THE HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF KARATE-DO KATA

Harry Cook

"*There are many movements in karate. When you train you must try to understand the aim of the movement and its application. You have to take into account all possible meanings and applications of the move. Each move can have many applications.*"

Yasutsune Itosu ***Ten Teachings*** 1908

In most traditional oriental martial arts kata are the heart of the system. They contain all the techniques and fighting strategies used by the style, and are a record of the lessons, often learned at great cost, by its founder and leading practitioners. Karl Friday, an American teacher of the traditional Japanese style of Kashima Shinryu swordsmanship points out that 'Fundamentally, kata represents a training method wherein students rehearse combinations of techniques and counter techniques, or sequences of such combinations, arranged by their teachers.'[1]

The importance and role of kata in martial arts training is a sore point with many modern instructors and students. For many modern practitioners of karate and Judo, training in kata is a waste of valuable time and energy which could be better spent sparring or training with equipment designed to improve impact or strength.

Kata in antiquity

To the early Chinese, Okinawan and Japanese instructors kata were the essence of their training; they believed that only through constant repetition of kata could all the essential techniques of fighting be mastered, and only through the study of bunkai [kata application] could real combat skill be developed. This approach has a long history, and references to kata-like training methods can be found in the annals of many ancient cultures. For example military training 'dances' are found in ancient Egypt. It is known that during the time of the Middle Kingdom [21st-18th century BC] soldiers performed dances "to imitate mock combat, beating time with boomerangs while two of them staged a fight with bent throwing sticks."[2]

The ancient Greeks performed the Pyrrhic dance which featured men in armour performing movements of attack and defence, and it is said that the citizens of Athens made Phrynichos commander-in-chief of their army because of his skill in the Pyrrhic dance. The Spartans also performed dances which imitated wrestling movements and techniques from the Pankration.[3]

According to the Chinese historian Ssu Ma Ch'ien,[4] King Chou Hsin [1154-1122 BC] was able to kill wild animals with his fists and break rocks and timber.[5]

It is reasonable to assume that these techniques were organised into some form of system similar to the external forms of Chinese Boxing and karate. King Wu of

Chou [circa 1156-1116 BC] created a training method known as Hsiang Wu [military dance] which was usually taught to youths aged about fifteen. The ***Book of Odes*** records that 'During the time of King Wen there were fighting methods which King Wu later put into dances accompanied by music. It was named Hsiang Wu'.[5]

Over a period of time these military dances became more complex and sophisticated. By the 7th century BC it is recorded that there was a specific dance performed by soldiers and known as the 'shield dance'. The soldiers held a shield and banner as they performed the movements which were defensive rather than aggressive in intent. This dance was complemented by the 'battle axe dance', also performed by soldiers holding axes which was aggressive in its movements. In the account of the 28th year of the Duke of Lu [666 BC] in the ***Tso Chuan*** [Tso's Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals] we are told that a prince of the royal house of Ch'u fell in love with the widowed queen of the late king Wen. In order to win her favour he built a pavilion next to her palace and had the 'wan'[6] dance performed in it. Hearing of this the queen wept, saying 'When my late lord had this dance performed it was to keep his warriors in training for battle. His excellency, instead of directing it against the enemy, aims it at one who is not yet dead. What a difference!'

Obviously these 'dances' were not simply artistic endeavours; they were training methods intended to prepare warriors for war.[7]

The use of these 'dances' seems to have continued for a long time. During the Dutch embassy to the Chinese court in 1794-95 the diplomats were entertained by what they described as a 'curious dance' performed by the Shih Wei or bodyguards, Manchu bannermen selected for their military bearing and proficiency. It is possible that this was the first time that Western eyes saw what we would now call a kata. In the middle of the nineteenth century a Western traveller in China, Thomas Meadows, seems to have seen a Chinese soldier performing a weapons kata. In his book ***The Chinese and Their Rebellions*** [1856] he describes a Chinese soldier he saw 'Another man, who was armed with a sword and rattan buckler, without being so manifestly angry, was much louder and more voluble in his abuse. He accompanied it with a selection of those curious pranks that the Chinese sword-and-buckler man executes in the course of his parade exercises, - such as springing with this equipment into the air and performing a sword cut and a loud yell when up there; then suddenly squatting down under the shelter of his buckler - in an attitude that a stiff-jointed and tight-breeched European would be in vain to imitate - and doing a severe cut from underneath at the legs of an imaginary foe: then again, placing the buckler, still attached to his arm, on the ground, putting his head on the centre and tumbling over with it in the direction of his [still] imaginary antagonist.'

In most traditional Oriental martial arts kata are the heart of the system. They

contain all the techniques and fighting strategies used by the style, and are a record of the lessons, often learned at great cost, by its founder and leading practitioners. If we examine the ancient Indian art of Kalari, Japanese arts such as ken-jutsu and jo-jutsu, Okinawan karate and kobu-jutsu systems, and methods of Chinese Boxing, we see a similar method of teaching and training. A student is taught a kata or form which he initially practises as a solo exercise, along with supplementary training methods designed to improve his strength, stamina, breathing and co-ordination. Once a modicum of skill has been developed, he learns to apply the techniques of the kata against a partner, often his teacher or a senior student of the school, in order to bring the techniques alive and preserve a sense of reality. In this way the student finds out where his own strengths and weaknesses lie as well as the limitations of the various techniques. Karate master and historian Hiroshi Kinjo claims that in the oldest extant work on Chinese Boxing, General Ch'i Chi Kuang's *Chi Hsiao Hsin Shu* [8] "you will find a description of the two man waza, but you can find no description of any single man demonstration. This book was written more than a century after the Thirty-Six Families arrived on Okinawa and it therefore seems to me to indicate that in the 14th century there were no one man kata in existence."[9]

However General Chi Ch'i Kuang wrote "I have selected the thirty-two best boxing techniques from various styles, each movement following one after the other" which seems to suggest that the techniques were performed in a sequence. The text also points out the need to understand the application of the techniques, "After learning the art, practise with an opponent is required."[10]

A modern teacher of Chinese Boxing, P'ng Chye Khim explains that "though the trainee may master the mechanics and spirit of the solo Lohan pattern (Lohan ch'uan) unless he can apply its actions as techniques in defence of his person, he cannot be said to be a fully trained Shaolin exponent."[11]

Khim's comments are echoed by Adam Hsu, a teacher of Northern styles of Chinese Boxing. He says "When practitioners can't practise their systems as it was designed, this means they can't use it, at least not in the way it was intended. Regrettably...many instructors have this problem. When these people practise forms it can be said, though all the movements are there and in the correct sequence, none of them are really correct. What is lacking is an understanding of the intended usage of the movements, and without this understanding the movements are vacant; the practitioner doesn't know what he is doing...Without the correct usage, a kung fu form is an empty shell. And no matter how beautiful, an empty shell is meaningless."[12] One T'ai Chi Ch'uan teacher Jou Tsung Hwa simply says "Knowing the solo form without knowing the application is like buying a new pair of shoes at a store and then going home with only the shoe box."[13]

The same values are expressed by teachers of Okinawan Shorin Ryu. Toshihiro Oshiro, a senior student of Matsubayashi Shorin Ryu founder Shoshin Nagamine explains that "Traditional Okinawan karate is actually a series of circular techniques. The misconception that has led some Japanese styles to use rigid straight-line techniques comes from competition fighting and a lack of understanding by some instructors about how power is generated.

On Okinawa, we learned that there are two forms of martial arts. One is real and teaches the true fighting applications of each move. The other form is false, called *meikata* (dance), and teaches only the shape of the techniques, hiding the real application within the form.

