

## **"Sometimes you don't know how to fit in until you break out."**

By Patrick McCarthy © 2005

Since Okinawa reclaimed its rightful heritage as the birthplace of karate---a moot point mainland Japan has laid claim to---grounds for looking into its cultural landscape and social mindset have kicked opened the door for questioning existing beliefs not previously challenged! Never before has there been such emphasis placed upon questioning the origins and application practices of kata, than now. From before such a movement ever became popular the IRKRS has been providing a growing number of progressive learners a valuable source with which to network and find more pragmatic explanations to an otherwise highly convoluted tradition.

What started as one person's quest to resolve the ambiguity in understanding the defensive application of kata has since grown into a worldwide movement of like-minded people in pursuit of common goals. By 1985, after nearly twenty years of training in traditional fighting arts, I had grown terribly frustrated by its rule-bound practices, cultural ambiguity and inflexible mindset. It wasn't because I disliked the traditional fighting arts or wanted to stop practicing orthodox rituals, it was mostly because I could no longer stomach the commonly accepted interpretation of kata application, irrespective of how religiously they were protected. Consequently, I began to search for a teacher, a style, or even an organization that could teach me the original and more functional combative application practices of kata and in a rational, coherent and systematized manner. Specifically, I was looking for someone who could -

#1. Use realistic acts of physical violence [instead of the commonly accepted rule-bound reverse punch scenarios against a compliant "attacker"], as the contextual premise with which to successfully apply the prescribed techniques of karate. I knew this exemplified the true nature of physical violence and would provide deeper insights into the original art.

#2. Teach me the so-called prescribed application practices to these realistic acts of physical violence, as handed down by the pioneers. In doing so, also clearly illustrate how/why and who transformed such functional lessons into mnemonic-like rituals. I felt certain that such knowledge [i.e., recreating realistic scenarios of physical violence---in a controlled environment--- & applying the prescribed defensive lessons against progressive levels of resistance] would help me better understand the mechanisms with which kata were developed.

#3. Show me how the prescribed application templates [i.e., the mnemonic-like rituals that make up the abstract solo-routines, known as orthodox kata] not only culminated the fighting lessons already imparted but, when linked together into choreographed solo-routines, clearly offered something greater than the sum total of their individual parts.

#4. Identify, and competently demonstrate, the general mechanics of these prescribed application practices, and adequately explain the fundamental principles upon which their mechanisms work. Irrespective of the culture from which one comes, all human beings share the same general anatomical structures, which are governed by the same fundamental mechanics and principles. As "domestic one-on-one empty-handed physical violence" [i.e., the universal contextual premise upon which prescribed self-defence application practices were originally developed] is not discriminatory, and knows no geographical boundaries, I believed that what may have been concealed and passed on by a human being from 19<sup>th</sup> Fujian, China [or Okinawa], could be just as easily be equally understood by any 20<sup>th</sup> century Western learner.

While there was certainly no shortage of excellent practitioners everywhere I looked, I found "**NO TRACE**" of such teachings anywhere in Japan, or Okinawa! Dissatisfied, I began to cross train in many styles---Asian & Western. Cross training opened many new doors of opportunity while providing valuable insights about both training and life that I had never before realized. Based upon this experience, recalling the thought-provoking wisdom of Basho ["not ---blindly--- following in the footsteps of the old masters but rather seeking out what they sought"] I was compelled to make my own deductions. This gradually resulted in the establishment of the HAPV-theory [[Habitual Acts of Physical Violence](#)] and [two-person drill concepts](#). Such findings ultimately lead me to [re-]discover old and lost practices and the essence of what the ancient masters both sought and taught. Wanting to preserve and share this important study, while paying homage to both the Okinawan pioneers [most responsible for handing down this eclectic art], and the Zen-inspired Japanese culture [which profusely influenced its growth and direction], I ultimately brought these collective teachings together into a wonderfully systematized practice called, 'Koryu Uchinadi Kenpo-jutsu,' a name inspired by my Okinawan master, Kinjo Hiroshi.

