

Midori Yama Budokai: *Hanshi's Corner*
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Ichi go, ichi e: One life, one meeting

Jujutsu Kata of Wilson Kancho: Kick Kata II

All of the kicks in this form are done as side thrust kicks. One alternates kicks, first with the right foot, then the left in all eight directions. There are three sets of ten kicks directed at three levels. The first level is toward the knee; the second toward the lower abdomen; the third to the solar plexus (or the head). **1)** Right side thrust kick directly to the front (this requires great flexibility of the hips, as the hips don't turn toward the kick, but do move forward for power). **2)** Left side thrust kick directly to the front. **3)** Right side thrust kick to the right front corner. **4)** Left side thrust kick to the left front corner. **5)** Right side thrust kick to the direct right side. **6)** Left side thrust kick to the direct left side. **7)** Right side thrust kick to the right rear corner; **8)** Left side thrust kick to the left rear corner. **9)** Right side thrust kick to the direct rear (again, flexibility of the hips is necessary). **10)** Left side thrust kick to the direct rear.

Evala Wrestling

The correct pronunciation of Evala Wrestling is ev-ala res-ling. Wrestling is an important feature of cultural life amongst the *Kabye* people of northern Togo in West Africa, who originated Evala Wrestling. In days gone by all boys were taught to wrestle beginning as early as six years old and their skill is evident in the arena. As young men, they would take part in the Evala wrestling festival as a way of proving their manhood: Competitors meet yearly at a festival following a retreat marking the initiation of young men into adulthood. It has been likened to a "Kabyean bar mitzvah." Not only does the "boy become a man," but the last of these initiation rites is circumcision. Evala is the penultimate element of this initiation rite, during which young men are separated from their families for one week, residing in special huts where they are fed and subject to mental training. Prior to wrestling, participants go on a pilgrimage which involves climbing three mountains; those who do not complete the pilgrimage are not initiated into adulthood. Although wrestlers are initiated regardless of whether they win or not, losing is considered shameful to the family name. If a boy performed well he was strong enough to fend for himself, and therefore ready for marriage.

Wrestling matches pit brother against brother, neighbor against neighbor, village against village, districts against districts, and so on. Men must fight in the festival for three consecutive years to complete the tradition and cannot fight again after that.

This festival is held in the northern city of Kara every July, but is no longer the exclusive preserve of the *Kabye*. Young men come from all over West Africa to wrestle in the tournament. Many of the contestants are members of the Togolese armed forces, where wrestling is part of the training program.

Karate Shodan

It has been said many times, but needs to be re-emphasized: *Shodan* means "Beginning Step (or Rank)!" This is because at *Shodan*, one should have an understanding of technique, and technique is the beginning of the mastery of *karate*. Through intensive

practice (*shugyo*), one discovers similarities and relationships among various techniques – and at the advanced levels, among various arts. Relevant to correct practice is balance and breathing. One must be able to move swiftly and gracefully, while breathing correctly. Breathing must be done with the diaphragm, which affects both physical and mental performance. Masters contend that, at higher levels, breathing also affects spiritual performance, as well. Practice is only useful when one comprehends what is being demonstrated. This requires four things:

- Exact observation and concentration. One must see the technique as it is and concentrate on trying to perfect it.
- Understanding. One must understand, not only the technique, but also the principles and mechanics of the technique.
- Practice. This refers to more than “going through the motions.” One must practice correctly. Practice does not make perfect! Perfect practice makes perfect!
- Critical observation. At *Shodan* you should know how a technique looks and is done, so you should be very critical of your performance of that technique, and correct, or improve, the areas that you perceive as weak.

Once these criteria have been met, one is ready to begin the art of *karate*. This is stated very well in the motto of the Japanese Karate Association: “The primary aim in the art of Karate is neither victory nor defeat – the true Karateka strives for the perfection of the character.” Alternatively, in the words of Kase Taiji: “Karate is not a shallow sport. You can always probe deeper into it but will never be able to completely plumb its depths.” With this beginning, one realizes that it is not the destination, but the journey, that is important. One will never arrive at the end of learning, but for as long as one trains, one may continue learning. One may never – in this life – attain perfection. It is the striving for perfection that is the goal. *Dō mukyoku*: “There is no end to training.”

Based, in part, on *Karate: Basic Principles* by A. Pfluger.

In Answer to “How Do You Perform a Punch?”

As I learned the punch, the hips (pelvic area, actually) are the most important part of the punch. Technically, the punch begins with the driving leg, which “roots” the body to the ground through the stance. The drive of the leg (some say the pull of the lead leg) automatically rotates the hips, which drive forward. This rotation “throws” the arm toward the target. The arm should be relaxed, tensing only on impact. At this time the fist may rotate, either a half-turn or a full turn – corkscrew punch. In the Elliptical Kata (Hand Kata II), the fist actually rotates a three-quarters turn, or 270°. On contact, the correct muscles for the punch tense for a fraction of a second (*kime*), then immediately relax. Some systems “bank” the hips before throwing the punch (a very adept description of the movement, by the way). For example, a person is in left forward stance with a lower guard (*gedan gamae*). Prior to executing either a lunge or reverse punch, the hips are rotated to the right rear, “banking” the waist for movement. After the rear rotation, the punch is delivered by rotating the hips left forward, through the drive of the leg/s. The sequence should be: Drive with the legs, rotate the hips, launch the arm, tensing at contact, then immediately relaxing. In actuality, the hips lead, although the drive with the legs pushes/pulls the body forward. Think of a sprinter. He may push with the legs off the starting block, but the hips lead the body forward. In addition, during this, correct breathing is necessary for speed and power. Holding the breath, as many beginners (and some advanced practitioners) do, “locks” the body, which tenses the muscles, which

slows the speed, which prevents full power from developing (yes, it does sound like “The House That Jack Built!”).

Chikara no Kiyozaku

Chikara no kiyozaku refers to the appropriate use of power (focus or *kime*) when performing *kata*. The focus should fit the technique, and power is not to be continuously applied. That is, the muscles should be relaxed until the moment of focus and relaxed immediately after focus. There should be no tension in the body until *kime*. In most *kata*, there are fixed points of maximum power, emphasizing the relaxation of the body prior to those points.

“Sticky Hands”

Your *hanshi* is a firm believer that all martial arts share common principles. One of the most overlooked is that of “sticky hands.” There is also chi gerk, or “sticky legs,” but not as commonly known. Wing Chun (Ving Tsuen) is the most well known art for this practice, which is referred to as chi sau. This is primarily due to its promulgation by Bruce Lee. However, Tai Ch’i (which, as previously mentioned, Bruce Lee could and did perform) has had its version for – literally – centuries. The Tai Ch’i version is called t’ui shou. Tai Ch’i may use one or both arms in training. The techniques for the single arm (si chen shou) are based on movements taken from the form: Ward Off, Roll Back, Press and Push. It is used to develop “listening energy” (ting ching). Using both hands is referred to as Shoulder Roll, and is based on Lift Hands. Another martial art, not noted for “sticky hands,” but which indirectly uses them is – *judo*. Movements used in a struggle for grips are very similar to those used in Wing Chun and Tai Ch’i. The major difference with *judo* is the lack of strikes one has to parry, as in the two Chinese arts. Incidentally, for those who consider Tai Ch’i an exercise for children, women and old persons have never sparred with a real Tai Ch’i master. It is one of the more effective martial arts – emphasis on martial!

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