The level of many karate kata is really much higher than the average person realises. Those throwing, joint-locking, and elbow techniques often look like a punch, but they hide the real meaning. After all, there is much more to effective fighting than just straight punches and blocks, and the originators of karate realised that."[14]

Okinawan Goju Ryu practitioners adopt the same position. Teruo Chinen explains that "While the patterns of kata do not change, their interpretations (bunkai) do. Bunkai follow the kata and show...the function and meaning of each technique. Bunkai change with the student's growing understanding of and skill at the kata."[15]

From a traditional Okinawan point of view simply practising the form of a kata is not enough, irrespective of how well the techniques are performed. At this level kata is simply an athletic performance similar to gymnastics or callisthenics. True mastery of kata is reflected not so much in the outer performance of the techniques but rather in the depth of understanding of the meanings of those techniques and the ability to apply them. Shotokan and T'ai Chi Ch'uan teacher Herman Kauz teaches "To become proficient in whatever martial art he is studying, the student must practice with a partner. In judo, falling and throwing techniques, which at first are learned without an opponent, must soon be done in a more realistic way. Judo on the ground, or grappling on the mat, cannot be learned without someone to hold or from whom to escape. In the various forms of hard-style boxing, a student's form might appear attractive and effective when he displays it in individual practice, but if he has not worked with actual opponents, the unexpected physical contact may upset his balance and reduce the power of his technique. In T'ai Chi Ch'uan, merely doing the form does not develop the ability to avoid someone's attack. We must practice push-hands over some years if we desire proficiency in attack and defence."[16]

It is significant that the kind of close combat training given to Allied SOE and OSS agents during WW2 was "focused on scenario-based training."[17]

Practising and exploring the bunkai of a kata can be considered to be a form of "scenario-based training" in which the practitioner develops relevant skills by

applying kata techniques in different situations.

The more traditional Western approach to education and learning is fundamentally similar to that of traditional oriental martial artists. In a discussion of traditional and modern forms of education Roger Scruton points out that "With the discipline, there is a chance of being creative; without it, there is no chance at all."[18] This accurately sums up the role of kata and bunkai in developing a genuinely skilled martial artist from the classical point of view.

In karate the analysis and application of the kata is known as 'bunkai', although some styles use other expressions such as kata-kumite. The founder of Shotokan, Gichin Funakoshi explained that 'the knowledge of just the sequence of a form [kata] in karate is useless' and 'sparring is a form used to apply offensive and defensive techniques practised in the kata, under more realistic conditions, in which by prearrangement between participants one applies offensive and the other defensive techniques.' Funakoshi also taught that 'sparring does not exist apart from the kata...When one becomes enthusiastic about sparring, there is a tendency for his kata to become bad. Karate...should be practised with kata as the principal method and sparring as a supporting method.'[19]

Funakoshi's student Fusajiro Takagi made the same point when he said 'without practise based on the understanding of the meaning of kata, then kata practice has no value.'[20]

Chojun Miyagi says in his ***Karate-Do Gaisetsu*** [An Outline of Karate-Do] 'In kumite training the techniques contained in the kaishugata are practised with the true spirit of martial arts in a 'real fighting' atmosphere, where one is expected to reach the limits of his ability.'[21]

Like Funakoshi, Miyagi regarded the kata as primary, and sparring as a way of exploring the meanings of the techniques contained within the kata. The value of kata lies in the fact that they preserve techniques not allowed in the kind of sparring usually seen in competitions. For example Chinte features nukite attacks to the eyes, while in Kururunfa the student can practise stamping kicks to the knees, armlocks and throws. Without knowing and practising the application however, kata can become simply callisthenics drills, similar to gymnastics with little or no application to combat.

To a traditionalist an important part of kata training meant practising the techniques with a partner in order to appreciate the subtleties of the kata, and to learn important aspects of fighting such as ma-ai [correct fighting distance] and zanshin [awareness]. The modern practice seen in karate, Taekwondo etc. of simply performing the movements in thin air is, from a classical point of view, incomplete: it is only the first stage of learning the techniques and is an aspect of kihon or basics.

Concentrating only on this part of kata is potentially dangerous to the integrity of the system, as the trend is always towards the visual aspects and away from the practical. Before the foundation of the Tokugawa shogunate at the beginning of the seventeenth century the reality of the traditional kata was preserved by actual fighting. Any drift towards unrealistic methods was checked by the knowledge gained in combat. However without the spur of war there was a tendency towards introversion on the part of some systems, and as Karl Friday points out a 'methodology centred on imitation and rote memorisation could readily degenerate into stagnation and empty formalism.'[22]

Actually all arts have the potential for concentrating on the outer shell instead of the living spirit, a weakness that the Chinese Taoist philosopher Chuang Tzu observes in his tale about Duke Huan, the 7th century BC ruler of the state of Ch'i. 'Duke Huan was one day reading in his hall, when a wheelwright who was working below, flung down his hammer and chisel, and mounting the steps said, 'What words may your Highness be studying?'

'I am studying the words of the Sages', replied the Duke.

'Are the sages alive?' asked the wheelwright.

'No', answered the Duke; 'they are dead.'

'Then the words your Highness is studying', rejoined the wheelwright, 'are only the lees and dregs of the ancients.'

'What do you mean, sir!' cried the Duke, 'by interfering with what I read? Explain yourself, or you shall die.'

'Let me take an illustration, said the wheelwright. 'From my own trade. In making a wheel, if you work too fast, the spokes won't fit in. You must go neither too slowly nor too fast. There must be co-ordination of mind and hand. Words cannot explain what it is, but there is some mysterious art herein. I cannot teach it to my son; nor can he learn it from me. Consequently, though seventy years of age, I am still making wheels in my own age. If the ancients, together with what they could not impart, are dead and gone, then what your Highness is studying must be the dregs.'[23]

Okinawan masters of karate were aware of the need to avoid the "empty formalism" referred to by Karl Friday. The great master of Shorin Ryu Choshin Chibana pointed out that "Karate, as it is transmitted, changes every few years. This is a common phenomenon. It happens because a teacher must continue to learn and adds his personality to the teachings. There is an old Okinawan martial arts saying that states that karate is much like a pond. In order for the pond to live, it must have infusions. It must have streams that feed the pond and replenish it. If this is not done then the pond becomes stagnant and dies. If the martial arts teacher does not receive infusion of new ideas/methods, then he, too, dies. He stagnates and, through boredom,

dies of unnatural causes."

Training in kata should always be approached with what the Zen master Shunryu Suzuki[24] calls the 'beginners mind'; clear and open to new possibilities. People with rigid minds may find it impossible to train in this way; if their 'mental set' demands clear unambiguous solutions to problems, then they will feel uneasy when faced with an open-ended situation, where a range of possible answers exist, all 'correct' according to context. One important aspect of Zen training to make the student question all his assumptions about the reality of the situations he encounters. Edward de Bono, the author of a number of works on 'lateral thinking' explains it this way in ***Po: Beyond Yes and No*** 'If you look at a situation only from within your established way of looking at it, no amount of will power is going to take you to a new way of looking at it. You draw the boundary and work within that boundary, and your answer will also lie within that boundary.'[25]

One of the aims of kata training in the traditional sense is that it leads the trainee to break the boundaries imposed by a superficial understanding of the application of the techniques. The Okinawan Goju Ryu master Morio Higaonna says 'To think that the kata of karate is the practice of one person battling against an imaginary opponent is a complete misunderstanding of kata practise. If one comprehends the kata in this way then the way to practise the kata will also be misunderstood. It is because of the belief that kata is only for individual practice that the kata have suffered changes over the years...None of the movements of the kata is restricted to only one application - in a real fight the variations of each application are unlimited. Thus, if you practise the kata enough, in real combat the techniques from the kata will surface naturally in a practical way. It is because of this that within karate the kata are the most important aspects of training.'[26]