More than a decade ago I formally introduced my research surrounding the HAPV-theory and corresponding two-person drill practice. Between 1993 and 2005, I popularised the practice under the

name "*Tegumi renzoku-geiko*" [hand-grappling flow drills] during the delivery of some 600 seminars in more than twenty countries around the world. The informal explanation presented herein provides a glimpse into the study preceding its introduction.

## **BFO**

During the years I studied swordsmanship [*Tenshin Shoden Katori Shinto Ryu*], at the *Sugino* honbu dojo in *Kawasaki* [Japan], I gained a huge respect for how the style accomplished its combative outcomes through using highly functional two-person training drills. While delving into its origins I became deeply impressed with the way classical attack scenarios had been first identified and studied before being ultimately catalogued into individual and collective leaning modules each with prescribed responses and variations on common themes. Never having been terribly satisfied with the incongruous *ippon-kumite* practices of karate and unable to understand

the defensive "effectiveness" of kata [as traditionally taught against modern reverse punch scenarios] or how its abstract mnemonic mechanisms were methodically linked back to actual real-life fight circumstances, I always felt that something was missing in traditional karate and from this *blinding flash of the obvious* [BFO] I finally realized what it was.

Challenged by such an experience I began looking into those classical acts of physical violence habitually used by men-against-men in empty-handed one-on-one fight scenarios commonly encountered during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries---the era in which karate was developed. I borrowed liberally from my *ju-jutsu* experience<sup>1</sup>, Chinese and SE Asian martial art practices<sup>2</sup>, used abstract themes from the *Bubishi*<sup>3</sup>, and the contextual premise used in *Katori Shinto Ryu*<sup>4</sup> and finally contrasted them with classic *Shaolin* empty-handed scenarios<sup>5</sup>. Broadening my analysis, I also explored the defensive practices found in turn-of-the-century *ju-jutsu* styles<sup>6</sup>, and medieval manuals on empty-handed fighting<sup>7</sup>. Two other important mentors during this study were my karate teacher, Kinjo Hiroshi Hanshi, and submission-kakutogi pioneer [UWFI] Takada Nobuhiko. Kinjo Sensei is simply a walking encyclopedia of knowledge, a genuine living treasure, and the link between the old and the new worlds of karate. Amidst the many valuable things I learned from Takada Nobuhiko were his functional grappling practices and the unique way they could be linked together

through solo re-enactment drills exemplifying the concept of ancestral-based *kata*. During my study I gradually modified the classical empty-handed attack scenarios<sup>8</sup> to best exemplify those acts of physical violence commonly found in today's western society, and fortified the experience by developing many variations on these common themes. I further divided the attack scenarios into three individual categories for easy study reference:

#1. *Seizing*,

#2. *Impacting*,

#3. *A combination of #1 & #2 used together.*

### **The Human Body**

Throughout this entire undertaking the one subject, which always remained constant, was the human body---another BFO. So simple and yet seemingly so unknown, or perhaps I should say so unstudied! As the human body is the principal subject in empty-handed physical violence, and size, strength and how it is used, are always such determining factors, it made perfect sense to better understand its fundamental anatomical structures if I was to ever fully grasp how it is used best and how those defensive concepts best worked against it. Up until this point in my training I had always relied solely upon my own physical prowess, as a competitive athlete, to get the job done. Concluding my study I determined that it is always the human body, its unique structures and common anatomical weaknesses that ultimately determined how kinetic energy [seize/impact] best impeded motor function; the dispassionate aim of self-defence. Armed with this understanding I turned my attention towards reverse engineering the classical defensive themes found in the mnemonic templates of *kata*.

**Common Mechanics** Contrasting them with more traditional response methods found elsewhere, I drew heavily upon those immutable principles supporting common mechanics, and used the five *Ancient Machines*<sup>9</sup> along side a simple 5-part rule<sup>10</sup> to exploit anatomically vulnerable structures made available through opportunity or design while negotiating the HAPV. The response categories included; percussive impact, the seizing and pressing into cavities unprotected by the skeletal structure, attacking bony

protrusions [the periosteum], neurological structures and connective tissue, the hyper-flexion/extension and the over-rotation of joints, the constriction of blood and air passage ways, the displacement of balance, and those tactics commonly found in grappling.

