

# Jissen 実戦

The FREE online Practical Martial Arts Magazine

Issue 6



**Styles: Are They Killing Karate?**

**How to Win a Bar Fight**

**Never Give UP!**

**Flow in Modern Karate Kata**

**"Bouncer" by Geoff Thompson**

**Interview with UK's Dave Turton!**



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# EDITORIAL

## ISSUE 6

Welcome to the 6<sup>th</sup> issue of Jissen! I'd like to begin by apologising for the delay in getting this issue to you. I've been so busy over the last few months that it became obvious that I was not going to get this issue finished on time.



Helen (my wife) picked up the slack and this added in another slight delay while she got familiarised with all the typesetting software. I think you'll agree Helen as done a great job and the good thing is that the magazine is no longer entirely reliant on me for progress. The 7<sup>th</sup> issue is already being put together. I am therefore sorry for this delay, but the good news is all future magazines should be as regular as clockwork.

If you have a look at the contents page opposite, you can see that this issue has been well worth the wait! We have a great interview with Dave Turton, an article by world renowned realist Geoff Thompson (with more to come from Geoff in future issues) and articles on a whole host of subjects including multiple opponents, improvised weapons, kata application, flow drills, ancient European fighting arts and even how to fight a horse!

I hope you enjoy this latest issue, and if you are new to Jissen please visit [www.jissenmag.com](http://www.jissenmag.com) where you can download all back issues at the great price of free!

Thanks once again for all your support of Jissen

All the best,

I - Abernethy

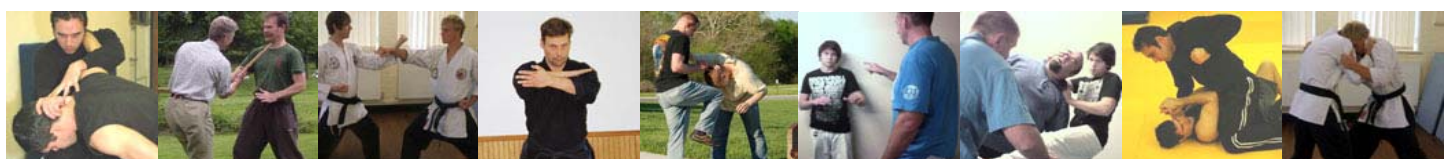




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# Martial Arts Scepticism: The Pornography of Reality Based Self-Defence

by Jamie Clubb

Ockham's razor is a centuries old principle that argues for simplicity, reductionism and minimalism. Many scientists and a good number of mainstream historians use it to shave off theories that overcomplicate matters. Supporters of Ockham's razor put forward the idea that the simplest solution to anything is usually the correct one. It would appear that this philosophy is carried by the vast majority of those who are interested in the practice of martial arts as a means for self protection. For example, many self defence practitioners support the "log-jam" theory, where the superficial practice of too many combative techniques can overload and confuse a person when they are met with a stressful situation. Then there is the argument against fine motor skill techniques. Again, in a stressful situation when blood is leaving the brain to engage muscles it is more difficult to perform techniques that require a greater degree of accuracy and coordination. The use of the more aesthetically pleasing techniques such as high kicks, acrobatic moves, dramatic throws or complex locks are also generally dismissed as low percentage/high risk moves.

There are those who have completely embraced these principles as laws and built up entire systems around them. Seeing themselves as neither traditionalists nor sportsmen and women many have placed themselves under the moniker of Reality-Based Self-Defence or RBSD. They see their training as having the singular goal of being dedicated towards training for defence in the modern world. However, as we will see, far from creating minimalistic systems of pragmatic self protection, many are making the same errors they accuse others of making.

Some RBSD use a different type of aesthetic. Their promotional pictures are a type of pornography, where the visceral ugliness of the "real" techniques takes precedence of effectiveness and efficiency. Pick up a mainstream martial arts magazine today and you



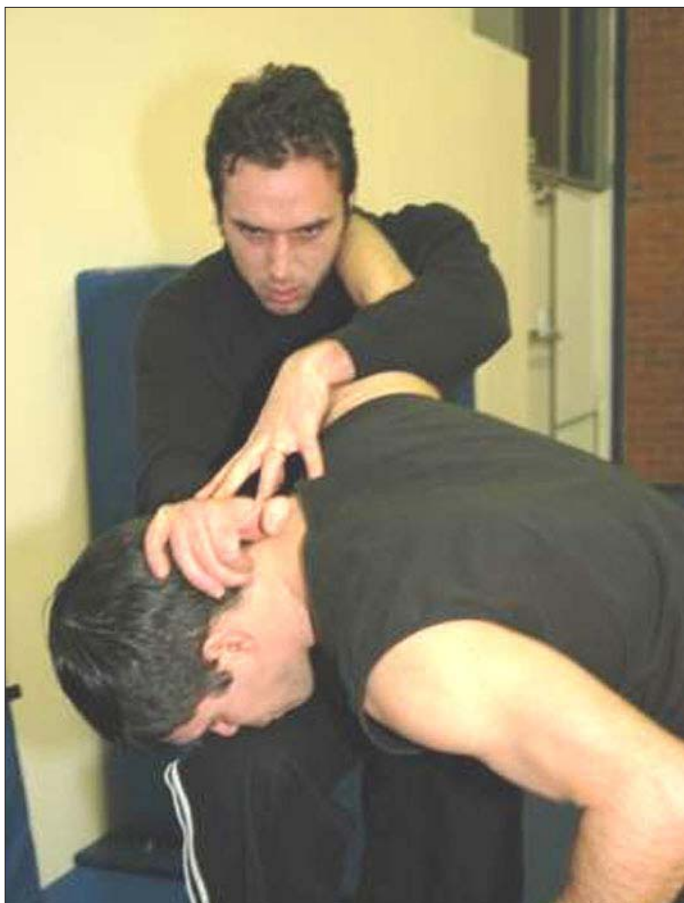
will see alongside the high kicking movie stars, successful sportspeople and serious looking traditionalists in their crisp white gis or doboks, another type of martial artist: The RBSD practitioner. He can be immediately identified by his "street clothes" and often posing with his fingers in someone's eyes or in the corner of someone's mouth or even up someone's nose, his teeth clamped around someone's ear or savagely brandishing a pair of car keys. The message being conveyed is that these martial artists are the real deal. They teach the ugly side of violence as a means to deal with the ugliness that is real-life violence. And yet just how efficient are these "real" techniques?

First up, there is the bite. The idea of humans biting taps into a primeval fear in many human beings. With our development of civilisation, the prospect of being bitten by anything is not nice. To receive the bite off another human being can be quite alarming. No mainstream combat sports permit them today for good reasons. Bites can be very painful to certain sensitive areas, but most of all they can be disfiguring. In addition to this, the human bite is known for its apparent toxicity derived from the bacteria that typically gathers around the human molar. It all sounds pretty nasty and is visually impressive in a magazine or on a website. However, a few factors need to be taken into consideration before we list major weapon in our unarmed combat arsenal of self defence techniques.



Human teeth are fairly unimpressive compared to all our fellow primates and the vast majority of other mammals let alone the rest of the animal kingdom. Having grown up on a circus and then a zoo, I have seen first hand and heard countless accounts of the damage non-human bites can cause. We have evolved to be the best tool developing animals on the planet and much of this can be based on our relatively substandard natural weapons. Check out the teeth of a chimpanzee in the ape family or, for that matter, consider small primates like lemurs that have teeth capable of cutting straight through denim!

Our teeth are just not great attacking tools. They are not proportionally large or very sharp in their natural form and our jaws are not nearly as strong as our close cousins in the ape world. There is no evidence of humans using their teeth as hunting weapons as other primates do. Sure, we have plenty of incidences of children biting and humans utilizing biting in brawls outside nightclubs or on the street, but typically they are used as a back-up or incidental weapon. They do not, for the most part, ensure a high percentage of stopping a desperate adversary. This is mainly due to their effectiveness not being based on any typical mechanical advantage. They



offer little in the way of leverage, they don't create brain shake or typically restrict blood flow to the brain, and they are not a high percentage immobilization or unbalancing tool. Instead the bite relies heavily on either gaining advantage through pain compliance or psychological intimidation i.e. the fear of being disfigured. If you are basing your tactics upon either of these, you are assuming your adversary is a rational person.

How often have you sparred heavily or energetically only to discover injuries later? We have all heard or seen people discover some very nasty weapon injuries after a real fight has ceased. This is due to the adrenaline that has flooded the fighter's system and helped stop the brain from registering the pain during the fight. In a real fight there is an increased chance that your adversary will also be under the influence of some form of intoxicant. This is the weakness behind all pain compliant techniques. While at this point it is also worth considering the various locks, holds and pressure point attacks commonly found in many RBSD systems that rely completely on a rational opponent being subdued through pain alone.

It is a very valid point, and one I personally endorse, that bites should be applied, as with any technique in a real life situation, with an aggressive and proactive intent. The animalistic front can help with the psychology and perhaps also with your own drive against inhibition. However, this again relies on your adversary being a rationally-minded or inexperienced fighter. A veteran of the street will know bites and biters. A person off their face on a narcotic or perhaps even on alcohol or naked rage may not be so easily moved by a victim who suddenly pretends to be a lion. This is not to say I am dismissive of the animalistic rage approach, but these points should be considered if you are relying on the bite as a primary attack tool, which I generally discourage.

If you do use bites then it is best to attack in a rapid action, consistently biting rather than sinking your teeth deep into a target. Pain receptors will stop anyway, so you will not be getting anywhere on the pain compliance front after the first few seconds. A bite is best applied, but not relied upon, as a type of incidental or accidental secondary attack tool within grappling range.

Fish-hooks have turned up on several occasions in our training, and their novelty has pretty much worn off for many and never even registered for others. I have seen many a rational student fish-hooked in various ways, but refused to tap, especially if they are in a dominant position. Apart from lacerations from nails, the most damage typically caused by fish-hooks is a slight cut in the corner of the mouth. The double fish-hook can appear to be an awesomely dangerous technique, but stop to consider how much force it really takes to be able to rip into a person's face or, for that matter, whether it is really necessary. Obviously you will be using full leverage of your body to apply the tear in an explosive fashion, but if this is being applied as a self defence move, your opponent is not going to be standing still when you apply it and you will need to be behind them anyway, where you would be better making your exit rather than engaging in some sort of sadistic overkill.

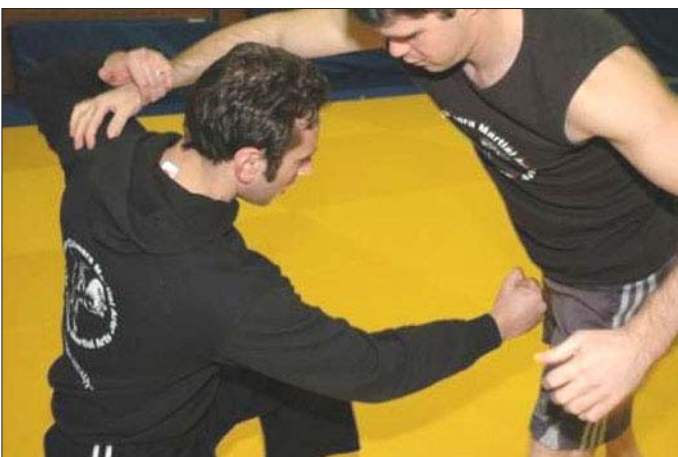
The eye gouge does have a clear advantage over techniques like biting and fish-hooking. It provides decent leverage to the head, a key target area on the body. The eye gouge gives the counter-attacker good purchase on the head, so that it can be moved into a good position to administer strikes. Although it is never advisable to rely on the pain and psychology certainty, it is a fairly safe bet that the eyes will be an organ that most people will instinctively notice if attacked, helping to put them on the defensive. It is with the eye gouge I feel that we find a good example of how so-called "foul techniques" can be an advantage if used correctly and in conjunction with more efficient techniques. You should never stay in the gouge, as you will remain fixed to your adversary who is unlikely to allow you to continue to gouge for very long unless



they have completely surrendered themselves to a bad position i.e. you end up on top of them. The resilience of muscles in and around the eyes should not be underestimated either. The eye gouge, like bites and grips on the skin are anti-grappling techniques. However, anti-grappling is best built on at least the positioning of robust grappling training – sprawling, pins and close movement around the body of a fully resistant fighter. In short, don't expect these moves to be a major response like a pinch you found when play-fighting.

Scenario training is also a trademark of many RBSD schools. Training occurs in various different environments under as many different conditions as possible. This is all well and good to help provide a realistic situation for the student who wants to train for "real-life" situations, but this should be kept in context. Every situation is different, but this does not necessarily mean it requires a completely different response. There are an infinite number of possibilities that can happen in a conflict situation and it is therefore virtually impossible to train an individual response to each one. Ockham's razor seriously needs to be involved here, but it is rarely wielded with much ruthlessness. Instead what often happens is that lists are compiled of the most common types of assault and individual responses created to counter them. Surely a more generic and less reactive approach would be in order, something backed up by robust principles that can be applied in as many different situations as possible.

Another favourite of RBSD promotion is improvised and modern weaponry. This really does make it stand out from sporting and traditional categories, although it is sometimes argued that the traditional weapons training can





be adapted for incidental weaponry. There is little arguing in the practical effectiveness of using obvious incidental weapons such as big sticks, light items of furniture like chairs, broken glass, domestic knives, hard throwing objects like bricks or flexible material suitable for ensnaring or entanglement. We have an abundance of case studies and evidence to support the practical use of these objects. However, the world of RSBD training hasn't settled at the most obvious incidental weapons. Adapted metal cans, pens and car keys are also fairly common in the average RSBD training course. The problem with these objects is that although they will undoubtedly hurt and can cause damage if used correctly, they don't necessarily increase the odds of an otherwise unarmed human. Once again, we seem to be back to stacking our hopes on the benefits of pain and psychology, although the psychology this time seems to be more to do with giving the potential victim more confidence.

We have already gone over the problems with anything that relies on pain compliance, so there is no point in repeating it here. Confidence - although perhaps the most important component to make self defence work - can be dangerous if misplaced. This applies to the use of all weaponry and should be taken into account by those who actually carry weapons. There have been a large number of incidents where a person's weapon has ended up being used on them. It is true that this often comes down to bad training, but overconfidence in the use of the weapon is also a factor. In fact, overconfidence may encourage or escalate a situation that might not have even needed violence in the first place.

RSBD throws a net long and wide over many different individuals, schools and styles, but there is a definite extremist element that places such emphasis on the use of weaponry that they don't see the importance of physical conditioning at all. This is somewhat comparable to the extremist element in combat sports that do not see the relevance of self defence training at all, believing that the confidence acquired from a combat sport is enough to prepare an individual for a real-life assault. The latter will be addressed in another article. The former, however, needs to be sceptically examined now and I unashamedly put my oar of opinion in here.

The extremist RSBD argument is that in the real world violent situations rarely last a long time and the self defence practitioner should therefore be focusing his attention on a short response only. Furthermore, they go back to the issue of weapons and modern weaponry such as firearms, which are far more accessible and available in countries like USA and South Africa than they are in my native UK. Both are fair and true points to a certain extent, but they also have reasonable criticisms too. Those who do advocate hard physical training and conditioning point out the contingency benefits and the physical tactical advantages of being fit and healthy. You may have to run, the violent incident might last longer than you have anticipated and if engaged at close quarters then being strong, agile and having stamina are all going to help reinforce whatever technique you will be using. This is a very solid argument in its own right and I think it stands up against the extremist RSBD argument, however, I also have a couple of points that I think are often missed but are just as relevant.

Firstly, being physically fit and conditioned are the hallmarks of a person who trains their close-quarter combat skills regularly, consistently and to the point where their tactics and mindset are going to be at least second nature. To be good at anything you need to practice it regularly and the by-product of regularly drilled and pressure-tested close-quarter combat is a physically fit body – a body fit for the purpose it is being trained for. Secondly, hard physical training specific for self defence develops mental strength. If you are training for survival then you need to have the will to survive. How do you really know you have the will to survive without testing yourself in some capacity that brings you to the point of failure? Hard physical training helps reinforce the message that you will only give up when it is impossible to continue, and that bar of impossibility should be consistently nudged upwards over your long term training plan. This is in alignment with the Central Governor Theory, which argues that our muscles quit not because they are being drowned in toxic by-products or have simply run out of fuel but because our brain sets a limit we interpret as muscle fatigue. We can increase this threshold through physical training and become more aware of the role our

emotions play on our bodies, and in self defence terms this could mean our very survival.

In conclusion, RBSD promotes itself as a modern and pragmatic approach to combat training for the civilian. The distinguishing points it likes to make are that it throws out unnecessarily risky and low percentage techniques, and promotes anything that will best ensure maximum results in a “real-life situation”. However, the pragmatism it aspires to can all too often become confused with a desire to promote “foul moves” as a distinguishing feature. These are techniques not popularized by traditional arts and are often banned from full contact combat sports. A key criticism of many traditional martial arts is that they, in general, do not or no longer sufficiently test their techniques under pressure and have become embroiled in the aesthetics of their art. However, there is a good argument that RBSD is committing exactly the same sins. Not testing a technique is explained by the “It’s too dangerous to practice under pressure” line, which is advocating the training of untested techniques.

Besides, it is not really true. Eye gouges, biting, small joint manipulations, throat and groin shots, and just about every other nasty technique you can imagine have been tested legally in a fully resistant and full-contact environment. In the UK Geoff Thompson popularized them in his *Animal Days* and Mo Teague’s *Animal Nights*, albeit with some small restrictions. The sport of Vale Tudo, currently enjoying an “underground” resurrection via the Rio Heroes label, is a great place to watch



the efficiency of “foul” unarmed moves. Head-butts remain legal in some MMA bouts such as the Finnish federation, Fin Fight, and are a mainstay in Burmese Boxing, Thaiboxing. What surfaces time and again is that effectiveness of these moves tends to rest on solid striking and grappling principles that are taught in mainstream full contact training. In isolation their effectiveness is precariously reliant on an adversary who is both rational and inexperienced. Putting it quite simply, if you bite a dangerous person when they have a dominant position you could very well just be reminding them that they can also do the same to you and they have the advantage.

I did not write this article in order to decry the whole area of martial arts that profess to teach modern combatives or self defence. After all, my own club and services fall under such monikers and it was this area of martial arts that helped shape my interests and career. My intentions in writing this article were to apply critical thinking to certain areas of self defence that are being taught worldwide. RBSD has arisen as something of a critique of the rest of the martial arts world, emerging as a camp of its own. They have used Ockham’s razor to shave off the unnecessary and pointed their training towards the single goal of self preservation. This is fundamentally fine, but in order to be honest and progressive the critique should never be above criticism. I argue the razor often shaves off what might prove to be beneficial. Dismissing techniques from a combat sport because the sport has rules is not sensible. A hard straight right works well on the street as does do in the ring or cage. Therefore, a student training wholly for civilian self defence needs to ask what will ensure subduing with the minimum amount of risk. Heavy trauma to the head or neck region through the hands preferably or constrictive strangulation or choking methods appear time and again to be people-stoppers. We have case studies galore both in the “real world” and in the sporting world. This needs to be considered the next time we are discussing the energy consuming and probably unnecessary task of tearing people’s ears off.

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# Never Give Up!

by Lawrence Kane

The goal of self defense is not to win a fight, but rather to avoid combat in the first place. After all the only battle you are guaranteed to walk away from unscathed is the one you never engage in. Taking a beat-down can seriously mess up your life, yet winners have consequences too. Beyond the potential for physical and emotional scars there are a host of other issues to address including interacting with law enforcement, finding a good attorney, navigating the legal system, fending off ancillary civil suits, and so on.

Awareness, avoidance, and de-escalation skills are the cornerstones of self defense. They can stave off most violence before it begins, either by circumventing the need to fight altogether or by removing the underlying cause of conflict by giving your adversary a face-saving way out. Nevertheless, sometimes despite your best intentions you may find yourself in a situation where there really is no alternative but to fight. When it comes to such circumstances, you absolutely cannot stop until it's over.

Once engaged in battle it is critical to remain mentally and physically prepared to fight or continue a brawl at a moment's notice. Always keep your opponent in sight until you can escape to safety. Even if your blow knocks an adversary to the ground, remain alert for a possible continuation of his attack. Most fistfights end when one combatant gives up rather than when he or she can no longer physically continue. Weapons bring a whole new dynamic into play. Even fatally wounded adversaries do not always succumb to their injuries right away; they can continue to be a critical danger for several seconds if not minutes.

Never give up until you are sure that you're safe. Sadly too many victims do not heed this lesson with tragic results. For example, on January 1, 2008 Meredith Emerson, a 24-year-old University of Georgia graduate, managed fend off both a knife and a baton attack, holding her own until her assailant tricked her into surrendering. Gary Michael Hilton, a burly 61-year-old drifter, subsequently tied her up and carried her to a



remote location where he raped and eventually killed her three days later.

Hilton reportedly told police interrogators that his petite victim nearly overpowered him when he first accosted her on an Appalachian hiking trail. According to published reports, Hilton stalked the 5 foot 4 inch tall, 120-pound woman on the trail but was unable to keep up so he laid in wait and intercepted her on her way back down. He pulled a knife and demanded her ATM card. Emerson, a trained martial artist, recognized the threat and immediately fought back.

"I lost control, and she fought. And as I read in the paper, she's a martial artist." Emerson, who held middle kyu ranks (blue belt and green belt) in two different martial arts, ripped the knife out of his hands. He countered with a baton that she was also able to pull from his grasp. As the struggle continued, they fell down a steep slope, leaving both weapons behind. "The bayonet is



probably still up there,” Hilton later told investigators.

“I had to hand-fight her,” Hilton said. “She wouldn’t stop fighting and yelling at the same time so I needed to both control her and silence her.” He kept punching her, blackening her eyes, fracturing her nose, and breaking his own hand in the process. He figured that he had worn her down as they moved farther off the trail, but suddenly she began fighting again. He finally got her to stop by telling her that all he wanted was her credit card and PIN number.

Once she relaxed her guard, he restrained her hands with a zip tie, took her to a remote location, and tied her to a tree. Predators often take their victims to secondary crime scenes where they have the privacy to perform their depravations. Sadly this was no exception. He kept her captive in the wilderness for three terrifying days before telling her that he was ready to let her go. Then he beat her to death with a car-jack handle and cut off her head.

Hilton made a plea deal with prosecutors, leading investigators to his victim’s remains so that they would not seek the death penalty for his crimes. He was subsequently sentenced to

life in prison with the possibility of parole after 30 years.

As this tragedy points out, never believe anything an assailant tells you. His (or her) actions have already demonstrated beyond any doubt that he’s a bad guy. Do not relax your guard and get caught by surprise; that is a good way to die. If the other guy thinks that he’s losing, he might be more inclined play possum or pull out a weapon in order to cheat to win. Worse yet, street attacks often involve multiple assailants many of whom are seasoned fighters who know how to take a blow and shrug off the pain. Be mindful of additional assailants, potentially latecomers, and be prepared to continue your defense as long as necessary.

As the Chinese proverb states, “Dead tigers kill the most hunters.” Remain vigilant during any pause in the fight. You may be facing multiple assailants, an adversary who pulls a weapon in the middle of a fight, or an opponent who just won’t quit. Once you have removed yourself from the danger and are absolutely certain that you are no longer under threat you can safely begin to relax your guard.

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by Lawrence A. Kane & Kris Wilder



# Bouncer

by Geoff Thompson

Where's Johnny Steen? I've come for my ear!"

The man at the nightclub door had a bandana of crepe wrapped around his head and a face etched in pain. Blood issued through the bandage at the point where his right ear should have been but patently was not.

"Johnny's not in. Hasn't been here all night." I replied trying not to stare at his injury.

"He bit my ear off." He continued, fingers dabbing tentatively around the wound as though checking his ear had really gone.

He wandered off to the next club in search of his missing body part.

Grape-vine gossips later informed me that the missing ear - bitten off in a grudge fight at the local park - had had been harpooned by the new owner to a dartboard in a busy pub and auctioned off to the highest bidder. The ear of a name fighter was quite a trophy in Coventry's lower echelons.

The seller got twenty quid and the buyer got to wear his prize on a key ring – a grotesque talking point.

In my former incarnation as a nightclub bouncer I had my life threatened more times than I care to remember. I was shot at, stabbed, glassed, punched, kicked, scratched, bitten, spat on, vomited over, and trampled. I fought in pub bars, car parks, chip shops, restaurants, and once at a friends christening: he'd asked me to have a word with a rowdy relative not realising that his interpretation of 'a word' was entirely different to mine.

Three friends were murdered during a decade of madness and mayhem. Another, depressed and grossly over-exposed to violence, tried to end his life - alone in a ditch - by swallowing a bottle of bleach. Many more were sent to jail, and a few ended up on the psychiatrists couch. Nearly all – myself included – found the divorce courts before salvation found us.