Higaonna sensei's comments are echoed by the founder of Wado Ryu karate-do Hironori Ohtsuka who says 'The martial arts have numerous varieties of kata. Predecessors, over long periods of time, created kata through experience, changes and imagination. It is obvious that these kata must be trained and practised sufficiently, but one must not be 'stuck' in them. One must withdraw from the kata to produce forms with no limits or else it becomes useless. It is important to alter the form of the trained kata without hesitation to produce countless other forms by training. Essentially it is a habit - created over long periods of training. Because it is a habit it comes to life with no hesitation - by the subconscious mind...when using the kata of martial arts, one must use it in accordance to the meaning and objective it has, or else it becomes useless...Martial arts progresses from kata to kumite, kumite to combat and so on. Kata is a fundamental aspect of martial arts and hence is unyieldingly important. It can never just be 'form'. It is essential to train for the 'living' form.'[27]

Many modern systems of sport combat almost totally ignore kata, while others merely pay lip service to the classical ideal, producing kata of great visual appeal but of little combat value. This is most clearly seen when the practitioners of these kata try to explain the application of the techniques they use - either the explanations are fatuous in the extreme, depending on totally unreal attacks or defences, or the kata have to be changed out of all recognition to make them combat effective. Some 'traditionalists' attempt to avoid the question by saying that actually applications are not important! In effect they are tacitly accepting that the kata they practise have been so distorted that they no longer have a combat role. They continue to teach and train in kata out of some vague sense of tradition, but they really do not know what they are doing in a combat sense. Because of this some martial artists refuse to have anything to do with kata, believing as a friend of mine once said, that they actually teach you bad habits which could get you hurt in a fight. Joe Lewis, the well-known American karate-ka and kick boxer expressed this view in Liverpool in 1978, while Bruce Lee once compared trying to learn how to fight by doing kata as attempting to wrap up water in a brown paper parcel. For people with these views kata are no more than antiques, interesting historically, but totally out of touch with modern combat realities.

The founder of Judo Jigoro Kano wrote 'Kata, which literally means 'form', is a formal system of prearranged exercises, including hitting, cutting, kicking, stabbing, slashing etc. according to rules under which each combatant knows before hand exactly what his opponent is going to do. The training in hitting, kicking, stabbing and slashing is given in Kata but not in Randori, because if they were used in Randori injuries might frequently occur, but when taught in Kata no such injury is likely to result because all the attacks and methods of defence are prearranged.'[28]

Although Kano was a forward looking educator he clearly regarded Judo as something more than simply a competitive sport, and so the dangerous self defence aspects of the art needed to be taught through kata. Also the essential principles of Judo need to be absorbed through kata training. Kano wrote 'If we compare the relationship between Randori and the Kata to the study of a sentence then the Kata may be likened to grammar and Randori to composition...if one practises only composition and does not understand grammar, then mistakes can easily arise in the sentence...Similarly in the practice of Judo, it is best that the Kata and Randori should be done along parallel lines.'[29] When Jigoro Kano and one of his most senior students Kyuzo Mifune noticed 'deficiencies in katame' [grappling] in the students of the Kodokan, they turned to kata training as a corrective measure. Kano wrote in his diary in April 1920 that he and Mifune 'agreed to intensify all kata study and make kata instruction a regular teaching function at Kodokan, on a twice-a-week basis. All

students will specially take part in the practice of katame-uchi awase [Katame no kata].'

However Judo evolved away from its martial traditions and became a modern Japanese system of sport wrestling, in which the traditional role of kata was effectively abandoned. Neil Adams, a top class competitive Judo player, had little experience of Judo kata, his only training was "one intensive weekend of kata in my whole Judo career - and that was early in 1981 in preparation for my 4th Dan." Adams explained that "Competition has, without doubt, been more important to me than either grades or kata and while my main attention has been on the international contest mat, the former have been of less importance. But by the beginning of 1985, I felt I should finalise my fifth Dan...so once again I looked at the katas. I think it is important to keep the katas as part of the grading requirements [which is the only thing that will make most Judo-ka do them] because it is part of Judo's tradition. I don't think I learned anything by doing them, not at least from a technical point of view, and so long as it doesn't interfere with competition I don't think it does anyone any harm to learn them."[30]

Like the majority of modern Judo-ka many karate-ka have totally rejected kata and bunkai training in favour of sparring methods. This may be because drilling kata movements without reference to the application or function of the techniques is ultimately a sterile and very boring way of training. Realising the lack of relevance of such training to combat, either real or sporting, many karate practitioners eventually gave up on kata as a useful training method and concentrated on various kinds of sparring, which has the virtue of producing clear cut winners and losers. A leading competitive karate-ka Vic. Charles explains his approach to karate training 'People say that I did not do my kata. But I have always maintained that I do not like kata. I always did so it's not a new thing. This conflicted with people's belief in the martial arts approach: you must do your kata...I was not willing to go to the club every day and stand in a corner and do basics and think this will make me sharp for competition. You have to change your approach as you change yourself.

When people did not see me in the dojo they thought I was not training. What they did not see was that I was running in the morning, suppling in the afternoon, and sparring in the evenings. And the proof was that there was nothing wrong with my techniques when competing at a high level, or the results of my contests.'[31]

If kata is to be of value to a modern martial artist it is necessary to identify the needs of the trainee, and the intent of the training method he or she is following. Clearly methods designed to inculcate practical self defence skills may be irrelevant in sport combat and vice-versa. If we look at Judo where the aim of training is to score points against another Judo-ka in a tournament, then training in kata is probably

not of much use. On the other hand if the aim is to develop defences against a variety of attacks, including punches, kicks, and close range weapons such as knives and bottles, then a careful study of the kata is probably very valuable. The same situation can be found in karate; those who only train for sport karate where the opponent will only be using a limited range of karate techniques according to a set of arbitrary rules will find little value in kata training, while those who train to learn self defence methods will discover many useful techniques within the kata.

The demands of kata competition have caused kata to evolve in ways opposed to the traditional criteria. For example is to look at the modern way of performing Nijushiho/Niseishi and compare it with the older version; the modern way features two high side kicks which are visually very impressive and technically difficult to perform properly; the older version simply lifts the leg, so blocking with the shin, or deflecting an attack. The subsequent punching attacks only really make sense in the older version, as the side kicks of the modern version would have stopped any attacker who was trying to move close in. In many ways modern kata competitions are more like gymnastic displays than martial arts: the kata are performed purely for the visual effect of the movements and so meaningless long pauses and exotic hand movements are introduced to impress the judges, and the breathing is over-done to give an effect of power.

The growth of competition karate and the emphasis on training for sport has seriously distorted the traditional view of kata training to the point where very senior practitioners of many systems now actually regard practising the application of kata techniques as somehow deleterious to the study of true karate; as if learning how to actually apply the techniques contained in the kata somehow weakens or distorts the actual kata themselves. Many very senior practitioners of karate seem unclear as to the role and function of kata in karate, and although they all say that kata is important there does not seem to be any agreement why they are important.