## Reverse Engineering

The realistic attack scenarios provided a workable opportunity to recreate and study each conceivable scenario of physical violence in a safe learning environment. Analysing [*bunkai-jutsu*] each HAPV provided the basis of understanding their mechanics, and dynamics, their strengths and weaknesses. The more I delved into this experience the more I wondered how, without such intelligence, could early pioneers [or anyone for that matter] ever develop functionally tactical strategies to be used against them. In the same classical format used in *Katori Shinto Ryu*, I brought these application practices [*oyo-waza*] to life in two-person drills. Each HAPV was recreated by the *uke* [attacker/receiver] while the *tori* [defender/taker] re-enacted the prescribed defensive responses. As learners gained familiarity and proficiency with each drill I encouraged them to increase power, strength and resistance [gradually or exponentially depending entirely upon physical prowess, and aptitude] to exemplify the tenacity of an uncooperative attacker so that two outcomes could be achieved:

#1. Making the attack scenario as life-like as possible, and...

#2. For each learner to develop highly functional skills.

By separating the two-person drills into equal parts [#1. the HAPV portion and #2. its prescribed defensive response] I was able to subsequently ritualise each part of the practice [the attack and its prescribed response] into mnemonic<sup>11</sup> templates. Herein lies the value of reverse engineering---ritualising each solo re-enactment produced mnemonic templates, which, considering 19<sup>th</sup> century oriental mentality, looked virtually identical to the individual composites of *kata*. Historically speaking, I believe that *kata* were originally devised by using such individual model responses and expressed by using the following ideogram 型 [model]---pronounced *Xing* in Chinese or *kata* in Japanese. By arranging HAPV-related prescribed responses into unique geometrical configurations, expressed by using the following ideogram 形 [shape]---also pronounced *Xing* in Chinese and *kata* in Japanese---I took for granted that early quanfa pioneers succeeded in developing something greater than the sum total of its individual parts...*Kata*. Not only could learners come into contact with the HAPV, and learn highly functional prescribed defensive responses to them, they could also improve their physical skills, mental focus, and holistic condition, hence strengthening the overall learning process. In an effort to establish and standardize core curricula in these early quanfa schools, I believe that pioneers formalized prescribed model 型 responses into creative geometrical shapes 形 to create *kata/xing*.

## Arriving back at the Beginning

In lieu of no other pragmatic explanation surrounding the evolution of *kata* and its functional application premise, I believe that this rationalization not only provides a sound crucible, it is even plausible to reason that *kata* were never originally developed to impart the actual lesson, but rather to culminate that which had already been taught; and not just as a creative exposition of physical prowess. This, I believe changed, and quite radically so, when the attention of *kata* shifted from the classical one-on-one, or small group-style instruction, to drilling huge groups of students in the schoolyards of turn-of-the-century Okinawa. There, *kata* were simplified and became the principal vehicle used in fostering physical fitness and social conformity in Okinawa's school system in support of the war machine during Japan's radical period of military escalation. The way *kata* is learned in modern/traditional karate traces its lineage back to this crucible, a time when the practice evolved from an art of self-defence into a form of callisthenics. Through the senpai~kohai system and a lack of critical thinking, imitative behaviour and the trickle down effect, has perpetuated *kata* as the enigma of karatedo.

Challenging myth and tradition, I used eclecticism and critical thinking, as immutable devices in deciphering the time-honoured enigma called *kata*. In doing so I was able to move my understanding of *kata* forward where established classical sources could not. I am honoured to be at the forefront of such a movement and grateful to all those who have supported this effort.

1

Citing Professor Wally Jay as my principal instructor, but not overlooking the value of my training with Richard Kim [Daito Ryu Aiki-jujutsu], Ron Forrester [father of the Canadian Ju-jutsu movement], Sugino Yoshio [Tenshin Shoden Katori Shinto Ryu Heiho-jutsu] and a handful of other wonderful ju-jutsu teachers I've enjoyed the pleasure of training with over the years.

2

Two-person hand drills from Silat, Arnis, Wing Chun and Taiji.

3

The section addressing the 48 two-person postures and the section on escapes & grappling.