Ironically I only took the job to face down my fears. I became a bouncer in the late eighties

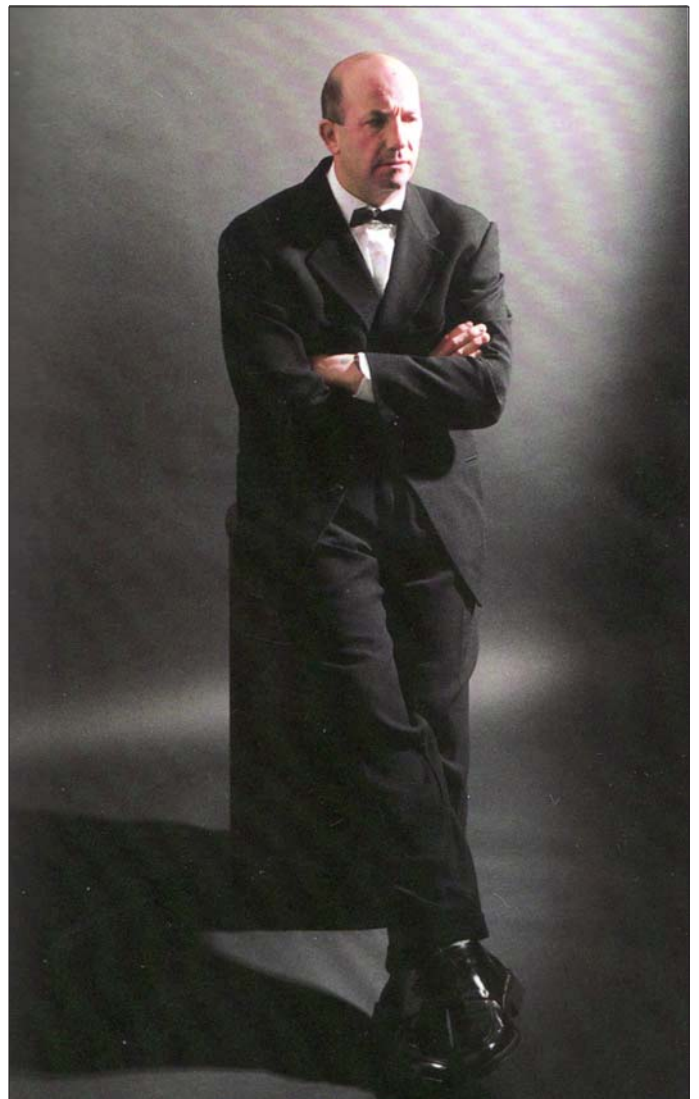
because I'd inherited my mum's nerves and as a consequence was plagued by debilitating depressions and irrational fears. Standing on a nightclub door was little more than a pragmatic experiment in growing courage.

Bouncing was not my first course of action; it was a last chance saloon.

The first port of call – the doctor's surgery – left me disappointed. Medicine had not evolved much it would seem: I hoped that working as a bouncer might prove a little more inspiring than a sympathetic smile and a course of Prozac.

It did but the price was high.

Frederick Nietzsche said that we should be careful when hunting the dragon not to become the dragon. It was a prophetic warning, one I wish I'd heeded sooner.





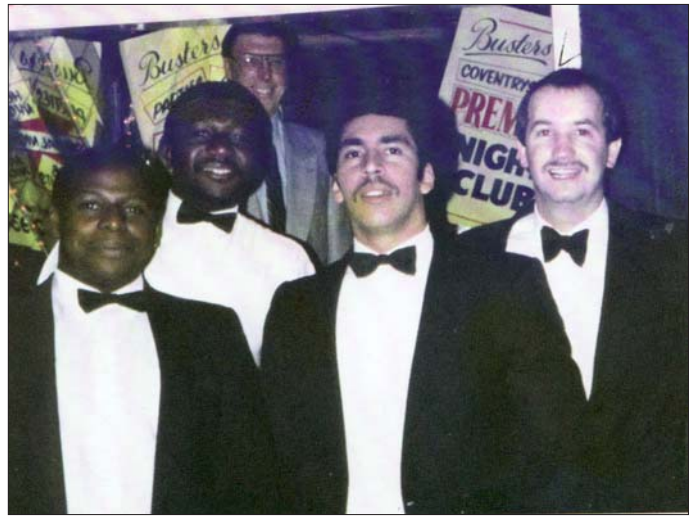
The Coventry club scene dished out violence as thick as it did fast. It was mostly unsolicited and it was always heinous. But for a lad looking to quieten his fears with a heavy dose of desensitisation there was no better place to be.

I only intended to stay in the job for a short while: ten years and many broken bones later I was still there. My fears had been trounced and the depressions a distant memory, but the reflection in my bathroom mirror was no longer of a man I immediately recognised or particularly liked. The soft youth of yesteryear had become a hard man who used violence as a problem solving tool. Those that stepped into my world looking for a little contact were dealt with quickly, brutally and always without demur.

Not surprising this placed me in bad stay with the law, but then policemen and bouncers have always shared an unholy alliance. We loved to hate them and they loved to lock us up at any given opportunity. Silly really when you consider the fact that we were both trying to do the same job: protect the good majority from the bad minority and the indifferent from themselves. That is not to say there were no exceptions. When it suited them the police could be very accommodating. After separating a local hard man from his teeth and his consciousness I found my self in a police cell facing a charge of Section 18 Wounding With Intent, which carried a possible five years in prison. My immediate future was looking pretty bleak until it was discovered that the man in hospital had a long list of previous convictions for police assault. In light of the new information the arresting officer found a sudden and healthy respect for me; he dropped all charges leaving me with a clean record and an unofficial pat on the back.

The police look after their own.

The camaraderie on the door was equally strong. We had our own rules and those that broke them did so at their peril. Anyone who attacked a doorman or a member of staff were taken – usually dragged - somewhere quiet and taught the error of their ways. Our reasoning was simple enough; you have to slaughter a chicken to train a monkey. Brutal perhaps, but then standing over the open coffin of a workmate who had paid the ultimate price was no picnic. Noel was one of three friends who found their young names in the



obituary column. One took a Saturday night baseball bat over the head and died on the Tuesday. Another upset a local gangster with Manchester connections and paid with a bullet in the head as he sat in his car. The third – Noel - forgot the Musashian code that all bouncers live or die by; *after the battle tighten your helmet straps*. He was attacked as he left the night club at three in the morning – a vulnerable time when most doormen switch off as they head for home. He was stabbed through the heart by a man with a head full of grudge and a skin full of strong lager. He was dead before his head hit the pavement. Noel was wonderful man who didn't read the signs. And there are always signs. The rituals of attack. The pre-fight twitches of men with bad intention and no fear of consequence.

Knives may be the tool of choice for the career criminal but I found to my cost that people are nothing if not inventive when it comes to finding and using expedient weapons to bash, slash and pound each other. A man called Granite Jaw once tried to demolish a concrete dustbin using the top of my head, I had to bite the end of his finger off before he'd let me go.

Doormen regularly face a multiple of offensive weapons in the course of duty; guns, coshes, bats, bars, crutches, craft knives, carpet cutters and cars – a maniac called Tank once drove a Ford Cortina through the front doors of a busy Coventry club to enact his revenge after being barred by the doormen. On another occasion a troublesome youth who threatened that he was going to "shoot you bastards!" was gambolled from the club with a bitch-slap and a challenge; "Go'n fetch your gun." Of course we never thought he would. Five minutes later he was back in a

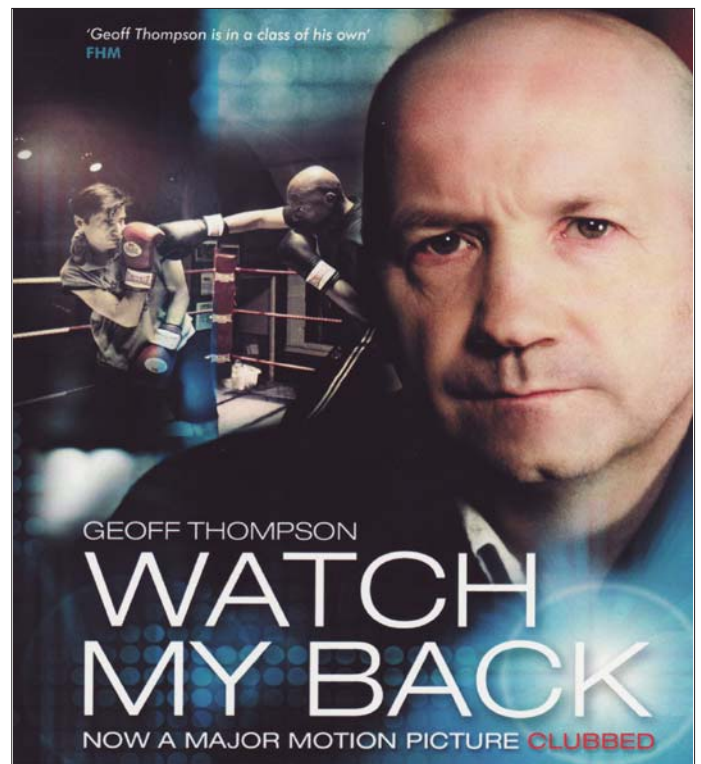
white Merc with a rifle – trained on us – poking through a gap in driver's side window. Before he could fire myself and three other *brave* doormen hit the deck and scurried – on our hands and knees - for the safety of the club.

Even *people* can be used as implements of pain when an equaliser is called for. An infamous eighteen stone doorman and former wrestler called Bert Assarati found himself before a judge after hospitalising several men outside a London nightclub, one of whom was in a particularly bad way. The judge asked Assarati, "What did you hit him with?" Assarati deadpanned, "His mate." Apparently he'd picked one man up above his head and used him to bludgeon the other.

Given the chance people will even attack you with their bodily fluids: blood, sick, spit, shit - nothing is sacred. One drunk and incapable man was so angry when I asked him to leave the club that he unzipped and pissed all over my trousers. It was very embarrassing. I could smell the vapour for days. Another man who I'd caught stealing cash from the bar till smashed his own nose off a table edge, machine gunned me with a gob full of blood and later told the police that I beat him up for nothing and invented the whole robbery story just to cover my tracks – and the police believed him!

Without question the most dangerous weapon by far was the one handed to every customer that stepped across our welcome mat. A beer glass. Even the uninitiated in a second of drunken madness can end a life with the speared edges of a broken jug. And the girls were often the worst offenders. Especially when another female stood between them and their man. I had to administer first aid to a beautiful twenty-something after a love rival cracked a wine glass on the edge of the bar and rammed it into her face. She hit her with such force that two inches of the glass stayed buried beneath her cheekbone. It took six hours of reconstruction to fix her face. The psychological damage would take more to repair than a surgeon's stitch.

Dealing with women was not always so violent, but it was often tricky. I had my fair share of sexual come-ons from scantily clad beauties with a penchant for large men in tuxedo suits. The door is a seductive trade offering local celebrity, free beer and loose women to those with a weak will



and a strong libido. I was married at the time so I should have abstained, and most of the time I did, but I can't say that I didn't occasionally succumb. In my defence – and my shame - my indulgences were infrequent and never without a post coital dose of guilt and remorse. Personally I found more profit in light flirtations than full-on promiscuity. For instance, an off-the-cuff compliment about the splendid condition of a customer's bottom once earned me months of pleasure. The lady in question thanked me by lifting her skirt and flashing a frilly pair of pink knickers that clung Kylie-tight to the neatest little bottom I have ever set eyes on. I was the envy of every man in the club. It became a Saturday night ritual that never failed to please. Sadly, it ended the night she turned up on the arm of a man with a face like ten boxers. I don't think he would have appreciated her generous spirit. Still, it was good while it lasted.

Some women wanted more for their money than a bit of sexually charged banter. For several weeks I complimented Lala on how nice she was looking. I mentioned her hair, her shoes (girls like that) and how nice her perfume was. I badly misread the situation. What had been an innocent flirt for me was patently a red-hot come-on for her. I realised my folly the night she wedged me – using her ample bust - into a dark corner of a busy nightclub and whispered in my ear, "I'd love to take you home with me, I'd massage your



whole body in baby oil, then I'd get Victor out." I raised an eyebrow into a question-mark and asked, terrified, "Victor?" She made a yummy smile, snaked her hand seductively down my chest and said. "Victor the vibrator." I made a few hasty excuses and spent the rest of the night hiding in a cloakroom.

Not all of the women I encountered were so enamoured by me. A rather irate lady once tried to decapitate me with the stiletto end of her right shoe whilst I wrestled her boyfriend from the club. He'd ordered drinks and refused to pay for them so he had to go. She was having none of it. Each time her shoe bounced off my head she screamed, "Violence is not the answer!" Hypocrisy it would seem holds no bounds.

I was lucky. Another doorman was stabbed in the ribs by a maniacal mother with a pair of nail scissors when he tried to stop her daughter - the bride-to-be - from having live sex with a hen-night strip-o-gram.

Personally, when dealing with women, I always recommend restraint. There is rarely cause to be physical. A keen eye and a quick wit is often all you need. The mere mention of large bottoms, flaccid bosoms and a hairy upper-lip are usually enough to send a body-conscious female scurrying for safety. We refused a rather large lady entry to the club one night because she was violently drunk and scaring the other customers (and the doormen). She wasn't happy. Intimating that she would return to the club with a bit of *canine back -up*, she bragged. "I breed Rottweilers!" My mate Tony, a master of observational put-downs replied. "Well love, you've definitely got the hips for it."

Violent men and frightening women are bad enough, but at least you know where you stand with them. It is when the gender is ambiguous that confusion can trigger sheer terror. Tuesdays at Busters nightclub was alternative night, which meant a culture dish of gays, geeks, Goths, punks and trannies. Nothing too bad in that you might think. I felt the same way until the night a pretty little girl who had given me the eye on the way into the club followed me into the gent's toilets, hitched up her plaid skirt, took out her manhood, smiled and then proceeded to relieve herself in the urinal next to mine.

Nightclub toilets were also the favoured hidey-hole for criminals and vagabonds. Bag thieves

used toilet cisterns to dump stolen and fleeced handbags, whilst muggers regularly attacked and robbed their unwitting victims when they were at their most vulnerable; unzipped at the urinal or de-bagged on the can. Messy but effective. And it was the doormen that had to clean up afterwards. Equally unpleasant was the mess left when too much partying resulted in a vomit fest.

Escorting the ill and the infirm from the premises without getting a jacket full of sick yourself was tricky, if not impossible. It was definitely was my least favourite task. Some people at least had the courtesy to wait until they'd vacated the building before shouting Hughy! One gent retched and heaved his way out of the club, sat down by a wall, threw up and then proceeded to pass out. Whilst he lay unconscious in a pillow of regurgitated Chicken Korma I propped a sign by his head that read: 'I bet he drinks Carling Black label'.

Druggies, similarly, used the multi-purpose space of the club loo to inject, roll, swallow, sniff and deal chemical high. Occasionally – and disappointingly – those on the make were the doormen themselves, though, despite suggestions to the contrary – and certainly from my experience – this scenario is rare. A good door team would not be seen dead dealing in drugs. They are constantly on the look out for dealers and users, both of whom get short thrift and a fast exit from the club if they are caught.

No moral crusade I can assure you, just part of the job description.

People are fixated by the evils of drugs and there is little doubt that for those who deal and those that take there can be no undamaged escape. But as an empiricist I would argue that if drugs are evil then alcohol is the devil incarnate. Not only is it more damaging and deadly than Class A drugs – it kills and ravages tens of thousands more per capita than any other substance – it is legal, socially acceptable and it doesn't even carry a government warning. And the deadly trilogy of stress, booze and nightclub ambience is all the ingredients you need to turn even the nicest people into despicable creatures.

Alcohol has always been linked with – and often blamed for – many of our societal ills, not least the burgeoning growth in unsolicited violence. No doubt there is a link between binge-drinking and

bar-fighting, but the former is surely a trigger and not the root cause. Pubs and clubs are brimming over with angst ridden folk looking to displace a bad day, a bad week or a bad life in a good night. Perhaps that would explain why the violence – often heinous, sometimes fatal – is completely disproportionate to the triggering stimuli. Accidentally spilling another man's beer in a club rammed with bodies hardly justifies a crossed word, let alone a broken glass in the neck and four pints of red on the beer sticky carpet. But, in the buzz of a busy nightclub it is just one of the many reasons people will find to enact atrocities on each other. If a spilled beer is going to cost you four pints of blood never make the mistake of chatting up another man's date; it may well cost you all nine.

After a decade of standing under nightclub neon and nearly losing my faith in human nature I had the growing realisation that violence was not the answer. It is a cruel and ugly language, the parley of ignorant men, but a means of discourse non the less and when you are dealing with the hard of thinking some times a quick punch in the eye is better understood than a lengthy over-the-table-negotiation. Some people – even despots and dictators on the world stage – will listen to nothing less.

Witnessing man's inhumanity to man is enough to turn even the hardest stomach but my personal renaissance only began after I nearly killed someone in a car park match fight. I won't insult your intelligence by glazing over my actions with the egg-wash of weak rationalisation. The situation - one that should have found a negotiable solution - started innocently enough. A local man and martial artist of some repute was consistently and blatantly challenging my authority and testing my patience by refusing to drink up at the end of the night. For three months I tried to be nice, laced my requests to *drink up* with politeness and respect, all to no avail. He obviously mistook my politeness for weakness and one late Sunday evening – in a fit of arrogance – he barged into me when I was collecting glasses. It was the final insult. My hat tipped I invited him onto the tarmac.

The fight was short and bloody. Although my opponent was a black belt he was ill-prepared for the pavement arena.

When the paramedics were called I knew that I had gone too far, and my capacity to inflict hurt had astounded even me. I felt sure that he was dead when the ambulance took him away under a wool blanket and a flashing blue light. The veil dropped and for the first time I could see exactly what I had become – more specifically what trading in violence had made me. At home I contemplated a bleak future where the *here and now* promised only prison and the here-after threatened a purgatorial darkness that I could not even begin to imagine. In bed I stroked the warm face of my sleeping wife. I could not believe how beautiful she was, she felt like silk. I got down on my knees and unashamedly prayed to God. "Give me one more chance," I begged. "And I promise that I will turn my life around."

It was the longest night of my life with plenty of time for introspection. There is nothing like the threat of prison and eternal damnation to give you an honest perspective on liberty and life. I realised that I was blessed; a great wife, gorgeous kids and freedom. It doesn't get much sweeter. And I was risking it all for a bastard trade that I had come to hate.

The next day I heard that my sparring partner had pulled through. My prayer had been answered. I kept my part of the bargain and shortly afterwards I left the doors for good.

I found a few things during my ten year sojourn into the dark often criminal world of the bouncer: my courage - fear *can* be beaten by those with the moral fibre to face it. My destiny - success and happiness is a choice not a lottery. And my limitations - we all find some form of invisible support when what we know as real starts to collapse all around us.

Perhaps ironically and more notably I discovered the futility of violence.

I also lost a few things, my first marriage and the innocence of youth to name but two.

Luckily - unlike many of my peers – I did not forfeit my sanity, my liberty or my life.

Oh, and I got to walk away with both ears.

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# How To Win A Bar Fight

by Rev. Arthur Chenevey

If my conscience would allow me to collect a single session training fee for every young man who has approached me over the years who states: "Hey, man, I don't want to learn a whole lot of fancy martial arts stuff. I just want to learn something solid that will allow me to handle myself in a bar...you know...what do I need to win in a bar fight?" I would be quite financially well off.

"Well, young man I will tell you for free what you need! How's that?" And I would proceed with something along these lines:

When you go into a pub or bar, you are there for a good time, right? Maybe meet some mates and females? If this is the case, then this is what you can do to handle yourself in the bar.

Always be polite. Don't go looking for trouble or looking for a fight because you will find way more than you or anyone else can handle. On any given day, there is some body out there with more meanness, more skill at bashing people, more treachery, more experience and more sand who is going to mop the floor up with your broken body and not lose a bit of sleep over sitting in prison for having do as much. No one is invincible—everyone can be beat. It's only a matter of when, if you are really looking for trouble or a fight.

When you are visiting a bar or pub, ALWAYS drink in moderation. Nurse a single drink per hour, allowing the alcohol to metabolize thoroughly so that your faculties are NEVER impaired.

Remain ever vigilant—watch the people around you. Go to the pub or bar as a lesson in sociology for developing "people watching and people reading skills." Watch the body movements of the people around you, their hand gestures, speech, body placement and how they invade another's personal space as they become more and more intoxicated. Then arrange your own body placement and position that will allow you a quick exit out of the bar safely if big trouble goes down and allow you to

scan 360 degrees around you. Always place yourself where you can get out faster than you got in. And never allow yourself to be placed in a position or posture where you do not know how to get out. If you know of no exists but how you enter, don't go in that spot.

Sit in a fashion that no one can get to your back without you knowing it. And if someone does maneuver to your back, politely turn to meet them with a smile and gentle but direct eye contact that is acknowledging but fleeting on the horizontal level parallel to the floor. State a nice greeting and reposition yourself so as to no longer have anyone at your back.

When you scan a room, scan at a level parallel to floor at your eye level, making only very brief eye contact with other males as if to say, "Hi, I see you—there you are, and you are no threat." When you make eye contact with other males, don't hold the eye contact as this is a sign of challenge. And when you make eye contact with any male, but then look down, this is a sign of real submissiveness. If that fellow is looking for someone to pick on, you just gave him reason. Scan at the level, maintaining that as you are making eye contact briefly is just that—scanning—demonstrating high level skill of awareness. This tells the other males that I am ready and able but I am not threatening.

If another male scans you and you make eye contact, remain on the level—eyes parallel—meet his, smile and nod a nod of acknowledgment, and immediately proceed to scan away with no expression on the face or in the eyes—maintaining that level. This is a friendly gesture of two alpha wolves seeing each other or two lions acknowledging—we are equals, not threat here.

When you bump into some, politely excuse yourself. Be sincerely humble, making brief eye contact, not looking down or holding the gaze. Do the same if someone bumps into you. If someone spills booze on your best suit, hey, it's occupational hazard of going to the bar in





your best suit. You made the choice—therefore it is your responsibility—not the half tanked man who stumbled over his own feet. It's no big deal. A cleaning bill is cheaper than medical bills, legal fees, jail time and being sued. Who cares about fabric? If you do, don't wear it to a bar.

If you sit in a seat and someone gets all huffy with you and tells you that you are sitting in his seat, politely excuse yourself and say, "Hey, I am really sorry, sir. I was unaware. Here is your set back. I will find another."

If someone has singled you out for reasons that make sense only to this person, and he starts to woof himself into a frenzy, bad mouthing you, then, simply politely excuse yourself and apologize. But then leave the establishment, watching your back the entire way out. Only when we believe that this person's opinion of us, a person who we don't really know and who doesn't really know us, possesses control over us, do we give that person ultimate control over us.

Fights begin and end in the mind—no where else. It is here they are won and lost long before the first strike is overtly thrown. Those who need to fight in bars are genuinely insecure ego driven souls who have something to prove, and are

truly missing the point. It's not about toughness. It's about toughness and smartness that survives life's trials and tribulations. Fighting in bars are about silly stupid ego-burbs needing fed, and nothing more.

To engage in a bar fight two or more egos must clash. If one ego is truly self-assured and self disciplined, then this ego has nothing to prove and doesn't need violence as a security blanket. This ego is tough and smart enough to vacate the area.

Being polite is a matter of self-confidence and self-discipline; being able to maneuver in a bar or pub, having fun with friends and family, acting responsibly and behaving politely and compassionately are the keys, and are qualities of a real secure ego that practices self-discipline.

I have been in only three "bar-related" altercations in my many years on this planet, all when I was extremely young, fresh out of the military, possessing a huge chip on my shoulder until and even older warhorse explained this very same piece of wisdom to me.

My one strength in life, once I am aware of my mistakes, is that I never repeat them. So you can see how silly I find it when people boast of such attributes as, "Well, I have been in over two hundred street fights and bar fights..." In my system of beliefs, there is something genuinely disturbing to me about such souls who make such claims. To say the least, I am certainly not impressed and very wary of such people.

Eventually, the individuals who make such claims, and if they are true, and if they continue acting like this, eventually they are going to enrage the wrong person, and wind up killed or imprisoned.

So, there you have it—free advice as to how to maneuver in a public establishment selling alcohol. In the end, we win by not provoking and by not being provoked. If we are easily provoked—that is a weakness in us that must cue us in so that we can shore up those attitude deficiencies. And should we unknowingly provoke someone—it happens, we then must politely apologize and leave the establishment. Be aware of how your behaviors affect other people. This is a skill that must be developed

and maintained at all times. Something doesn't come from nothing, and if someone is provoked by our presence, we need to be aware of what we are doing—behavior wise—that provoke such souls.

There are antecedents and precursors to each and every ambush—we must know what these look like, be aware of the existing variables that make these up and then act in a way that doesn't trigger said antecedents or precursors. It is our responsibility to know and be aware and then do—correctly.

For those who still are convinced winning a bar fight is about physical prowess, well, I wish you “luck” on your journey to the truth of it all.

Remember, we all can choose to do anything we want as long as we can live with the consequences, because in the end, there are no mistakes, simply consequences to our actions and inactions.

**Rev. Arthur Bodhi Chenevey, RM, DD**

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# Karate's holy grail: Kata

by Michael Rosenbaum

**K**ata, as a demonstration, is but a shallow and limited usage of kata"- Donn Draeger

Kata is the Holy Grail of karate and once its mysteries are decoded they propel the karate-ka to higher skill levels, or so we're told. Its true Kata fosters a deeper understanding of karate, but where actual fighting is concerned kata's role has become debatable. Does kata hold the answer to every combative equation or has it become a useless practice that should be tossed upon the martial junk heap, like the crossbow and long sword? The answer dates back to the earliest periods in martial arts history.

## Storing Martial Knowledge

Since the dawn of civilization humans have recorded experiences that influenced their lives. This urge, at its most basic level, is a survival mechanism imbedded deep within our genetic makeup. We respond to the stimuli of our environment then record the experience, yet never consider what drives this overwhelming desire to remember. Renowned mythologist Joseph Campbell wrote "The recognizing and responding subject is, rather, some sort of trans- or super- individual, inhabiting and moving the living creature. Let us not speculate here about metaphysics of this mystery; for, as Schopenhauer sagely remarks in his paper on The Will in Nature, 'we are sunk in a sea of riddles and inscrutables, knowing and understanding neither what is around us nor ourselves.'" (Campbell p.31)

Speculation may lead to the conclusion that early humans led utopian lifestyles. However closer scrutiny debunks this hypothesis since fighting is one of the oldest traditions practiced by the human race. Sir Richard Burton observed, "The first effort of human technology was probably weapon-making. History and travel tell us of no race so rude as to lack artificial means of offense and defense." (p.2) Therefore long before the rise of civilization our prehistoric ancestors fought one another for territory, food and sex. But more importantly as violence grew in its scope and intensity fighters grasped the

significance of recording lessons acquired in combat, since martial knowledge increases one's chances of survival.