Shotokan instructor Toyotaro Miyazaki explains that to really understand kata you have to be aware of the historical and social context that influenced the development of the techniques. He explains that some techniques were intended to be used in the dark ‘In some movements we go to the floor and look up; it is really to look up at the sky and see your opponent’s shadow. If people just go down on the floor, they don’t know, thus they don’t imagine. They just go down to the floor.’[32]

Hirokazu Kanazawa explains that part of the problem that some Shotokan instructors have with the concept of bunkai comes about because ‘when Funakoshi Sensei was teaching these kata, he did so with high school students in mind. I think he wanted to teach the kata more like physical education: so for this reason, the way of doing the kata was kept simple.’

Clearly training intended for adolescents cannot approach the levels of understanding required by more mature and experienced karate-ka. Kanazawa explains that 'bunkai is very important for understanding kata. At kyu grade level we teach some parts from kata, but it is not very complicated. The idea is to get students to look into the kata and see what they are doing. If they just practise the cold movement from the kata, then the feeling will not be right.

Also, black belt students should try to find their own bunkai. They should not wait to be shown everything; they should find out things for themselves...this means that they have to train in their kata many, many times in order to discover meanings. In the end, the kata comes up from inside them. When this happens they will have very good kata.'

The point of practising bunkai, according to Kanazawa, is to absorb the principles inherent in the kata. He explains that bunkai 'should not only be the exact movements. It should also be the principles, the idea...in Shotokan we see the exact movements being done, but I think this is not quite bunkai. If you do it this way, it is unnatural.'[33]

Andy Sherry 7th dan JKA was asked to comment on the relationship of kata and bunkai to self defence. He said 'I regard kata as a very important aspect of karate. It's a formalised training method which helps to develop the application of powerful techniques in every conceivable position and direction. What the techniques mean and the ability to apply them are however two very different things. Once a student has acquired a certain level of competence most of the kata movements are self explanatory, and those that are more obscure are understood almost immediately once one is shown them. Once movements have been learned totally different factors are needed to apply them such as timing, distance, reactions, agility, attitudes etc. These are the principles which are developed in kumite. I think that the well trained, powerful, agile and spirited kumite competitors are the ones most likely to be able to defend themselves and this cannot be done by bunkai alone.'[34] Andy Sherry's expression 'most of the kata movements are self explanatory' tends to mean in practice that they are interpreted as if one were defending against an opponent attacking with karate techniques at long or middle range. In real terms this almost always means that developing skills in close in striking techniques, grappling and ground fighting are ignored, which could be dangerous if an opponent closes in.

A highly skilled Shotokan instructor and international competitor Ronnie Christopher said that some senior instructors don't teach bunkai as they 'simply don't see it as being that important a part of karate and would rather develop good quality basic technique in their students'. He goes on to say 'We can all take kata apart. We can all work out bunkai, or we can ask Mr. Enoeda or other senior instructors - but

how good is your karate? Just because you can remember movements, does this mean that you're a very good karate-ka, that your movements would be practical outside and you'd be able to defend yourself? I don't think so. The only way you can reach such a position is by practising your basics whole-heartedly.[35]

This is certainly not the view of Shotokan master Teruyuki Okazaki who wrote in 1963 that understanding the meaning of the techniques in kata was of great importance because 'Once knowing 'why,' you will find that your performance of the kata will have 'depth.' This is because you now have reason, or purpose. This purpose is most important.'[36] Without this understanding Okazaki believes that the kata will 'lack a certain "something".'

Mr. Sherry's and Mr. Christopher's instructor Keinosuke Enoeda echoes Okazaki's comments. He explains 'It is very important that the student understand the application of technique. Many times students do not understand kata. They cannot see the meaning of the movement. They see slow, broad movement. They may think kata has no purpose. Application shows them the purpose.'[37]

A traditionalist could reverse Mr. Christopher's approach and say "simply because you can score a few points against another karate-ka in a mock fight under rules which forbid attacks to the weak points of the body, ignores close in strikes and grappling, and discourages heavy contact, does this mean that you're a very good karate-ka, that your movements would be practical outside and you'd be able to defend yourself? I don't think so. The only way you can reach such a position is by practising effective techniques aimed at the weak points of an opponent at all ranges, including fighting on the ground." Ironically a traditionalist would answer Mr. Christopher's question "how good is your karate?" by demonstrations of kata and bunkai.

Practitioners of Fukien White Crane boxing as well as followers of Okinawan karate, especially Goju Ryu and Uechi Ryu, believe that the essence of the art could be seen in the practise of Sanchin kata. Students of Fukien White Crane have a motto which states that if you want to see authentic White Crane you must see Sanchin.

Many modern practitioners would answer Mr. Christopher's question by looking at the tournament record of the individual concerned; the more competitions won, then clearly the better the karate. If Mr. Christopher is correct and self defence skills can be acquired by practising basic techniques then the question needs to be asked: what is the function of kata in modern karate? Obviously one use of kata is seen in karate competitions where they are performed as a kind of floor gymnastics, and points are awarded for the performance. Some instructors use kata as conditioning drills to improve stamina, strength and flexibility, so in that sense kata are possibly useful as adjuncts to free fighting, an approach diametrically opposed to Gichin

Funakoshi and Chojun Miyagi's teachings.

When Okinawan methods of karate were taken to Japan in the 1920s and 1930s and taught in the universities they were very rapidly brought into line with the teaching methodology used in Judo and kendo, and a highly energetic athletic version of karate was developed which in time evolved into the tournament format seen today. The older Okinawan methods of teaching were abandoned in favour of drilling in large groups and one casualty was the transmission of bunkai. Hironori Ohtsuka, the founder of Wado Ryu karate-do was a student of Gichin Funakoshi, Kenwa Mabuni and Chokki Motobu. It is said that he felt the need to introduce sparring methods into his training as he felt that the simple repetition of basics and thin air kata training stressed by Gichin Funakoshi was not enough to develop fighting skills. He found part of his inspiration in the methods of the classical Japanese sword schools. He created a series of two man sparring drills which taught not only the techniques of his style, but also exemplified the underlying principles, so in a sense the real kata of Wado Ryu are the ten kihon-kumite drills, although of course Wado Ryu stylists also practise a range of kata drawn from traditional Okinawan karate.

According to Chomo Hanashiro's student Hiroshi Kinjo, [born in Shuri, Okinawa in 1919], most modern karate 'experts' have little or no understanding of the real nature of traditional karate: their expertise centres only on the "rule-bound competitive phenomenon" of sport karate. He believes that "ever since Karate was introduced to the mainland [of Japan] kata have become stylised by the so-called traditions to which they belong...standardised for competitive purposes, too much emphasis is place upon symmetry and performance, rather than understanding of application."

Kinjo observed that while the concept of the "one strike one kill" is perfectly valid when applied to the Japanese sword, the adoption of this concept to karate has led to a profound misunderstanding of the realities of a "personal confrontation without weapons when actually seized by an opponent. More often than not, in an effort to subjugate an attacker, a defender must impact a subordinate target in order to set up a more anatomically vulnerable zone to traumatise, before dragging that person to the ground, or, conversely being dragged to the ground. Joint locks, strangulations, grappling, biting and eye gouging are also considerations not addressed in kumite but represent the issues upon which kata are based...kumite is not representative of kata, hence it is not Karate, but rather a sophisticated game of tag where the best trained athletes remain dominant."[38]

If we look at Shotokan we can see that the stress is laid on developing precise kihon [basics], which in turn leads on to sparring training. In reality the practise of kata was stressed only as a variant of kihon, and the practical applications of the

techniques were largely abandoned. During a class I attended in 1996 given by Dave Hooper, a member of the JKA and a student of Osaka sensei, it was explained by Mr. Hooper that his teacher had told him that on the JKA instructors course it was often the case that an 'advanced' kata class would revert to performing the basic Heian kata in order to perfect a point in technique. Obviously the study of body mechanics had replaced the traditional approach of actually learning to apply the techniques: this is the reason why some senior Shotokan instructors are on record as saying that there is no such thing as 'advanced' kata. From their perspective they are correct, as the most 'basic' kata will develop the same body mechanics as the most 'advanced' form, and if applications are irrelevant one group of movements are as good as the next. Of course we should then ask why they need to train in anything more than the basic five Heian kata if the aim of kata training is only to develop good form.

