

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

**The flying butterfly
I feel myself
A creature of dust.**

Issa

Renbukai: Training Martial Arts Association

Renbukai was developed by a group of martial artists. Unlike other styles, it does not have a single founder. It was first known as *Kanbukan*, or Korean Martial Arts Place (Hall). Yung Geka, the first instructor in what was to become *Renbukai*, ran it. This *dojo*/*dojang* was unique in that different martial arts groups came together to share ideas. Tamae Hiroyasu was the next instructor involved in *Renbukai's* beginning. Tamae had studied *Shurite* with Gusakuma Shiroma, who was a direct disciple of Itotsu Yasune. Tamae had also studied Chinese Kenpo in Peking (Beijing), and *Nahate* and *bo* in Okinawa. Then, in 1945, two young men Nakamura Norio and Okamoto Miwaru, became part of the fledgling association. Nakamura held a 4th *Dan* in *Kendo* and a 2nd *Dan* in *Judo*. In 1948, Koide Masayuki joined the *Kanbukan*. Koide did *Shotokan* (Waseda University) and held a 2nd *Dan* in *Kendo*. Koide became the International Director of *Renbukai*. One of his most famous students, and the author of four books on *Renbukai*, was Ronald Lee Marchini.

In 1950, *Kanbukan* was changed to *Renbukan*, or Training Martial Arts Place. Norimoro was its first Director. Finally, in 1964, the school became a style and was renamed *Renbukai*. *Renbukai*, *Wado-ryu*, *Kyo-kai*, *Shito-ryu*, *Goju-kai* and *Rengo-kai* became the first six recognized schools of The Federation of All-Japan Karate-do Organizations. Gordon Kennedy, a 1st *Dan*, introduced *Renbukai* to the United States in the early 1960's. As of 1981, *Renbukai* was the only school in Japan that fought full contact with training gear.

Renbukai is composed of the following arts: *Karate*, *Judo*, "Kung-fu," Taekwondo and *Aikido*. *Renbukai* used the following *kata*: *Kihon Shodan*, *Kihon Nidan*, *Kihon Sandan*, *Kihon Yodan*, *Shihokebanashi*, *Pinan Shodan*, *Pinan Nidan*, *Pinan Sandan*, *Pinan Yodan*, and *Pinan Godan*. Today the list has been modified to *Gekisai Dai Ichi*, *Gekisai Dai Ni*, *Gusukuma Chinte*, *Jion*, *Seipai*, *Pinan Shodan*, *Pinan Nidan*, *Pinan Sandan*, *Pinan Yodan*, *Pinan Godan*, *Bassai Dai*, *Bassai Sho*, *Naifanchi Shodan*, *Naifanchi Nidan*, *Naifanchi Sandan*, *Seshon*, *Rohai*, *Chinte*, *Jitte*, *Join*, *Empi*, *Sochin*, *Shibanaku Shanku*, *Wankan*, *Chinto*, *Matsumura Rohai* and *Seienchin*.

Kihon Shodan emphasized the use of the down block, *Kihon Nidan*, the use of the outside block (inside-out), *Kihon Sandan*, the inside block (outside-in) and *Kihon Yodan*, the use of the rising block. Essentially, these were *Shotokan's Taikyoku* slightly revised, except for *Kihon Shodan*, which was the same as *Taikyoku Shodan*. *Shihokebanashi* used the + pattern of Chonji, emphasizing a series of blocks, punches and kicks in four directions. The sequence was outside block (inside-out), reverse punch, front punch, rear leg front kick, reverse punch to the front, repeating the sequence to the rear, then to the left and

finally to the right. All techniques were done from a forward leaning stance, and the kicking leg was returned to the rear prior to the following reverse punch. In this instance, *Renbukai* has shown that *kata* can be modified to include “hidden techniques.” There is no reason that a kick (of any kind) may not be included in any of the basic *kata*, such as *Heian*. One could do the down block followed by a kick and concluding with the lunge punch. The original form is maintained, but the modifications are used for practice, especially with combinations. *Renbukai* stresses the following in the study of *kata*:

- The ability to sense an attack (*Genshin*).
- Breathing (*Kyoku*).
- Coordination (*Renraku* or *Sogo*).
- Posture (*Kamae*).
- Balance (*Antei*).
- Speed (*Hayai*).
- Maximum application of power (*Kime*).