Prior to the twentieth century, illiteracy was common throughout many societies. This is not to imply that our forefathers were unintelligent, but that they were unable to read and write. John Keegan noted "Allowing the combatants to speak for themselves' is not merely a permissible but, when and where possible, an essential ingredient of battle narrative and battle analysis. The almost universal illiteracy, however, of the common soldier of any century before the nineteenth makes it a technique difficult to employ." (Keegan, The Face of Battle, p.32) Therefore, being unable to transcribe their experiences pre-modern fighters developed alternative means to store and transmit martial knowledge.

Mnemonics is a process which assimilates and transmits knowledge through logical sequencing, rhythm, rhyme and symbolism. In literate societies prose reduces the mnemonic need because information is transcribed, but in oral societies dance, song and poetry serve as mnemonic tools. Matthews and Stewart noted the importance of mnemonics during medieval times when they stated "It would not be too excessive to say that a culture such as that of sixth-century Britain was held together by its songs, tales, and communal store of education and imagination." (Matthews and Stewart, Warriors of Arthur, p.13)

Dance, song and poetry were used by many societies to record combative strategies. However other rituals like skiamachia- ancient Greek shadow boxing, the long and short forms of Tai Chi and karate kata were developed by fighters who sought to create their own mnemonic tools through the use of rhythm, rhyme and symbolism.

## The New Face of Kata

Technological innovations alter lifestyles and with the industrial age's dawn there came a mechanical philosophy which turned a history of rationalism into a fragmented, static and un-

evolving experience. Where correlations between the various art forms once existed there grew a collection of unrelated disciplines and as the metaphors of higher experience faded a mindset absent of symbolic awareness took their place. Bertrand Russell observed about this change “A second cause was the rise of industrialism, with a scientific technique very different from traditional culture. A third cause was popular education, which conferred the power to read and write, but did not confer culture; this enabled a new type of demagogue to practice a new type of propaganda, as seen in the dictatorships.” (Russell p.194-195)

In Western cultures the industrialized mindset reduced the Grail Quest to Disney movie status, while modern technology made traditional martial arts obsolete. However this changing mindset was not restricted to the West, but also affected Japan which by 1933 was a growing industrial power ruled by a military government determined to indoctrinate its citizens with a quasi martial ethos.

In 1933 Karate was officially recognized by the Dai Nippon Butokukai (Great Japan Martial Virtues Association) and was used with Judo and Kendo, to promote physical fitness and the government's militaristic ideologies amongst Japan's populace.

Legendary Karate master Shoshin Nagamine recalled a conversation with Choki Motobu about the changes karate was undergoing during this period in history “He was sad that with the popularity of the discipline there also had come great change. The kata practiced in Tokyo had been carelessly changed, and in some cases completely disintegrated. In Okinawa, during the old days, students spent years meticulously learning a single kata or two. That custom in Tokyo had changed to the pointless but popular practice of accumulating many kata without ever understanding their respective applications. The practice of kata had been reduced to stiff and fixed postures, without tai sabaki (body movement) or ashi sabaki (stepping and sliding). Kata had become a lifeless practice, Motobu believed.” (Nagamine, Okinawan Masters, p.100)

Karate's wide spread popularity in Japan is largely attributed to the fighting art's practice as a sport, which was uncommon on Okinawa

before 1933. After being introduced to Japan, Karate underwent a transformation due partially to Gichin Funakoshi and his son, Yoshitaka, who sought to make the fighting art more popular than kendo and judo. To accomplish this goal free sparring was introduced and karate's appeal amongst college students grew enormously.

However, this competitive innovation had its pitfalls. Donn Draeger noted “Japanese karate-do in general, under the influence of the younger Funakoshi, eventually became a quasi-combat form because both weapons and throwing techniques were discarded. Furthermore, many of the techniques developed, if used under conditions of serious combat, are reckless and liable to cause serious injury to the user. Nevertheless, because the execution of techniques in the JKA style requires the exponent commit his body fully in attack or defense, this style produces a forceful action with a tremendous appeal to energetic young people. It is a style well suited to competition. Thus the JKA style has affected almost all sects of karate-do, literally forcing them to follow similar patterns of technique if they wish to attract new members and keep pace with the growing popularity of the JKA style” (Draeger, Modern Budo Bujutsu, p. 134).

Prior to Karate's introduction to Japan, kata was an intricate process used to train fighters and record combative behaviors. Martial Arts historian Patrick McCarthy lists eleven traits associated with kata while Iain Abernethy, a leading Bunkai-jutsu expert lists ten. They are:

### ***McCarthy's Kata Traits***

- Yoi no Kishin (mental preparation)
- Inyo (yin/yang—understanding the magnitude of cause and effect)
- Go no sen, sen no sen, and sen (three aspects of defensive initiative)
- Maai (understanding engagement distance and how to utilize ma-the space or interval established through body-change) and tai sabaki (expansion and contraction, gyration and body mechanics)
- Chira no kyojaku (the proper amount of power for each technique)
- Kiai-jutsu (the gathering and releasing of ki or Qi)



- Waza no kankyu (the speed and rhythm of technique)
- Ju no ri (the principle of resiliency and the willingness to bend in the wind of adversity)
- Bunkai (understanding the defensive themes and application of technique)
- Zanshin (mental alertness and continued domination before and after the fact)
- Seishi o shoetsu (transcending the thoughts of life and death)

### ***Abernethy's Kata Traits***

- Bunkai (direct application of kata techniques)
- Henka-Waza (variation of techniques)
- Oyo (application of the technique's principles)
- Okuden-Waza (Secret Techniques)
- Jintai-Kyusho (striking the body's weak points)
- Tegumi (grappling techniques)
- Kansetu-Waza (joint locking)
- Ne-Waza (ground grappling)
- Atemi (striking with the limbs)
- Heiho (understanding the kata's strategies)

McCarthy wrote "Through understanding the magnitude of kata, especially when it is combined with spiritual doctrines, it becomes perfectly clear how a single paradigm (kata) can represent an entire fighting art." (McCarthy, *Ancient Okinawan Martial Arts*, 109) Sadly though, the traditional role of kata was lost when karate gained worldwide popularity.

### **Kata Kumite: The Lost Process**

Immediately after the Second World War Karate was introduced to the West by people who had gained a limited knowledge of the fighting art, while living in Japan or Okinawa. Deeply impressed by modern karate's traditions these newly minted Senseis taught karate as they learned it and by doing so presented kata as a solo practice. This practice was later compounded by rampant commercialism which according to Kiyoshi Arakaki made kata "something to learn only in order to advance to a higher rank." (*Secrets of Okinawan Karate* p.7)

The beauty of karate's kata is they can be



practiced solo fashion, yet this leads to the assumption that kata is merely a form of shadow boxing. To alleviate this misinterpretation all kata techniques should be practiced as self-defense drills, or close quarter sparring. This is known as kata kumite which Gichen Funakoshi noted "is a form used to apply offensive and defensive techniques, practiced in the kata, under more realistic conditions, in which by prearrangement between participants one applies offensive and the other defensive techniques." (Funakoshi, *Karate-do Kyohan*, p.211)

Hunter Thompson, director of the International Hopology Society stated about the importance of two-man practice that "Originally, solo training patterns were secondary to partner or group training. Obviously, partner-training more closely simulates actual combat than solo practice, and therefore is considerably more effective as a training format. The main training format then, if the individual was to survive combat, would have to be the two-man practice that closely simulates real action." (Armstrong, *Pre-Arranged*



Movement Patterns, P.19) Therefore kata kumite develops the most effective combative skills, not solo kata practice as many believe.

Apart from developing combative skills kata kumite also provides realistic feedback about bunkai while simultaneously allowing variations of bunkai, the Henka-Waza Abernethy identified, to be developed. Similarly the techniques used during kata kumite should be simple and effective since your goal is to develop realistic strategies for a violent and chaotic encounter.

### **Unifying the Combative Themes**

Kata stores and transmits martial knowledge, but the sum total of a fighter's knowledge is not contained within a single kata. Instead those who created kata did so with the understanding that additional techniques such as jabs, shin kicks, hook punches, ground grappling, locks and throws would be used during kata kumite.

Some may argue that shin kicks and jabs are not traditional karate techniques but history tells us different. For instance Siamese (Thai) boxing, a style of fighting noted for its shin kicks, was introduced to Okinawa during the 16th century. Likewise Robert Smith acknowledged western boxing's impact on Chinese fighting styles when he wrote "Chinese knew little about Western Boxing until the first half of the twentieth century.

Although the Western style contained something for the Chinese- primarily head punching, which the Chinese traditionally had relegated to a lesser position than what they believed was the more grievous body punching- because of its restrictions." (Smith, Comprehensive Asian Fighting Arts, p. 19) To assume western boxing had similar impact on karate would be logical.

Many traditionalists reject eclecticism, but it was common practice amongst karate's progenitors. For instance Choki Motobu was noted for both his striking and grappling abilities. Chojun Miyagi was well versed in Judo and Kanryo Higaonna's training "regularly included, for example, ude tanren (arm conditioning), uke harai (block training) and kakie (push hands). Then there was ne waza (ground techniques), which required a partner and a large wooden barrel. The two students naked from the waist up, practiced numerous grappling techniques such as neck chokes and joint locks while lying down in the confined space of a barrel." (Higaonna, The History of Karate, p.19)

In addition to its being a mnemonic tool kata united a field of combative themes which go unnoticed today. Long time Goju practitioner and martial arts author Gavin Muholland wrote about this unification, "Despite what some people think these days, the kata do not hold the entirety of any given system-nor were they intended to. There have always been elements of Karate which sit outside the kata in terms of their core learning. Often they are alluded to in the kata, but the actual study of them is expected to be done elsewhere- grappling and weaponry to name just two." (Muholland, Four Shades of Black, p. 14)

Kata consists of two spheres, the literal and symbolic. Literal being the kata's formal presentation, while symbolic is the incorporation of tai sabuki (body shifting), Henka-Waza (variations of techniques, kakie (push hands), ne waza (ground techniques) kansetsu waza (joint locks) and even hojo undo (conditioning) into kata kumite.

More importantly though, is the symbolic realm imbues each technique with an infinite number of applications, thereby allowing it to become a miniature kata. This undoubtedly is why many of karate's progenitors adhered to the philosophy



of learning deeply and taught only a handful of kata, as opposed to the modern practice of retaining a superficial understanding about numerous kata.

### **The Depths of Kata**

While enabling the karate-ka to develop technical skills kata also fosters a mindset suitable for combat or the Yoi no Kishin (mental preparation) McCarthy alluded to. And in many instances this is as important, if not more so, than physically based techniques.

Dr Richard Hayes identified eight combat traits as the phenomenology of combat in his *Paleolithic Adaptive Traits And The Fighting Man*, one being Innate Force/Yield Trait (goju no ri) which Dr. Hayes describe as “On hopological terms, the Innate Force/Yield Trait (IFYT) refers to the pervasive instinct of survival inherent in man (implemented by high-order brain processing) which, in a circumstance of danger, is presided over by the imperturbable-mind state of mind and under which there is evoked a concentration of mental and physical energies in varying degrees of compliance and resistance in response to external stimuli coincident with combative action or action withheld.” (Hayes, *Paleolithic Adaptive Traits*, p.9)

Another trait Dr. Hayes associated with systematic training is Manifest Force/Yield Trait (MYFT)- goju no jutsu which he characterized as “learned combative behavior based on, or evolved by life-experience and/or formal training, as determined by genetic/constitutional/temperamental factors, and in circumstance or danger, prescribed over by the imperturbable-mind state of mind and under which it is characterized by the conservation of mental and physical energies demonstrated in varying degrees of resilience and resistance at the time of their application for combative purposes.” (Ibid) Hence in layman’s terms the first line of defense is our mindset.

Kata develops combative skills, but it also fosters qualities which transcend fighting. Nadel and Strauss observed about a similar transition found in dance: “If we look at meditation as a form of deep and continuous concentration or focus on a single sound, image or idea, the dancer, like the religious person, can approach a meditative state both in class and performance.



This state is similar in all the arts and is like the flowing current felt in most situations of deep focused concentration” (Nadel-Straus, *The Dance Experience*, 141). Therefore by training to defend ourselves we polish our character through the practice of solo kata and kata kumite.

### **Conclusion**

As it is with many traditions which evolved in preliterate societies, kata is a multifaceted process influenced by a symbolic presence rarely encountered in our current age of texting, twitter and blackberries.

Kata’s progenitors were not wizards or magicians but pragmatic individuals who realized combat was an experience so dynamic that words alone could not encompass it. To prepare for combat they developed a mnemonic tool that unified a field of combative themes and imbued fighters with martial prowess. In Karate this tool is known as kata.

Kata, like fighting, is neither fixed nor static but comes alive through the insight, creativity and pragmatism of the karate-ka. Yet when kata does become static and lifeless we march with Percival, the knight who saw the grail, but failed to grasp its importance.

About the contributor: Michael Rosenbaum has been training in karate since 1976. He is the author of *Kata and the Transmission of Knowledge in Traditional Martial Arts*.

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## Endnotes

1 Rhyming couplets were used extensively in pre-modern societies to impart knowledge about matters so diverse as good manners, farming, marriage, medicine and hunting. Christina Hardyment remarked about the importance of rhyming couplets during the 15th century that "Much of what they learned was in rhyming couplets, a very effective way of imprinting facts on the memory. Rhyme was used not just to teach children everything from arithmetic to good manner but to offer basic tips to adults on farming, housekeeping, hunting and medicine. Many such poems were written for their own children and then more widely circulated." (Hardyment, *Malory*, p. 64-65) Rhyming couplets are also used in Chinese and Indian poetry.

2 Arakaki also stated "Kata study today places the main emphasis on how to make the kata more appealing to outside observers, often discarding or forgetting its inner nature. *Karateka* (students of karate) are often more interested in the sport and exercise aspects of karate than in the mastery of karate as a science. For karate schools to survive as businesses, it has gradually become necessary to establish karate in the world of sports or for *enbu* (performance). Over time less and less emphasis has been placed on the scientific aspects of this martial art." (Arakaki, *Secrets of Okinawan Karate*, P.7) Ironically Arakaki is also a Muay-Thai



kickboxing advocate noted for his fighting prowess, not the performance of kata.

3 Donn Draeger observed about the kata process in Judo, "This is as it should be, if kata is being used correctly. The kata is thus an evaluative device, which registers incorrectly, applied technique and can reveal the reasons why tori is failing to produce the correct result. In nage no kata, uke makes only predetermined efforts to foil tori, and tori before hand realizes these actions are to come. In spite of this knowledge, should the technique not come off well, it is a definite sign that tori is not applying his technique properly. How can he fail with a cooperative uke an expect to "defeat" a non-cooperative uke in randori or shiai? In katame no kata, after certain preliminaries, uke is free to actively, and in an undetermined way, extract himself from tori's technique. Uke's escape actions are not prearranged except of utilizing legitimate Judo methods. If, with this "perfect"

chance to immobilize uke, tori fails, how can he ever hope to immobilize a tori who from the beginning, is struggling to defeat him?" (Draeger, Judo Randori No Kata and Ju No Kata)

4 "We moderns who have no memories at all may, like the professor, employ from time to time some private mnemotechnic not of vital importance to us in our lives and professions. But in the ancient world, devoid of printing, without paper for note-taking or on which to type lectures, the trained memory was of vital importance. And the ancient memories were trained by an art which reflected the art and architecture of the ancient world, which could depend on faculties of intense visual memorization which we have lost." (Dates, *The Art of Memory*, p. 4)

## Kata and the Transmission of Knowledge

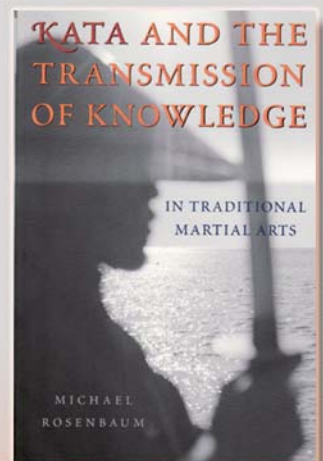
All too frequently, martial arts practitioners study their art without truly understanding where it comes from, how it was developed, and why it was created in the first place. Indeed, many don't care—and if you feel this way, you should put this book down. For the rest of us, who have taken our art beyond tournaments, it is reasonable to expect that we want to uncover the past. We want to understand the where, why, and how of martial art development. We are intellectually curious about our combative history.

To study the combative arts is to understand the circumstances of their development and to gain insights into the views and ethics of the societies that created them. As we travel back in time, we see consistent evidence of martial systems being influenced by those that came before and/or invaded. We also see the use of 'pre-arranged' fighting patterns (kata) to transmit proven techniques from one generation to the next.

It is this transmission of martial knowledge, through kata and other forms of communication, that this book will explore. The author will demonstrate that pre-arranged fighting techniques (katas) were used by ancient Greek, Egyptian, Asian, African, and European societies. And that Poetry, Dance, and Song were also significant methods of preserving and transmitting battle-tested fighting tactics through the ages.

The purpose of kata training is not to become bound by the form but to transcend the form itself—to evolve.

*Michael Rosenbaum* began his martial arts training at the age of five. Along with Isshin Ryu, which he has been practicing for 25 years, he has studied Bando, Judo, and Boxing. Michael is a former member of the elite 82nd Airborne Division of the U.S. Army, and has completed Infantry, Airborne, and Jungle Warfare Schools. He currently resides near Knoxville, TN.



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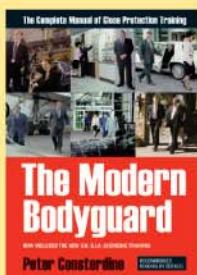


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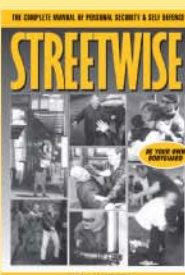
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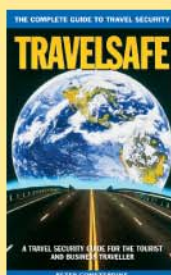
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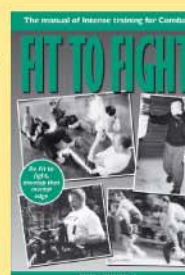
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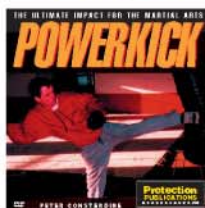
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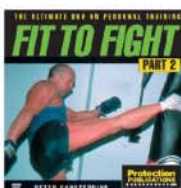
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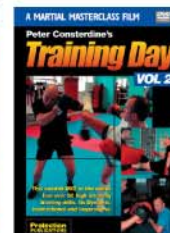
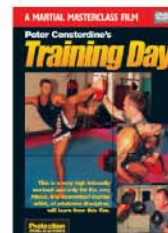
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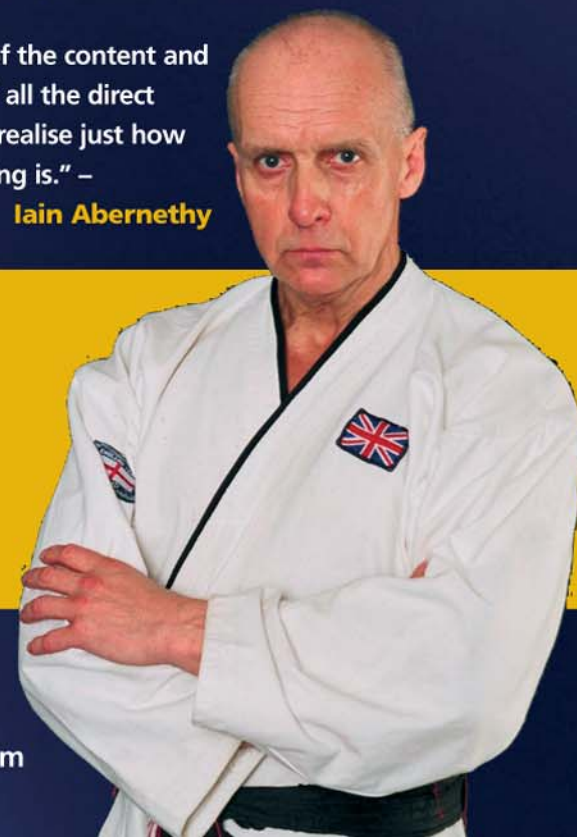
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# A WHITER SHADE OF PALE

by Andi Kidd

It's happened to all of us – hasn't it? You're at a wedding or birthday party and suddenly 'Wooo-oo-oooo – ooooooooooooooooooooo' the dulcet tones of Carl Douglas over the speakers signalling yet another play of the 1974 classic 'Kung-Fu fighting'. A friend or relative rushes up to you to tell you that they have had it played especially for you so you better come and dance. You laugh as though it is the first time it has happened and, depending how drunk you are, attempt to politely refuse, or get up with people asking you to 'show them some moves'.

It doesn't matter if you do kung-fu, karate, kickboxing or krav, people not 'in the know' think that the song relates to you and to what you do. The meaning of the song, to them, is a representation of something that you are involved in. The song may have a very different meaning to you and maybe a completely different meaning to what the man who wrote it was thinking as he penned it.

Kata is very similar to this. We spend many hours researching the meaning of the movements and can have very different

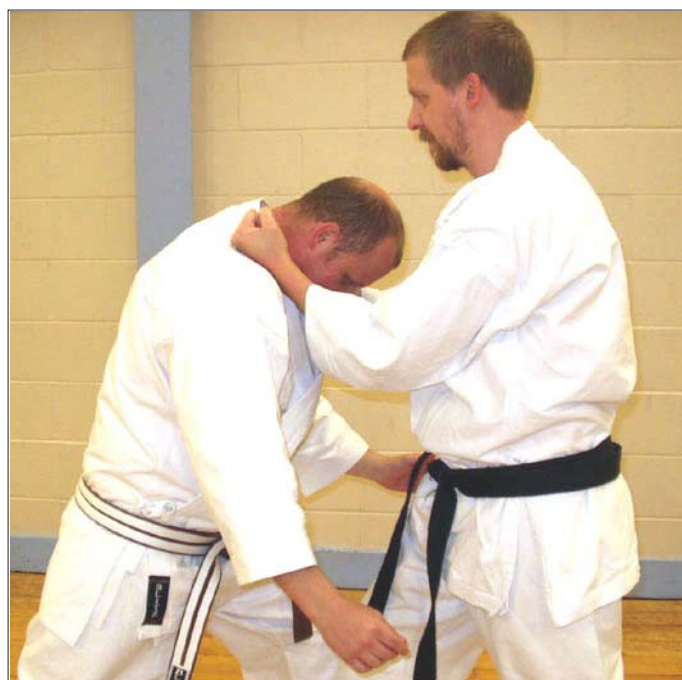
interpretations from each other for the same outward physical appearance. Are any of the applications conceived the same as the ones the originator thought of? How could we possibly know if they were or not? Even if they are, or aren't, does it really matter?

Take the song 'A whiter shade of pale' by Procal Harum, there are huge debates about what this song means, ranging from drink and drugs to penile dysfunction! The author says that he doesn't know what it means, but is he just not saying, enjoying the debate or does he not want to say for some other reason? Some people say there have been extra lyrics at concerts (thus having special insider knowledge) and that at one point it implies part of the song is about raping a woman! So what is the truth?

The truth is that we don't know and save a death bed confession, we are not going to find out! This is also the same as kata. Looking at Bassai/Passai we know that the originator is not with us and he can't tell us the meaning of the movements, we also know that it is very unlikely that any new written evidence will appear to enlighten us on the subject. One bit of evidence that we do have is Funakoshi saying that some



As the opponent attacks with a grab/punch, use both hands to ward this off. The knee can be deployed as a strike or to take the opponent off balance



Drop both hands down into the neck





Alternate is to grab and strike at this point

of the movements in Passai/Bassai are 'Kusariwa' the 'Arm Ring' which essentially is a double leg take down. This is mentioned in Karate-Jutsu (1).

Although anecdotal evidence like this may point toward the original bunkai it may also just be Funakoshi's own interpretation. When fitting this in with my karate, this interpretation comes in third to two others, one semi stolen and one of my own! So just because there is evidence of what the possible original intention was, it doesn't stop us looking at the kata to try and find other combative functions. It also means that we don't all need to have the same function for each move.

If we are trying to recreate what the originator intended when he specified the movements we could all well be wrong as there is no way of telling what was in his mind at that point. If we are trying to find workable techniques that can be used in actual self protection, as long as they are thought through properly, we could all be right.

Some movements in kata seem to be very obvious just like some lyrics in songs.

If you take the iconic 'Smoke on the Water' by Deep Purple, it is well known that this is a story of actual events 'They burned down the gambling house, it died with an awful sound' is a pretty obvious lyric and with other background information (Ian Gillan's autobiography for one), we know exactly what it means

This shows us that if we know something about the creator of a specific kata then maybe we



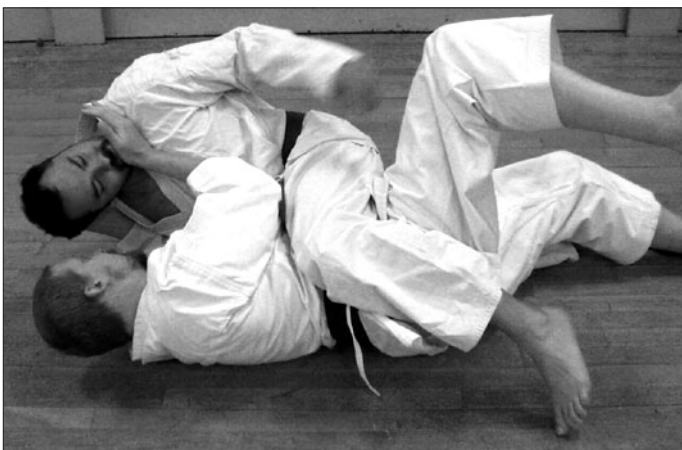
Use the stepping punch as a neck crank

would be able to better speculate on what the meaning of the kata was when he was constructing it in the first place. We know Itosu invented the Heian/Pinan kata and we know from Funakoshi's writing that he used to leave opponents face down unconscious (2), so does this help us to work out bunkai in any of these kata? It can help and gives us clues as to the original meanings of the movements, which in turn should lead to good, solid and useable bunkai, but if the inventor was of a different body type, size and/or strength, they still may not be what you want and/or need.

