretty safe assumption that if your partner had not been holding the shield, and if they hadn't braced themselves, then that the elbow would have proved to be a stopping blow.

It is vital that you make use of this equipment in order to develop powerful and effective strikes. It may sound obvious (because it is!) but if you want to be able to hit hard, you need to practise hitting things hard. Practising against the air can be a useful way to refine basic technique, but it will not develop power. Being able to hit hard is the number one physical skill when it comes to self-protection. Be sure to regularly train with impact equipment in order to develop that vitally important skill.

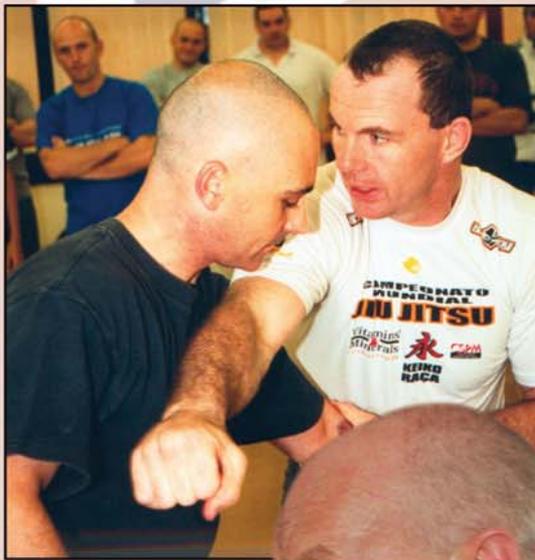


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## NOVEMBER 2008

Celebrating 15 years at the very top of the U.K. martial arts scene, the BCA will this year be holding a residential course in November, showcasing the very best exponents of not only practical personal combat, but of traditional systems and how they can be made to work in many spheres of life.

To be held at Lilleshall National Sports Centre, there will be not only training sessions, but a full programme of lectures and discussion groups, open to non BCA members and spearheaded by the Association's Chief Instructors, Geoff Thompson and Peter Consterdine. There will be a line-up of some of the foremost Instructors with Rick Young, 'Mo' Teague, John Skillen, Iain Abernethy, Russell Stutely and many others.



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# Jissen 実戦

Issue 4 Coming Soon!