The system used the blocks, kicks and punches of the forms in their syllabus for promotion. For 9th *Kyu*, you learned the down block and lunge punch, etc. *Renbukai* used a 10 *Kyu* and 10 *Dan* ranking system. 10th was white belt, 9th was orange, 8th was yellow, 7th was blue, 6th was purple, 5th and 4th were both green and 3rd, 2nd and 1st were the traditional brown. Due to its eclectic style, *Renbukai* included grappling, throwing and falling in its curriculum.

Bill Wallace and *Kata*

For those interested in furthering their skills in *kumite*, either traditional or full contact, a book by Charles Roy Schroeder and Bill Wallace gives excellent advice. The book, *Karate: Basic Concepts and Skills*, is a classic in the field.

One unique feature of the book is the section concerning *kata/hyung*. Wallace *Sensei* has been criticized about his views on *kata*. Those who do so should actually read what he believes. I quote: “Although *karate* by nature is fundamentally a method of self-defense, it is imbued with a spirit of courtesy, humility and gentleness. Naturally, the execution of *kata* reflects these spiritualistic qualities.” He states that one need not be a Buddhist, or a member of any other religion to be spiritual. If one avoids unnecessary violence, according to Wallace *Sensei*, s/he is spiritual. Earlier, Wallace *Sensei* states that *karate*’s prearranged sequences (AKA, *kata*) “are...practical defensive movements against...opponents.” In addition, Wallace *Sensei* includes how *kata* improves breathing, footwork, stances, techniques and timing. Footwork, other than the obvious, also teaches angles of attack. Stances and techniques require that an actual opponent be visualized; otherwise, the *kata* becomes merely a dance. Correct breathing strengthens the diaphragm and the abdominal muscles. With the contraction of these muscles (and others) a more powerful blow may be given. In addition, correct breathing (exhalation at the moment of applied technique) gives stability, preventing the attacker from losing his or her balance. The *kiai* is seen as both physical and mental in its application. Physically, the body is stabilized (breathing out) and the muscles tightened, which help absorb a blow. Mentally, the exponent prepares him- or herself for the fight to come. Military forces have utilized this for centuries, including the Indian war cry and the so-called “Rebel Yell.” Empirical knowledge does not recognize boundaries of any kind – only repeatable results.

***Washin-ryu*: Harmony With Truth Style**

Ochiai “Hidy” Hidehiko states that the founder of *Washin-ryu* is unknown. Master So-An was the first known proponent; and reputedly studied under C.Y. Yen in 1569. Yen was a visiting Chinese merchant and martial artist. This would indicate the style to be over 400 years old. The style’s favorite weapon is the *bo*. However, Ochiai is well versed with the *sai*, *katana* and *nunchaku*. Ochiai Hidy brought *Washin-ryu* to the United States. His instructor for both *Shuri-te* and *Naha-te* was Saito Kanabe. Ochiai began training at age six. First, he studied with his father, purportedly one of the foremost *kendo* and *jujutsu* masters of pre-war Japan. His study of *Washin-ryu* was in a Zen temple in Hiroshima. The symbol of this style is the pine tree, representative of simple beauty, inner strength and eternal wisdom. The pine was chosen because it is yielding, tireless and ever green. *Washin-ryu* stresses the student attaining full potential physically, mentally and spiritually. The style places equal importance on form, sparring and self-defense. Mike Stone is one of *Washin-ryu*’s best-known practitioners.

Kata used by this style include *Taikyoku* (*Shodan* through *Sandan*), *Heian* (*Shodan* through *Godan*), *Naifunchi* (*Shodan* through *Sandan*), *Gohō no Uke* (*Shodan*, *Nidan* and *Sandan*) and *Matsukaze* (*Rohai*). The *kata* which typifies *Washin-ryu* is *Washin-ryu Ten no Kata*, or Form of the Heavens. Albert Ortiz Mercado, in his book, *Karate, the Art of Self-Defense*, gives a slightly different list with Japanese names, based on *Shorei* and *Shorin* delineation. *Shorei*: *Tekki* I-III, *Jutte*, *Hangetsu* and *Jion*. *Shorin*: *Heian* I – V, *Bassai Dai*, *Kwanku*, *Empi* and *Gankaku*. In addition, he lists “other *kata*”: *Chinte*, *Bassai Sho*, *Sochin*, *Kanku Dai*, *Kanku Sho* and *Unsu*.

Washin-ryu uses a 9 *Kyu* system, beginning with white, then white “with one strip,” yellow, green, purple and blue with three brown belts having one, two or three strips. Basics (*kihon*) and *kata* are very reminiscent of *Shotokan*.