When analysing bunkai there are many factors you have to consider, two of these being the relative size of the combatants and threat level of the attack.

Size is important no matter what anyone tells you (ask any woman who is strapped to a polygraph machine!) In combat there is no way that a smaller person can use some techniques against a much larger opponent, or if they can they would be silly to try. Some throwing techniques spring to mind and before people start throwing (excuse the pun) their arms up in outrage, I know it is all about leverage etc but trying to throw someone of twice your weight in the street using a Tani-otoshi (3) seems like asking for trouble. He actually mentions this himself in the narration before the pictures in Karate-Jutsu (4).

The threat level of any attack will also determine the level of response. I have argued with some people about this but I cannot see how you can justify the same level of force to be used against



someone who is trying to kill you and your family and a relative who has drunk too much and is getting leery at a wedding and or family party (this is usually just before Kung Fu Fighting is requested!)

Looking at it in this way and realising that the inventors of kata knew about fighting, this brings us to yet more questions. Did the originator of the kata decide on one principle for every technique or several dependent on other factors? Take Shuto Uke (knife hand block or sword hand reception depending on translation) for example. In my club this is probably the most prolific source of varied bunkai for a single movement and like 'a whiter shade of pale' could mean any of them. As long as they are functional surely it doesn't matter what 'we skipped a light fandango' actually was supposed to mean and is more important as what it means to us and how effectively we can employ it.

Did the creator of the kata have a specific idea in mind for the shuto at the exact point of a kata? Or did he think that this could be used for x, y and z as well as p, q, r, s and t as well? Did he have one explanation, three or five? Otsuka said that Naifanchi/tekki was a profound kata that would take more than a lifetime to master. Was this down to the inventor or was this down to Otsuka's excellent analysis?

If you have ever fallen in, or out of, love then you will probably know that the lyrics to some songs change in your perception. One day the words say one thing to you, the next they are saying something completely different. The





same with applications; perspective is everything. If we look at the movement just after the third yama zuki (mountain punch) in Bassai/Passai, where you turn 270 degrees into a low stance, anyone who knows judo will have seen it before as a throw. I discovered this at 4.15am one morning many years ago. My daughter was up in the night and I was trying to comfort her to get her back to sleep. She wouldn't settle and I decided to turn the TV on as she snuggled into me (the way that babies can to make you forgive them anything). The Open University was on (there was nothing else in those days, not like the 24 hour TV culture now) and there was a programme about the structural integrity of pylons. As this went on they showed a judo-ka throwing someone, then him performing the technique again without the uke, demonstrating the stability in his stance. I stared at it and wondered why I hadn't seen this technique in that move in Bassai before. It was all a matter of perspective.

I am almost sure that we read more into kata now than was originally intended and that the creators of kata would be impressed with some of the bunkai that has been invented. The reverse engineering method may not be historically accurate and we may end up over analysing everything but as long as the bunkai produced is combat functional, does it matter if the kata masters are sitting on their cloud laughing at our attempts to analyse their whiter shades of pale?

## Footnotes

1, Interestingly if you look at the same 'throw' in To-te Jitsu and Karate Jutsu there are variations of the explanations and the names.

To-te jitsu it mentions grabbing the opponent's arms instead of his legs, saying "when the opponent tries to strike ones face with both his fists, defend and counter attack by attacking with both hands and stepping towards him while attempting to grab both of the opponent's arms." P 62

Karate Jutsu says "parry an opponent's two-fisted attack towards the face with a rising block and then leap in and use both arms to encircle his legs with udewa." P 55

Are these translation errors or two possible bits of bunkai read into the same thing by the different translators? The two passages, which have been translated from the same text, have very different ideas; this is food for thought for any document that has been translated.

2, "I now recall a well-known incident when Itosu was set up upon by a group of young toughs, but before long the hoodlums were all lying unconscious in the street. An eyewitness, seeing that Itosu was in no danger, rushed off to tell Azato about the incident. Interrupting his account, Azato said, 'And the ruffians, of course, were all lying unconscious, with their faces to the ground, were they not?' Much surprised, the witness admitted that that was true, but he wondered how Azato could have known.

'Very simple,' replied the karate master. 'No karate adept would be so cowardly as to attack from the rear. And should someone unfamiliar with karate attack from the front, he would end up on his back. But I know Itosu; his punches would knock his assailants down on their faces. I would be quite astonished if any of them survive.'" Karate-do: My Way of Life – Gichin Funakoshi P18-19

3, If referring between the books, 'To-te Jutsu', 'Karate-Jutsu' and 'Karate-do Kyohan' you will see that the Kyohan has a different set of pictures for the Tani-otoshi. The Tani-otoshi referred to in this article is called Sakatsuchi in Kyohan.

To-te Jutsu – Gichin Funakoshi P 62

Karate Jutsu - Gichin Funakoshi P 55

Karate-do Kyohan - Gichin Funakoshi P 232

4, "I will mention, however, taking the technique called *taniotoshi* ("to drop off a cliff") as an example, that when one is much stronger than one's opponent, the technique can usually be executed smoothly and with ease. But when facing an opponent of equal or larger size, there are also times when the technique just will not work and in order to defend oneself one may have no alternative but to "swallow one's tears and resort to using one's head as a mallet." P 53

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Mike Liptrot is one of the UK's premier grappling coaches. A full time international judo coach, Mike started training in Judo at the age of six. Thanks to the massive influence of legendary Judoka Tony Macconnell, Mike had a successful competition career, competing in his first International at sixteen years old. Presently the Chief Coach at the Kendal Judo Centre (an official Olympic facility to be used by international players in preparation for the 2012 games), In addition to his role as a top Judo coach, Mike also coaches MMA fighters, traditional martial artists, and self-protection practitioners who wish to develop their grappling skills. Mike is available for seminars and private instruction.

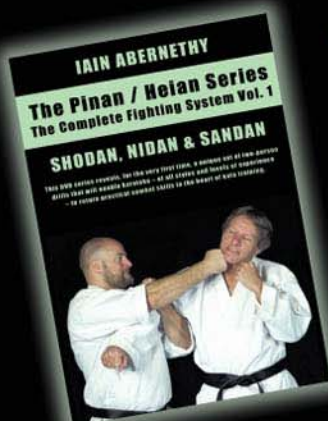


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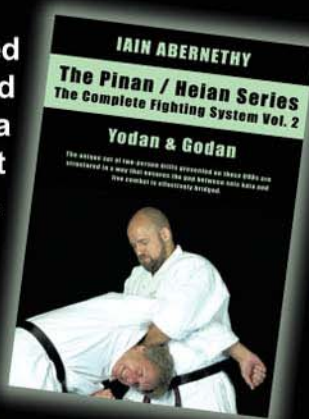
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# The Anatomy of Back Stance

By Chris Littlefair

I'd had a hard day so when I saw a window of five minutes free I did what most English people do when they need to relax; I made a cup of tea. Scooping up a book and my good cup of builder's tea I strolled into the dining room sinking down into a chair. I half turned, my thigh muscles took my weight, flexed and I realised once my bum had landed that I'd gone through a back stance to get there. Does my mind never turn off from martial arts? Nope, and especially not for back stance... I like to keep aware of back stance throughout my day. Front stance being a much more natural 'walking' style of stance is more easily conveyed to beginners but back stance can be a pain to learn. And then there's movement within the stance. What's it for? It's not useful anyway is it? We just need it for hyungs (kata) and to get through gradings, right?

Back stance is an intricate body position and has been developed for the specific purpose of limiting the upper body target area. As such it has been used extensively in tournament styles of martial arts such as Tae Kwon Do, Tang Soo Do (in which back stance is also called fighting stance) and kick boxing where Bill 'Superfoot' Wallace developed his own particular style of back stance. Does this mean that back stance is only useful for tournaments? Not necessarily as can be seen from the syllabus within Tang Soo Do. Hu gul ja sae or back stance is prevalent in ho sin sul and il soo sik or what are sometimes loosely named self defence and one step sparring techniques. Despite these being formulised 'classic' applications of technique in 'one step' defence situations we can see some of the meaning and the real deal deep within back stance. The self defence aspects of back stance are rarely explored but there are valuable combat lessons to be learned.

The usefulness of back stance is shown in its construction: a defensive stance with a sideways aspect which minimises the upper body as a target area, and it's not a new phenomenon. In fact it's been around for quite some time! Shown in this figure (1) is an illustration showing an early fencing position akin to a back stance. This piece is from the German fencing master Peter Von Danzig, 1449.



figure 1

Modern European fencers also know that 'turning out' the body in this way affords optimal protection from the adversaries' sword thrusts but still gives them good forward and backward mobility. This flexibility of movement combined with minimising the effective scoring part of the body is why a side-on stance is adopted in European fencing.

In the photo to the right you can see the attacker (figure 2) performing a flèche or a cross-step lunge forward in an attempt to thrust through the defender's (right) guard. Instinctively the defender rolls back his weight onto his back leg, flexing it to take the weight and preparing the hips for either a counter attack or more backwards defensive steps. We see him adopting a natural defensive 'back stance'.

In the next sequence of photos (figure 3) you see the usefulness of this side-on stance in fencing for mobility. Firstly the lunge is shown, pushing forward of the back bent leg illustrating





figure 2

a rapid forward attack. The second photo highlights the rapid and dynamic push or hop-slide forward which can give explosive results.

It could take forever describing a technical back stance but naturally the back stance can be defined as being a side on approach to the opponent with the weight being mostly to the rear foot with the body turned out. That's it. Of course back stance can be very mechanical in classical posture and as such deserves self scrutiny to ensure the weight distribution and limb alignment is correct. In Korean back stance the feet are about shoulder width apart, with a weight distribution of about 30%/70 front to back foot. Some schools of Tae Kwon Do prescribe 20%/80 but I find that this inhibits my mobility too much although they might argue that it's more important to maintain that distribution for kicking from the front leg. Japanese back stance has a wider base with a more even weight distribution but the essence remains the same across Korean, Japanese or Chinese schools: a back weighted stance with a slight turnout of the body, front foot usually pointed to the opponent.

As described above in fencing, this back weighed defensive stance is ideal for minimising point scoring on the torso and facilitates a backward head movement away from attacks. This is partly why it has become popular in tournament style and de rigeur in Korean tournaments. Back stance is sometimes called fighting stance in Korean styles and for systems which advocate high, jumping and spinning kicks it's easy to see why. From this back stance it's easy to deliver a stopping kick off the front leg. An opponent advancing on you and looking for a

point can be stopped dead in their tracks by a judicial kick off the front leg without having to expose oneself to a counter by kicking from the rear leg. It is also much easier to jump up for kicks such as ee dan kicks (tobi geri) whereby the front leg is lifted (but only as a feint) while at the same time a jump off the back leg is initiated and it is this back leg which delivers a point scoring technique (usually to the head). Spinning kicks are also a hallmark of Korean styles and the back stance can help with rotation - the turn which precedes the spin is made easier by virtue of the fact that the weight is already turned backwards and the body turned out.

Bill 'Superfoot' Wallace made his tournament career on a backward weighted, side-on stance in his kickboxing fights. He was famously able to use his feet like others use their hands! Although not a classical back stance as we might understand it he certainly understood the importance of minimising the target area while being in a position to move backwards and forwards rapidly and maintaining the ability to kick quickly off the front leg. Bill Wallace adapted the back stance due to his own physical needs: in his younger days he suffered an injury meaning



figure 3 a

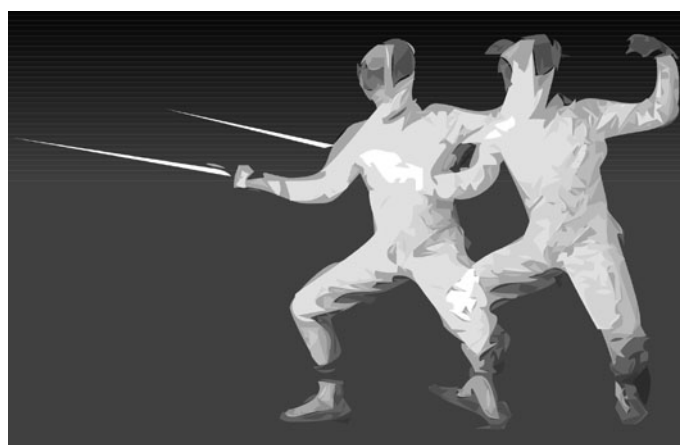


figure 3 b

one of his legs was much weaker than the other. This circumstance meant that he was almost obliged to take on this backward weighted stance as he was limited to kicking with only one leg.

This needn't suggest that back stance is only at its best in competition and tournament situations though! A swift look in our trusty almanac of techniques reveals the real and effective usefulness of the back stance. This ready resource is, of course hyung (kata). In addition to hyung, Tang Soo Do syllabus contains codified self defence techniques and one step (or sometimes three step) attacks and these rely heavily on back stance. Why are these defensive techniques based on a back stance? In examining some of these hyung techniques, ho sin sul and il soo sik (one step sparring and self defence) the potential of using back stance or a backward weighted stance within real combat situations can really be unlocked.

Let's look at some of these techniques to see the link between self-defence and back stance:

In several of the pyung ahn (pinan or heian) forms



figure 4

there are fist crossing motions across the body showing a head turn takedown. This can be seen notably during pyung ahn oh dan and illustrates how back stance can be used to facilitate not only a defensive move but a weight shift and pivot to facilitate a takedown. (Figure 4) Pivoting around the back leg is much easier in back stance and in some cases is necessary to enable close-in throwing techniques. In this case the transfer of weight to the back leg is required to move the opponent's body round and down. A front loaded stance can hinder the turning and rotation process. The ease of rotating with back stance is evident here.

The first codified one step (il soo sik) technique is a defence against a stepping punch. The defender steps back into a back stance and blocks with the front hand. (figure 5a) The weight is now shifted quickly forward and into the opponent with an elbow strike. The self defence key point here is the 'falling away' from the opponent using natural movement and catching oneself on a sprung, bent rear leg, weight backwards ready to spring forward in a counter attack. This is quite a natural position to come to when attacked: sharp step back but readying to counter. (figure 5b) In a real situation we might not attain a classic back stance but the essential is there: side on stance with weight back. When I teach one step sparring I try and impress upon the students that the most important thing is to get out of the way of the oncoming technique: get out of the way of the attack! This is facilitated by a back step and block. There are other ways of evasion of course: despite the name back stance it doesn't mean we have to always step backwards to evade. This is another feature of back stance: its usefulness when evading to the side, or simply away from the opponent. When being attacked we want to position ourselves in the optimal place for a counter attack and this means using the opponent's space and layout of the body. It may be beneficial to step across to the blind side or obliquely into the attack and back stance helps balance the situation without fleeing. We don't want to create too much space between ourselves and the opponent as this merely gives the pursuant an opportunity to continue the barrage. Instead the back stance allows us to ease ourselves off the line of the attack but keeps us ready for a counter.

A lot of the value of the back stance is as an intermediary step to counter attack in front stance. This shifting of weight backwards helps in establishing a moment to evaluate the situation before countering. As such, the back stance may be seen as part of a larger 'out and in' dynamic: a



catalyst for imminent techniques. The pendulum motion swings from back stance and defence through to an attacking front stance.

Although back stance doesn't have the same ease of constant forward movement as front stance nor its forward stability it can prove useful when moving swiftly in or out of range by a dynamic push or hop. Being placed "on the back foot" is indeed a defensive situation but needn't remain that way: sliding the front foot forward and turning the weight into a counter or, if the situation demands, 'springing' forward in order to turn that backward motion into forward energy. Of course, springing or hopping forward in an informal front stance is possible but within the context of a defensive situation the possibility of a strong front stance may not be a viable option and this is why back stance is an important tool for the martial artist.

Back stance is not better than front stance per se but there should be more awareness in the applications of forward and backward weighted stances and ultimately the redirection of energy.



figure 5 a



figure 5 b

Back stance should not be promoted over front stance for all situations. Front stance is a strong, attacking position and, as Geoff Thompson describes in *Dead or Alive*, can be used as a ready stance, almost invisibly, just prior to a real situation. Rather, back stance is a useful part of a martial artist's repertoire and transfers well into combat situations. It's rather easy to not practice our back stance because, let's face it, it's a pain. It hurts our thighs, turning out the hips without collapsing the knee needs work and weight distribution is a permanent preoccupation. It does, however, deserve continued practice and examination of its applications.

So although we might think of back stance as a purely tournament oriented position there are deep associations with self defence, as indicated by hyung practice and codified one step/self defence techniques such as ho sin sul and il soo sik. Back stance can help when rapid naturally defensive movement is required whilst simultaneously maintaining a balance and awareness within our bodies ready for counter attack. 'Falling' into back stance defence can maintain this readiness for combat. It will also help with close fighting turning a defensive situation into a counter attack by allowing us to quickly turn the backward movement into a forward attack. Not only can it facilitate striking techniques but it is ideal for pivoting when in close range for some takedowns.

So you think you're too tired to train your back stance? Go and grab yourself a cup of tea and have a sit down then.

### Figures

1 [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/36/MS\\_44\\_A\\_8\\_1v.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/36/MS_44_A_8_1v.jpg)

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2. Fleche fencing (this image is copyright free: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fencing\\_054.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fencing_054.jpg))

3. Illustrations 3a and 3b

4. Pyung ahn O Dan (fist crossing: head turning)

5. Natural defensive back stance

### Glossary

Ho sin sul – self defence applications

Il soo sik – one step sparring

Hu gul ja sae – back stance

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# Dealing with multiple attackers – Split, Stack and Shield!

by Glen Stewart

Picture your average Saturday afternoon as you stroll down to the local newsagent to buy the local paper. As you make your way along the side walk you suddenly find yourself in the midst of three young men bent on taking your wallet, phone and anything and everything else. Unclear beyond their bad intentions is the level of violence to which they are prepared to go, or want to go. All you know is that you don't want to be there!

In this article I would like to look at several key concepts in dealing with multiple attackers and some training ideas that assist to develop our skills in relation to this controversial arena.

As with any training we need to have a good understanding of the desired outcome, so as to effectively identify the best ways (i.e. techniques and tactics) to achieve that outcome. In these articles the focus of our training is civilian self defence and as such our desired outcome is:

To survive and escape the situation with minimal injury to ourselves so that we can return (home) to our loved ones.

The desired outcome would obviously be different if our training was geared towards crowd control or a law enforcement perspective where we need to control and restrain as a primary objective, as opposed to just getting out of there as quickly as possible.

Without discussing the obvious, i.e. the lack of environmental awareness that led to you being allowed to be confronted in the first place; the ability to use dialogue to dissuade the attackers and allow you to manipulate your way past them; etc. we will look into the situation from the fight stage. At this point we have made the decision that we are going to have to resort to physical force to exit the situation. Please note that this can be at any stage we feel that our non-physical tactics are not going to allow us the opportunity to escape unharmed. We should however be using those same non-physical skills to create

opportunities for our physical response to be maximally effective – i.e. we look to set up the opponents to our advantage, and to maximise our opportunities to escape.

Several key factors need to be taken into account in our training. Our opponents provide us with the position we find ourselves in, whilst the environment provides us with the setting and opportunities available to us. As such we need to be mindful that we take these items into account. We need to consider that we must be looking to manipulate our attackers in relation to ourselves and our environment to maximise our chances of survival.

The three skills I'd like to highlight in this article are what we call: The Split, Stack and Shield elements of multiple attacks.

## The Split

The concept of the split, in its simplest form, is to remove ourselves from the centre of the circle our attackers are attempting to impose on us. In any group situation attackers will encircle their 'prey' purely so they can attack effectively – i.e. they require access to the target and don't want to get in each others way to strike. Added to this



Photo 1: Nathan finds himself being encircled, utilising his dialogue to distract attackers he initiates a split to avoid dealing with 2 attackers

is the tactical concepts that a group 'hunting' will deliberately employ. The limitations to this ability of a group to encircle its prey is simply the environment in which the attack takes place. Obviously if we are up against a wall we cannot be fully encircled.

As such we must strive to remove this tactical advantage from the group. The split is the method by which we do this. Often you see multiple attacker scenarios where the defender stays located in the centre as each attacker patiently awaits their turn. Beyond Hollywood this never occurs in the real world – each attacker taking the opportunity to attack at will and en masse to overcome the victim in the easiest (for them) way possible. So our (micro) goal is – Get the hell out of the circle!

The defender can seek to achieve this by moving between attackers to exit. In the pre-fight stage this can be achieved via two strategies. Firstly, attack the mouthpiece. Often in group dynamics there is the alpha dog. The mouthpiece draws attention to themselves to occupy the defender whilst the helpers set up



**Photo 2: Splitting between the attackers**  
Nathan attempts to use Matt as a shield - attacking easy targets ie eyes

the drive of the others involved to see this person taken out, and also may cause confusion, a pause that allows for a get away. The cons of this approach is that the mouthpiece is generally ready for a movement, and so may be the offside.

The second option is to attack the help. By not having your attention focused on them you may be able to employ the element of surprise,



**Photo 3: Using the attackers body to shield himself**  
Nathan attempts to stack his opponents, causing them to entangle themselves

for a blindside attack. The pros of attacking this person is that in some instances it will remove hopefully catching them before they may be set, and allow you to break the circle and take control.

The techniques used for this are too numerous for this article but generally open handed strikes, eye rakes, groin slaps etc. work best – anything that attacks vision and balance as well as minimises damage to yourself are most effective. Random and circular movements are best as they make it difficult for an attacker to seize you effectively and help disturb the opponent's balance and movement. The next two concepts work hand in hand; The Shield and Stacking.

### **The Shield**

Taking a shield is basically the concept of using anything to provide ourselves cover as well as to obstruct the attackers' access to us. Generally once the split is initiated we attempt to seize an attacker, ideally from behind, to use them as our shield. We can/should be applying any opportunity to use pain compliance with this individual for two reasons.

Firstly, control: we want the person to be as responsive to our movements as possible. Attacking the eyes and or throat of the person generally encourages this. This allows us to keep manipulating them between ourselves and the other attackers. Secondly from a psychological point of view if he is screaming and begging and in obvious pain we may be able to use this against his friends to deter them from any further



attacks. Obviously throughout all phases you are constantly using dialogue etc. to attempt to distract, confuse or convince the attackers to stop!

The shield can also be utilised using environmental obstructions as well, tipping over a table, manoeuvring behind a car, using a chair, even throwing your wallet or coins at an attacker(s) to distract them. Remember THE GOAL - to provide yourself with the opportunity to escape or take a more secure position – not to necessarily damage our opposition; although this may well be a consequence of the situation.



**Photo 4: Using the shield allows Nathan to protect himself and launch a counter attack or**



**Photo 5: Use the shield to create an obstruction to deal with the last attacker or make his escape.**

## Stacking

The concept of stacking is to manoeuvre ourselves and/or our attackers in such a way that we only fight one opponent at a time. This obviously minimises the risk to ourselves and creates confusion to our opponents. The use of the shield helps achieve this as does constant movement and momentum. The goal is to line up all the opponents, ideally in a single file so that we only have to face the front man. Obviously if we disable him, as he falls he creates another obstacle both physically and psychologically that the attackers have to cross to get to the defender.

We need to also consider and utilise all the opportunities the environment provides. Slipping between cars limits the space available to our attackers; fighting to a doorway that is an escape exit limits the amount of attackers' access to us (particularly if you drop or push attackers down in front of the doorway creating an obstacle to climb over). Even as a last resort, fighting ourselves into a corner to limit the amount of access attackers have to us (especially when utilising a shield) can assist us in maintaining limited damage to ourselves. This strategy would only be utilised if no escape route is available and we have no alternative but to outlast an attack using our shield(s) to maximum effect to limit our opponents options for attack. As always escape is the primary goal.

The Shield and Stacking work hand in hand to help limit the amount of damage to ourselves whilst allowing us to counter attack – both physically and psychologically – our opponents. They are used synergistically. The shield is used to create obstruction and opportunity to stack our opponents and we stack to create opportunities to take shields and minimise our opponents opportunities to inflict damage. The use of both increases our chances of surviving the situation and making use of any escape options that may be available.

Glen Stewart has been training for the last 25 years in Zen Bu Kan Kempo Karate, currently 4th Dan and 4th Dan in Bunbu Ichi Nihon Jujutsu. Previously undertaken Security work and for the last 7 years have worked as a Correctional Officer for NSW goals. For the last 4 year been an active member of several Immediate Action Teams - emergency response unit with each goal.

# Flow in modern karate kata

**By Nikolaj Fæno Skarbye**

**W**hat is meant by flow and sensitivity, and why is this an essential part of skills needed to be acquired, for one being able to defend one self. How come that the neighbouring countries prior to the Japanese have sensitivity drills such as Kakie (Okinawan Goju-ryu), Chi-sau, lat- and lap-sau (various styles of Wing Chun), pushing hands (tai chi) and the Hubad/Tegummi exercises (various Philippine martial arts)

Most of the katas from modern karate, has its past from Okinawa, which leads us back to china and so goes the story. Most people are definitely aware of that the katas were designed for the simple man to be able to defend himself, empty handed, against a villain or a ruffian. The moves in the katas could have different meanings, we are unaware of most of the original meanings, but as long as we make an effective solution, that will do the job - it is an effective interpretation of the kata - hence a bunkai solution.

The categories of bunkai solutions range from pure striking, grappling, locking, clinching, kicking, and throwing continuing on with tons of various interpretations. All which will solve the immediate problem, at first hand, by being attacked, grabbed or even confronted and then delivering the first attack - connecting with his initiate defensive response thus taking the opponent down. Most of the solutions are based on success at first impact - but what if?