However not all Shotokan instructors think this way. Sensei Tetsuhiko Asai, a senior JKA instructor warns that because of the value placed on competition and sport the traditional values are at risk. He warns us that 'What can be noticed about different competitions is that the kata tests have become gymnastic tests. Obviously because the karate-ka are worried less about understanding the meaning of their movements and because they are too attached to aesthetic values.'[39]

Actually if it is true, as Mr. Christopher and others assert, that some instructors do not want to waste time practising kata applications, but would rather spend time developing good basics why don't they approach training for competition sparring in the same way? Instead of spending time practising sparring methods with a partner why not spend the time developing good basic techniques? The answer is obvious; sparring in all of its variations is a good way of improving fighting skills, and so is bunkai. Traditionally practising bunkai was the way to develop not only good quality basic techniques, but is also the method to integrate a wide range of effective and practical techniques in a unified whole. Those instructors who fail to teach bunkai may in fact be doing their students a disservice, and the type of karate they develop may be perfectly suited to tournament conditions, but could be woefully inadequate when faced with the real thing.

If bunkai is ignored then why do kata? Without the bunkai there is nothing in kata that cannot be developed equally well by kihon or kumite. Kihon training will develop basic techniques and sparring training will develop the ability to fight in a tournament. Actually this is the position that many modern karate-ka have arrived at. Kata were not intended to teach one karate-ka how to fight another karate-ka, and those who say that kata do not improve a karate-ka's ability as a competition fighter are correct, but to then conclude that kata are a waste of time is a non sequitur. It is like saying a racehorse is useless because it cannot pull a plough very well, or a

ploughhorse is useless because it cannot win a race. Skill in traditional karate and tournament success are not synonymous, and the aim of traditional karate is not to win a trophy, but is to give the practitioner a fighting chance if attacked for real.

Dave Lowry began his training in Yagyu Shinkage Ryu ken-jutsu under master Kotaro Ryokichi. Like all traditional Japanese arts of the sword, training emphasises kata. 'The first kata of the Yagyu Shinkage ryu required me to step forward four times, delivering an overhead strike, then a sideways slash from left to right, followed by a reverse cut from right to left, and finishing with a stab to the chest. The defender in this kata moves steadily backward in response to the assaults, blocking and redirecting the assailant, countering the final thrust with a slicing cut that would sever the arms of the attacker if the weapons were not of wood. As I repeated the sequence to memorise it, Sensei simply met my oaken blade, assuming the role of defender and putting nothing of the tremendous strength of his hips and shoulders into the blocks. When we had covered the length of the dojo floor, we switched roles and slowly waltzed back again, this time with him attacking, again without force, and me defending.

As I began to learn them, the kata of the Yagyu style of swordsmanship had none of the speed and force of the individual techniques I performed daily. But patiently, Sensei increased the tempo of the two man exercises. His blocks came a little bit faster, with more focus. In attacking, his speed was even greater. I hardly finished making one parry before the second cut was upon me, forcing me back steadily. The difference between cutting and defending against an imaginary opponent...and entering a session with another body that moved and struck back was enormous. I would find myself skipping in an effort to keep up with my teacher as he retreated ever more quickly from the reach of my bokken. When I did catch up, I would be out of place for the following strike and Sensei's bokken would come down like a lash on my hands or wrists. The return trip up the dojo floor was just as swift, with Sensei's hacking cuts constantly threatening. Where once I had been able to make a strong stance and creditable block, I found myself batting with my bokken and scrambling to avoid getting hit.

Under the pressure of the kata, attention was narrowed. My mind was filled with the sounds of the dojo, the slap, shuffle, slap, of our feet as they slid across the smooth wooden planks; the sharp bark of the bokken meeting; the rustling of hakama; my laboured pants - and the steady, overwhelming hiss as sensei exhaled, always exhaled, like a tiger approaching from the forest.'[40]

For the Japanese samurai the constant fighting which marked the Sengoku Jidai or Age of War (1490-1600) meant that the techniques of all the schools of bu-jutsu were constantly being field-tested under harsh conditions, but once peace came

to Japan after the victory of the Tokugawa at Sekigahara, the schools of bu-jutsu were no longer subjected to the same unforgiving environment. Karl Friday and Sumi Humitake point out in their excellent work on traditional swordsmanship and the samurai that without the constraints imposed by the needs of actual fighting kata tend to become meaningless in traditional terms. "Under such conditions, kata came to assume an enlarged role in the teaching and learning process. For new generations of first students and then teachers who had never known combat, pattern practise became their only exposure to martial skills. As instructors slipped further and further away from battlefield and duelling experience, and as evaluation of student progress came to be based on performance on pattern practise alone, it became increasingly difficult to determine whether or not students - or even their teachers - actually understood the kata they were performing. In some schools, skill in pattern practise became an end in itself and of itself. Kata grew showier and more stylised, while trainees danced their way through them with little attempt to internalise anything but the outward form."[41]

Modern model

Shotokan instructor Takayuki Mikami comments on the changes in technique and training methods. "Even in the same style, kata changes. The JKA kata changed from the kata in Okinawa. Originally the stances were higher and narrower. In Japan, kata stances became deeper and more elongated. Within the JKA, there was a definite purpose in doing this. The primary reason was physical development. Deeper, lower stances build up the legs to a greater degree. So that was why we made changes. True, the original forms were used in training karate-ka for fighting. But that purpose no longer holds. So the changes are for the better in that they adapt karate to the present day and increase an individual's physical development."[42]

Although Mikami does not comment on the reasoning behind the JKA's decision to abandon the traditional approach to kata training, it is likely that one major consideration was that the classical approach was very time consuming.[43] Okinawan Shorin Ryu instructor Takayoshi Nagamine observes that "After years of practice, the student begins to take moves from the kata and make practical applications...Of course, to any kata there can be many variations in the bunkai. It is up to the advanced student to explore these possibilities."[44]

In the early 1950s Shotokan was mainly practised in the universities and Japanese university students simply did not have the time to explore the bunkai of the kata to develop fighting skills. Like university kendo and judo dojos competitively based sparring methods replaced the older kata centred approach. The decision to relegate the primary role of kata as methods of developing combat skills to the secondary function of supplementary callisthenics exercises intended to strengthen the legs indicate how far the JKA had moved from both the traditional Okinawan model

and from Gichin Funakoshi's ideas.

