

The  
Meanings  
of  
Forms  
& Katas

ADULT LEVEL

調査(ちょうさ)

Based on the

Quan Li K'AN

Style of martial arts

By Bruce Everett Miller

# The Meanings of Forms/ KATAs

By Bruce Everett Miller

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# ISN'T IT ABOUT TIME YOU START UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU ARE REALLY DOING?

There are many people who will sell you lots of possibilities for the moves in a kata ... Unfortunately most of these are look like moves and worse yet many of these so called “explanations” flat out don’t work on the street. Some (explanations) are so different than what you are actually doing in the kata that you can’t even recognize the move as what you have been practicing.

The Problem with all these fake explanations is that they don’t understand the rules of kata (YES there are definite rules!) And those rules are based on REAL [not imagined] Human physiology. There were Real reasons why they katas were done the way they were ... but unless you understand the REAL reasons and rules you will not actually understand the real meanings.

And once you know them kata AND it’s real meanings, the moves make sense for self-defense ON THE STREET!

## WARNING

This book is contains information and techniques which are potentially **disabling and/ or lethal**. This book is definitely not for children or the emotionally immature!

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**IF YOU CAN'T LIVE WITH THAT THEN DON'T READ THIS BOOK!**

**The Secret of Success is not  
to ask WHY**

It is to ask **WHY NOT?**

## **Is it the Master or his tools that make the difference?**

A large group of people had gathered together at an old time farm auction of a farmer who had died recently. As things progressed to be sold, an old dusty violin was soon held up for bids. The auctioneer plucked a few of the out of tune strings to show it still worked and visibly blew the dust off. The crowd laughed as he did this.

“Okay,” he said, “Let’s start the bidding at 5 dollars.” He joked, “Who will give me 5 dollars?”

Silence.

“4 dollars then ... 4 dollars,” he called.

No one answered the bid at all until a gentleman offered “I will give you \$2.50 for it. My grandson wants to learn to play the fiddle that one should be good enough for him.”

A few snuffled laughs but no one made another bid until an old man standing in the back walked slowly stepped forward and asked in a soft voice, “May I see that violin a minute?”

“Sure Old Timer,” the auctioneer answered, glad to have a break from the uncomfortable silence ... “I suppose it can’t hurt ... no one seems in much of a hurry to buy it. But be gentle with it ... I think it is even older than you are.”

“It definitely is”, he said

A few snickers cam from the crowd.

The old man took the violin gently from the case gently and gazed at it intently. For several long minutes he stared at the violin, then he reached up carefully and twisted the tuning pegs and plucked the stings to put then in tune. Without a word he reached down, took the bow from the case tightened it and brought the violin to its proper position, Then he began to play.

The air was filled with a melody that was exquisitely beautiful and every bit of chatter in the crowd stopped. It seems like no one dared to even breath, to not dare disturb the melody. Not a single sound, except for the beautiful music, could be heard for the next few minutes. Even the wind seemed to hold still.

When he was done, he carefully put he violin back in its case and just as carefully handed it back to the auctioneer.

Looking up he said, “It’s a copy of an Cannone del Gesu from the early 1800s .

Rightfully to be fair to the owner ... It is worth far more than I could ever afford”... he shrugged as he looked at the violin ....

He paused and then said, “One must to understand what you have, in order to understand its worth.” Then picked up his cane and quietly walked through the crowd and away from the auctioneer . Everyone stared, but no one dared to even speak.

Dead silence seemed to go on even longer until the auctioneer asked “Well, could we ... can we start the bidding over?”

Five thousand dollars was the first bid. The bid went up quickly from there!

Now you might ask how a story like this has any relationship to martial arts. However, I can tell you that in my personal opinion, the (real) older fighting katas of martial arts are exactly like that violin. In the right hands, they are masterpieces! They teach principles that can raise the art of self-defense, in those who know how to play them, to new heights. Unfortunately, it takes an understanding of what you have to make them work right. Today, in our world of sports competition and 90-second katas, we relegate these old katas to the world of toys and ways to earn belts. No concept of their true worth is understood.

Also the training katas will give you tools that you can use today on the street! But you MUST be able to understand what separates a training kata from a fighting kata from a changed or tournament kata.

Hopefully this book/video/DVD will give you that information. I intend to show you how to help figure out what katas really mean and how you can tell each type of kata and how decipher the real masterpieces of principles contained within them.

If I can communicate the messages well enough, you will see these katas for the art they truly were and, in fact, still are, and know that real katas are more than just a collection of moves you dance through the air. If I can do that, then I will have done my job and your understanding and appreciation of martial arts will have increased immensely.

## **Definitions**

For the purpose of this text I need to define some terms I plan to use.

The first term is that of a move. A **move** something you try to do to your opponent ... it can be a punch, a kick, an arm bar, throat grab, etc. Whatever you do to attack your opponent is a move.

A **technique** is a grouping of moves (usually 2-5 moves), which are grouped together to produce a result.

A **kata** is a grouping of techniques.

A **fighting kata** is one that is composed ONLY of techniques designed to be used for self-defense.

A **training kata** is one that teaches concepts and thus will not have self-defense techniques as its focus. There are many such katas. Training katas came from the fighting katas but some of the moves were deliberately left off. (Usually the final killing move). This is NOT to say that training katas can not kill it is just that you usually don't have to .. we will get to this subject again in greater detail in a bit.

**NOTE:** For reference so that more people could relate to my explanations, I have tried to use examples from katas that are more widely known. While I know of many katas in my style that show these examples, I felt it was better if you could relate to the kata and examples you might already be familiar with.

## Why this book?

The obvious purpose of this book is to learn the real reasons why there are katas and why we should spend time studying kata. Believe me, this question is not a moot one. In fact, there have been many very famous martial artists who have questioned the need for doing any kata. What they did not understand, is that, at least originally, when kata were developed, there was a real purpose for the kata ... and in my opinion, that reason was self-defense. And if you know the techniques and principles taught by a kata, then you can use them wherever you need them, even on the street today!

Historically, one must realize that in centuries past ... especially in eastern cultures and especially for the upper class, a person did not put their hand casually on another person, especially if that someone was of higher station than you were. If you did so, it was taken as a great offense and, in fact, such an act was usually done only when the person touching or grabbing intended to do harm. From what I understand, in some times and places simple accidental touching of a noble was considered an affront and was dealt with by the use violence.

Now it would be simple to mete out violence whenever you were affronted, IF you were, significantly, the biggest, strongest, and toughest person around.

Unfortunately, for the upper class, position and money were not relevant traits for genetics and thus they were not guaranteed to be bigger than their opponents. Additionally, the lower class were employed with manual labor where as the upper classes were not, so the lower class aggressor would most likely have been stronger than the upper class person.

So how did the upper class deal with such a situation? With their hands! Yes, I will acknowledge that they had bodyguards, but it was still the same situation, for someone had to deal with the aggressor. If not the nobles themselves, then the

bodyguard had to. And you can't always hire the biggest, strongest person to follow you around and protect you ... besides, what if they turned on you?

Now, I will acknowledge that in many cases the upper class did have weapons and, because of money resources, had the ability to have more and better weapons than the peasant class did. I will admit that this gave an advantage, but weapons come in all forms and some do not require money to possess.

Now, they didn't have guns (until later time periods), and they did have edged weapons, but at extremely close range such weapons were not a guarantee that you would win such a confrontation, for the aggressor might also have a weapon. So it could be open hand against open hand or weapon against weapon or any combination of the above.

In fact, it all came down to whether the upper class person had the training to be able to deal with being touched, molested, or robbed and dealing with the person who might have a weapon.

I am also certain, in at least some situations, the ability to hold on to their personal power rested directly with being able to enforce what they said. If they could not enforce their will decisively, then there would have been many willing candidates to take their place.