***Uke/Harai*: Receive (“Block”)/Sweep (“Parry”)**

When blocking or parrying, two principles must be remembered. First, whenever possible you should block/parry outside the attack. If the attack is done with a right limb, the receiver should be at the right side of the opponent. You should block/parry above the elbow, when outside the attack. You should be closer to the shoulder rather than the wrist. This is based on two concepts. First, you have control of the elbow – the center mass of the arm. This makes the opponent easier to control and to off-balance. Second, blocking/parrying closer to the wrist permits the opponent to simply bend the arm and continue attacking with the elbow. The second admonition is based on the idea you may have to block inside the attack. That is, against an attack with the right limb, the receiver is to the left side of the opponent. When blocking/parrying inside, do so between the wrist and elbow, preferably closer to the wrist. If you block at the elbow or above, the arm can be bent and continue the attack. If the attack was a “roundhouse” type of blow, blocking at or above the elbow will actually facilitate the blow. You literally will be hitting yourself.

Women’s Self-defense

Women many times accuse men of not understanding their needs in regards to self-defense. Unfortunately, this is many times the truth. However, this usually is not intentional on the man’s part. Generally speaking, one can only teach what one knows. In

addition, one can only teach the way s/he's been taught. In the case of male instructors, most have not been informed of the differences between men and women in regards to physical skills or learning skills. Although there are exceptions, most women are stronger in the hips and legs, whereas men are stronger in the chest and arms. Not well known, is that women's shoulder joints are constructed somewhat differently – which is one reason why most men are strong in the chest and shoulders and most women are not. For the range masters, this is why some ladies have problems with the rifle or shotgun. There is no shoulder “pocket” as with the men. In addition, most women are more flexible in the hips and legs than most men. There will always be exceptions to both sexes. Again, a woman's pelvis is constructed differently than a man's. A man's pelvis is fused; a woman's is not, so that she can give birth to her children. If it weren't, we'd have died out with the dodo bird (yes, there really was such a bird!). Emotionally, men and women are different. Whether this is due to genetics or culture, really isn't important. What is important is that they are. By nature or by training, men are usually more aggressive than women – unless, of course, you endanger a woman's child! Women, either by nature or by training, are more nurturers. This means that women usually have to be taught aggression before any actual training for defense can begin. Another concept to be considered is that women usually react to criticism differently than men; therefore, corrections should be modified for the female student. This is particularly true if the woman in class has been abused, physically or emotionally. If so, it is usually by a male. Another major difference is the way men and women learn, of which I have already written. Most men learn by doing, with little verbal instruction. Women usually process information by talking about it. Therefore, when teaching the ladies, instructors will have to be able to verbalize, and explain, what to do and what they expect. Experience of your *hanshi meiyo kyoju* confirms that although women may take more time processing information, once learned the information stays with them longer and is more lasting.

Logophobia

Many of the greatest fighting legions had something in common, though separated by thousands of miles and unknown to each other. Two of these were the Spartans and the Samurai. In differing ways, they practiced logophobia, literally a fear of words. In this instance, the meaning was symbolic, as the actual meaning in use was the discipline of conquering fear and controlling the body. The discipline entailed not becoming afraid due to what the enemy said, or what was said of the enemy, hence logophobia. Both groups began at an early age, when still boys. The Japanese learned the discipline through Zen. The Spartans learned it in attending an agoge, or training barracks.

This type of discipline was also learned by most of the Tsitsistas (Cheyenne) “Dog Soldiers” of the plains, and by the Mescalero, Jicarilla and Chiricahua (Apache). Cheyenne comes from the Lakota (Sioux) name for the tribe – Sahiyena. For all of these groups overcoming physical pain was essential to overcoming fear, and each people had their way of dealing with it. The “Dog Soldiers” were a force to be reckoned with. With battle impending, the warrior would tie one end of a leather strap around his ankle, and the other to a stake. He would then drive the stake into the ground. His intent was to remain in that spot until he or the enemy was dead. This carried the concept of the German duel to new levels. When dueling, German soldiers could not step back for fear of being called a coward. This gave rise to the clichéd, but based in reality, “dueling

scar.” Battles at sea were comprised of the same mentality (or lack thereof!). Cannon balls were so heavy that when fired they could be seen and followed. However, it was considered cowardly to move from their path.

Moreover, as mentioned above, the battle cry was designed to instill courage in the fighting man and hopefully create fear in the opponent.