Once kumite training became the main way of inculcating fighting skills, the role and importance of kata changed in the JKA scheme of training. JKA kata and kumite champion Yoshiharu Osaka believes "if you can do the Heian kata well, then the advanced kata are easy".[45]

One of Osaka's students David Hooper pointed out that when Osaka takes an advanced kata class at the JKA honbu dojo he "spends more than half the time...referring back to the five basic Heian katas. The spinning high outside block in Jion kata that finishes in back stance, for example, is fundamentally the same movement as the first spinning downward block in Heian shodan. If students can't do the latter, it should be no surprise that the former seems so difficult."[46]

While the mechanics of the movements in the basic Heian kata and the more advanced kata may be fundamentally the same, the possible application of those movements may reflect very different responses to a wide range of attacks. Reducing kata practice to the lowest common denominator of developing good body mechanics is to negate the need for anything more than the five Heian kata or even just Kanku-dai. Those who promote this approach need to explain the point of maintaining a group of twenty-six kata: practising a large number of kata only makes sense if those kata are the vehicles for transmitting a wide range of self-defence techniques via the bunkai. If the purpose of kata is simply physical education a small number of training routines will suffice. According to Hirokazu Kanazawa when Itosu created the five Pinan (Heian) kata he derived the movements from Kushanku (Kanku-dai),[47]
so it could be argued that for dan grades Kanku-dai might be the only kata they need to practice as it includes all the techniques found in the five Heians, plus aspects of Bassai-dai and Tekki shodan. This was certainly the position held by Itosu's student Kentsu Yabu, who advised his followers "If you have time to practice the Pinan, (Heian), practice Kushanku (Kankudai) instead."[48]

Masatoshi Nakayama suggested that the five Heians were sufficient to develop the skills needed to master karate. He wrote "Through the performance of the Heian kata, one should master the principles and skills that are indispensable in karate."[49]

In fact Masatoshi Nakayama once told a group of American karate-ka that Heian shodan was the perfect vehicle to incorporate new knowledge into basic techniques.[50]

The other kata were seen to be of value in the sporting arena as they added variety to the competitor's repertoire. Nakayama noted that learning Bassai-dai and Kanku-dai is "important...as they are both selected for Japan Karate Association matches."[51]

Other senior Shotokan instructors also accord great value to the basic kata.

Teruyuki Okazaki believes that "All the techniques and strategies we need for self defence and kumite are contained in the fundamental kata."[52] Masahiko Tanaka states that "Master Funakoshi believed that fifteen kata are enough for the practitioner of karate disciplines. For the other kata it is sufficient to practice their application."[53]

The modern approach to kata training referred to by Takayuki Mikami was transmitted to foreign students of Shotokan. Frank Cope began to train in Shotokan in England in 1960. He believes that training in bunkai is a "time waster." He says that kata training "is a way to improve basic form...really it is just an extension of kihon (basic) training, and it certainly isn't "Kumite"...If you want to practise sparring, then do more kumite training." When asked what was the point of kata training he replied "it's good for your spirit, it's good for your attitude...Kata is kata. It's on its own, it's an exercise...I think kata practise is very important, it's like a life-exercise, like T'ai Chi I suppose, only more dynamic. It's a training method."[54]

Some senior Shotokan instructors think differently, and embrace a more traditional viewpoint. Robin Rielly, an American Shotokan 6th dan, says that "Without the practice of bunkai, there can be no real understanding of the movements, and the kata becomes merely a gymnastic exercise. Those who wish to truly understand kata and perform it well must practise the application of the moves...the possibilities for the interpretation of a kata movement seem to be endless, limited only by the practitioner's imagination. This is why higher ranked karate practitioner's talk about "studying" kata, not just performing it...Being able to walk through the movements of 20 kata is useless if one has no feeling for or understanding of any of the movements. It would be comparable to reading a book in an unknown language. One could pronounce all the words, but the meaning would be incomprehensible."[55]

Rielly's instructor Hidetaka Nishiyama says "The problem today is that everyone copies their instructor and very few people understand the proper application of the moves in kata. The kata is only an outside symbol that represents the inside. So you must understand the inside, if not then you are only a puppet doing movements with no meaning."[56]

Tetsuhiko Asai (born 1935) 9th dan explains that "Kata is kata. It is the tradition of karate. Kata applications have always been practised as part of that tradition. Each style has its own tradition, like Shotokan or Goju or Chinese styles. To practise the applications from the kata is called Yakusoku kumite. This is a way to get a feel for and an understanding of the techniques from the kata. To practise Yakusoku kumite with a partner or more than one partner has always been the tradition. It is a pre-arranged kumite...you know what you are going to do and they know what they are going to do, like a demonstration. Of course there are many variations on what you can do. But, this has always been the tradition with kata. I have my own ideas on

the meanings, just like other people have their own ideas. This is why the kata change slightly sometimes, because of people's different interpretation of the application. You practise the kata as an exercise and the applications as Yakusoku kumite. This is the tradition."[57]

Fusajiro Takagi was a student of Gichin Funakoshi. He explains that "Although there are many stages depending on the practitioner's level, the importance should be placed on whether the individual understands the meaning contained in the movements of the kata. Without practice based on the understanding of the meaning of kata, then kata practice has no value. Of course, the level of understanding will naturally vary depending on the practitioner's level, a shodan (1 dan) will have a shodan's understanding; and an 8-dan will have an 8-dan's understanding. A recent tendency is to practice kata which is appealing for competition purposes; however, competition is only a part of practice and not the final goal of karate. Importance should be placed on the accurate understanding of the meaning of kata and to the mastering of its movements in accordance with the meaning through practice.

Further, kata was formulated against an imaginary opponent, thus, the meaning changes if the opponent changes. That's why the kata of karate is limitless in variety and its practice never ending."[58]

The American karate-ka and full contact fighter Bill Wallace in his column 'Front Kicks'[59] asked the question 'Do You Want to Dance?' He describes the type of 'creative, innovative' kata that has been on the American scene for some time and is starting to appear more and more in Britain 'Kata competition today is done for beauty, not the effectiveness of the techniques. It is a beauty pageant to see who dresses the nicest, and who can do the most somersaults or back flips to wow the crowd and win the musical forms. It's not really martial arts any more. It's - like Jhoon Rhee has said - a martial ballet. It's a dance. The kata competitors come out and do somersaults and back flips, and maybe throw a punch or one or two kicks. People like to see that, but it has nothing to do with the martial arts.

I was in the Cayman Islands recently, and I was talking to some kids who asked me if I could do back flips and such like they had seen in the martial arts movies. I said 'No. Every time I've tried to do a back flip, I've landed flat on my face.'

People want to see the back flips and the somersaults in kata. It's fancy, but it's not kata any more. When old traditional Japanese karate instructors look at that stuff, they just kind of giggle. They are probably thinking to themselves 'Okay, fight me like that. Come on. Do a back flip. As soon as you land I'm going to take your face off.'

This kind of gymnastic approach has made inroads in many of the kata taught

by systems regarded as ‘traditional’. For example the older version of Unsu kata features a spin on the supporting leg meshed with a crescent kick, followed by a ducking action to the ground. The more modern version, where the body is launched in to the air, is practised by most Shotokan karate-ka. It is physically more demanding than the older version but less practical in application. We can see the same process at work in Kanku-sho; the modern version includes a jumping action where the sole of the right foot strikes the extended left palm, followed by the rest of the body which leaves the ground and turns over in the air. I have a video of a senior JKA karate-ka performing the same kata in the 1950s. In the older version the karate-ka does not leave the ground, but extends the hand in kokutsu dachi, hits it with a crescent kick, and then drops to the ground as if ducking a blow or grabbing an opponent’s ankles in order to throw him.

There is a definite pattern; as the stress on application is lost, other criteria become important, and athleticism and showmanship replace the traditional values. We can see this in its most garish in the so-called ‘creative’ kata, but the same tendency is there in those ‘traditionalists’ who refuse to have anything to do with bunkai. Ironically the need for the classical approach to kata has been pointed out by a number of individuals who would regard themselves as anything but traditional. One commentator on the modern development of ‘no holds barred’ and ‘mixed-martial arts’ competitions has pointed out that ‘to be competitive today, a fighter has to know punching, kicking, takedowns, standing control, ground control, and submission holds.’[60] It is precisely these kinds of techniques that kata were designed to preserve and teach. As sporting competition more closely approximates to the conditions found in actual combat, so the methods developed through bunkai training become more relevant.