So what did they do? The answer was obvious. They learned techniques that would help them. While such knowledge is not built into us (unfortunately), it can be learned and the upper class had better resources to learn things (techniques) while the lower classes did not. And with this knowledge, they could deal with any challenges.

But once you learned a technique, how did you remember it? If you forgot it, you were right back in the situation you started with. So these techniques had to be put together in a way that could be remembered. And in centuries past, while the upper classes may have been able to read and write, most people could not ... so? How to remember such techniques? Even describing them on paper is a poor description simply because of the complexity of the moves that needed to be described. The answer was, of course, by practicing it. And when you knew a bunch of techniques, then you put them together in a practice grouping. And one you had grouping of a

techniques down and could show someone, then you could pass on these techniques to those you wanted to know. Thus, in my personal opinion, were born katas.

These collections of techniques were soon taught and passed on through the generations by a process that I will call the monkey-see-monkey-do method of learning. The real problem with that is, of course, unless you get ALL the small moves that accompany the larger moves, you lose the real meanings of the technique and all you are left with is the basic outline. Unfortunately, most of the time without the small moves, the techniques do not work. And regrettably for a number of reasons (beyond my desire to get into in this text), the small moves and thus the real meanings of these techniques were lost over the ages. However, the gross overall movements were not. Worse yet when instructors were asked what the moves were for, they gave the best answer they had or simply made up answers. Additionally, without the understandings of how to make the moves work, retrofitted answers were substituted for attempts to discover how to make the technique work as it is performed in the katas. So instead of explanations that are consistent with the move as it is performed in the kata, students were given answers that showed the move being applied on the street differently than it is done in the kata.

This, of course, begs the question, “Why do the kata at all if you are going to do something entirely different in a real situation?”

This is exactly what I believe is the situation today. While many of the basic outlines are still there, the real information (meaning the small moves that make the techniques work) has been lost in most katas. And the older the kata, the more lost meanings.

Now you also need to realize that it is my personal opinion that the real and most dangerous katas were created in the time period when it was allowable and, in fact, expected that you would maim or kill an opponent when you got into a confrontation.

Today, however, the situation is different and, in fact, it has been for the last century. And while it is a deliberate over simplification, one of the foremost reasons why there was a dramatic change in katas was that Karate was brought into the schools. Another reason is that Karate has spread to multiple countries and cultures and the rules for socially acceptable responses to being touched or challenged are quite

different today than it was in centuries past. Thus we have the situation where it is okay to “know” a kata, but not need to know how to use it for real situations.

Another reason why I personally believe there is confusion about the working of kata is that, I also personally, believe that many recent katas were created simply for training purposes, some specifically kids. These katas would teach useful information and that could be used for simple self-defense but would not be as brutal and have as deadly an outcome as older katas.

Note: ALL these kata have all been created in the last 100 years. There were no katas for kids before that.

No, please do NOT take that to imply that these training or kid katas are less than valuable. They are, in some ways, better for today’s uses than the original fighting katas.

One has to understand here that there are some katas that have techniques in them that cause responses that cause damage or kill so quickly that they are hard to control and stop before the damage is done. Based on the above, I hope you can see that while this may not have presented a problem in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it is a problem now. Thus such (fighting) katas were not something that should be taught to kids.

NOTE: A perfect example of this loss is the katas of Bassai Dai and Nihanchi (Shodan and Nidan ... not Sandan ... I will explain why Nidan is not in this collection later!) ... And while these katas are nowadays taught in most schools at beginner and lower levels, they are, in fact, extremely deadly katas that contain very deadly killing techniques. Yes, there are more katas than this; I only gave two of many examples. Nowadays, most people learn katas only because they are required for their next (karate) belt or advancement. And while I do not mean to put down the sport of karate in itself, I personally see this as a very significant loss.

Instead, training katas are perfectly acceptable and, in fact, do provide a good level of defense ability IF you understand the techniques they teach from the adult level. Unfortunately, with the loss of the meanings of the older deadly katas, most people do not have the choice of learning the truth about the older katas and worse yet, do not

even have the opportunity to learn the real adult level self-defense techniques that these training katas contain. And while I applaud the effort by some to fit meanings into the katas, I still find a problem with the concept of learning a technique only to have to do something different or even apply it differently in a real situation. It has been proven that under the stress of an attack, we do what we have been trained to do. So if you are trained to do the kata, then you are going to have a hard time trying to get that move to do something else on the street. Which is back to my point; why not learn what the move is really for?

This book is designed to restore some of that lost knowledge. To not only give you insight to some of the older katas, but also to allow you to figure out what the real fighting/self-defense application of all katas was intended to be... So that you can use the techniques contained in kata, on the street, under stress situations, where it counts the most.

Yes, I know the obvious arguments, but I will deal with those in following chapters.

Now, this book is going to make some deliberate assumptions. Those assumptions are that you understand ALL levels of pressure points (all 3 levels, not just pain points). And that you have a fairly good understanding of anatomy, at least as it pertains to the martial arts.

I am going to make these assumptions because it is beyond the scope of this book to teach you anatomy or pressure points.

If you do not have this knowledge base at your fingertips, then I suggest you check out my material on both subjects or anyone else's material you respect.

[www.quanlikan.com](http://www.quanlikan.com)

I don't make this statement as a plug to sell you more books or CD's, but instead I truly believe that it is this knowledge coupled with the explanations I will give you here that will allow you to understand points and katas that I do not cover here. For you should be able to take the explanation I give you and apply them to all the katas you do.

If a scientist were to cut off his ear, no one would take it as a sign of heightened sensibility.

Peter Mendawar

## PROVE IT

Now, the obvious question that is always brought up, is how could I possibly know what the founder of a kata was thinking? Is my claim that I have a time machine? Or better yet, maybe I claim that I can read minds across the vast space of history.

NO, I do not have a time machine, and no I can't read dead men's minds. But I can't read the mind of the people who invented roads either. Does that mean I can't figure out what they are used for?

Sure, you can figure out a million uses for a piece of road. It could be a flat place to lie on, a place to plant flowerpots, a place to get a suntan. However, if you understand the rules, (of what a road is used for) then you will quickly understand that these uses are not going to work out very well! This may seem overly obvious, but unfortunately most people do not understand the rules of kata, thus they are left with all the possible uses the same as the person figuring out the uses for the road.

However, the good news is that there are also a lot of rules that apply to kata. Now if it was only my personal opinion that these rules exist, then one can quickly discard what I say as simply an opinion. However, most of these rules are based on human anatomy and physiology and thus these rules are as valid today as they were in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when some of these (real fighting) katas were created. This also means the rules are absolutes, not opinions. In fact, you can check out these rules in any in-depth physiology book or in several of my other books. I really suggest that you do this research because it will teach you a lot about what you really can do and what reactions you can cause with the right stimulation.

The **ONLY** thing that has changed, in terms of anatomy, is our understanding of it. For if we were limited to the understandings of centuries past, then I seriously doubt that there would be any way to understand these katas except by being taught by those who really knew.

Luckily, we are living in an age where **western medicine** does understand **all** levels of pressure point reactions, and the physiological response to most aspects of physical assaults. (While not every medical practitioner may know all these facts, the research is readily available if you know where to look.) Therefore, when we apply these known anatomical and physiological rules, we dramatically limit the possibilities of what could be the intent of moves in a kata. If we also apply some very common sense rules (which I will define in a little bit) then we once again dramatically limit the possibilities of what the move could be used for. Limit it again by what works when you perform the move **exactly** like it is done in the kata and you are limited to only very few possibilities of what the move really could be.

So the situation is sort of like figuring out a chess game. If you don't know the rules, then there are millions of possible uses of the chess pieces, including propping open the door. However, if you know the basic rules, then you have dramatically limited the possibilities of what you can do with the pawn.