I have always been asking questions of why some movements in the katas are slow, some explanations could be the fact that it requires extra security or safety measure to execute it on at training partner, or that the breathing / meditative aspect is at a higher ratio here. What else could it be?

Wing Chun has a lot of different sensitivity drills; Chi-sau: A two-hand connected drill where in some systems both hands are outside/inside, some where one hand is outside and one hand is inside. Lat sau; an attacking exercise, where you try to lock down your partner, with a same side tab (pak), then striking with a straight punch, partner doing same in reverse thus exchanging blows. Lap-sau; where the elbows are connected (same side) and

the attack/defend arms are crossing the body (cross side).

Tai Chi has various different ways of doing pushing hands, also either two handed or one handed - most common is the type, whereas cross hands are met, and the push is directed towards opponents centre, using the body and hip rotation to deflect the incoming force, still staying connected with the assailant reversing the exercise.

The martial arts of the Philippines, Kali, Escrima, balintawak etc. has the exercises know as hubad lubod. Generally speaking a flow exercise, where the partners right hand meets your left hand (same side) - moving the incoming attack with the right hand and marking an attack with the left on the arm - hence mirroring the move (4 count exercise).

The Okinawan Goju-ryu has Kakie; an exercise almost similar to the pushing hands of tai-chi - though emphasizing the use of strength.

My question is: How come that the neighbouring martial art countries have a lot of these flow drills or sensitivity exercises, when it seems that the lack of them in modern karate is complete? Isn't it true that Karate had its first stop from Okinawa? (where the Kakie existed). Isn't it true that the Chinese did their part of influencing the martial arts on Okinawa? (chi, lat, lap-sau along with pushing hands). Would it be unbelievable that the Philippine martial art community developed exercises, which are integrated in systems, several hundred years old, not to have found their way to china, hence Okinawa and the Japan?

I believe that such exercises did exist, and that they were found in the katas, but as with the many bunkai applications were lost during time. But why should the Japanese invent the deep plate again, when the Chinese and those of the Philippines did their part? Obviously the Japanese liked copying, just look at Chinese hand vs. empty hand (Tode vs. Karate)

If we analyze the different ways or approaches to the sensitivity and/or flow drills of the countries close by, we will notice:

# Chi sau - Pushing hands: Both hands are





1st picture shows a gedan barai executed after contact with both hands - this will force his arms to be crossed, and control can be achieved with one hand.



2nd picture show a follow up zuki

connected to the enemy, from here, locking, grappling, striking, throwing and trapping are options - weather inside inside, opposite, or inside outside.

# Lap-sau: Left hand tugs opponents left arm down, while maintaining contact with the right elbow to opponents left elbow, attacking with a back fist, opponents right hand blocks attack and exercise reverse. This is an cross-side exercise, training the reflexes of what to do when the first contact is cross-side, weather defensive or offensive.



3rd picture shows the first move of heian nidan / pinan shodan - inserted into my drill.

# Basic Hubad: As described above. This is a same-side exercise, training the reflexes of what to do when the first contact is same-side.

# Kakie - Pushing hands: These flow drills, could emphasize on seizing and joint locks or manipulations as that the motions are slower, and the sensitivity is at a higher level of that those of the previous.

Yeah - very nice, but were talking about karate here - nothing of this stuff is present in modern karate?!

In the 3rd pinan or heian kata , the first 3 moves (from the style of shotokan) is an uchi uke/inside-out block to the left, followed by a double block with a high uchi uke along with a gedan barai/low block and the reversing in the same place. In my 14 year martial art career, I have never met someone doing a mae-geri along with a zuki/punch simultaneously - and then being able to counter it with the moves written above. If your enemy is defending his head (perhaps you just punched him, and now his arms are in the way for your next hit - simply with your left hand - connect to his left hand, removing the arm to the far left side of your body, throwing a backfist towards his head. If his other hand makes contact to your arm a cross-side reference will be there - thus actually engaging in the drill of lap-sau or we can call it the heian sandan flow drill - HSFD - or bollocks - what ever the name is, its effective.

Good thing about flow drills and patterns

- It will increase your reaction speed
- It will stop you from thinking (mushin)



- It will increase your relaxation
  - It will make your techniques more fluent
- Not so good things about flow drills and patterns
- It may create a false security
  - It may create a sloppy counter
  - It might be hard to get perfect technique

### Troubleshooting

How can we get around those problems and then benefit from the good stuff?

Lets take a theoretical approach: If we take a partner and begin flow exercise a, then suddenly while drilling - one of the parts, will push the other guy away and launch a random attack with more power and speed of that of the drill - so changing the circumstances and removing the false security. The goal is what is agreed upon, if takedowns are emphasized, be sure to take this launch down. Perfect technique? In honesty I don't care, as long as I get the pain reaction and I finish the guy off.

So this is not a solution, but a tool to practice yours or others solutions. For instance, Iain Abernethy showed me a nice 3 strikes

interpretation of Pinan Shodan (heian nidan) - the first 3 moves - So I tried to see, if those moves, did fit into my theory, and they did!

**Follow this URL to see the drill being done (highly recommended - IA):**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KwFjVKnOQDg>

Hope you enjoyed my article, be free to send comments, pros, cons etc.

If you are interested in arranging a seminar, I I will be happy to do it - martial art is my passion and I live to do it.

forsvardigselv@hotmail.com

### About the author:

Nikolaj Fænø Skarbye has been practicing martial arts for the last 14 years. Everything for Jiu Jitsu, Shotokan Karate, WingTsun, Koryu-Uchinadi, Aikido and Kyusho Aiki Jitsu.

He has participated in seminars with Patrick McCarthy, Vince Morris, Iain Abernethy, Gary Rooks, Jim Corn, Steve Rowe and many more. (for a complete reference list, go to [www.forsvardigselv.dk](http://www.forsvardigselv.dk) )

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急所合気術



# Oh Sh\*t – Taking Chudan Uke to a Higher Level

by Eric Parsons

For most people reading this magazine, the idea that an “uke” is not really a “block” is nothing new. Neither is the belief that the ways in which these blocks are most typically taught are not the most practical applications of their movements. However, as these motions show up repeatedly in many of the traditional forms, they clearly have some meaning, some applied purpose. Hence, it is the responsibility of the practically-minded instructor to discover these aspects of the techniques. Oftentimes, the most practical application can be as simple as a jam or a strike. For example, the basic head block, jodan uke, can be used to close in on an opponent, arresting the motion of a head punch, or it can be used as a forearm shiver to an opponent’s head, either preemptively or after an initial attack has been deflected or otherwise neutralized. Similarly, the down block, gedan uke, can often be seen as hammerfist strike to the groin.

The chest block, chudan uke, on the other hand, is not always quite so easy to decipher. In terms of aggressive, offensive applications, one can interpret it as thumb-side hammerfist to a given target, likely the jaw. Possibly its best “basic” application is as a wipe in which an opponent’s strike is wiped free from the deflecting arm, allowing the defender to take control of the opponent’s striking limb. This application is even more obvious when chudan uke is opened up to form hiki uke, allowing for the wipe to be coupled with a grabbing and pulling motion.

However, what if the term “chudan” itself is misleading? This name implies that the “block” is meant to deal with mid-level attacks. But, under the assumption that karate is meant to be primarily applied against an untrained assailant, how many attacks are likely to come

in the form of straight punches to the torso? Probably not many. Instead, one would expect a high percentage of punches from an untrained attacker to take the form of wild strikes to the head, i.e. haymakers. And since the kata are meant to be applied in practical self defense situations against this type of assailant, one would expect there to be several responses in the kata to this extremely common form of attack.

Looking at the basic head block, jodan uke, only partially addresses this issue. As mentioned before, this technique works best in a jamming or preemptive situation where there is time and/or space to employ it. (It also works well against the type of descending attacks that might occur in a weapons defense scenario.) However, if a wild, hooking haymaker is already a fair way to its intended target, jodan uke will not stop much, as the punch loops around it.

Now, one might argue that the well-trained karateka should have enough situational awareness to always give him/herself the necessary time and space to employ the technique. However, this is something of an unrealistic assumption. Even trained individuals can and do get caught off-guard on occasion, a fact that the masters of old certainly understood. Recognizing this unpleasant fact, it is likely that they, pragmatists that they were, incorporated some non-optimal, last minute defenses into their curriculum, a curriculum that has been passed down to us through the kata.

This brings us back to chudan uke. Consider taking the basic circular, outward-swinging motion of the traditional technique, enlarging it somewhat, and quickly ducking underneath the blocking arm in a flinch-type reaction.

Now, chudan uke looks a lot like what boxers sometimes refer to as the “Oh Shit!” block. (“Oh Shit! I didn’t see that hook coming! I better duck and cover fast!”) Looking at it this way, this “mid-level” technique produces an excellent defense to a type of high-level attack that people are likely to encounter in real-life self-defense situations.

What is even more exciting about this interpretation is that, using it as a starting point, lots of new applications can be taken from familiar sequences in the traditional forms. For example, consider the following sequence taken from the first two kata in Master Toguchi’s Goju-Ryu system – chudan



figure 1



figure 2

uke, gedan uke, and gedan tsuki. (Figures 1-3)

In the traditional bunkai to this kata, the partners practice this sequence just as described. The torite strikes with a chest punch, follows with a down punch, and then blocks the uke’s returning down strike. Although this is an excellent flow drill that allows the partners the opportunity to repeatedly practice the techniques with some resistance and contact, this is certainly not the best self-defense application of the kata techniques. For starters, there is no reason to assume that the attacker is going to follow the chest punch with a down punch. In fact, to make this assumption goes against one of the fundamental rules of bunkai as put forth



by Iain Abernethy in his book Bunkai-Jutsu – kata techniques do not rely upon unpredictable actions from the opponent.

So, since the above application is not satisfying, let's take this same sequence and apply it to a more realistic situation – the attacker comes in with a wild haymaker. In this instance, the chudan uke is applied as the “Oh Shit!” block, protecting the defender from the aggressive attack. (Figure 4) However, the beauty of the kata lies after this maneuver. Now, what was a down block becomes a hammerfist to the side of the head (Figure 5) followed by a grab and pull that



figure 3



figure 4

yanks the opponent forward and bends them over at the waist. (Figure 6) This is then followed by a low punch that is no longer aimed at the groin but is instead directed at either the base of the skull or the side of the head. (Figure 7) All in all, this is a much more brutal and effective application than the one described previously.

Moreover, the presentation of this sequence of techniques in the kata supports the “haymaker defense” application because, although the sequence is performed twice, it is not performed symmetrically, as is often the case with paired sequences in the forms. Instead, in both instances, the chudan uke is



figure 5





figure 6



figure 7



figure 8

performed with the left hand – the same hand that would be used to block haymakers thrown with a dominant right. In fact, as Rory Miller notes in his book *Meditations on Violence*, there is evidence to suggest that even left-handers often start a fight with a right roundhouse punch. Hence, emphasizing the left-side chudan uke makes even more practical sense.

Continuing on, this interpretation becomes even more interesting once the next kata in the style – Gekisai Kata Dai Ichi – is taken into consideration. In this form, the corresponding sequence to the one described above is chudan uke followed by a front snap kick (mae geri). Once again, though, a literal application of this sequence is somewhat troubling because, if the attacker is close enough to throw a straight punch to the torso, they are likely not in kicking range, making it difficult to successfully deliver the mae geri.

However, consider the previous application wherein the attacker throws a haymaker, the defender blocks it using the modified chudan uke, and then tries to grapple the attacker's



figure 9





figure 10

head downwards to position it for a punch. What is the opponent's likely natural (i.e. predictable) reaction to such an occurrence? Two possibilities come readily to mind.

In the first instance, the attacker goes with the pull, dropping his/her head and upper body forward, while simultaneously trying to back up and pull away from the defender's grasp. (Figure 8) Such a maneuver is likely to result in an escape from the grip and would certainly make it difficult for the defender to deliver a precise strike to the back of the head. However, taking a page from Gekisai Dai Ichi, the defender can respond to this reaction by throwing a "kick", which in this case actually results in a knee to the opponent's face. (Figure 9) Moreover, the technique presented in the kata is fault tolerant because, if the opponent escapes more quickly than the knee can be delivered, he/she is still likely within the range of the fully extended kick.

A second likely reaction to the pull-down grip would be for the attacker to remain upright, fighting against the force of the pull and trying to wrench him/herself backwards. (Figure 10) Similar to the fault tolerant method described above, however, Gekisai Dai Ichi provides a counter to this response. Here, if the attacker manages to escape backwards, the defender

can strike quickly with a front snap kick to the groin as the attacker pulls him/herself directly into kicking range. (Figure 11) Furthermore, the likelihood of success for this technique is enhanced by the fact that the attacker will probably have his/her attention focused at the head level, where the original grasp and pull is occurring, thus forgetting to protect him/herself from a low level strike.

As can be seen from the above examples, raising the level of chudan uke from mid- to high- as presented in this article can open up the possibility for some interesting and effective applications to be taken from the traditional forms. This by no means suggests that this is the only, or even best, application of chudan uke. However, it does have several advantages in its favor – it is a solid defense to an exceedingly common type of attack, it works with the body's natural flinch reaction, and its structure is such that it keeps the attack outside of the body's frame, making it applicable in weapons self-defense situations (In fact, Krav Maga stylists use a similar block as part of their 360-Degree Drill training.). As a result, it is an application that warrants further exploration and can lead to interesting avenues of study once that exploration has begun. Until next time, Arigato gozaimasu.



figure 11



When most people think of the martial arts, they think of their use in fighting against a physical attack. However, in the African nation of Uganda, the martial arts are being used to fight against something bigger – HIV/AIDS. The Karate for Life Foundation is an organization dedicated to developing the life skills of Ugandan youth through the practice of the martial arts, giving them the qualities they need to resist the behaviors that lead to HIV's spread. For more info, visit [www.karate4life.org](http://www.karate4life.org).



# The Way of Kata

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

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

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

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# Stav

by Tony Brush

**M**any European martial artists take the attitude that we have no native martial arts, and we are obliged to look to the East in order to pursue such an interest. While it is true that the lion's share of defence classes in Europe have an Eastern origin, European styles do exist whether they are noticed or not. Often referred to as Western Martial Arts, the majority of these are reconstructions based on the study of antique texts, from a broad range of historical periods. Stav is unusual, though not unique, in being a European style with a continuous history of use.

As with many styles, Stav has a long history of being a family tradition before being taught out of the family. While in modern Britain or the USA, the idea of a family style may seem anachronistic, but again, Stav is not alone in this, and various other families exist in Europe with credible claims to their own styles who as yet do not teach “outsiders”.

So what is Stav? The word “Stav” literally means staff, or rune-stave – runes being letters (at the most basic level) from Northern Europe's pre-Latin alphabets; Stav also means “Knowledge of the rune-staves”. Stav is a tradition of many intertwined aspects, with martial arts being a major component. The primary teaching tool of Stav is a staff, a long walking stick that is shoulder height to the practitioner. The runes are associated with postures or “rune-stances,” and the practice of moving through all of these stances in sequence, co-ordinated with breath, is the foundation of the whole system. This has many benefits for the body and the mind, and martially, the stances lead into guard positions. For instance, to make the rune “Fe”, both arms are extended forward, pointing diagonally upwards. Put a staff in your hand while making this posture and you have a high guard.

Stav, as least this Stav, begins with the Hafskjold family, old Norwegian nobility, which branched off from the Jarls (Earls) of More in about the year 500, taking the name “Hoskol”, meaning “Odin's Hill”; later they changed to “Hafskjold” meaning “sea-shield” which became their coat of arms. The Hafskjolds were “Herses” or “chieftains” and preserved many of their traditions until modern

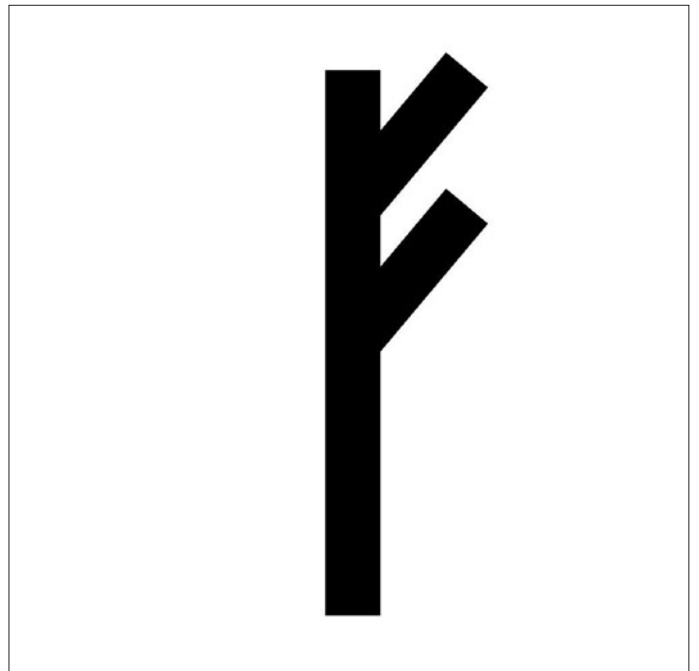
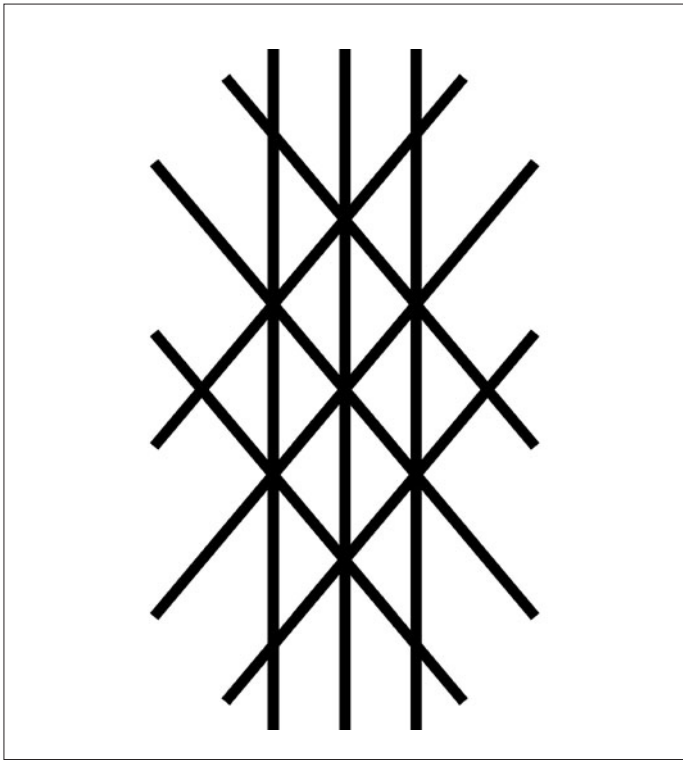


Figure 1 the rune Fe

times. The title “Herre” that goes with this and similar families, is not unlike the Scotch “Laird” - an old tradition that no longer conveys political power. Modernity is inimical to tradition for many reasons, added to which, World War II gave the runes a dodgy reputation – undeserved in this case as the Hafskjolds, like many other Norwegian families, were instrumental in resistance against the Nazis. Nonetheless it was declining interest within the family that led the present Herre to seek students outside of the family in order to preserve the traditions.

My first encounter with Stav was some years ago, at a class in Oxford, led by Graham Butcher, one of four of Ivar Hafskjold's students who were given the title “Master”. The class was basically spent learning to control and manipulate a staff, first as single-person exercises, then as partnered exercises. As simple as a staff is as a tool, at first I couldn't fathom some of the interactions that were taking place – even though I'd had several years of martial training in various other styles including some work with weapons. The partnered drills were all fairly short: assume a guard; await attack; counter. I asked at the end of the session about unarmed training and was assured that this would



## The web

come from the weapons training. I pressed the point, and it became clear I needed a demonstration. Two seconds later I was on the ground with a twisted neck. It sorted itself out in a couple of days and I've been involved in Stav ever since.

One of Ivar's sayings is "There are no techniques in Stav." This is a highly confusing statement to the beginner, because of course, you start learning by being shown techniques and trying to copy them. However, Stav is a living, evolving tradition, and does not want to get stuck in a dogma of a limited number of "right" moves. The basis of Stav's martial art is the "Web", a mythical and philosophical concept, which applied to martial arts, gives the lines of attack, defence and footwork. The runes follow these lines and by applying weapons to these lines, guards are drawn. The defender moves by cutting from one guard to another. Added to this are five mindsets, based on the goals and responsibilities of the five classes of Old Norse society. In essence, that's it – all techniques, such as they are, are drawn from this basis. Any number of techniques can be shown and trained; in the final analysis, the practitioner is supposed to be able to go beyond applying technique X or Y, and instead just follow the lines of the web, in one of the mindsets, in any given situation.

The practice falls somewhere between fixed drills and sparring. A pre-arranged attack is given and the defender attempts a particular response. Depending on the skill of the attacker, the attack will be more or less consistent. The defender responds to what is given, rather than a "text-book" response that may not be appropriate. The drill ends where a response has been given and in this sense it differs from free-sparring. No system of training is fool-proof, and I've written elsewhere about the benefits, and dangers, of sparring [[www.oakebooks.com/eazines/martial-arts issue 6](http://www.oakebooks.com/eazines/martial-arts%20issue%206)]. But from Stav's point of view, if the opponent has suffered a simulated staff through the throat, then why continue?

One important feature of Stav is that it works on gross motor skills. The use of fine motor skills, such as is common in Jojutsu, a Japanese martial art using walking sticks, in which Ivar holds a 4th degree black belt (he holds the same in Kenjutsu), may be excellent for teaching co-ordination, but the danger is that these skills will be lost under the stress of dealing with a genuine defence situation. Aiming to pull off tricky grip changes in the heat of combat is a risky strategy, which – generally speaking – Stav avoids.

Another is the use of mindsets, alluded to above. Stav places a lot of emphasis on psychology. It is not enough, for instance, to copy the footwork, guards and cuts of a practice drill: the right mindset should be there too. For instance, a jarl strives to keep out of individual conflicts without surrendering power or authority; he will attempt to defuse a conflict while retaining the upper hand. It is the velvet glove over the iron fist. A calm, controlled response can cool an attacker's own "fire". A jarl response will either show his skill, as a deterrent, while leaving the combatants at a distance at which it is difficult for either to continue, or at which the defender ends in a position where an incapacitating strike can be delivered before a renewed attack can reach him. Stav uses a great deal of subtlety, not everything that occurs is clearly visible to the observer, and tricks or "ginnings" are employed to deliberately hide movements that are strategically important. Timing is also an important part of the training. Fear can make defenders rush into mistakes; inefficient movement slows even an athletic martial artist. With correct placement and timing, the need to rush is gone and a situation can be controlled with skill rather than speed.

The staff and walking stick are the principal training tools. With these, the student learns the



lines of the web, and teaching the staff simultaneously teaches the spear, sword and axe. Likewise, the walking stick simultaneously teaches the short-sword. The tein, or short stick, is used from time to time and teaches knife work. Finally, when the lines, guards and strategies are understood, no weapon is needed at all. This is counter intuitive, however, the same sequence can often be shown first with staff, then walking stick, then tein, then empty handed, with only minor modifications. Once seen, it looks obvious, and incomprehensible how difficult it seemed at first to switch from one to another.

The scale of a conflict can also be magnified upwards, and the strategies and mindsets taught can even be seen on the modern battlefield [see "Stav: The Fighting System of Northern Europe", Butcher].

Stav has been a bit of an outsider in Western Martial Arts. It must be said a number of people have expressed skepticism about its authenticity. One argument has been "How come it has existed for so long but we haven't heard about it until recently?" Well, getting something heard about is not straight forward. Trust me, I, and others, have



Masters Ivar Hafskjold and Graham Butcher

put posters in strategic places around several cities for some years, in attempts to acquire students, still, it's basically unknown. To be known requires considerable effort, for which there has to be a reason. Only recently has this existed.

Another is "Why do you not use shields?" This is because Stav is a living art. A comparison with Yoga may help. Yoga is thousands of years old – there is no doubt about that. However, what you see in a modern Yoga class is not what would have been used in the beginning; it too is a living art, and while it undergoes changes and reforms, it remains a continuous tradition [see "The Yoga Tradition of the Mysore Palace", Sjoman]. Getting back to Stav, life has changed, and people have not generally fought with shields for hundreds of years. That aspect of Stav has been lost, just as one of Stav's nine weapons – the throwing hammer – has not been taught for who knows how long – probably hundreds of years – though it remains accounted for as part of Stav's traditional armory.

Finally, Ivar has been accused of making the whole thing up based on training he received in Japan. I've spent well over a decade training in Eastern martial arts, I've seen Jojutsu, and I've seen Stav. The similarities are few – they're no more alike than are a mediæval European fencing manual and its Japanese contemporaries, and the differences are considerable. It's not Japanese, and with all due respect to Ivar, there is just too much to it for it to be the product of one person's imagination. The skeptics are invariably people who've read about Stav on the internet and have not spent time training with Ivar or other Stav masters to appreciate its depth.

One final question you may be thinking of is this: "Does it work?" As with all martial arts, it is up to the practitioner to apply it. Anecdotal evidence suggests "Yes, and then some." One of the Stav masters, David Watkinson, has a penchant for conflict, and enjoys work in security where attacks are run of the mill. He teaches in the Phillipines, has had armed duels with several Eskrimadores there, and been victorious every time. Others within Stav have their own anecdotes in both armed and unarmed encounters. Personally, I'm not accustomed to being attacked by axe-men, but feel the training would set me in good stead against the possibility.