Because of the importance of developing good technique and the large size of classes which makes drilling by numbers a relatively effective way of teaching, the practise of kata has tended to concentrate on developing the appearance of the movements; the external ‘form’ of the kata is now the main criteria of skill. This in turn has led to an over emphasis on form for its own sake, with little or no value being placed on content, or function. If one karate-ka performing Nijushi-ho/Niseishi aims a side kick to the knee, it will often be judged as inferior to a version which features a side kick to the head, even though in fact the lower kick will almost certainly be more effective in a real fight. Thus the practice of kata is often bogged down at what is essentially a beginner’s level, and even people with decades of experience may be training in the same way they did when the first joined a dojo. That is they are putting most of their energy into an approach that in most classical systems is intended mainly for beginners and low grades. It could be argued that to truly perform a kata in

the classical mode you must train with a partner to give meaning to the techniques. There is no doubt that solo practice can result in some outstanding visual performances, but without understanding the possible applications of the techniques the result is superficial and ultimately sterile. This may be inevitable, especially as those who want to promote karate simply as a sport do not seem to be interested in the martial aspects, beyond mere lip service. I once invited a highly graded female karate-ka, who has won or placed in kata tournaments at European and World level, to come to my dojo to teach kata and application. She replied that she could teach the movements of the kata but not the applications, as she didn't really know what they meant. After years of training in methods which are said to be the essence of her art, she understood little more than when she started training. This is not a criticism of the karate-ka involved; she simply reflects the historical fact that in some styles the kata are literally meaningless because they have lost the bunkai; a loss which is compounded by the fact that many senior instructors do not seem to care, and are content to allow the situation to continue unchanged.

The danger inherent in this approach is that if applications are not taught, or developed, then realistically there is no need to maintain the traditional form. If applications are not important why not lower an already deep stance into the full splits, or replace turning movements with back flips or barrel rolls? And why should we actually aim techniques at specific weak points of the human body? Why not simply select physically demanding movements that are valuable as exercise and eye catching in a competitive situation? The answer is obvious; as martial artists we should be interested in the practical effect of the movements we perform, and the context in which they are performed, and if we look at kata in the traditional way we can discover a very valuable source of techniques, and tactics.

In 1989 Fusajiro Takagi, then the Executive Director of the Japan Karate Federation, and Secretary General of WUKO, wrote in ***Karatedo Nippon Magazine*** Vol. 6 [1989] that karate was a modern sport and should not be considered a Japanese martial art. He accepted that if "there is a tradition that karate should preserve, then that must be kata", but from the whole tone of this article, and others he has written, it is obvious that the idea of karate as a method of self defence is to be minimised, while the modern idea of a competitive sport, where athletes train to fight people doing the same techniques, is to be promoted. Jacques Delcourt, the President of WUKO said in an interview that the first objective of WUKO was to "be in the Olympics' although paradoxically he also says that 'We don't want karate to, like Judo, be only a sport and die out. That means maintaining the [traditional] karate of Japan. We don't want to go the way of modern [sport] karate...If we go into the modern karate, then in a few years, karate will go downhill."[61]

What Mr. Delcourt doesn't seem to realise is that if he obtains Olympic recognition, then he is promoting the swing to sport karate as the Olympics is the premier sporting event in the world. Mr. Delcourt seems to be confused: if the aim is to retain tradition, then forget all about the Olympics, as it is the sporting approach that is eating away at the traditional ways. If the sporting arena is the path of the future, then traditional kata and bunkai, self defence etc. are not needed and should be abandoned. The aim should be to concentrate on scoring points in mock combat; replace the old kata with a set of prearranged gymnastic routines designed to display the athletic and gymnastic skills of the performers as has already occurred in Chinese Wu Shu,[62] and then there will be an activity ripe for Olympic recognition.

For those interested in what could be called "Sport Budo" kata are largely irrelevant except as a kind of callisthenics or gymnastics. For those interested in a more traditional approach the lessons preserved in kata are a treasure from the past which should not be abandoned lightly. The lessons learned from sparring are the new treasures of today, and the knowledge gained from both sources should be valued in tandem, mutually enriching and expanding the fighting abilities of all martial artists.

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[1] ***Legacies of the Sword*** Karl F. Friday University of Hawai'i Press 1997 p 102

[2] ***Sports and Games in the Ancient World*** V. Olivova Bloomsbury Books, London 1986 p 56

[3] ***The Greeks Their Life and Customs*** E. Guhl and W. Koner Senate 1994 pp 273-274

[4] Ssu Ma Ch'ien's family were involved in the martial arts. According to Burton Watson in ***Ssu-ma Ch'ien Grand Historian of China*** Columbia University Press 1958 'The branch of the [Ssu-ma] family in Chao was famous as hereditary masters of the art of swordsmanship.' p 42. In a note on p 203 we are told that the family may have been 'masters of the arts of swordsmanship and boxing.'

[5] ***Memoires Historiques de Se-Ma-Ts'ien*** E. Chavannes Paris 1895 Vol. # 1 p 119

[6] The Wan dance is referred to in the ***Book of Odes*** [see Odes 300, 301]. According to ***Mathews' Chinese-English Dictionary*** Harvard University Press 1972, p 1042 the

Wan dance refers to 'certain ancient dances with shield and battle-axe.'

[7] Many Chinese dances were taken to Japan in the seventh and eighth centuries where they were preserved by the Imperial Court. Known as 'Bugaku' these dances reflect both civil and military influences. In the dance known as 'Bairo', the dancers perform with swords, spears and shields. In China the dance was originally performed before a battle, with the quality of the music and movements indicating the chance of victory or defeat.

[8] The *Chi Hsiao Hsin Shu* (Effective New Methods of Military Science) was written in 1561. See Harry Cook, "Ch'i-Chi Kuang and the Chi Hsiao Hsin Shu" *Banzai International* 3: 49-51 (1987). For a complete translation of the section on empty hand fighting methods see Douglas Wile *T'ai Chi's Ancestors: The Making of an Internal Martial Art* (New York, Sweet Ch'i Press, 1999), 18-35.

[9] Hiroshi Kinjo, "Chronicles of Karate-do" *Gekkan Karate-do* 9:30 (September, 1979).

[10] My translation.

[11] P'ng Chye Khim & Donn F. Draeger, *Shaolin: An Introduction to Lohan Fighting Techniques* (Rutland, Vermont, Charles E. Tuttle Co. Inc., 1979), 110.

[12] Richard Miller, "Usage: The Soul of Kung Fu" *Black Belt* 21 (9):92 (September, 1983).

[13] Tom Phillips & Linda Stehlik, "Beyond Solo Form" *Inside Kung-Fu* 11 (11):96 (November, 1984).

[14] Wendy Ann Weinstein, Ph.D, "Okinawa's Shorin-Ryu: How It Differs From Japanese Karate" *Karate Kung-Fu Illustrated* 17 (8):30 (August, 1986).

[15] Teruo Chinen, *Fundamental Karate-Do* (Spokane School of Karate-Do, 1974), 30-31.

This approach is typical of all traditional Okinawan karate and weapons systems. For example teachers of Meibukan Goju Ryu emphasise the practice of yakusoku kumite (prearranged sparring), believing that "In jiyu-kumite (free sparring) karate becomes a sport." The kumite drills used by Meibukan practitioners are

"Kumite techniques taken from the classical Kaishu Kata."
M. Yagi, C. A. Wheeler, B.S. Vickerson, *Okinawan Karate-Do Gojyu-Ryu Meibu-Kan* (Prince Edward Island, Canada, Action Press, 1998), 117.