If you further understand the intent of the game, then you also eliminate all the bad moves and that further limits the possible combinations that each piece could be used for. Now if you further limit your attention to one piece on the board (like a knight or knife hand) during a particular situation, then the possible responses are limited to only a very few. And only **ONE** of these moves will be the best.

Well, the anatomy and physiology rules are the absolute rules, like the rules which govern the movement of the chess pieces, but **IF** we limit our study of kata to believe the creators also took it seriously, then we must accept the intent was to 1) win **AND** 2) win even if your opponent was bigger and stronger. With these assumptions we have realistically limited our possible interpretations of what a technique in a kata could be.

However, to be clear, the rules I use to limit and thus define are as follows:

## **1) Kata techniques HAVE to conform to anatomy and physiology facts.**

- a. Thus you are not going to be doing nonsense things like reaching in and pulling someone's heart out, twisting their heads off, or doing a neck break like they do on television. (There are many easy ways to do a neck break and I will cover that in this book, but the techniques I cover DO conform to known anatomy and physiology where as common/television descriptions do not!)
- b. On the other hand, you can do things that cause a person to
  - i. Drop their blood pressure
  - ii. Lose balance, (and therefore ability to apply strength)
  - iii. Have significant trouble breathing
  - iv. Become very disorientated
  - v. Force their body to move in specific ways. (An example is the crossed extensor reflex.)
- c. Thus if you know how to use the rules of human physiology, you have a decided advantage and you can come a lot closer to figuring out what the creator of the kata had in mind.

## **2) Kata Techniques are for self-defense once you have been grabbed.**

Now I will admit that this is an assumption, but if you look at the moves in a kata (with the exception of kicks) what distance do these moves work at? Not at distances that are over an arms length. That much is obvious. So we can pretty

easily surmise that the techniques were for relatively in close distances. However, when you start looking at the effect that these techniques have when your opponent has trapped one hand by grabbing you, suddenly you see that there is a DRAMATIC increase in effectiveness.

Enough so that there is no question that this interpretation is the better one. (Not the only one perhaps, but definitely the better one.) However, when you start looking at the pressure point targets that are opened when a person grabs you versus just being close, you see another dramatic jump in effectiveness. Add those two reason together and it becomes pretty obvious (at least to me) that the difference is day to night.

Lets add a reality check! In older days –especially in places like Okinawa and Japan ... if you got into a fight with distance – WEAPONS were used ... why would you do a “kata” move if you had a sword – or a knife or a club, what ever. In reality you would not! But there were [and still are] times when you are way too close to bring a weapon to bear. In that case KATAs taught you how to defend yourself! Katas were essential to take away the advantage of size and strength [and yes they ABSOLUTELY DO THAT!] So in fact katas are exactly what you need for modern life

NOTE: There are entirely different techniques that protect you against a punch or a kick than when you are grabbed ... Frequently these techniques are very similar to the same techniques you learn in kata but more importantly, once you do perform these techniques, they almost always wind up bringing you into close range with your opponent where you can then apply kata techniques verbatim. SO, learning the MEANING and true application of the techniques of katas are definitely the place to start! It really has no down side from my point of view.

So based on that to me it makes sense, at least to me, to learn the techniques like they were being done from being grabbed.

Okay, so that this is not all about words, I am going to give you a clue what I am talking about. And that clue is that the most important move you can make in a kata move is actually accomplished with the backhand or the foot and not the front hand

which most people put their emphasis into.

Let's try an example that should help clarify what I am talking about. Have your partner throw a punch at you and then block it. Assuming that you are successful, you should have blocked the punch and maybe given yourself some time to counter punch. Okay, that is legitimate. However, how much did you really affect your opponent? It depends directly on 1) how hard you can punch and 2) how strong they are and thus their ability to resist damage from such a punch.

This move however does not really give you much of an advantage. To me learning to be strong seems to be more of a determination of the outcome of that move than learning to block and counter punch in some kata.

However, let's make the assumption that this move is not for a punch and counter block but instead something else. So this time, I want your partner to grab you. (For real please, like it would happen on the street.) Instead of blocking, this time I want you to place your arm against your partner's opposite arm on the brachioradialis muscle (which will look much like you have done a block) and then drop your hips and twist to one side while you put pressure (with your radial bone) and roll the brachioradialis muscle.

IF you have done this correctly, you should see your partner's knees bend and they will twist to the direction you are twisting. This, of course, will open a LOT of important targets including knockout points. These openings are there because of the twist and they were NOT open before when you just did the block. In addition, the twisting and your opponent's temporary change in balance and their knees bending will dramatically lower their resistance to a punch, making your punch far more effective. You will also note that it does not take strength to cause this reaction. Your being tight really doesn't have much of a change in the reaction you cause and, in fact, may make it harder for you to do this move. All it takes is the proper body motion! And they WILL turn!

To me this proves a couple of things.

- 1) It reinforces that fact that IF you know and do the proper moves, then there are

techniques, which nullify your opponent's strength and size.

- 2) If your opponent grabs you, your knowing the real meaning of kata does give you a significant advantage.

Now, when we get to the chapter on explanation of the adult meanings of moves, I will also show you even more powerful things you can do when you are up close and personal.

### **3) Katas are made up of a collection of techniques.**

- a. These techniques are in groups of 2-5 moves (usually 3-4).
- b. Each technique, however, like I said above, if taken to completion, will cause your opponent to die or be so disabled (from damage, not pain) that they physically cannot attack you.
  - i. The fighting katas take the technique to the point where your opponent is dead, but the training katas do not, so you have choices depending on which kata technique you choose.
  - ii. You do not have to take each technique to completion, but the option will be totally yours.

### **4) Size, speed, and strength are NOT a factor (except in your mind) ...**

- a. Another secret of kata is that you move either yourself (very frequently) or your opponent, so that their size and strength are nullified. And example is while an opponent can be very strong, once they grab you; it is very hard for them to keep you from twisting forward at a 45-degree angle and being able to reach them.

- b. Once you have moved, your opponent has a lot of open pressure point targets that were not open before you moved. (Both this example and the one I presented earlier show this)

## **5) Effective techniques DO NOT rely purely on pain response.**

- a. I don't care how effective the technique looks ... if it relies only on a pain response, then it is NOT the correct interpretation.
- b. Ten to 15 percent of the overall general population are natural non-responders. (Meaning, they don't respond much or at all to pain pressure points) Additionally, if your opponent is high, drunk, or even very mad, they effectively become non-responders and you cannot rely solely on the pain response.
- c. If the move doesn't work ALL the time, how can you count on it? Kata is supposed to give you the advantage when you need it most. So learn the techniques that cause a reaction, even if they don't feel pain.

## **6) You must do techniques EXACTLY as they are done in your kata.**

- a. What good does it do to learn a specific motion or strike or body position if you think you are going to have to do something else on the street?
- b. Why not practice what you are going to be doing when it will be real?
- c. Do you think that in centuries past they thought, "Well, I will be using this

technique on the street as a neck break, but in the kata I will practice it as if I was blocking someone”?

**7) If a technique can be done 2 ways, but one way takes less force to accomplish, then the way that takes the least force is the correct version ...**

- a. If the point of a kata is to be able to overcome an opponent who is larger, then the easier that you can do this, the better. SO, like the chess game, the best move is the one that lets you win the easiest. I believe it is the same with the interpretations of kata techniques.
- b. Besides, if it takes you considerable energy to accomplish a technique, you are going to wear yourself out and not be able to deal with the jerk's friends.
- c. As you progress in discovering the moves and techniques in your kata, you will find that you will redo your interpretations of what is the correct meaning many times as your skills get better and better! (This is good.)

Now to me, the above reasons weren't very hard assumptions to make. I think that they are fairly obvious, much like the rules of winning a chess game. However, if you can't accept these rules, then you are going to question almost everything I say from this point forward, as I am using these rules to play my version of human chess called martial arts.