For further information please contact [Stav@oakebooks.com](mailto:Stav@oakebooks.com)



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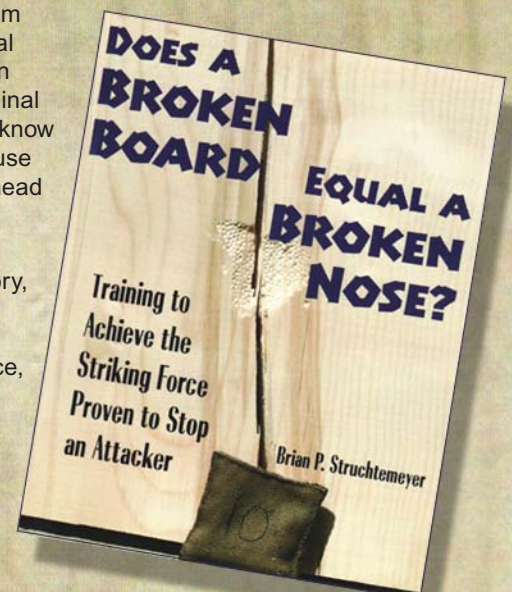
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# Karate Jutsu

by Kris Mansfield

**W**hat exactly is meant by the term Karate Jutsu? Let us first examine the various constituent parts of the term:

Kara- China or empty

Te – Hand

Jutsu – Science or art (depending again upon interpretations)

Recently, I was fortunate enough to read a first edition of Gichin Funakoshi's 'Karate Jutsu' whilst on a trip to New York. The experience alone blew my mind, but it was what was contained in the text that was really firing me up.

I wanted to see how this book related to what we do in the Karate Jutsu Association. One of the first things that struck me was the sheer amount of grappling and throwing techniques contained within the text and clear statements relating to where the techniques can be found in the various kata. This alone was an eye-opener. Now, I am by no means new to the idea that kata contains various grappling and throwing applications as I have read all of Iain Abernethy's work, most of Vince Morris', Patrick McCarthy's et al and am fortunate enough to train with an extremely open minded group of individuals under our Instructor, Jon Ryley.

However, to see grappling techniques written in black ink, under actual images of Funakoshi performing the techniques, was quite remarkable. How was it then, that Karate became the laughing stock of the martial arts world when it contains so many effective self-protection techniques and principles?!

In order to understand what is meant by 'Karate Jutsu' we need to first consider, what exactly is Karate then?

Rather than begin on a lengthy diatribe about the differences between Karate Do and Jutsu, I will rather discuss what I 'do' (pun intended) at my club and leave it up to other people to

argue over whether it is 'proper' karate or not.

It is a well documented fact that the founding fathers of karate all adapted and modified what they did in order to tailor Karate around themselves. Karate must adapt in order to survive, as must everything else in this funny little universe.



grappling

On Monday classes at my club, we follow a formal 'Karate style' format including the wearing of a gi, kata, kihon, kumite and kiais! On a Friday the seniors wear less formal attire and generally hurt each other for an hour and a half. It's all good fun though. However...



Am I actually doing Karate on both nights or not? At what point does Karate stop being Karate? This issue seems to really annoy some people, it makes me laugh actually. I have had friends remark how what I do at training sometimes isn't Karate. My response (if I can be bothered to entertain such mind numbingly boring statements) is usually along the lines of, 'Well, we were punching, kicking, elbowing, grappling, trapping, using pressure points, hitting with impact, sparring...so tell me...which part of that doesn't sound like Karate to you?'

What I find so refreshing about the way that we (and many other clubs these days) train is that we are not scared that other people may criticise that we are doing is not 'Karate'. There are only so many ways to hit someone after all. Even the term Karate as demonstrated at the start has a confusing history due to the politics associated with the definitions of the term. Motobu and Funakoshi themselves



mid block

couldn't agree on what Karate was/should be, Itosu Anko changed virtually everything in Karate to make it suitable for children, Karate has and hopefully will be forever changing.

What you tend to find, is that most martial arts at some point come to a juncture, some sooner than others due to stylistic features and we start to notice patterns. For example, in my

club we frequently use the 'gunting' (scissoring) method as found in the Filipino Arts to attack the opponents attacking limbs, we also use the same principles when applying Torite (Grabbing hand) Jutsu techniques, or when we are body boxing and for Karate purists, the same principle can be found in the 'preparation' hand of uchi-uke.

So. If I am in a room with music playing, wearing grappling gloves and t-shirts, training hard utilising combative principles with my training partners, is that any less of a Karate



floor arm bar

class than two hours of line work? I believe not. In Funakoshi's own text of the same name, adaptation and application of concepts are encouraged. None of the 'old masters' copied their Sensei's version of Karate, so why should anyone now believe that they are the authority on what Karate is or isn't.

I know that I train in a scientific empty hand combat system. For anyone who wishes to translate that into Japanese, go back to the start.

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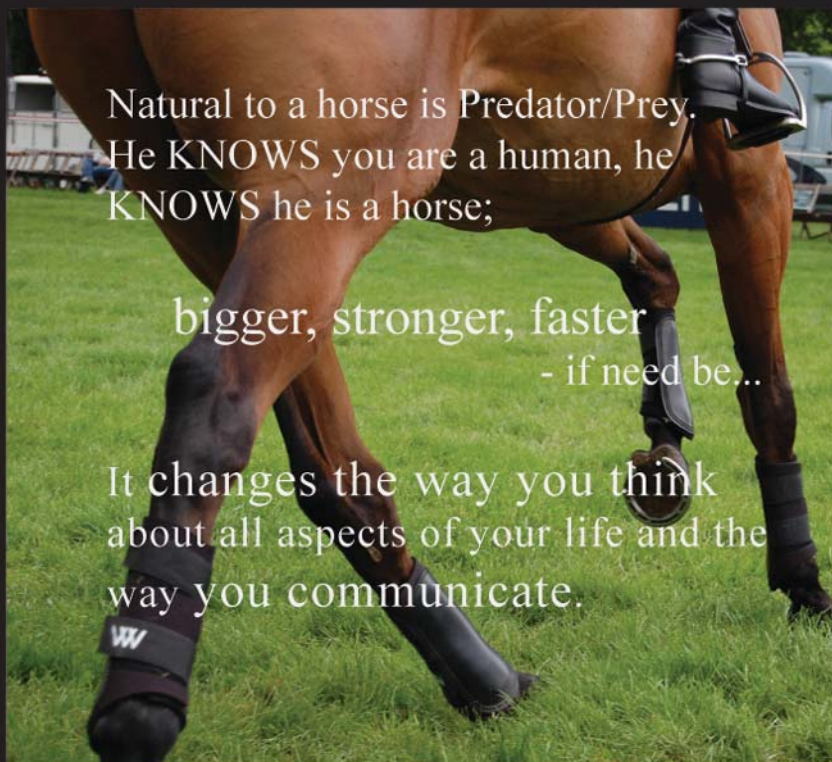
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# Bunkai and the Horseman:

by Ron Breines

Between 1972 and 1976, while in my early to mid teens, I studied a combat form of jujitsu and karate. My sensei, was a recently retired marine sergeant who held black belts in Shotokan, Judo, and Jujitsu and had been a close combat military instructor after two tours of duty in Vietnam. A friend of my uncle - a sergeant in the Army Special Forces seeing combat in both Korea and Vietnam and a professional boxer who taught me boxing - my sensei was an intense man who taught us “deadly” self defense techniques through the study of kata. My skills were most developed not through competition, but through focused “combat” training. He did not believe in belts, so we never knew what belt we were. We just learned.

After high school I competed in collegiate gymnastics on scholarship as an all-around competitor. This, I believe, helped me to acquire quite a lot of strength and balance, and it was my martial arts training that helped me become an accomplished gymnast. One of my college coaches was also a black belt in karate and he opened up a dojo to earn some extra money. So after my gymnastic workouts, I would go to his dojo and continue my studies in martial arts. He was confused because I could perform many kata, but I was wearing a white belt. He asked me if I ever tested for my black belt, and I told him why I hadn't. So I studied under him for a few years and then left college, still a white belt.

I returned to New York for a few years and joined some old high school friends who had become black belts in various styles of competitive karate. After a few more broken bones, I got tired of competition karate and realized that I missed my early discipline of training, where the focus was on self defense. I soon retired from karate a white belt in the mid 1980s, and aside from my own private

training which I carried with me where ever I went, I did not return to any formal study of martial arts until about 6 months ago, when my 6 year old daughter decided that she wanted to join her 8 year old cousins in a karate class, where a 4<sup>th</sup> dan sensei in Shotokan is devoted to teaching kids about Kime and Zanshin, the old fashioned way.

As I watched the class, I realized that the kata they were doing were the ones I had done all those years ago. I became inspired, picked up a book on kata and watched my old karate master idol, Hirokazu Kanazawa, perform his katas on You-Tube. I began to re-learn the katas via the digital world rather than the super 8 films we used to watch him on. At about that time, I found out about Iain Abernethy's work in kata bunkai, so I ordered some books and started reading Jissen. I was discovering that people were studying what I had learned back in my teens with a marine sergeant, and I began to enjoy my martial arts



Ron And Rico

By profession, I am a horse trainer in the Spanish classical tradition. I also work with problem horses; some very severe cases. I believe that my martial arts' training plays a profound role in my work with these powerful

animals. In fact, most recently, when I was in Egypt and England doing horsemanship clinics, I learned what my early study of martial arts was all about: it saved my life.

After three days of very successful clinics, mainly with problem horses and their owners and grooms, a woman asked me if I'd evaluate her two and a half year old Arabian stallion, who had aggressively attacked her, having grabbed onto her arm and not letting go until she hit him with her whip (which she was lucky to be carrying at the time.) I had worked with his brother the evening before, and taught him not to bite, to relax from his usual hyper behavior, and respect me as a leader. He learned pretty quickly so I figured his brother wouldn't be that much different, yet I was aware that like people, no two horses are alike.

While working with her \$50,000 stallion, I quickly read that he was not at all like his brother. He had very little interest in focusing on me, was super-dominant and demonstrated a tendency toward serious aggression. He did have some impressive skills as the horsewoman, a 67 year old doctor from Colorado who'd lived in Cairo for 30 years, had done some good in-hand work with him. But the grooms, as is the way in Egypt, were very rough, brutal, and so he'd become almost predatory, in my mind.

At one point, he caught me off guard, charged me and bit me hard on my side. I jumped out of his grasp and he shot around for a second attempt. I moved quickly and "popped" him on the neck with the end of my lead rope, startling him. We faced up, but he was too close for comfort. I was definitely finished evaluating him and understood that he had crossed the line into predatory behavior, from which there is usually no return. But I couldn't turn my back on him as he'd definitely try to kill me.

As I had done earlier with him, I commanded him to back out of my space. Instead of backing, he lunged forward and just before he clamped onto my neck, I blocked him with, yes, age uke. He bit down hard on my forearm and

had no intention of letting go. Then he rushed forward and I dropped to my back; hard! I raised my knees so he couldn't stomp me. His knees were now on top of mine, much of his weight bearing onto me. I reached down to my chaps for my switchblade, but it was not there. I had taken it out for airport customs and forgot to put it back. I began to think of the inevitability of death. It is amazing what your brain conjures up in a mere few seconds.

Yet, I was aware of the fact that in a street attack, a victim's heart rate can jump from 60 beats per minute up to and over 175 b.p.m. At that rate, the person loses all ability to perform complex motor skills, the thought process seizes and all blood flows to those parts of the body that will need the most help. Adrenalin masks most pain.

I remember thinking about my wife and daughter, and that I couldn't believe I was going to die, in Egypt! At that very moment, when I hesitated, I felt my heart beat begin to rise, and could have easily submitted to fate right there. I can now say this really does happen to people. It is a real dilemma.

But then my martial arts training kicked in as I told myself that I needed to keep thinking clearly. With my marine sensei, we had practiced something he called "moving forward." When sparring, we were not allowed to stop and re-group. Instead, we had to keep moving forward in our thinking and actions no matter what our emotions told us, even if success seemed impossible. I believe he got this from his marine combat training.

I kept moving – mentally and physically - which I know was a result of all that training. This moving forward concept is something we also use in training horses in this style. All training, whether on the ground or in the saddle, must be designed around keeping the horse's hindquarters - his engine and power center – fully engaged. The moment he disengages, he loses forward momentum and his skills simply fall apart.

So the moment I felt the stallion loosen his grip on my arm, I forced my arm deeper into



his mouth, something that is pretty counter-intuitive. I did this because I understood that pulling my arm out wouldn't have saved me at all. He'd have just gone for my throat. Instead of retreating, I needed to act with "forward." I twisted my wrist until I was finally able to pull my fist into his mouth, then I shoved it deep down into his throat. He immediately released my arm. I then kicked with both legs which gave me the freedom to roll away. He didn't attack again, but stood calmly when the grooms finally rushed into the pen. To everyone's surprise, my arm was not severed, just badly bruised. I had survived an attack by a 1,000 pound predatory animal because of luck, and skill that had become engrained in me because of training in my youth.

Would this "moving forward" training work in a street fighting situation? I believe it would, because the more you train yourself to think forward, the less you become frozen in fear. There's no time for fear, and so you control your brain function and heart rate to some degree. This is similar to what Martin O'Malley is saying about visualization in his recent article in Jissen magazine, and what Iain Abernethy writes about realistic kata bunkai sparring. It's training that prepares a practitioner to over-ride the natural mechanisms of complex motor skill shut-down.

Of course, in this and all scenarios, luck also plays a large part, but the goal is to minimize luck in favor of positive and somewhat controlled action. I also believe that it was the



Ron and Rico out on a trail

kind of training I did – self defense rather than competitive martial arts – that allowed me to focus in such a dire situation. Yes, competitive martial artists develop quick reflexes and motor coordination skills, which is a good thing. But in competition most things are controlled, including the attacks. Rules make things more predictable, even if there is an element of surprise in strategizing. But since there is less chance of serious injury outside of those related to competition, those motor skills are never really suppressed the way they are when the heart rate rises so quickly under the duress of a real fatal attack.

But when practicing bunkai techniques the way they were originally designed - for street fighting with unpredictable civilians - or by practicing "forward" type sparring regardless of who wins or losses (there are no trophies in this) the practitioner, I believe, is better prepared for a serious attack. The advantage of being able to control adrenalin levels and blood flow, and therefore, mental state, more than the opponent - who most likely will be acting with gross motor skills much in the way the stallion did - is key.

To be able to cognate during an attack, we must prepare ourselves in the most realistic way possible - the way the masters intended, through realistic skill building.

A tragic note: The stallion, Zaby, was put down the following morning. The owner realized that she would never have survived the attack she witnessed, nor would have her grooms. As she put it, "I would never have known what to do. I know I would have just died on the spot."

After some 27 years, I have recieved my shodan in karate and will soon join Kanazawa's SKIF. My daughter's sensei, in my case, replaced the free sparring with Kata Bunkai. I am also working towards my shodan in Budoshin-Jujitsu, and am studying laido aswell. It's never to late to build on one's life in the martial arts.

# The Innocent Walking Stick

By Ernest Tuff

**T**he Walking Stick, as we know it with the crook, is a very versatile piece of defence equipment. When my wife and I go out walking it's my constant companion. Indeed there is no reason why I couldn't have this innocent walking aid with me any time I went out, because no one would take any notice of a 71 year old with a walking stick! Then of course if it were raining I would have my unbreakable umbrella with me (also lethal), which if any of you want to see demonstrated, go to the Internet and type in "Unbreakable Umbrella"

I was introduced to the stick some years ago, when my Sensei Dan Redmond of our Karate Club (CKA) invited Master Mark Shuey of 'Cane Masters' for a seminar. From then on I have trained once or twice a week trying to perform better the basic moves and learned Mark Shuey's kata "The Old Man" Then I put together my own kata from moves that I find simple, but I can guess effective (hard to know, as it's difficult to find any friend who would be willing to be on the receiving end. I guess they would be no more a friend) also trying to be innovative and build up speed strikes, that is parry/strike in one continuous movement. My thoughts of defensive/offensive action used to be block and strike, now it's receive/strike.

I don't see much sense in training against another with a stick, as it's not likely (not impossible) that I will meet any assailant that carries a stick or any long weapon because of concealment issues, at the same time I would not be caught unawares. But I am more likely to meet some dastardly individual with a knife or some other sneaky sharp instrument.

This "walking stick defence" is not new by any means. I suppose the stick would have been the first weapon ever used. I don't pretend it's an elegant art, nor am I aesthetic in the movements, but as I won't be in any kata competition, that's of little consequence. It must be to me, something that works, should I be in danger. "Nothing is more harmful to the world than a martial art that is not effective in actual self defense"(Motobu Choki)

I believe it is predominantly useful in a street confrontation and there is nothing elegant there.

To me as with karate, there is no such thing as a sporting side to this art. It is purely for the preservation of life. There is a wise old saying "A clenched fist should be like a hidden treasure up one's sleeve; it remains secret until someone comes looking for it" Karate My Art Motobu Choki P48. So the walking stick should remain an innocent looking companion/walking aid, till someone comes looking for trouble!

As with any martial art, balance, footwork, using the body's core (I call it the transfer box) to transfer the power from feet, legs, hip and body weight into the strikes which makes them doubly effective, as a matter of fact lethal. This is why I would never go to the head/neck with any of the strikes, unless someone else's life or mine was in danger. Any positive hit at all on the wrist, arm or leg would be more than enough to take the fight out of most, except the one who is high on drugs, then a bit more drastic action would be required.

The Chujo Karate Association in Ballymena had its inter club competition, when I gave the following demonstration with the walking stick. This consisted of my own kata, which I named "A stick for a fool's back" I then took three parts of it and with a partner (Keith Millar 3rd.Dan, whom I thank for his help) showed how these moves could be applied.

Now let me say this, in a real situation it is highly unlikely that the attack will come just as I have mapped out here. The angle of attack could be in any point of 360 degrees, the ferocity will be different, the height, weight, speed and experience of the attacker different. It is evident that I cannot be thinking "Oh he has come at me, as in attack 208 so now what is 208 defence???"

So in my training I have to be so very versatile, so that I can respond efficiently to any attack. I cannot be attached to any one defence/offence as it would create a bottle neck situation and I would be overcome. I need to be able to respond in a positive way. Musashi said "The spirit is, to check his attack at the syllable "at...", when he jumps check his jump at the syllable "ju...", and check his cut at "cu..." (A Book of Five Elements)

Musashi also had a simplistic mind as regarding his art. The following quotation gives us an insight into his art form. "Niten Ichi-Ryu techniques are





**Application 1 (above):** Attacker comes knife held in underhand grasp and suddenly right thrusts at Stick-man's chest. Stick-man steps to the right at a 45 degrees and the left foot swings round to bring his body away from the knife, at the same time the stick held in the middle comes around to receive the knife hand and guides it passed the body (Photos 1, 2 & 3). Stick-man's left hand has also taken hold of the stick end so as to swivel the stick hitting the attacker on the face with the crook end, this makes the attacker lean and stagger back (Photos 4, 5 & 6). Stick-man steps in as appropriate, hits the leg of his aggressor, which will damage soft tissue and bone and will bring him to the ground. Make no mistake such a move as I have shown, will badly damage a leg and in all possibility put him to the ground, if not the leg can be hooked by the crook and pulled to bring the assailant down if need be (Photos 8 & 9).

economical, with no flashy or exaggerated movements. Targeting is precise, and the distance and timing of techniques is exceptionally tight and without wasted motion."

(Koryu Bujutsu: Classical Warrior Traditions of Japan) I love it. That last phrase 'without wasted motion' or as I like to say 'Economy of Movement' is this not what we aspire to in our Martial Art?

As you must realise one has to move a lot slower when demonstrating with a stick, with the result the

moves are a bit separated. But this has to be, as an unintentional contact could be a disaster and I would have lost a friend to demonstrate with/on.

I appreciate that which I have shown, the follow-ups, would be unnecessary and would be overkill. It's most likely that the fight will be taken out of the assailant after the first or second strike. Nevertheless in case of miss-strikes, which could happen in the midst of a confrontation then there must be a follow up when the life is threatened.





**Application 2 (previous page):** An attacker grabs Stick-man from behind to control him. Stick-man uses the hook to pull down on his hands which will create pain and a release (**Photos 1 & 2**). Stick-man then bends forward to hook the attacker's leg at the same time sitting back into the attacker and pulling the attacker's foot from beneath him (**Photo 3 & 4**). Then pivoting round adjusting the distance as necessary, Stick-man delivers the finishing touch (**Photos 5 to 7**).



**Application 3 (above):** Attacker comes menacing from behind, he is struck by the hook over the shoulder. Then in photo 3 the Stick-Man turns with a step, strikes with a left handed stick to the neck and at the same time the right elbow is preparing for a strike head, neck or chest. In this instance it's a strike to the throat (**Photos 1 to 4**). The attacker's head is pulled at the same time as the stick-man glides sideways as needed bringing the whole weight of the body into the elbow strike. Immediately the hammer fist descends to strike the groin (**Photos 5 to 8**). The attacker staggers backwards and the Stick-man adjusts his distance and puts a side kick into his midriff which helps him on his way to the ground where the finishing touches are administered. It could have been a kick to the knee or a knee to the face depending on the dictating circumstances (**Photos 9 to 11**). The finishing touch (**Photo 12**).

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# Dave Turton Interview

**Interviewed by Michael Rosenbaum**

**D**ave Turton is a legend in the U.K. martial arts world. A man with over 40 years of training. Dave was inducted into the Combat Martial Arts Hall of Fame in 2003.

During the Spring of 2009, Dave took time off from his busy schedule to be interviewed by JISSEN

**1.Dave, you've been involved in the martial arts since the early 1960's. What are some of the changes you have seen take place, and how have they affected the martial arts world today?**

Oh great Mike ... start off with the easy questions eh?

Some of the changes are for the better, others definitely for the worse. On the plus side, students are less 'controlled' by their style, sensei, association etc. This means some extra 'freedom' to pursue other aspects. At one time any one specific group considered it a real 'sin' to train elsewhere, or even to add others methods to the ones advocated. Other instructors expelled students simply for attending courses run by other 'rival' groups.

The introduction of more competitions has been good, such as Cage Fighting etc... However often very 'violent' events can cause the opposite effect, and that is turning away from the style. Thankfully the martial arts is so wonderfully diverse, that there is ALWAYS something for everybody.



Martial arts have been made more widespread, and lots more juniors found an interest in the martial arts, on the other hand, this has often meant a weakening of standards.

In many people eyes, the martial arts are just yet another 'hobby', you know the thing, "My son/daughter has done piano, dance, football, so now we will try karate or TKD etc" ... this has meant that the arts are less 'serious' in some aspects. Another excellent advance had been in the proliferation of arts I didn't even know existed back in the 60's. Students have access via seminars etc to EVERY style known to man, which makes for a more diverse martial world.

I do think and genuinely believe though; that the standards of BASICS have dropped in general. Students want 'quicker fixes' and spending months just learning a couple of steps etc (which we had to do) is less prevalent these days.

This in fact a very profound question and one that could be worthy of at least ONE (if not more) articles.

**2.Your background includes training in both Eastern and Western styles of fighting. Do you see any differences between the two, and are they compatible with one another?**

Yes I have always included both aspects and feel they compliment each other very well indeed.

The differences are more 'cultural' than 'technical' really ... take the Japanese traditional Arts as an example, in these you have to follow certain 'customs' and 'etiquettes', which is fine if that's your thing. With the Western Arts, they tend to be much more 'hands-on' from the start. The emphasis is more on the 'doing' in western training. But you can easily mix both ideologies, provided you have a sympathetic 'sensei' or instructor. For me of course that's no problem as the 'buck' stops with me anyway in the SDF.

You also have to remember that I have spent decades looking at the 'WHY', not just the 'HOW' of a move or technique, principles, concept whatever.

Environment, clothing, culture, ethnic diversity etc, ALL have made influences on the ways in which



certain combat methods have evolved.

Most of the Okinawan 'Kobudo' methods were designed to combat the Katana/Tachi of the samurai. That's one of the many 'whys' I look at. If the Samurai's swords had been a totally different design, then so would have been the development of Okinawan Kobudo.

Now this next remark is NOT meant to be even slightly 'racist' just an observation, but if you were to see a photograph of 'rush-hour' Canton in say 1880, you would see 1000's of small people with black hair all roughly the same build. Very few blond six-footers weighing 120kgs back then and there. It follows therefore that their combat arts would reflect the 'users' being that build. So certain 'styles' would have emerged more suitable to those physical attributes.

The West has a l-o-n-g legacy of the sword and shield in combat, perhaps as long as 5000 years. Our footwork, hand positions, postures, and movements reflect the close-in use of sword and shield against sword and shield, and these attributes have filtered into OUR combat styles.

Its one thing learning to charge across an open plain in Africa, but a vastly different prospect charging through woods and forest. You can't run in a straight line through a forest, you have to duck under branches, swerve around trees, jump over small bushes etc... that has influenced OUR footwork.

Indeed think of the hand positions of holding a 'buckler' (small shield) and a sword, then take away the two objects and then you are left with a posture that is almost identical to an old fashioned Pugilistic stance ... the influences scream at you.

And so it goes on ... but with a modicum of intelligent thought, we can easily and successfully blend the East with the West.

### **3.Do you think the Western Arts are more pragmatic in their approach?**

Not sure about how pragmatic they are ... the emphasis 'appears' to be mainly the practical and technical approaches, but deep down they are also very well thought out. The Orientals seem to be better at preservation of their cultural arts ... the West seems to have simply tried to get better a modernising ways of killing the enemy ... strange how Man is at his most inventive and progressive when it comes at ways of killing??? After all more technical advances occur during War than during

Peace.

### **4.You've trained in a variety of grappling arts: wrestling, judo, ju-jitsu, how has this influenced your outlook towards fighting and self-defence.**

Nice one Mike, segregating Fighting & Self-Defence ... Self-Defence ISNT (nor should be) fighting.

The three "F's" govern man as a species totally; they are FEEDING, FIGHTING & FORNICATING. (Some people use an alternative "F" for fornicating ... but not here Ha Ha) These three acts dominate



the existence of most mammals, but especially Man. All three are necessary for the survival of our species. And in their basic biological aspects can only really be performed best CLOSE IN.