Okinawan Goju Ryu master Morio Higaonna says that it is by training in kata and bunkai that "all the *gokui*, the secrets of karate, may be preserved."
Morio Higaonna, *Traditional Karatedo Okinawa Goju Ryu 3* (Tokyo, Minato Research and Publishing Ltd., 1989), 10.

[16] Herman Kauz, *The Martial Spirit* (Woodstock, New York, The Overlook Press, 1977), 73.

[17] Col. Rex Applegate & Maj. Chuck Nelson, *The Close-Combat Files of Colonel Rex Applegate* (Boulder, Colorado, Paladin Press, 1998), 185.

[18] Roger Scruton, "What Mozart had and Tracey hasn't" *Sunday Times News Review* , May 20, 2001, p6.

[19] ***Karate-Do Kyohan*** Gichin Funakoshi trans. Tsutomu Ohshima Kodansha International Ltd. Tokyo 1973 pp 39, 211

[20] ***Karate-Do Nippon*** magazine Vol. 2 Sept. 1987 p 12

[21] ***The History of Karate*** Morio Higaonna Dragon Books California 1996 p 88

[22] ***Legacies of the Sword*** Karl F. Friday University of Hawai'i Press 1997 p 117. Kurt Singer in his excellent ***Mirror, Sword & Jewel*** Japan Library 1997 points out the importance of maintaining the vital heart of any art when he warns that "Form everywhere easily degenerates into mere formalism, courage into brawling, loyalty into servility, calmness into insensitivity." p 160

[23] ***Chuang Tzu*** trans. Herbert A. Giles Mandala Books Unwin Paperbacks, London 1980 p 140

[24] ***Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*** Shunryu Suzuki Weatherhill 1983. Suzuki explains "The goal of practise is always to keep our beginner's mind.....In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities; in the expert's mind there are few." p 21.

[25] ***Po: Beyond Yes and No*** Edward de Bono Penguin Books 1976 p 100

[26] ***Traditional Karatedo Okinawa Goju Ryu*** Vol. 3 Morio Higaonna Minato Research and Publishing Co., Ltd. 1989 p 9

[27] ***Wado Ryu Karate*** Hironori Ohtsuka trans. Shingo Ishida Masters Publication Canada 1997 pp 19-21

[28] ***Judo [Jujutsu]*** Prof. Jigoro Kano Maruzen Co. Ltd. Tokyo 1937 p 24

[29] ***Kodokan Judo*** Hirokichi Aida trans E.J. Harrison W. Foulsham & Co. Ltd p 231

[30] ***A Life in Judo*** Neil Adams Willow books London 1986 pp 107-108

[31] ***Sport Karate*** Vic. Charles Paul H. Crompton Ltd. London 1983 p 66

[32] ***Karate Illustrated*** magazine Vol. 14 # 10 Oct. 1983 p 24

[33] ***Budo Dojo*** magazine Winter 1995 p 61-62

[34] ***Traditional Karate*** magazine Vol. 4 # 6 Feb. 1991 pp 9-10

[35] ***Fighting Arts International*** # 77 p 12

[36] ***Strength and Health*** magazine Sept. 1963 p 36

[37] ***Kick Illustrated*** magazine March 1983 Vol. 4 # 3 p 20

[38] ***Irish Fighter*** Vol. 6 # 4 p 36

[39] ***Fighting Arts International*** magazine # 69 pp 33-38

[40] ***Autumn Lightning: The Education of an American Samurai*** Dave Lowry Shambhala 1985 pp 78-79

[41] Karl F. Friday with Seki Humitake, *Legacies of the Sword: The Kashima-Shinryu and Samurai Martial Culture* (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), 117-118.

[42] Harrison McGuane, "Takayuki Mikami: A Shotokan Master Looks Back" *Inside Karate* 6 (1): 23 (Jan. 1985).

[43] There are also Japanese aesthetics to be considered. Many Japanese have a belief in "form" which seems illogical to anyone accustomed to a more analytical empiricist way of thinking. A classic example of this is to be found in Robert Whiting's *The Chrysanthemum and the Bat* (Tokyo, The Permanent Press, 1977), 41. This work, a fascinating study of the Japanese approach to baseball, provides an interesting insight into Japanese mentality, and the Japanese way of doing things. Whiting says the "obsession with form has its basis in the Japanese belief that form has a reality of its own. There is a right and wrong way to attack an opponent with a sword, to arrange flowers in a vase, to construct a garden...The correct form...has been discovered and refined...by the great masters of the past. A good player is one who can merge his own movements with correct form; everything else will follow in time.

In America, excellence is equated with getting results no matter how unorthodox the form. In Japan it is more important to conform to the set way of doing things."

Joe Joseph, *The Times* Tokyo correspondent observes "in every school playing field across the country...you can see thousands of children, dressed in expensive tennis whites or immaculate baseball outfits, serving imaginary tennis balls and striking phantom baseballs, for hours on end, until they can mime perfectly the textbook rhythm of the movement. It is only when a real ball is introduced that the schoolboy athletes encounter a spot of trouble."
Joe Joseph, *The Japanese Strange But Not Strangers*, (London, Viking an imprint of Penguin Books Ltd., 1993), 236.

[44] Matt McCormick, "Nagamine on Matsubayashi Shorin Ryu" *Kick Illustrated* 4 (11):34 (November, 1983).

[45] Anon, "JKA Champion Visits England" *Combat* 3 (5): 31 (Feb., 1977).

[46] David Hooper, "Thoughts from Japan JKA Shotokan" *Dragon Times* 14:9.

[47] Hirokazu Kanazawa, *Shotokan Karate International Kata Vol. 1* (Japan, 1981), 137.

[48] Charles J. Swift, "Channan The "Lost" Kata of Itosu ?" *Dragon Times* 18:28.

[49] Masatoshi Nakayama, *Best Karate Vol. 5* (Tokyo, Kodansha International Ltd.,

1979), 14.

[50] Stephen St. Laurent, "The Essence of Kata As Taught By Master Masatoshi Nakayama" *Fighting Arts International* 57 Vol. 10 (3):35.

[51] Masatoshi Nakayama, *Best Karate Vol. 6* (Tokyo, Kodansha International Ltd., 1979), 14.

[52] Farid B. Amin M.D., "Master Teruyuki Okazaki Seminar" *Shotokan Karate* 67:4 (May, 2001).

[53] Masahiko Tanaka, trans. Schlatt, *Karate-Do Perfecting Kumite* (Lauda Konigshoften, Germany Erhard Gotzelmann, 2001), 242.

[54] John Cheetham, "Frank Cope 6th Dan 'A Pioneer of British Shotokan' "*Shotokan Karate* 38 p7.

[55] Robin Rielly, "Kata To Kumite The Role of Bunkai" *Shotokan Karate* 24 p17.

[56] Don Warrener, "Nishiyama Hidetaka: A Karate-ka's Karate-ka" *Bugeisha* 3, p51 (Summer 1997).

[57] John Cheetham, "Tetsuhiko Asai 9th Dan Chief Instructor to the J.K.A." *Shotokan Karate* 39 p 5-6.

[58] Anon, "I Still Discover New Things" *Karate-Do Nippon* 2 p12 (September 1987).

[59] ***Black Belt*** magazine October 1992 Vol. 30 # 10

[60] ***Black Belt*** magazine March 1999 Vol. 37 # 3 p 164

[61] ***Black Belt*** magazine Sept. 1992

[62] ***International Wushu Competition Routines*** trans. Xie Shoude Hai Feng Publishing Co., Ltd. 1989.