As a disclaimer, I must say that for SOME of the newer “training” katas, a punch is just a punch and a kick is just a kick and there really is no secret to them. These are the kata that have been created in the last 20 or less years and were created primarily for tournaments. Typically you can tell them because they have a lot of flashy moves and flamboyant postures and if you try to figure out meanings, you find no consistence to the logic of the attack against your opponent. Yes, you can still

retrofit these katas with look-a-like meanings or, in fact, to mean anything you want, but there is no secret meaning.

Now there are also a whole bunch of katas that were recompilation of older katas. Most of these katas fall into the training kata class and were created in the last 100 years. That does not mean these katas are not valuable or legitimate. They are! The techniques that were taken and put together into these newer katas were effective in the even older fighting kata so the techniques are also effective in the training katas. The only real difference is that the last move (typically the killing move) has been taken out of the technique and a lot of the quick kill movements have been left out. For today's environment, that is not necessarily a bad thing. I sure wouldn't want to be teaching kids the real meaning of the fighting katas to be taken out to the playground! Which I am guessing, is exactly why such katas were created.

Again, there are some very useful things to be learned from these katas and the skill you learn will allow you to progress to the fighting katas IF that is the direction you want to go, but even if you don't learn the fighting katas, knowing the real techniques of the katas you do will give you a tremendous advantage on the street.

**Note:** Personally I don't believe tournament katas will protect you on the street as they offer no advantage and the techniques they teach come down to how hard you can punch or kick and if you can take more punishment than your opponent. I didn't train for as many years as I did simply to prove I was a tough guy ... I continue to train because I believe it gives me a real advantage when I am confronted on the street. That advantage comes from studying fighting and training katas.

**NOTE:** By the way, if you are studying martial arts and accept these rules (for the fighting and training katas, anyway), if I may give you some advice: don't limit yourself by only doing what your instructor taught you! Instead, try to figure out the PRINCIPLES of what your instructor is trying to do and learn to do those ... You will find that you will do/add certain body twists/moves to the katas you are doing that will dramatically improve the effectiveness of the contained techniques ... KEEP those extra movements in your kata ... most of the time, if you look at old versions of the kata, you will find they were already there ... it was your instructor's instructor that left them out ... accidentally or on purpose. Maybe they figured you weren't ready for the full meaning ... now you are!

People will occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of the time they will pick themselves up and continue on. - Unknown

## Chapter 3

The rules of intent

**N**ow in the last chapter, we noted that techniques are made up of 2-5 moves - typically 3-5. We also noted that the end point of a fighting kata technique was to incapacitate or kill your opponent who had already grabbed you.

In this chapter I will tell you why I believe that techniques are made up from that many moves. Again, some katas will have techniques that will combine some functions so the individual techniques will be shorter, but over all, the general range of moves blended into a technique are 2-5. There is a wide range for the number of techniques in a kata, though, and I have not found any rule that determines how many there should be, but then, that is consistent with the fact that different people created the real kata.

Now there are, of course, rules that are common to all fighting katas. No, I am not implying that the creators all got together and decided on a set of rules, but these rules are so common sense that if you think of it, a real kata technique HAS to follow it if it is going to be used for defense.

The first rule, of course, is that you must stop the attack. I mean, what good are your moves going to do if they are still attacking you. YOU are not in control and you might very well be the loser if things continue this way, so the first rule will be to stop your opponent from continuing the attack. Now, part of our definition was that kata was for someone who had grabbed you. So they have grabbed you and you can be certain it was not to give you a kiss. Either they will grab you with one hand or both hands, but they intend to do something (to you) and you had better stop them from attacking.

This will be the objective of your first moves.

So the first rule is: **1) Stop the attack.**

Yes, I know there are many real katas and they all take a different approach to this problem, but I think if you look, they ALL have that similar philosophy. And I believe you will consistently find that those that don't are newer katas or changed versions of the original that are missing some of the moves. Now I am not a historian, but I do believe in functionality and I know from experience that when I have been attacked, I had to deal with the attack before I could do much of anything else. Yes, sometimes attacking the opponent is the first move and if your counter attack is done with sufficient effectiveness, then it can force your opponent to stop their attack. And, in fact, many kata openings take this approach! So, in fact, there is a lot of room for different variations here. The only thing that is consistent is the intent. Stop the attack!

**NOTES:** When you are thinking, "Stop the attack," please don't think "block" as the first move, because you don't need a kata to know enough to put your hands up and protect yourself. And I don't personally buy the "all blocks are strikes" explanation as a definition of stopping an attack. So while I do agree with that philosophy (that "blocks should all be attacks"), I can see absolutely no reason why you would need to create a kata to memorize such techniques. Additionally, such techniques rarely can be counted on to **stop** the attacker in their tracks. They may be very good at stopping that strike but that is vastly different from stopping their ability to continue the attack!

Instead, most fighting katas will stop the attack by forcing your opponent to move so that they can no longer hit you. Look at the openings of Empi or Bassai Dia. These katas cause your opponent to rotate their shoulders (crossed extensor reflex) so that they can no longer hit you. Nihanchi Shodan does it somewhat differently (but follows the same principle exactly) by causing you to throw your head (and balance) backwards by sticking your fingers up your opponent's nose. If you have seen the reaction to this, then you know your opponent cannot proceed with the attack. Of course, there are many other real katas out there that have their own approach to stopping the attack but all the ones I have personally seen use a similar philosophy (first stop the attack!) even though they do it with different techniques.

NOTE: There are many versions of these katas but each technique grouping in these katas has the same principle so regardless of the version you do it should follow this rule if you understand what it was really doing.

## **Rule Two: Unlock your opponent.**

Okay, here is where the real crux of the situation comes to play.

Either you believe the concept that katas are designed to work against people that are bigger and stronger than you, or you discount all that I am saying. If you remember my opening chapter, you see that the attacker was probably stronger so IF they were going to make these techniques work, they had to have ways that nullified their opponent's strength. Most commonly disrupting their balance does this.

However, the trick here is that the katas use pressure point techniques, frequently carving or striking areas like the brachioradialis, or pressing the sternocleidomastoid. This causes your opponent to lose their ability to concentrate on holding you (tightly) AND knowing how to move into position for their next move.

## **Rule Three: Stun or Knockout.**

Now it should be pretty obvious that most people will resist being killed. And as we said, most of the techniques you see in the movies or on television simply do not work. Why? Because your opponent will resist! And that is absolutely true, unless your opponent cannot resist. So these moves in katas were specifically designed to prevent your opponent from having the ability to resist your moves. Now, not every kata resorted to a stun or knockout, but most of them do and they use light force knockouts to cause your opponent to lose their ability to resist the last move.

## **Rule Four and Rule five: Incapacitate and/or kill.**

Note this can be done in either one or two moves. So that is why I stated the rule as and/or. The approach to this varies dramatically depending on the kata. Some katas, like Nihanchi Shodan and Nidan, separate the two goals. Bassai Dia does not do many stuns (but does do a couple of chokes) however; NO real fighting kata will skip both of these steps. Either one or the other or both things will happen. After all, the design was to stop the attacker, not stop them from attacking you and then let them go! Remember the time period in which the fighting katas were created. The **training** katas may not use this rule, however, and may instead simply dump the person on the ground or do something like a well-placed kick or a stomp to educate your opponent. This is one way to tell the difference between the two types of katas.

NOTE: Most Training katas were created AFTER 1886 when the Japanese kicked the Okinawan samurai to the street.