You feed by taking 'food' into your mouth

You propagate the species by the act of sex, which HAS to be very close in.

You FIGHT to survive or kill prey-food ... again close in. This of course ignores the technical advances such as projectile weapons, from spears to missiles, just in our basic form.

Therefore ALL forms of grappling are not just good, they are ESSENTIAL to our survival, and we have opposing thumbs, the best tools possible for combat grappling. Plus these grappling skills are innate ... very young children don't PUNCH they slap, push, pull and GRAPPLE. It's a natural part of us.

Therefore I realised early on that to leave out any forms of grappling was to weaken the overall combat efficiency of anything else I learned. However some grappling arts are more useful against clothing, such as a Gi, others against 'bare skin', and others against weapons, so a variety of styles was necessary in

order to incorporate as many aspects as possible, hence the many styles I chose to study.

Again going back to the older Western Arts, when fighting against swords and shields, if you were unarmed the one move that DIDN'T work was punching ... its impossible to punch a person wearing armour and wielding a sword. Yet KICKING and GRAPPLING were very successful skills. Most of the more valid grappling arts came from TWO distinct survival skills.

Killing animals such as a deer would take some form of weapon, but to get the dead deer back to the hut, you had to LIFT & CARRY it. Lifting and carrying ANYTHING naturally uses the same muscles as in Grappling.

(That's one of the first "F's")

Now swiftly passing Sex, it is worth mentioning that forms of 'grappling' occur during sex. Again one of the "F's"

Now FIGHTING (the third "F") especially when facing a guy with a sword, when you are unarmed can ONLY be done successfully either by Kicking or by GRAPPLING.

Even the Inuit tribes (wrongly called Eskimos) have devised their own combat skills, based around Head Butts and Foot swoops ... impossible to punch well against 6 inches of fur???

So, before I turn this answer into another four-page article, I will simply say that combat is done with all one's basic weapons, and grappling is essential.

### **5. Tell us, with such an extensive grappling background, how do you achieve a balance between grappling and striking?**

The 'balance' is automatic ... the two are so much



part of each other I have no problems.... Even KICKING works very well combined with grappling.

Many instructors teach and talk about RANGES of combat ... you know the thing... kicking range, punching range, grappling range etc... well I don't see that, I teach there are only TWO ranges ... you are fighting or you aren't.

Within that concept is what is available to you.. if you are in a bear hug you and you kick his shins, which 'range' or you in? grappling or kicking, and whose?

If he kicks out and you grab his foot, is this kicking range or grappling range? and again whose? Its NEITHER it's COMBAT Range.

'Holding & Hitting' is a large part of our style, so combining the two concepts isn't that hard

### **6. What do you feel are the key elements of self-protection and self-defence?**

To answer this fairly simply ... self-protection are the steps you take to AVOID any potential or actual 'trouble'. Simply leaving a rowdy pub or bar, or crossing the street to avoid a gang etc, are examples of self-protection.

Self-Defence on the other hand are the physical steps you take to escape a violent encounter ... Even more simply

Self-Protection is TACTICS

Self-Defence is TECHNIQUES

To perform 'self-protection' is to use any methods you can to get away BEFORE it goes physical. ... so AWARENESS & AVOIDANCE are the two key elements here.

With 'self-defence' its NOT about beating up your opponent ... it's about using physical means to negate his attack and thus allow your escape.

Just as a slight 'aside', do you realise EVERY martial arts club in the UK (including my own) breaks the Law at EVERY session ... HOW?

Well we teach methods of continuing our physical techniques AFTER the opponent is not longer a valid danger ... you know the kind of thing, you perform a block, strike, foot swoop, then when he is helpless on the floor, a couple of axe-kicks, maybe finish with a 'knee-drop' (to an unconscious man??)

So to repeat myself ... Self-protection uses TACTICS ... self-defence uses TECHNIQUES.



## 7. Do you feel that the term 'self-defence' is misinterpreted in the martial arts world today?

Often too much so, it's usually down to the instructor. I see and have seen, a lot of what I term "Dojo Defence". These are movements perpetrated to be self-defence, but in fact are often either "Martial Arts in jeans" or defences against their own art. You know the thing, unrealistic attacks. This is the main 'fault' (for want of a better word.)

It's the ATTACKS and the ATTACKERS that matter. Few street attackers will use traditional martial arts attacks, so the first step in making ANY art 'street viable' is to use realistic attacks. Then ADAPT your art to meet with and nullify these types of attacks.

But frankly it's impossible to mention any specific martial art as being good or bad in this respect. It's the way it's taught and practised. Some martial artists are excellent at adapting their art to the street, others not so.

I don't always think it's the martial arts world that misinterprets the term the most, it's 'Joe Public'. They have yet to be 'educated' that some arts are designed for and work best for the street, others for the competition arena etc.

But if the martial arts world struggles to get this aspect right, then how can Joe Public? Parents take their kids to say a kickboxing class that is 100% competition orientated, and do so often in the belief that this will be a viable school of self-defence for their offspring.

The martial arts and the martial arts instructors themselves need to be honest first. Advertising any individual style as good for Fitness, Discipline, Sport, Defence etc etc, is WRONG.

## 8. You consider the Goshinkwai Yawara Ryu style of fighting to be the pinnacle of personal combat, yet not purely for self-defence, why is that?

I started my 'quest' for a 'fighting' and 'self-defence' system way back in 1961, when most of the readers weren't even born.

Along the way I tried (to varying degrees of success and time): Western Boxing & Wrestling (Olympic Freestyle only back then), Judo/Ju-Jitsu, Kempo-Jitsu and Shotokan Karate (Billy Higgins). In my own very personal opinion, all these fine arts gave me 'something' towards my goal, but also lacked 'something'.

Until I saw a demonstration of Goshinkwai Yawara Ryu, it had it ALL for me.



Non sport, incredibly effective and efficient, very very brutal and violent, using methods, techniques and principles I had simply not only never SEEN, but never even knew existed back then.

The main source was Master Kenshiro Abbe's (10th Dan) "Butokukai Defence" & Kyushin-Jutsu, along with the 'extras' that the two Warfield brothers (John & Gordon) had included.

It blew me away with its devastatingly efficient combat methods.

BUT, it's NOT self-defence, it's 'FIGHTING'. Its goal and training makes very efficient FIGHTERS out of people. The methods are aimed at the destruction of all of, or parts of, another human being. No submission holds, no 'controls' (all locks levers etc are trained for completion, which is limb destruction, not TAP). Chokes take him out. Strikes are for maximum damage etc. Their Tai Sabaki is the most efficient I have ever seen in any other art

In essence it's the most 'brutal' art I have ever witnessed or trained in.

However, there are no, Avoidance skills, No Fence or Guard, no verbal dissuasions, just basically "Attack the instant your opponent attacks and keep attacking him until you have total and complete dominance"

I trained from the early 1970's until 1990 with that organisation, and travelled regularly from North Manchester (where I lived at that time) down to Pontypool in Gwent, South Wales, simply because nothing else was around that matched it.

But common sense made me realise that just being a good 'fighter, didn't make someone good at AVOIDING fights ... self-protection skills were just as vital.

So I left in 1990 to pursue other aspects of the combat arts. I had had several non-martial artists, people like taxi-drivers, etc coming to me for self-defence, who simply didn't want the sheer violence of the Goshinkwai. So like all good arts, I adapted some aspects to formulate more defensive methods.

But in truth Mike, there are times I miss those heady days on top of Llanelli Hill Nr Abergavenny, (part of the Black Mountains) training brutally on Gordon Warfield's back garden, or in the Hut (now a Chapel) in Pontypool (John Warfield's club) learning and practising some very nefarious methods.

**9. In regards to training, if a new student walked into your school today, how would you train them from say, beginner to black belt?**

WOW ... that would take a book to explain properly ...but let's have a stab at it.

If you are talking about pure SDF Self-Defence and not just the other stuff like corporate self-defence, conflict management etc ... here goes (and it's YOUR fault Mike if this gets l-o-n-g Ha Ha)

There are seven Kyu grades and seven Dan grades within my system, and this would take 20 plus years to get through at the quickest and some people never get all the way.

However ... even before their first lesson, I would have had a chat with them about their expectations etc. Just so they know what's in store for them. Although to be totally honest I get more 'converts' than beginners. That is people who already have some degree of martial arts training. So that the lower Kyu grade stuff is pretty straightforward for them

However the first THREE Kyu grades, don't appear too different from a combat Ju-Jutsu style, which in fact is what it basically is.

This is to get the students to understand how to use the basic techniques, the impact and grappling stuff, and learn how to 'manipulate' another human being, how the 'mechanics' of the body works etc. It's not that deep or complicated at this level, and onlookers wouldn't see that much different to many other arts or styles.

Doing moves SLOW until they are learned well, then using impact equipment accomplish this, we will improve their impact abilities massively, and engender some confidence in their abilities. Their training partners are co-operative to varying degrees ... from no resistance in the first couple of months,



building up from 100% compliance to say 60% compliance and 40% resistance.

From 3rd Kyu Green Belt, we start to 'individualise' or 'personalise' each student, find out their own strengths and weaknesses and allow them their input into how the 'feel' about the moves and principles. From Green Belt on, as well as learning new methods, and techniques, we start to learn PRINCIPLES and how to apply them. Attacks are much harder and with less 'compliance' ... we study body mechanics and understand anatomy and physiology much more. Weapons are brought into it ... street weapon defences, adverse situations, multiple attackers, more 'Atemi' work.

A great emphasis is placed on mobility and controlling SPACE, DISTANCE & TIME on your opponent. This is brought about by practising Advanced Tai Sabaki methods, (body management, not just 'footwork')

As the student progresses to 1st Kyu and 1st Dan, then the student goes into the 'mental' side of training .. Pathworking, Visualisation etc.

The 1st Dan grading is quite severe ... no gifts here. The student is pushed very hard indeed, but not for a long time ... it lasts about an hour, but the last few minutes are the hardest. We just beat them ... all the attackers just pile onto the candidate/s and keep pushing, slapping, dragging, etc etc, they are allowed NO respite and obviously cannot fight back efficiently, they are exhausted mentally and physically, but they HAVE to keep going, keep trying, keep SURVIVING until time is called.

The SDF system has so many aspects that individuals will rarely learn them all, so MUST become 'selfish' and learn what suits them best.



The end product is a highly efficient overall total personal combat system.

### **10.How important is physical conditioning to the fighter, and what do you do to stay in shape?**

Two totally different questions there mate ... but take the first part first. Conditioning is vital, but it **MUST** be the right kind of conditioning to meet the desired objectives of each style or system.

The SDF is totally dedicated to the 'street', and as street encounters are fast, furious and violent, then we don't need the ability to spar for 10 rounds.

Its like the difference between a marathon runner and sprinter ... both 'run', but one really does fast 'jog' which needs to be kept up for 3 hours or so. The other blasts all their power and energy into a few seconds.

That is the type of training WE do.. short and powerful... we have a saying in the SDF .. "If you are fighting for longer than 10 seconds, you are probably losing"

So that is the way we look at conditioning.

Myself ... Ha Ha at 61, I get a workout just getting UP each morning.

No I walk a hell of a lot and teach very often, and I find that simply demonstrating the techniques at varying speeds and power keeps me going. Being able to 'blast it out' for a few seconds and still do so reasonably well is still there.

### **11.Earlier we discussed your grappling background. What are your thoughts on MMA, and do you believe that all fights go to the ground, or should go to the ground.**

I quite like the MMA, but like all 'competitive' combat arts, they are for fit young competitors. And the MMA has almost become a style of its own. You see very little in the way of new techniques tried out, and in fact it has nearly become a style that ISNT Mixed Martial Arts ... but it provides good hard competition for young people who want to test themselves. But it certainly isn't the 'be all and end all' of realistic street training.

Next even if 99% of fights go to the ground, 100% of them start OFF the ground.

There are THREE ways you don't drown in water ... one is if someone saves you, two is if you can swim, but THREE is the most important ... you **DON'T** go near water ... You need to be efficient on the ground, so if you **DO** end up there, you don't

think "Oh S\*\*t, now I'm beat" ... you think instead "I've been here 1000's of times, I can deal with this"

The ground is something you can handle if you get there, but NOT something you should go straight to ... There are FOUR lines of defence, and the ground is the LAST... fights should be finished stood up because unlike the MMA cage, your opponent in the bar, pub or street will almost certainly have a couple of mates waiting to use your head as a football.

### **12.Dave, you once stated on Iain Abernethy's forum that you train people to use the Pick Axe as a weapon of self-defence ... how do you go about that and what other weapons do you teach?**

Well Mike it's actually the pick axe **HANDLE** I use Ha Ha.. Not the actual pick axe... The handle is superbly designed for wielding and taking impact without transferring any harmful energy to your arms. It's superbly balanced and can be used both single and double handed. Unlike say a baseball bat or a golf club, which has an obvious holding end, and a hitting end (which means when someone picks up a baseball bat, the play baseball with their opponent) ... The pick-axe handle can be held at **EITHER** end, in the middle whatever, and **STILL** be an efficient weapon.

It can be a close-in weapon, and a weapon of distance, it works in perfectly with footwork and multiple attackers, and can also be used for locks, chokes and levers.

It delivers such a devastating amount of contact power, that rarely would you ever need a second strike, unless you wanted to kill someone. I have yet to find anything better in that category.

BUT I don't teach it to everyone, I hand pick them ... it's such a devastating weapon that a degree of 'responsibility' comes with its knowledge.

I also don't train **ANYONE** under 2nd Kyu, or under 16 years old with it.

Other weapons? ....

Well **FIRST** I use what I call are "Expedient Weapons" ... these are whatever objects are close at hand ... just every articles, such as chairs, belts, whatever ... I categorise them into: Short and sharp ... short and solid ... long and solid ... bulky... and flexible. Then I try of ways of using them as a defensive aid.

**SECONDLY**, I train with what some people would call the "Eskrima Stick", but that really only describes

its length. I did some work with Renee Latosa many years ago and he inspired me to look more into various sticks as weapons. Using the very basic Eskrima skills I had, I tried other medium length stick methods from all over. Such as Indian Lathie, Japanese Jo-Bo, English Single Stick and French La Canne. Each had something the other didn't, so I ended up with some decent techniques.

In truth I just saw some moves and played around with them. So I now term it all as "Combat Stick work" ...

This also includes the short stick known as the "Yawara-Bo" ... I love this one.

THIRDLY ... I trained with Gordon Warfield on his actual "Knife Fighting" methods. This is something I teach to Black Belts/Instructors ONLY. It's the actual methods of fighting WITH a knife as opposed to just defending against someone with a knife.

**13. Do you believe that there is an effective way to fight a gun or a knife empty handed? And if so what strategies would you recommend?**

I believe in knife defences and indeed have several 'battle reminders' of having to deal with knives and/or 'edged weapons (I have been cut with a broken bottle and had a stab attempt with a screwdriver done on me, so its not JUST knives). So I know some methods are workable against these types of weapons. As for Guns ... BUY A KEVLAR VEST!

I don't really believe there are many ways of taking a handgun off someone who genuinely intends to use it on you. And if you are 'only' being threatened with a gun, say as a robbery, then COMPLY!

The best strategy for BOTH is the ancient art of GETTING THE HELL OUT OF THERE.

But if you are faced with a blade, you are probably going to get cut anyway, so GET IN ... surprise him, shock him, control the ELBOW never the wrist, don't try any 'twisty-wristy' rubbish, it doesn't work.

Get in... Grab and control the elbow, Apply pain and Dump, then get the hell out of there.

**14. With over 40 years experience, how has your training changed since you began?**

In many ways Mike ... I started just wanting TECHNIQUES and hard ones at that. I had little time for 'mental' study or concepts, principles etc.. I went 'wider' not 'Deeper' into the arts I studied.

Later on I started asking more "WHY's" ... why was the move designed, what for, why did it have to be performed in a certain way, and so on.

I started studying movement more, the

'supplementary' methods ... How many clubs will spend hours just on (for example) balance training, or breath control or -or - or?

So I went DEEPER, and still do.

Physically I believe 'movement' stays with you longer than power, so I use less 'power' in training for myself.

I aim for 'efficiency' not speed or power any more ... you can't really train for speed anyway. You are born with a limit to your speed, and it can't be exceeded.

Just to explain this a little further ... If you touch a hot surface with your finger tips, just 'whip' them away like lightening.. its impossible to reproduce that speed when the 'burn' isn't there.. you are always just that tad slower.

You actually train to be more efficient, then your inbuilt 'speed' will combine with that efficiency and give the ILLUSION of being faster ... but you can't train purely for speed.

**15. In 2000, you formed the Self-Defence Federation (SDF), what is the Federation's purpose, and what are your future goals for it?**

The idea being the SDF was to build a 'home' for those martial artists and NON-martial artists who wanted to study, train in, and develop their more 'realistic' defensive aspects.

I wanted no boundaries to styles or backgrounds, no politics, no egos. I just wanted to have a place to go to for those wishing to develop their realistic combat abilities.

I have developed Instructor's Diploma Courses whereby people who AREN'T black belts can still become instructors in varying levels of self-defence from the very basic to the more advanced.

These diplomas allow people to advertise that they have some actual provable skills in self-defence as opposed to just being (for example) a champion at sport Tae Kwon Do. Many authorities are rightly asking for more than a 4th Dan trophy holder to teach 'self-defence'.

I want the SDF to be the 'byword' for sensible and practical self-protection and self-defence in the UK.

Many people, especially the middle aged and out of condition types simply don't want the typical hard training high kicking arts, they just want to learn principles and methods that will help them survive violent encounters. That's our aim

16. You're noted for using stories as allegories to



impart knowledge or pass on experience you've accumulated over the years. Would you care to share one with us?

Yes Mike I do use lots of stories, I believe people can understand points better if they have something tangible to 'hang' on to.

The best I can do in the space we have here is to tell you TWO short stories about the late and very great Kenshiro Abbe 10th Dan .. the man who taught my two main instructors.

Each of the stories are there to illustrate how taking each individual scenario and using 'tactics' best suited to them.

1.Kenshiro Abbe was accosted in London late one evening by three youths one of whom showed he had a knife .... "Give us your wallet you Jap Bastard" was their opening gambit.

Abbe coolly produced his wallet and held it slightly in front of himself and said "Here is my wallet, it has all the money I possess in the world in it ... but I am prepared to die for this money ... I hope you three are prepared to die for it as well" ... with that he threw the wallet in the face of the guy with the knife and dropped him with a strike ... shouting .. "Are you two still sure you want to die for my wallet?" ... "You can grab your friend and go NOW if you wish" .. which they did ... by dominating them and attacking them he had controlled the scenario well, and was

prepared to go as far as he thought necessary to win.

2.In a pub in Pontypool, Abbe was approached by a man whose brother had died in Changi prisoner-of-war camp in the Second World War.. (This incident was in the early 1950's so the war was a recent memory to many.

This man approached Abbe shouting and swearing and saying he was going to kill Abbe and whatever ... Abbe just stood coolly looking at the guy.

Eventually the man's friends dragged him away apologising to Abbe.

After they had gone one of Abbe's kyu grade students who was there in the pub asked him. "Sensei, why did you just stand there and do nothing .. why didn't you hit him?"

Abbe's response was ... "I am a great martial artist, by doing nothing, I have just saved that man from a terrible and pointless beating"

It showed the time for restraint.

**Dave, thank you for taking the time to talk to us..**

Mike the whole thing has been my pleasure mate .. I only hope readers of 'JISSEN' will find something of interest in this .. mind you it has given ME a sodding headache Ha ha

# Self-Defence Federation



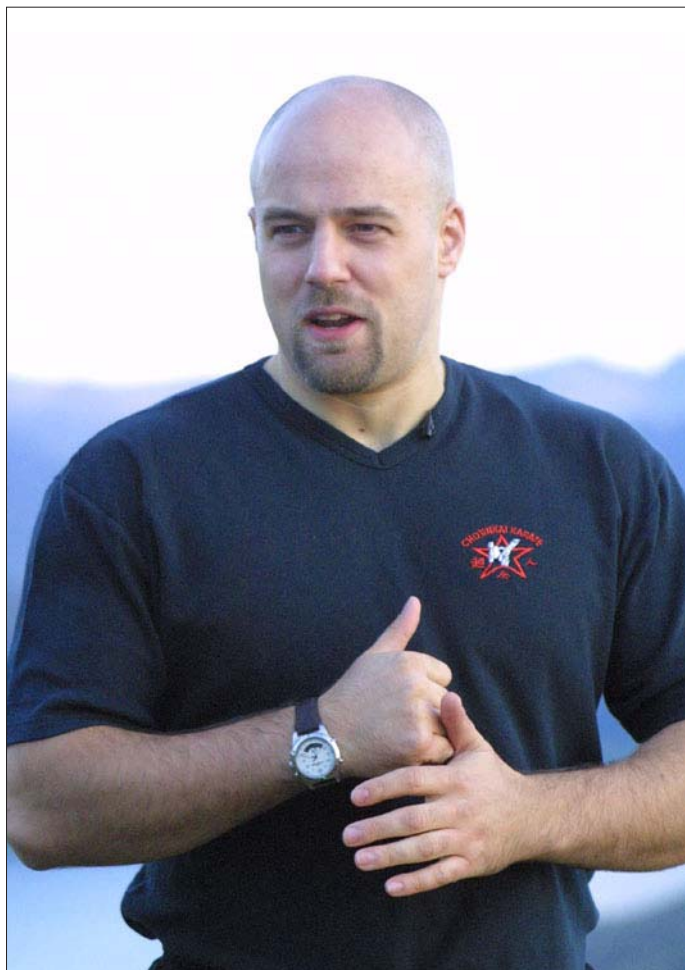
Dave Turton 8th Dan, Founder of the Self Defence Federation, The highest graded 'pure' Self-Defence Instructor in Europe with nearly 50 years involvement in the Combat Arts, and well over 35 years instructing at all levels. Dave is 'The Man' the experts seek out when THEY need help! The SDF was started in JUNE 2000, by Dave Turton (then 7th Dan) with just 3 Clubs and around 100 members. The SDF has grown very steadily from 3 clubs and 100 members in June 2000 to nearly 40 clubs and approaching the 5,000 member mark.

Clubs, Instructors and individual members are now established in just about every region of the UK, from the Island & Highlands of Scotland, down to the Cornwall in the South West. We have member in both North & South Ireland, and North & South Wales, making us truly national. For more information, please visit the website:

## [www.sdfuk.co.uk](http://www.sdfuk.co.uk)

# Styles - Are they killing karate?

By Iain Abernethy



**T**ell another martial artist that you practise karate and it is very likely that they will immediately then ask you, “what style?”. From this it would seem that the notion of style is felt to be important. However, this raises many questions: How did all these various styles come into existence? Are they really that important? Should the existing styles be preserved? Or perhaps we should be looking to create new styles? In this article I'd like to look at the notion of style and suggest that, whilst the styles handed down to us are of great value, if we place too much emphasis on “style” it can be detrimental to karate.

The most widely practised style of karate today is almost certainly Shotokan karate. As I'm sure

most of those reading this will know, it was Gichin Funakoshi who is attributed as being the founder of this style of karate. So what did Funakoshi himself have to say about the style he founded?

Towards the end of his life, Gichin Funakoshi wrote the following in his book *Karate-Do: My Way of Life*, “One serious problem, in my opinion, which besets present day karate-do is the prevalence of divergent schools. I believe this will have a deleterious effect on the future development of the art ... There is no place in contemporary karate-do for different schools ... Indeed, I have heard myself and my colleagues referred to as the Shotokan school, but I strongly object to this attempt at classification.” Funakoshi goes on to say that he believes all karate is one and that it is this approach that will best serve the future of karate. So it seems that Funakoshi was not a fan of the idea of schools or styles and, if he were around today, he would probably be unhappy at being labelled as the founder of the Shotokan style. Funakoshi's objection to styles seems to be primarily based on his concern that styles would be divisive and would see karate separate into various factions.

Other masters were more comfortable with the idea of styles, but Funakoshi was in no way





alone in his worry that styles could be divisive and detrimental to karate. Kenwa Mabuni, the founder of Shito-Ryu, is also on record of saying that he felt all karate was one and what people considered to be styles were simply variations in the expression of karate's common principles. So we know that the idea of styles was not universally endorsed and that two of modern karate's founders felt that that karate as a whole should be valued more than its various expressions. But where did these "various expressions" or styles originate from?

When we talk about karate styles, it is commonly accepted that Shotokan, Shito-Ryu, Wado-Ryu and Goju-Ryu are the four styles that are most widely practised across the globe. I'd now like to briefly look at the formation of each of these styles.

**Shotokan:** Gichin Funakoshi studied under Anko Azato, Anko Itosu, and, to a lesser degree, Bushi Matsumura. It was Funakoshi's personal synthesis and expression of what he learnt from these teachers that formed the nucleus of what is now called Shotokan (although, as we have seen, Funakoshi himself did not like that term). Funakoshi borrowed a number of ideas from Judo (i.e. the uniform, grading system, etc). Shotokan was further developed by Gichin Funakoshi's son, Gigo Funakoshi.

**Shito-Ryu:** Kenwa Mabuni studied under both Anko Itosu and Kanryo Higaonna. Mabuni synthesised the methods of both men into what became known as Shito-Ryu. Indeed, the name reflects this synthesis as "Shito" is derived from the first kanji characters used in writing "Itosu" & "Higaonna". When I interviewed Haruyoshi Yamada 9th dan – who studied under Chojiro Tani, who was in turn a student of Kenwa Mabuni – in 2006 he told me that Kenwa Mabuni also practised Shin-den Fudo-ryu Jujutsu and taught this style of jujutsu to Chojiro Tani. However, it would seem that Mabuni kept this aspect of his personal martial practise separate from his karate style.

**Wado-Ryu:** Before taking up karate, Hironori Otsuka originally studied Shindo-Yoshin-Ryu Jujutsu under Tasusaburo Nakayama. Later, he studied karate under Gichin Funakoshi, Kenwa Mabuni and Choki Motobu. Otsuka's Wado is a



fusion of his jujutsu and the various interpretations of karate as taught to him by his various teachers.