4

Katori Shinto Ryu lays great emphasis on mastering the use of its curriculum through two-person drills where the tori recreates the classical attack scenario and the uke re-enacts the classical response theme.

5

In a personal 1992 interview with Liang Yiquan [DOB 1931, Dengfeng county] of the Historical Research Society at the Shaolin Temple, I learned of the 36 empty-handed classical acts of physical violence, and variations on these themes.

6

"Jiu-Jitsu Tricks," by K. Saito, publisher Richard K. Fox NYC 1905, Irving Hancock's 1905 publication, entitled "The Complete Kano Jiu-Jitsu," "The Text Book of Ju Jutsu" (as practiced in Japan) by S.K. Uyenishi, "Jiu Jitsu Combat Tricks" by H. Irving Hancock, "The Complete Kano Jiu-Jitsu" 1905 by H. Irving Hancock & Katsukuma Higashi, "Ju-Jitsu" (Exposure of all Methods of Self-Defence) by Higami Kasatu Briton Publications, Sydney Australia, "The Secrets of Jujitsu" (7 Vols) 1918-19 Captain Allan Corstorphin, Stahara Pub Co., "Combat Jiu-Jitsu" by S.R. Linck, publisher Stevens-Ness Law Publishing Co. Portland, OR 1943, and Joseph Charlemont's "Savate" 1920, etc.,

7

Sources included, Talhoffer's 1443 "Flehtbuch," Hans Wurm's "Ringbuch" c. 1507, Vollstandiges Ring-Buch 1659, "Clear Instructions to the Art of Wrestling" by Nicolaes Petter 1674, Edmund Price "The Science of Self Defence" (A Treatise on Sparring and Wrestling) 1867, Prof. Mike Donovan's 1893 "Science of Boxing," The "New Art of Self-Defence," by E.W. Barton-Wright (Copy of the 1901 Pearson Magazine Article).

8

1. Straight kicks 2. Angular-type kicks 3. Straight punches 4. Circular punches 5. Downward strikes 6. Upward strikes 7. Knee & Elbow strikes 8. Head-butt/Biting & spitting 9. Testicle squeeze 10. Augmented foot/leg trips 11. Single/double-hand hair pull from the front/rear 12. Single/double-hand choke from the front/rear 13. Front neck choke from rear 14.

Classical head-lock 15. Front, bent-over, augmented choke (neck-hold) 16. Half/full-nelson 17. Rear over-arm bear hug (& side variation) 18. Rear under-arm bear hug (& side variation) 19. Front over-arm bear hug (& side variation) 20. Front under-arm bear hug (& side variation) 21. Front/rear tackle 22. One-handed wrist grab (same & opposite sides-normal/reversed) 23. Two-handed wrist grabs (normal/reversed) 24. Both wrists seized from the front/rear 25. Both arms seized from the front/rear 26. Single/double shoulder grab from front/rear 27. Arm-lock (behind the back) 28. Front arm-bar (triceps tendon fulcrum up supported by wrist) 29. Side arm-bar (triceps tendon fulcrum down supported by wrist) 30. Single/double lapel grab 31. Single/double-hand shove 32. Garment pulled over the head 33. Seized & impact 34. Single/double leg/ankle grab from the front (side/rear) 35. Ground straddle 36. Attacked (kicked/struck) while down

Application techniques dealing with strangulation, hyper-extension/hyper-flexion and the over-rotation of joints, balance displacement, and grappling can be explained through the 5-ancient machines; Lever [3-categories], the wedge, pulley, screw, and fixed axel & wheel. <http://www.tpub.com/content/engine/14037/> Techniques of percussive impact best explained by addressing timing, distance and the transfer of kinetic energy.

10

1. Location (The precise anatomical structure to be attacked)
2. Tool (Which part of the body [fist, foot, elbow, knee, fingertips, etc.] used to attack with)
3. Angle (The angle of energy transfer)
4. Direction (The direction of energy transfer; i.e. back to front, perpendicular to location, etc.)
5. Intensity (The amount of energy transfer necessary to achieve the desired outcome)

11

A mechanism used as an aid to assist the memory.