If we focus on the fighting katas for a minute, their most common ways to doing this (to kill or maim) was by a neck break and or by causing a compound spiral fracture (usually of the leg). Why? Well, the neck break is obvious. But the compound spiral fracture means that the person has open bone sticking out of a leg ... also pretty obvious. NO one fights with a compound spiral fracture. Even if they want to and for some reason can handle the pain, they are not functionally able to stand and continue the fight. And in centuries past, such a wound also usually meant death due to infection (see the history of medicine in the US Civil War for some interesting if morbid discussion on why they did all the amputations.)

## **Is it a Fighting Kata or only a Training Kata/collection of techniques?**

So how can you tell if a kata is really for fighting (instead of just training) ... well, that is the same way you can determine if it a real kata or just a made up collection of moves. Does it follow a logical sequence to the end? Meaning, do the techniques found in the kata take it from being grabbed to the point where your opponent can no longer fight back? If the answer is yes, then it is a real kata. If it is not yes, if it is just a case of this technique shows you how to hit here and then it shows you how to hit there, then you can be sure that it is not a fighting technique kata and probably not even a training kata that

you are looking at. Most likely you have a “changed” kata that no longer is true to the way it was created. Many, but not all, of these were changed in the last 20-50 years for political or tournament reasons. [NO, I am not going to get into that discussion here.]

Be careful, though, in discarding some of the older katas. There are some that are not crystal clear in their application of the rules I have discussed because, while it may not appear at first glance that they follow the rules I laid out, in fact, they follow the rules ... they just take a variant approach to the rules.

For example, there are some katas that start with a proper opening of stopping the attack and then go to completion exactly like it is expected they should. However, then they will do a series of 2 –3 moves that seem to start from the middle (when your opponent has already been stopped) and go to the end of the sequence (the killing part) and then do the same thing again. Then they will show a different way of stopping your opponent, take it to the end and then add another group of moves that take it from the middle to the end again. They do this over and over.

Bassai Dai is a kata that does this exact thing. Bassai Dai is a very real fighting kata from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, which makes no fuss at all about killing people by breaking their neck (in fact there are 14 different neck techniques breaks in the kata). However, the approach in Bassai Dai is that they will first show you a complete technique and then they show you variations on that technique as if to say, “well, you stopped them and killed them with this type of move, but after you stopped them and put them in this position, you could have also done this or this or this group of moves.” (ALL which end up killing by using a neck break technique.) Again, if you count all the variations, there are 14 different ways to break an opponent’s neck, so the creator was very consistent in how he thought that the opponent should be dispatched.

Here is also a VERY good point that will help you separate which moves go together to make up a technique. When you do a move that is part of technique, the position you leave your opponent in after completing the move will set them up perfectly for the next move in the technique. For example, if the 3<sup>rd</sup> move is a knockout by striking the back of the head, then you can be sure that the 2<sup>nd</sup> technique spun them around so that the back of their head was wide open. And of course, the first move set up for the second and so on. This point will help you both to find which moves go together for fighting katas.

Another point I like to look for that helps distinguish real katas from tournament katas is the presence of pressure point stimulation moves. These are the moves that can only be effective if you are targeting a pressure point. These moves make no sense at all otherwise and they tend to look like strange movements. All real kata tend to have these movements and the fighting katas have the most.

Also, as you study katas, you will soon find that most fighting katas and training katas have a theme or a flavor and consistency that runs through the entire kata. Ways of doing things that are done throughout the kata. Of course, there are multiple different techniques, that was the point of creating the kata, but they (the techniques) may all center around a certain concept. An example would be using neck techniques to destroy the balance of the opponent before breaking their neck.. OR the kata techniques may center around spinning the person around so you can attack their back or even destroying their front leg. [Remember disabling the opponent was a definite goal]

Some katas are very aggressive and go in for a quick kill as if saying, “I know I am the best and you are going to die quickly.” Others set your opponent up more slowly as if saying, “I am not taking a chance here, yes, you are going to die but I am not taking any chances that you can do damage to me first.” Others katas say, “I know if I use my body weight, then I can make you move and then you are going to do what I want and that is to kill you!” Other still (the Yang short form is a perfect example of this attitude) say things like, “Yes, you are going to die, but I am going to make you do all the work of killing yourself!” We talked about Bassai Dai above, but all the other real fighting katas have the same consistency throughout the entire kata.

To me, this flavor or attitude in ways of doing things is very interesting as it reflects the personality of the creator. The creator of the kata’s attitude of how they thought things should be done (for this kata anyway) and how they will deal with an attacker comes through loud and strong in some katas, less strong in others but is always seems to be there.

Another perfect example of this attitude is the kata Nihanchi Shodan. This kata is very consistent in its groupings/techniques, in that the same pattern can be seen. Stop attack, unlock, stun and then kill by use of a neck break caused by making the person fall or by use of my body weight. Noting all along that while the creator wasn’t afraid to use

strength, none of the techniques REQUIRED strength to make them happen. This kata has such a strong flavor and consistency in the way things are done that you can feel it in every technique. Even though the number of moves that make up a technique varies from 2 to 5 in this kata, the rules and the obvious intent is crystal clear in every technique. (Which makes me laugh when I see this kata taught as a kids kata. Those who have relegated this kata to this level obviously do not know that the kata shows 9 different knockouts and 9 ways of breaking someone neck ...sigh.)

But back to consistency, the same exact consistent philosophy that is found in Nihanchi Shodan is also found in Nihanchi Nidan. And such consistency helps to identify the creator of the Nidan katas as the same one who created the Shodan kata. (Either that or they were created by two people with identical training and viewpoints.) Nidan is much shorter, but the flavor and approach is identical. To me personally, it was as if the creator of Shodan had thought about it for years and then decided, “well, you could also do this and you could do that also ... and, of course, you could do the technique to either the right or the left side,” which is why the katas are mirrored side to side. But the important thing is that the sequence of events, (stop the attack, unlock them, stun them and then kill by making them fall) are there and the flavors of both kata are identical.

However, Nihanchi Sandan does not have the same flavor as the other two Nihanchi katas at all. In fact, if you follow the moves in the Sandan kata, you will find that the first move seems to start the same as the other two katas, with a stopping of the attack and then an unlocking technique, but then there is no kill which follows at all in many techniques. Occasionally there is a stun technique, but even that is not consistently there. Instead, after stopping the attack and unlocking your opponent, the kata starts over with another stop attack. There is even a headlock, but no follow up move to kill the aggressor. Hello? This makes no sense to me at all. Furthermore it has no consistency with the attitude of the first two katas where the creator was efficient and brutal about his approach and the absolute attitude of killing the opponent who grabbed you.

So, either the person designing the katas had a sudden radical change in their personal philosophy and decided they should only defend (somewhat) and then let the attacker go, (which is NOT consistent with the time period when Nihanchi seems to have appeared at all), OR, in fact, Nihanchi Sandan was made up later by someone else! This is what I personally believe and I went through all this because this gives you a perfect example of

how to tell a real kata (fighting or training) from a made up collection of techniques. I believe that Nihanchi Sandan is not a real fighting kata at all ... instead, I personally believe it is merely a collection of moves thrown together, taken incompletely from the other two katas by someone who did not understand the actual working of the Shodan or Nidan katas.

Okay, now that we know what I believe the rules of the techniques (and the rules of kata in general) we need to look at some of the moves that make up techniques to see how they fit together into a technique.

Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors. -- African proverb

## Chapter 4

### Why and why not

**N**ow, I freely admit it would be impossible for me to go through and tell you every meaning for every move of every legitimate kata out there! However, I can tell you some of the meanings of some of the more common moves that are used and from that you should be able to see how a move can cause an effect and how it could fit together with other moves into a technique so that we get what we expect from the technique (as defined by the rules earlier).

The easy part is that we don't have to invent how the moves go together. The creators of the original katas already did that (hard part) for us. They gave us the order of the moves. We just have to figure what they intended and then once we have that we can add the small twist and turns our body needs to make to the technique efficient AND we can then separate the moves into appropriate techniques because we will know when your opponent is obviously dead!