**Goju-Ryu:** Chojun Miyagi studied Naha-Te karate under Kanryo Higashionna. Miyagi, like his teacher, made a number of trips to China to learn more to further develop his martial arts knowledge. Miyagi himself did not give a name to his system until one of his senior students, Jinan Shinzato, was asked to name it following a demonstration he gave in Tokyo in 1930. Jinan Shinzato is said to have said struggled to accurately name the style he practised and it is said that he reluctantly settled on "Naha-te", but felt this did not accurately reflect what Miyagi was now teaching. He returned to Okinawa, explained his predicament to Miyagi who decided that Goju-Ryu (Hard-Soft School) would be a good title for what they now practised.

What should be noted straight away is that Funakoshi, Mabuni, Otsuka and Miyagi did not preserve karate as it was passed on to them. They fused various expressions of karate together and also gained both technical and cultural influences from Chinese systems, Jujutsu and even Judo. These new styles were

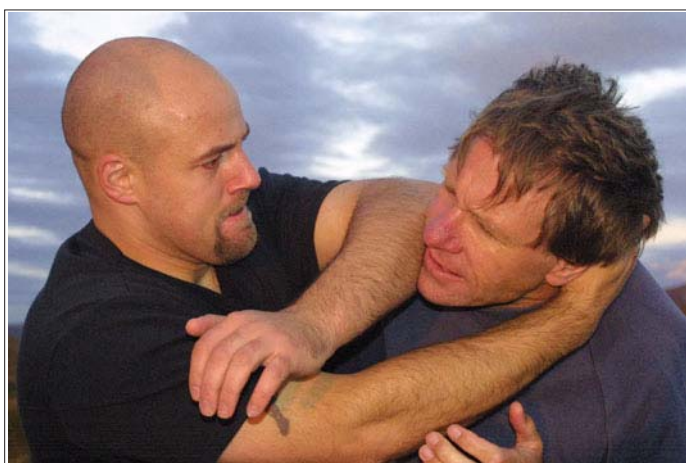
not “pure” or passed on in an unchanging way across the centuries; they were a “mongrel mix” of what the founders considered the best aspects of all their influences. The past masters mixed things together, left things out, and created things that were their own. This was far from being a “free for all” though. This development of these “new traditions” was done according to the process of Shuhari.

Shuhari is the process through which martial arts are said to evolve. Each syllable represents a specific kanji character and the process of Shuhari is best explained by looking at the meanings of each individual character.

Shu: The meaning of this character is “to defend” or “to obey”. In martial arts, this stage would be the learning of the fundamentals of our chosen style. The student does not yet have enough knowledge or experience to be able to effectively deviate from the fundamentals and hence it is important that they strictly adhere to them. Essentially this stage is “learning by copying”.

Ha: The meaning of “Ha” is “to diverge” or to “break away”. A martial artist who has reached this stage will be working to find their own personal expression of the fundamentals introduced by the preceding stage. They will be working out what they feel is most effective and making corresponding changes to their training and teaching. Essentially this stage is “learning by experimenting”.

Ri: The final character means “to leave” or “to go away”. At this stage the martial artist has moved away from the earlier stages of their martial art and – although what they now do can still trace its origins to their early training –



is now uniquely theirs. It has “left” what they originally did and may now need its own name to adequately define it. Essentially this stage is “learning by creating”.

The martial artist who has reached the “Ri” stage will encourage their students to copy their teachings (Shu) and the whole process begins again.

If you look at the history of the four main styles discussed earlier, you can see the Shuhari process at work. The masters who formulated the modern styles started by faithfully copying the teachings of their own masters. At a certain point, the master develops their own expression of these teachings; and this included the fusing together of various separate methods i.e. different martial arts styles and alternative expressions of karate. Finally what the master is doing has moved so far from the original teachings that it has become something new. This is the point where a new label is needed and, as soon as that label is given, a new “style” is born.

As I said earlier, this developing of new styles was not a “free for all” and these new styles were not born of political infighting, financial interest or ego. They came into existence as genuinely new expressions of previous existing systems. So where does this leave us and how does the idea of styles and Shuhari apply to us today?





As I see it, one of the biggest problems facing karate today, and martial arts generally, is the abandoning of the Shuhari ideal. I would suggest to you that in the majority of cases "Shuhari" has been replaced with "Shu-Shu-Shu". The existing styles are frequently regarded as sacrosanct with any minor change being viewed as a form of heresy. This is not good for karate, it is not in-keeping with what the past masters themselves did, and it is not inline with traditional practises.

One of the main reasons for "Shu-Shu-Shu" becoming so prevalent is the modern disconnect between problem and solution. The past masters originally sought what they considered to be the best solution to the problem of violence. A problem arose when martial artists stopped measuring against efficiency in combat and started introducing artificial criteria such as "style purity". Whether something was "good" or not was no longer measured against its efficiency in combat, but instead "good" was always measured against how close any given motion was to a rigid "style criteria". The element of "ha" or "divergence" was actively discouraged, even if that divergence would increase combative efficiency. "Shu" – or the ability to strictly copy a teacher's movements – was all that the grading system rewarded and is all that people trained for.

This problem can perhaps be seen most clearly when discussing kata. The original purpose of kata was to record and communicate combative techniques and concepts. Kata could be viewed as a set of instructions or a syllabus that would guide a practitioner's study and practise. Kata is the map to guide the student through the landscape of conflict. The trouble has been that people stopped trying to navigate their way through conflict and started endlessly copying maps instead! It mattered little if people could "utilise the map in the territory" so long as they were able to accurately copy out the map.

The actual expression of the combative principles within kata became an irrelevance. The goal changed. It was now all about faithful copying and keeping the kata "pure". Those who navigated the territory and, as a result of their experience, suggested updating the map were condemned as heretics. The map was no longer something functional, but a work of art to be copied and admired, but not understood or used.

In all fields it is very important that we faithfully and accurately understand the teachings and findings of the previous generation. This information is invaluable as it removes the need for each generation to start from scratch. If we always had to start from scratch, each generation would have to start with fire and the wheel and hence humanity would make no progress.

In the field of physics, school children throughout the world learn Sir Isaac Newton's laws of motion. There is no need to rediscover these laws as the work has already been done. Some students may go on to study physics at a high level and eventually work at the cutting edge of the field. They aim to come up with better theories to explain the physical universe. In doing so they are seeking what Newton himself sought. They are honouring him by building on his research. They would not honour him if they abandoned the search he was key part of and instead sought to preserve the "infallible equations" of "Newton-Ryu".

In the martial arts, "styles" can become a

barrier to progress if they are viewed as something that must always be preserved and can never be deviated from. This preservation prevents the process of Shuhari, diverts us from the quest that the masters themselves were on, can prevent improvements in combative efficiency, and will ultimately lead to the stagnation and death of the “style”. Styles are not sacrosanct and it is important that we allow karate to live and to evolve.

The styles that have been handed down to us are invaluable. They form the basis of what we do and we should be incredibly grateful to the founders of these styles for ensuring we don’t have to start from the beginning. We should faithfully copy their teachings so we gain a good understanding of their own discoveries. However, there will eventually come a point where we should continue to copy the example of the founders of these styles and introduce our own expression of the core concepts. Eventually we may even do what they did and go on to formulate and teach our own personal expression of karate.

Using “style purity” to stifle growth is not “traditional” and is bad for karate as a whole. We can see evidence of this in the loss on combative efficiency that “form over function” karate has produced. We should return to seeing styles as being the foundation study that eventually frees us to express karate in our own way. We should be constantly striving to better understand the problem of violence and improve on the solutions offered by previous generations. If we can make such an improvement it is because of the superb job the past masters did in preparing us to do just that. We are in no way suggesting we are “better than them” when we suggest improvements. We are acknowledging their genius when we suggest improvements!

To use what I think is a very apt quotation from English author John of Salisbury (1159), “We are like dwarfs on the shoulders of giants, so that we can see more than they, and things at a greater distance, not by virtue of any sharpness of sight on our part, or any physical

distinction, but because we are carried high and raised up by their giant size”. We do the past masters a great disservice if we allow ourselves to be lifted up by them only to close our eyes! Karate should evolve and styles are at their most valuable when they facilitate effective evolution by passing on what the previous generation discovered so we can use it as our base. Sadly, the prevailing view of styles today, far from effectively facilitating evolution, actually prevents that evolution and encourages stagnation.

I am in agreement with Mabuni and Funakoshi when they said that all karate was one. That does not mean that all expressions of karate should be exactly the same or unchanging. Instead it means that all the various expressions are simply branches of the same tree. When a tree grows it produces new branches. These new branches are good for the health of the whole tree. Like a tree, karate will be at its most healthy when allowed to grow.





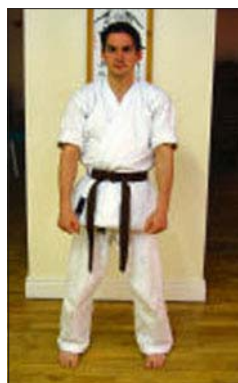
# Transitional Aspects in Karate: Are you appreciating only a small portion of your technique? (Part 2 of 2)

by Chris Denwood

In part one of this article, we considered the performance aspects of kata and suggested that there may be more than one way to look at them. We also highlighted the way in which our attention can usually be drawn to the most vibrant or visual aspects of a particular form, whereas categorically, the real 'meat' of the movements is found within the frequently subtle transitional motions between each 'snap shot' posture. Furthermore, we discussed ways in which you can practice kata in the dojo by isolating each of these transitional movements. In the second and final part of this piece, I'd like to explore the ways in which a more attentive study in the movements of kata can help towards the universal goal, to develop more pragmatism within our traditional arts.

Let's say then that we've managed to alter the way we see our forms and through training in performance, now have much greater respect for the transitional movements contained within them. As far as the practical application of kata goes, how can concentrating on these transitional movements help us? Well, even on a superficial level, there are at least four important elements that when a focus on transitions are applied, really help to benefit more pragmatic skills in combat. These four elements are:

1. Appreciating the effects of bodyweight manipulation through stances.
2. Gaining a higher degree of body control.
3. Subconsciously choosing techniques that flow together.
4. Considering applications within the transitional movements themselves.



(Figs.1 and 2: A simple exercise to understand the fundamental effects of bodyweight manipulation)

## Appreciating the effects of bodyweight manipulation through stances

Without digressing or delving too deeply here, the stances found in karate have only one main purpose – to manipulate the bodyweight in order to create advantage over your opponent in combat. How you use that body manipulation is entirely up to you. For instance, as the kata may suggest, you have the option to use the energy derived from bodyweight manipulation to evade, block, receive, strike, lock, or even to throw over the stance itself.

As we progress through a transition, we naturally change our bodyweight orientation through movement and because we are in fact moving means that we have the potential to use that energy. As long as we keep moving then we become almost like a large pendulum hanging from a large grandfather clock. When performing the simple act of walking for instance, we are in fact doing nothing more than keeping bodyweight in motion by repeatedly catching ourselves just before we would usually fall. This can be illustrated quite graphically when we see people tumbling over nothing more than a slightly raised paving slab, a small

rock or a sudden change in floor surface friction. If we can no longer control or catch our inevitable fall whilst walking then we will undoubtedly end up flat on our face! This is energy in motion and a perfect example of transitional movement.

It's only when we stop altogether that the energy from the body is wasted. Ironical as it may seem though, many karate-ka forget about the true potential behind these transitional movements and as I've briefly described above, they become far too fixated with the end position or posture. But of course, at this end position, there is no movement. If there is no movement, then there can be no bodyweight manipulation and therefore, there can be no potential. Becoming deadlocked like this means that you are forced into 'kick starting' that pendulum again before any further energy can become available for use.

Although bodyweight manipulation in stances can sound rather complicated when discussed in the pages of a book or article such as this, it can be more easily understood by performing the following simple exercise (Fig.1 and Fig.2). If you stand with your feet around shoulder width apart and your legs completely straight, then as long as you don't suffer from any sort of structural deficiency then your bodyweight will have a balanced 50/50 split between both legs. Now start to bend the left leg and experience what happened to your body weight. You should find that your weight will shift downwards and across towards the bend left leg. If you bend the left leg only a little, then the bodyweight will shift only a small amount. Bend the leg any further and the bodyweight will shift proportionally further to compensate. Next, observe what happens when you try something different such as bending the other leg, bending both legs, taking one leg in front of the other or since the knees should always be kept over the feet, altering the direction in which the feet are pointing?

The little exercise described above provides the bedrock for all the rules associated with bodyweight manipulation throughout all the stances found in karate and in my view, provides

the key behind understanding the transitional movements found in kata. In respect to stances, the following rules should be deemed as true in the vast majority of cases:

1. The bodyweight will shift in proportion to the change in angle of the knees.
2. The bodyweight will alter according to the proportions of the end position of the stance.
3. The bodyweight will naturally be directed in respect to where the feet are pointing.
4. The velocity of the shift in bodyweight will be in proportion to the velocity to which the knees change their angle (i.e. the principles of collapsing and efficient relaxation).

This idea of bodyweight manipulation should always be considered when first analysing your forms. After all, it's the body working in unity that provides the possible framework on which more pragmatic applications can be uncovered. The core of the body and the way in which it's manoeuvred is by far the most important and pivotal aspect in karate. Everything else merely represent 'add-ons' to the overall effectiveness.

### **Gaining a higher degree of body control**

The whole idea of physical self-protection is to project your intent physically against your opponent in order to help assure your safety. This process initially begins at the brain, where signals are sent to fire nerve impulses that contract the required muscle(s) in order to perform the intended action(s). If you take a few minutes to think about this, I'm sure you'll agree that the process of moving alone (let alone fighting) is rather impressive and hugely complicated indeed. In order to be able to move effectively in karate, we have to be mindful of two elements to our training. Firstly, we have to aim to practice in the correct way so as not to build any bad habits. This is why so much emphasis is placed on correct technique in traditional schools. Secondly, we have to practice repeatedly over time, so we can develop what is commonly termed 'muscle memory'. Of course, it's not the muscles that have the memory, but this is still a great label for repetitive subconscious learning nonetheless.



The more that we practice whilst mindfully becoming aware of 'how' we are moving, the better placed we'll be to having a greater control over our bodies. It's amazing how many people who study karate move around with almost no appreciation as to how each of their legs are shifting into the correct (or in a lot of cases, incorrect) position. If we concentrate on the transitional movements between every technique, we can learn to appreciate the subtleties that make these movements much more efficient. As a quick test, try to practice your form in 'ura' (the opposite way round) and see how much more active your mind has to become in order to complete the task well. This is perhaps a perfect example of the effects of repetition, muscle memory and 'learned' body control.

The quickest way from point 'x' to point 'y' is always going to be in a straight line, but some transitional movements require different 'flight paths' in order to affect a particular outcome. Some movements for instance are inherently circular by nature and aim to nullify, embrace or accentuate an opponent's energy in your own favour. You need to first understand the main aim(s) of the movements and then repeatedly develop the transitional movements so that they can be mindfully executed towards perfection. After a while, you'll begin to find that the body will get used to what is deemed to be an 'effective' transition and your understanding can be progressed towards spontaneously and subconsciously choosing strikes and techniques in a free flowing way that naturally blend together. This is obviously the most efficient way of applying what you have learned in a more pragmatic way.

### **Subconsciously choosing techniques that flow together**

Increasing your ability to perform seamless transitions is very important for all things combative (Fig.3 to Fig.6). The next time you watch a boxing match on TV, try to specifically observe the transitions between each strike thrown from the fighters. After all, these are the best 'all-round' punchers out there. You'll quickly come to realise (comparing this to your own

experimentation) that some techniques just do not sit well when combined together. A four technique combination such as 'jab-cross-lead hook-reverse uppercut' displays sound transitions. Each strike naturally flows from its predecessor and correct sets the body up for the next. Conversely, a 'lead hook-lead uppercut-reverse back fist-reverse hook' combination feels completely un-natural to execute. If you consider that it is in fact your whole body (not your limbs) that actually 'strikes' then it becomes clear that with smooth transitions, the 'spent' position of one technique becomes the 'reservoir' for the next - or to put it in other words more akin to what was explained earlier in part 1; the termination of one, automatically becoming the origin of the other. Simply put; the proactive repetition of grouping suitable techniques together, along with specific training geared towards reducing the transition times in between these will greatly help your pragmatic combat skills.

All of the benefits of karate training are useless if you're not alive to experience them. Therefore, the art is first and foremost for assuring safety from harm. The body control that's repeatedly trained through austere training therefore must have some practical value unless all your efforts will be wasted. If we are to take practical advantages from the transitional movements found in kata, then one of these should surely be the fact that the body and mind learns how to choose and then execute a group of techniques smoothly and seamlessly. Without thoroughly understanding this principle though, your smoothness will only be restricted to the confines of the kata itself. Bunkai (analysis) allows us to take lessons from the kata and not only utilise the visual movements within as physical applications, but also to appreciate how the human body can move effectively so that how you apply karate can transcend the form itself and become an expression of your own mind. As esoteric as this may seem, it's no more different than what I, myself am doing here by freely joining commonly known words together to form the article you're reading now, based naturally on what's in my mind and my own individual opinion.

## Considering applications within the transitional movements themselves

This can be for most, the greatest 'eye opener' in appreciating the significance of the transitional movements between the origin and termination of any technique and all boils down to the simple question of: 'why should we only limit our applications of the form to the discrete number of 'snap shot' postures that they consist of?' If a particular form has for instance, 30 techniques, then at least another 30 applications are possible for all those 'linking' transitional movements before even looking at the shape of the techniques themselves. It's no understatement to say that absolutely everything throughout the traditional forms of karate (among other things also) have some practical relevance designed to support you in physical combat.

A good place to start looking for applications within transitional movements is within the preparatory position of any basic 'blocking/receiving' technique. Before the hand strikes down, it has to be brought up. Before the hand swings to the outside, it has to first be brought to the inside – we could go on and on. If you were to punch when sparring, your sensei would advise you that an excessive movement in the opposite direction would be visually telegraphing the strike. If this is so, then why does almost every karate-ka perform exactly this kind of telegraphing before executing many of the traditional blocking techniques found within karate? Obviously, the answer is that these preparatory movements have some greater significance and are in fact, only really preparatory in a 'secondary' sense of the word. Consider the applications for Gedan Barai (lower sweep) and Uchi Ude Uke (inside forearm response) as shown in Fig.7 to Fig.12. Both of these show the preparatory movement being used in a positive way in order to quickly seize the initiative against the attacker.

As well as considering only the arm movements during transitions, we must also concentrate on how the rest of the body moves, such as the legs, trunk, head and even your 'intention', in order to gain a deeper understanding into the many applications associated with these. In fact, to get a good idea

as to just how much information can be derived from these, I would recommend that for one session, you choose only a single technique and dissect every part of that movement. Then search for ways in which you can positively apply your findings in a more pragmatic combat situation. I guarantee that you'll be absolutely amazed at the results!

To conclude this two-part article on the focus toward transitional movements in karate, I'd like to bring your attention back to the analogy I made in part one about kata being very much like one of those 'magic eye' puzzles from the 1990's. Sometimes, what we initially see with our eyes can become quite misleading. While strong and vibrant colours or shapes can be more pleasing to look at, it certainly pays to take a step back and look in a much wider sense and in different ways. Many people look, but don't see the whole solution merely because they're minds are already fixated on what seems to be most significant part of the view. A 'magic eye' puzzle claims its success in ways very similar to this. To give another example, magicians also use the limitations of the eyes to affect their tricks and make people wonder how they can perform 'seemingly' impossible feats.

In karate, we also have to be aware that sometimes, our eyes can be our own worst enemy. What we feel is by far the most important aspect to consider. The transitional movements of the forms often contribute to very little emphasis within the training regime of many karate-ka. I believe that this is simply because, more often than not, these subtleties are not even seen, let alone mindfully felt. Techniques may feel wrong to the practitioner, however he or she may not even know why. Furthermore (and more worrying), it is entirely possible to experience a long and fruitful life in karate without ever dwelling in these subtle aspects, which in my own personal view, are wholly critical to understanding not just what you're doing, but why? This is indeed, I hope you'll agree; a really unfortunate position for one to be in.

Thanks for devoting your time to reading this article; I sincerely hope that you've found the content both useful and enjoyable.





**(Figs.3 to 6: Seamless transitions are vital in combat applications)**



**(Figs.7 to 8: An application for Gedan Barai utilising the transitional movement)**



**(Figs.9 to 12: An application for Uchi Ude Uke utilising the transitional movement)**

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# CONTACT IN TRAINING PART TWO : RECEIVING CONTACT – A RATIONALE

By John Titchen

In the previous magazine the benefits of making contact in training with bags and other people was discussed. In this issue I will be discussing the rationale for receiving contact (being hit by other people).

Receiving contact in training is useful for the following reasons:

- 1 Physical Conditioning
- 2 Psychological Conditioning
- 3 Accurate Feedback

## Physical conditioning

Physical conditioning is actually only a minor aspect of being hit. It may be obvious that the tougher you are, the more resistant you may be to receiving impact to some areas of the body, but the actual act of being hit does not really strengthen the body in this respect. There is an element of physical conditioning that occurs in training with regard perhaps to changes to skin thickness on striking surfaces and, as many Karateka who have used Makiwara will attest, an increase in knuckle size; but I would regard these developments as conditioning from making impact, not receiving impact.

Our bodies are strengthened, toughened if you will, through the combination of physical exertion, rest and appropriate diet. Well structured exercise and diet ensure that we have a stronger skeleton, combined with powerful muscles, tendons and ligaments, all supported appropriately by healthy organs and a good vascular system that can cope with the stresses of extreme heart and lung activity in the event of a combative situation. Being hit does not improve our physical conditioning, rather it tests it. It shows us how



much we can take, and where we can sometimes afford to take knocks and where we absolutely cannot. If receiving hits is not physical conditioning per se but instead, physical testing, its actual purpose is psychological conditioning.

## Psychological Conditioning

Psychological conditioning is the key basis for engaging in any form of training where you actually experience being hit. In fact one of the key aspects of what people perceive as physical conditioning, pain tolerance, is actually psychological conditioning. The pain of being hit does not disappear, instead the mind becomes accustomed to it as little more than a signal that something is wrong. If you hold a person in a wrist lock or a finger lock for too



long, they become accustomed to the pain and find they recover a degree of movement – which is why such techniques are generally best applied with faint pulses so that while the technique is never ‘off”, the mind never has a chance to get fully accustomed to the pain. The more often we are hit, experience the pain, and realize that we can in fact carry on, the less attention the mind pays to the actual pain of receiving the strike. Now this obviously is extremely important for anyone who is training to be in a fight, whether they are preparing themselves for self defence or for a competitive fight, because the majority of this process of pain acceptance and stimulus rejection is subconscious. Our natural response to pain is to shy away. Think of when you first (or last) made the mistake of putting your hand on something hot and found that amazingly your hand had flinched off it without any thought. The pain tolerance that comes from the experience of being hit will not stop a natural unconscious flinch away from the impact, but what it will do is allow a person to continue to act rather than stop to consider or assess the pain because the mind is no longer rating the warning signal so highly because of the experience that it can continue and that the damage is not severe. Without such contact the likelihood that a person will freeze when their defences fail and they get hit is increased. The ability to carry on despite being caught and having your balance and rhythm distorted (in addition to feeling pain and possibly being winded) is an essential

attribute of a successful fighter, and an ability that is best developed by careful and gradual exposure to receiving contact in a dynamic situation.

At the same time as the mind develops this ability to process yet set aside stimuli, another equally important mental process is being developed by experiencing contact. The process I have described above concerns the mental processing of the tactile stimuli of being hit, but fighting also touches on other senses such as sight, hearing, and potentially even taste and smell (the latter perhaps more so in real life than in competition). These senses assail the conscious mind more often because they are (with the exception again of the latter two) the means through which we communicate, and fighting actually does involve a tremendous amount of communication through the sight (of facial expression and of attacks coming towards





you) and sound (threatening shouts, grunts, screams).

### **Accurate Feedback**

Unless introduced to sparring at slow speed, many people in static no contact sparring have difficulty staying still when a counter strike is coming towards them, even if they know it will stop before hitting them. This desire to move out of the way is no bad thing, but sometimes the confidence that you are not going to be hit can pave the way to a dangerous over-confidence in the ability to evade an attack that is really intended to strike home. When the training regime involves contact, there is no uncertainty as to whether the strike 'would have hit'. You learn to accept when you have been hit, how it became possible, how it made you move, and what you can do to change that outcome,

Receiving Contact also teaches a very valuable lesson about the techniques that we use. Experiencing the force of a well executed strike through padding a trainee can truly appreciate how much pain and damage it can cause when no protective steps are taken. Such knowledge may have a positive influence on a student's appreciation that outside of training, martial arts techniques are less for show or minor squabbles, but only for situations of real need. Contact in training can therefore be a movement to responsibility.

Unsupervised and untrained use of padding and body armour can result in the very injuries that their use is designed to prevent. The head and the spine are particularly vulnerable to dangerous injury and the latter should never be struck in training. The golden rule to reduce injury is, as always, start training slowly, strike lightly in a static fashion before increasing contact, and when first transferring to mobile targets, again start slowly with a progressive force continuum. Always ascertain how much contact you and your partner are prepared to take in static training before moving to dynamic training. I would advise anyone undertaking contact training to always have a non-participating safety observer present to stop the training at any time. Train safely.

The Body Armour shown in the accompanying pictures is High Gear™ and is available from Blauer Tactical 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), e mail [jwt.dart@gmail.com](mailto:jwt.dart@gmail.com). He is an accredited Coach with the National Federation for Personal Safety and is available to teach seminars in self protection, use of force and the law, restraint and Karate Bunkai. The author's book, Heian Flow System - Effective Karate Kata Bunkai, is available on Amazon and from all good bookshops.





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