Now before we start, PLEASE don't expect every kata to answer every possible type of attack or attacker. While I believe in the power of kata, I also realize that each kata was created by a human with specific needs and attitudes based on the threats they felt they

would run into for their time and the area they lived in. Nowadays, the world is far more varied than it was and thus we need a greater variety of possibilities to arm ourselves with.

And that is exactly the point of learning multiple katas! You should have different options because every situation on the street will be different.

Besides that, there is also the reason that some kata moves start sequences that will ONLY result in killing your opponent. Meaning, once you start the technique, you really don't have much choice in the outcome. An example of this would be techniques where you spin your opponent and have them fall backwards with their neck landing onto your elbow and then you cut their feet out. Up to the point where you have cut their feet you may have temporarily keep them busy, but you sure haven't ended their ability to continue to fight. So that isn't a worthwhile technique for defense. Of course, once you cut their feet out, if they are in the position to fall with their neck against your elbow, they are going to die! SO you are left with a technique that may have been valuable in the past, but will have very limited usage nowadays. However, there are also many techniques that start a sequence that knock out your opponent before they break the neck. This, of course, gives you the option of stopping at that point because an unconscious opponent is not a threat.

Another very valid point for learning multiple katas is that you should NEVER GIVE your opponent what they are good at. Meaning, if they are strong, you would want to use a technique that nullifies their strength (maybe through disruption of balance), if they are long armed, you may use a technique that uses that fact against them. The point here is one of having options. But, of course, that means you understand the intent of the kata.

Before we get into actual techniques, there are some anatomical facts that I MUST explain. They are found in my Essential Anatomy for the Martial arts, so I apologize for repeating this section, but it is crucial to this book also so for those that do not already know this.

Despite what you have seen on television, you cannot break the neck of another person by twisting it unless you are horribly strong AND they don't have strong neck muscles!

However, if you apply pressure at a 45-degree angle **through the neck** from just behind either ear, then it is relatively easy to break the neck, especially if you make the person fall and make their weight do the work! This is the exact placement of the hangman's knot in the old west and it was placed behind the ear so that as the person fell the force would be at a 45-degree angle through the neck and the weight of their fall would snap the upper neck vertebrae and kill them immediately. Otherwise, the person hung there and strangled to death slowly, which was hard for even the executioners to watch.

MANY katas use techniques where they cause the opponent to spin around and then fall so that they fall into the elbow of the person executing the technique at that critical angle. Thus it is the correct angle and the person's weight that does all the work. Therefore strength is not a factor at all in causing them to die. Now, I am not giving you this information because I am condoning killing, but this technique is found so often in so many katas that it is impossible to understand most katas unless you understand this technique. (This is another reason why I marked this book as being recommended for ADULTS.)

## **How to figure out what a kata move is for?**

Okay, I know we haven't covered what some of the moves actually do (i.e. the adult meaning), but I wanted to present this set of ideas of how to figure out a kata for yourself because I think you should be thinking of these suggestions as we do the next section... that way the analytical process will set in stronger and you will see the explanation I give as a PART of the answer to what the kata is really doing rather than an answer in itself. Again, from before, each move is only part of the technique (and there are multiple techniques in every valid kata). Look for the meaning of the move as it pertains to the technique; don't get so wrapped up in the move itself that you miss the over-all technique.

Unfortunately, when analyzing a kata it really helps to have experience at doing it before, because after a while, you will start to recognize patterns that give you clues. However, if you are not already experienced, then it is a bit like the chicken or the egg. (The egg came first. Mutations causing a new species don't occur in the bird – only in the egg the bird lays.)

But if you are not experienced don't be discouraged, it just takes a bit longer to figure thing out. Soon you will be looking at techniques and seeing both the meaning AND the extra small additions that are needed to make the technique work ... ON THE STREET!

These are clues to help you figure out what a move was for. Remember these are only clues and I am talking about all moves in general, so none of these rules apply to every situation. You have to pick and chose which one(s) work(s) in your situation. It could also be more than one rule.

Look at the move before and the move after and see if you can see a pattern of movements that will make your opponent move.

Look at the hand moves and see what points they may be striking. To be followed by hand positions. Meaning if the way you were taught was with a punch, but you see a great target but you need to use a knuckle fist (for example) then use the knuckle fist ... It is easy to see how the knuckle fist could have been missed and changed to a regular fist as the kata was taught down the line.

Examine what happens (points that open) when you add a foot technique, like a tap, to the movement/technique.

Use the rules I laid out (before) and see if you can determine which of the stages of the technique is being preformed by this move; (stopping the attack, unlocking, moving into position, stunning or killing). If you can figure this out, then you can then go forward and backward from that point to determine the start of the technique.

Have your training partner grab you and try to apply the technique. Don't be discouraged if it doesn't work. Think about what you would have to do to make it work. (Think outside the kata) and then see if the same thing can be done by a technique the kata already uses...

Consider that maybe you are working with a technique from a fighting kata that starts from the middle of the technique and the kata is giving you options (you can do this or you could do this or you could do this). Bassai Dia does exactly this same type of teaching format ... other katas do also.

Okay, before we close this Chapter, I want to make a point very clear. The speed of a kata is not the speed you can do by moving your hands through the air. The true speed is based on moving your whole body through the angles it takes to make the move work AND the reaction time of your opponent takes when you apply the move. While it is true that the kata will be performed somewhat faster with practice, it should NEVER be done without visualizing what you are really doing and what your opponent will have to be doing. Thus the 90-second katas you can see on the internet are only examples of someone saying, “Here, look at me while I show you that I haven’t got a clue what this kata is for.” That opinion applies for every real kata. However, I couldn’t care less what speed tournament katas are preformed at. They aren’t real anyway.

## Chapter 5

### Making it happen

**O**k here are some of the OTHER more common moves found in kata techniques are (you will have to judge if these moves were put together in the kata you are examining as part of a legitimate technique or just thrown together. NO I haven't even come close to explaining them all. However What I have done is to try and get a cross section of moves so that you can start to see how these things work. Add these explanations with the rules I have already given you and you will soon be seeing your own katas in a very different light. Which was the point of this book anyway. Not to give you a pat answer but instead teach **you how to figure out** what the meaning of your own katas was.

### Messing with their balance

Now we all know that you have to have balance to produce power. [If you doubt that try to hit something besides the floor while you are falling]. This principle is actually a level 3 reflex with is used all the time in fighting katas to decrease the strength and resistance of the opponent.

Essentially there are 4 main ways (plus several others which we won't discuss here but which become apparent when you apply the same principles we will discuss). 1) Tapping the foot 2) altering pressure on the foot and 3) striking the knee and 4) removing ability to stand on one of their legs

## **Trapping the foot**

The most common technique is the foot tap. Simply moving your opponent's foot by approximately ½ inch forces their brain to focus on their balance for slightly over a second. More than enough time to accomplish a move that otherwise they would resist. This is best done with your foot tapping the corresponding foot of the opponent and is usually shown by your feet coming together in a kata. Unfortunately this was probably one of the first things to be lost when katas were handed down as it is subtle enough that it is easily missed unless you are looking at it. However if you add the foot tap back into your katas you will find a dramatic increase in your ability to apply the next move in the technique. In fact I think you should look for places to add the foot tap into the katas. I personally believe it was probably there from the start but even if not if you are looking for an increase in efficiency this will definitely do it.

## **Stepping on their Foot**

The second way is to disrupt the balance is by stepping on your opponent's foot. While this may seem like a simple pain producing technique it is not that simple because the pressure on the foot changes the sensory information sent to the brain and thus the balance changes. [NOTE: don't stand on the top of their foot – it will destroy YOUR balance- Stand on their Toes]

A variation of this is sliding on your opponent's foot. Literally you slide your foot along the top of their foot as you step down. This is even more effective because it rolls the small muscles of the top foot and will cause a dramatic change in balance.

As I said above, in both of the case above it is best to step or slide on the outside toes and the flat part of the foot not because this part of the foot is particularly more effective or

sensitive but instead because you have to be able to keep your own balance or you have lost the advantage.

## **Knee attacks**

A particular misconception that seems to have come out of the training katas and also from television is that the front stance is a “get ready” stance. Actually nothing could be further from the truth. For in fact the creators of a fighting kata had not intention of standing there telling their opponent they were now ready to be attacked. Instead their opponent grabbed them and they stepped into a back stance to destroy their balance. How? By having your knee slam into the opponent’s knee as you step forward. And push their knee off center. Now, you can push their knee inward or outward but outward will give you a much greater effect on destroying their balance.

## **Removing ability to stand on one of their legs**

Now When I said ability to stand on one of their legs I meant that it is fairly common move in katas to do a strike with your leg against theirs. We already talked about driving their thing with your leg as you step in but there was a more common way. That was to step in with a C-step and drive their leg outward. This was particularly commonly done from the back and doing such will drive the weight off one of the legs, which was then followed by causing the opponent to fall in the direction you wanted them to. This is seen in katas such as Empi and Bassai Dai and others.

Of course you can also do a C step from the front which will cause the knee to bobble outward as you move your leg between theirs and then slide it outward. However this technique is best done when your opponent has grabbed you with both hands because otherwise you are likely to get hit with their free hand. A variation of this (which I particularly like to do) is to slide your foot on the outside top of their foot and then to trap their toes then bend forward so that my knee is on the inside of their knee and then force

their knee outward. This will cause the knee to buckle and they will fall but with their foot trapped the fight will be over! Due to the ankle fracture that will result.

## **Poison Points**

Another trick that while not common in Japanese, Okinawan or Korean systems was used by many Chinese systems was to destroy one of your legs, muscles ability to function properly, thus it could not bear weight and would dramatically altering your balance. The principle method of this attack was by use of Poison hands techniques. [See the Book Poison Hands Truth Techniques and Reasons]

I think by now you have gotten an idea of how they used some very common techniques to disrupt the balance. This disruption of course temporarily cause the opponent to lose their strength and “unlocks them” which qualifies as the second goal of a technique.

Now before we move on I need to deal with some off the adult explanations for some of the moves in katas which use the front stance. Particularly I am going to deal with the turn and step into the back stance move. Now when I was first starting the “instructors” loved to say that this was so that you could turn and block a kick. Why you would even try this is beyond me because the time required is not compatible with ever making it successfully. Obviously they have never tried to do this on the street.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **WARNING**

**THIS MOVE WILL HURT SOMEONE**

**Badly OR Kill them**

\*\*\*\*\*

.....

Instead the real function of this starts with you grabbing the cross elbow of your attacker (grab the elbow of the hand that has grabbed you) now pull it toward the center. Take your OTHER hand and carve their nose around in a circle and then twist your body like the kata does pulling them backwards (which is easy if you have twisted their nose away from the direction you are going to move them) and fall forward into a deep front stance directing their body to fall and their neck to land face up on your outstretched thigh. **NOTE this will cause their neck to break.** You can also deliberately let them miss your knee and fall to the floor.

## **The Third goal**

The third goal of a fighting kata technique is to stun or knock out. Many Training katas also have this same sequence goal. There are many techniques, which can do such a knockout, but in order to do this you **MUST** be able to get to the targets (points) which will cause the knockout. Therefore, the first point of this goal is to move either yourself into the proper position, or more commonly move the opponent so that a knockout or stunning blow may be delivered. The two main variations seem to be to spin the opponent around so that one of the side of their neck and the other variation is to spin them 180 degrees around so that you get a shot at the back of their neck. Both areas are easily susceptible to a light force knockout or stun if you know what you are doing

[See the Book: **The complete Book of Light force Knockouts** for more detail than can be covered in this book].

NOTE: I know there are many other knockout techniques than above but these seem to be the most reliable ones and thus are found the most in katas.

The question is of course, how can you spin your opponent around so that you have a shot at these targets? Well one of the more common moves was with what I call carving. Literally it is rolling critical Pressure point susceptible muscles of your opponent so that you can make them spin. Example of this would of course be the Brachioradialis muscle of the forearm, the Triceps muscle or the sternocleidomastoid muscle of the neck. Also there was a very common technique of driving your knee into the lateral thigh of the opponent at a 45 degree angle that causes them to spin. Note the angle of the strike as the purpose is not simply to cause pain but rather instead to cause them to spin again opening up the targets for a light force knockout.

However, we said that not every technique does this type of move because the creator may have deliberately skipped level 3 to go straight to level 4, which is of course the maim or kill level.

A perfect example of this is the grouping of two double back stances done together. In this case the first back stance will carve the arms (the Brachioradialis) and then as you step forward into the next back stance the back hand (which did the carving) will push the face around in a twisting motion so that opponent falls into the other elbow as you are moving forward. This requires a circular motion with BOTH hands not just the robotic motion that is frequently seen with a double knife hands stance.

It is also possible to step forward driving the opponents elbow outward (once they have been unlocked) and then push their face around and pull backwards so that they spin around and fall back into your other hand elbow as you step backwards. Your motion will cause the neck break as they fall. This may be somewhat hard to visualize in writing but is seen in both the Yang short form and also in the kata Bassai Dai. In both cases it takes very little effort to start this sequence but once you do it is hard to stop it and you must literally let the person miss your other hand and land on the floor or you will cause the neck break. The reason for this is of course that the opponent is supplying all the force. All you had to do was to twist their face around and pull them backwards and their own body weight did all the work for you.



## **TURNS**

I am going to tell you that the turn you do in a Kata are not there to make it start and stop at the same spot on the dojo floor. I will admit that some of the training katas have been rearranged for just that purpose but the turns were there in the first place and you can find the same turns in the fighting katas. So the turns DO have a purpose. The question is for what. The answer is that there are two answers; 1) for throws. For most turns (and this is the most common variation that I have seen) is for tossing your opponent across the room. Now personally I believe this was a way of dealing with more than one attacker for if one has grabbed you and you spin them around and then throw the one that grabbed you into the other one (hard) ... well lets just say you have achieved a temporary advantage. The other real reason for turns is a technique for penetrating the defense of the person who has grabbed you with both hands. Before they can toss you around you dip one shoulder and step into the attacker with one side and deliver a strike. As you can see there are a lot of possible strikes you could do for there are a lot of open targets once you are in that close and that is why you see so many variations of a turn and a different technique following the turn.

## **PUNCHES**

One difference between the training katas and the fighting katas is the number of punches that are thrown. Fighting katas tend to have very few punches in them and when they do they are usually designed to target very specific targets. {You can tell the specific target by the position of the opponent. Remember the rule about leaving the opponent in a position after a move} It is not that Punches are not effective they CAN be. It is that unless you spend a lot of energy and are very careful to set the opponent up to get the right angle first it is not something that you can absolutely count on. And if you do spend

that much energy setting them up a fighting kata tends to simply go for the kill at that point because it is more definite.

Does this mean that punches are not worth wasting time on? Of course not! Again punches can be very effective IF used right and IF you know how to punch correctly. I just don't personally believe in the one-punch kill stories. (It goes back to there is always someone bigger and stronger rule anyway!)

Rather If I am going to do a punch I tend to target specific locations, [which is what I believe the punches in training katas are for], and also tend to use specific hand position punches for certain pressure point locations. An example would be a knuckle punch for the eye or solar plexus, an eye of the phoenix for the Axillary nerve, an eagle claw for the jaw or the groin.

Back to my point. In many training katas you usually have groups of 3 punches. Single punches are for specific target AFTER an opponent has been set up ...(practice with a partner and move them through the kata to that point and you should see the obvious point that you should be aiming at). The most obvious targets that would be presented as you step forward and punch would be found along two lines, one vertical and one horizontal. Along the horizontal line are the spleen, solar plexus and liver. Along the Vertical line are the Throat, Cardiac Plexus and the groin. Granted there are a thousand other points that one could hit but these are the high value targets.

**NOTE:** The Cardiac Plexus is located deeper and slightly to the right of the solar plexus and best struck with a knuckle fist aimed upward and to the right shoulder. This can cause heart irregularities and POSSIBLY slowing or stopping the heart (probably not but even slowing the heart rate can drop the blood pressure)

## **Knife-edge Techniques**

Knife hand techniques are not something you find a lot in the fighting katas. They are more common in the training katas but they do have a REAL purpose. Unlike the Television, the real reason had nothing to do with smacking your hand against hard surfaces. Instead they should be done as rolling techniques so that the knife-edge of your hand is used to roll the tendons and ligaments of the opponent. Because of the small surface area and the relatively large tension you can apply done correctly this will cause a significant reaction (usually spinning) in your opponent.

Foot edge techniques are to be used exactly the same way. Rolling the knife-edge of the foot (hard) against the lateral aspect of the knee and the knee will buckle from the ligament reaction. This is not at all the same as trying to hit the knee with the edge of your foot, which in fact may dislocate some of the bones of the foot.

## **Things that are NOT a block.**

**H**ave you heard the concept that there are no blocks in katas? Well, in my opinion, it is very true. Why would you bother to create a complicated set of moves so that you don't forget the small details, when everyone already knows how to stick their hands up (instinctively) to protect themselves?

## **Square Block**

Okay, the square block is not a block at all. Despite what you have been told, (and I am certain that one point I was told the same). The “square block” is not a block at all! In fact, why would you stick one hand above your head when that position is relatively weak? There is no way that such a position would protect your head from an oncoming object. It is FAR better to simply spend the energy getting out of the way! However, the position itself (if you forget the block stuff) is very valid! Well, one hand up and the other one out is. The pretty hand above the head version is due to tournament influence. However, if you think about the front hand pushing on the back of the neck while the other hand is pulling on the top of the forehead (backwards), then you can see that this posture is, in fact, another neck break.

## **Small finger up block**

This is the block where you turn your forearm over as it rises so that the small finger is at the top. Okay, not a block!! I mean, think about it for second. The smaller of the two bones in the forearm is the ulna, which just so happens to be on the small finger side. In fact, the ulna is far more likely to be broken if hit than the radius (thumb side). So why would you block with the weaker of the bones? NOT! Instead, the MOTION is what is important for if you scrape along certain areas when you make contact, you will stretch tendons and ligaments that can cause those tendons and ligaments to release. Even more importantly, you can strike under the neck and cause the neck to snap back far harder than a simple upward strike will do. This is frequently used with the other hand positioned behind the neck. Designed to break the neck!

## **Quan So**

### **(Crossed Knife hand)**

Well, part of the secret of Quan So is the stepping forward. I will admit that I have told the kids in my class that the meaning was to roll the brachioradialis because I don't want them to know the truth. The truth is that the front hands first carve the (same) arm of your opponent (your right arm would carve their right arm and vice versa) and then once you have them starting to spin, your same arm (right, in this case) spins their head around and causes it to fall into your chest while your stepping knee strikes their poison point on the thigh, causing them to buckle. Your other hand (the back hand) then pushes against the side of their face forcing the neck into your elbow, while their body weight causes them to fall and they will **BREAK THEIR NECK**. This is a **VERY** dangerous move because once you start spinning your opponent, it will follow though on it own motion because your body weight is moving forward also and you will reflexively put out your back hand and push forward. Even if you do not try to put pressure on their neck, you will! And unless you keep your balance perfectly under control, your own body weight will force them to fall at the correct angle for the neck break!

### **Double fist moves**

(One hand moves down and the other hand moves up, usually in a closed-fist position)

Okay, if you are doing a single motion (just moving one hand up and then the other down-ward), then the motion is an opening to separate the opponent's hands. You can be very sure that this move will immediately be followed by something that will get your opponent's attention. On the other hand, if you are doing the version where each hand goes in one direction then reverses and goes the other direction, then yes, the first part is still an opening, but the second part is where the upper hand reaches out and spins your

opponent (on its way downward) so that your opponent's neck falls face up into the elbow of the hand which is coming upward.

## **SPEAR HAND TECHNIQUES**

DO I even have to say that you are not sticking the opponent in a hard area of the body or doing some of the nonsense descriptions that are not anatomically possible. Instead the spear hands has two main functions sticking a soft area of the body like the eyes, nose (up the nose in fact) or throat. It also can be a pull, especially when the kata has some of those weird hand positions. In this case it is ALSO for soft areas (for the same reason) but it might surprise you to know that with the right angle (pulling towards the mid line) you can severely damage the clavicle (collar bone), you can (IF you pull hard enough) partially dislocate the jaw- which hurts like ... (well you know the word) You can also pull on the ear and if you know the rules (pull the top half down and push the bottom half upward) cause the opponent to spin around and well you get the idea.

If you are starting to get the feeling that most of these techniques are killing (especially neck break) moves, then you are right. But remember back to the start of this book when we described WHEN these techniques were created. In those days, it was acceptable to kill. In fact, you had to be able to do so if you were to remain safe and in possession of your belongings. Today, as I said, many of these techniques are not acceptable in their combat usage. HOWEVER, if you know the real actions, you can (in many cases) start the technique and then dump the person on the ground HARD so that they get the message and yet can still pick themselves up and go home again! Hopefully wiser having learned that violence is NOT their best option!

Again these are not even close to the possible moves there are out there but it is a good cross section.

Every ending is but the start of something else.

## Closing

### Time to apply what you have

**I** will say again that the best thing to do in order to learn the real application of your kata is to get a partner and have them grab you. Now you **HAVE TO BE CAREFUL** and not do something that is going to hurt, maim or kill your training partner but if they try to hold on and you apply the principles that I have covered in this book you are going to find that it is much easier to move them then you thought it would be.

Try to look for easier way to move your opponent through moving you body. Meaning those dips of the shoulder, shoulder and hip twists, half steps and leans that make you more efficient should be there (in the kata) in my opinion and I think you should perform the kata with these movements in them. [As I tell my students practice visualizing ALL of your body moving as you do the technique not standing there without moving as if you had a pole up your butt.]

By the way I don't think you are changing the kata I think you are restoring it back to the way it was in the start!

However once you have a technique that works do not be satisfied with it until you have compared it to other options you have. If you find an easier or more efficient way then take that way and stat the comparison all over again until you can not find a better way. Not only will this give you progressively better explanation and realistic applications of kata it will also teach you how to think in ways that will help you dissect katas in the future.

I also suggest that you try to train with the mental picture of someone grabbing you and seeing in your mind what you would be doing and how they would be moving when you apply each move. Work with both single hand and double hand grabs. Again have you partner grab realistically... because helping you by hanging on loosely is not helping you

in reality for the person who grabs you on the street will grab hard and they will be fast.  
SO to be prepared, you have to be ready to apply working techniques, without hesitation.

I truly believe that this will prepare you for what can happen on the street much better  
than simply moving the air.

**I also suggest that you NOT teach this material to those who are too young to have  
the appropriate judgment when NOT to use these types of techniques!**

I truly hope this book and my personal opinions have given you some insight into the use  
of kata techniques and appreciation for some the power hidden in katas.

And that you may have learned to appreciate some of the older katas as the masterpiece  
that I believe they are.

My best always!

Bruce Everett Miller

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