

## Midori Yama Budokai: *Hanshi's Corner*

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*Ichi go, ichi e: One life, one meeting*

### **African Stick Fighting**

Much of African Stick Fighting is based on the alleged magic of the walking stick. This is similar to the alleged magic of the Indonesian kris, which is supposed to rattle in its scabbard to alert its owner of impending danger.

Liuwa, which is completely undeveloped and practically unknown, lies in the Barotse Flood Plains of Western Zambia. "Liuwa," in the local dialect means "walking stick." A local legend relates how a Lozi King, Litunga, planted his walking stick in the soil of the plain, which grew into a mutata tree. This legendary tree may still be seen.

With this legend, there is also the stick-fighting art as practiced by the Zulu of South Africa, the Swazi of Swaziland and the Amamfingo Ndebele of Zimbabwe. The Zambezi River is the border between Zimbabwe and Zambia, where these tribes are located. It is the Zambezi which gives rise to Nyami Nyami, also known as the Zambezi River Spirit, which the Tonga, or Batonga, believes controls the life on the Zambezi River. The magical walking stick is carved of sturdy wild olive wood and tells the story of Nyami Nyami, who has a body like a snake and a head like a fish. The Tonga people of the Zambezi Valley in Zimbabwe believe themselves to be protected by their ancestral spirit, Nyami Nyami, who is the ruler of water. They believe the symbol represented by the walking stick wards off the forces of darkness and attracts wealth.

- The handle represents Nyami Nyami, who is believed to be the spirit, or Mudzimu, of the Tonga people. Occasional earth tremors felt in the lake surroundings are believed to be caused by this spirit.
- The tree symbolizes the Mopane tree found in the Zambezi valley.
- The stick is carved with spirals to represent the waves of the river, and the carving of the fish represents the staple food of the Tonga River. Prior to the building of the Kariba Dam, they fished daily on the river.
- Figures on the stick represent the people on the Zambezi River banks during their ceremonial dances.
- The hand represents the holding of the "magical ball" which the Tonga believe guards against evil spirits. It is actually hand carved inside the dome and rolls around freely inside – an example of exceptional woodworking skill.
- The wooden rings represent the bangles worn by the Tonga women as decorations during ceremonial dances.

In addition to the walking stick, there is the *incelwa*, or Women's Bubble Pipe. This is a long pipe made from a calabash and is used by the Tonga people for smoking tobacco. In earlier years, "dagga" was smoked in the pipes.

In all cultures, there has been magic associated with the people's weapons, in this case the walking stick. The *katana* was the "soul of the *samurai*"; Excalibur was the weapon used by the European hero, King Arthur. Although not a "weapon," the staff of Moses was used in a contest against the magic of the Egyptian Priests, to part the waters of the Red Sea and to bring water from the rocks to sustain life. Ceremonial dances have been

used by almost all cultures. The Scots have a dance which teaches the use of the dagger; Native Americans have used dances for both hunting and war, the most famous of which were the White Buffalo Dance and the Sioux Ghost Dance. The tree has long been associated with magic and with miracles. Odin (Wotan), the All-Father, hung on a tree to gain wisdom; the Hebrews have the mystical Cabala, or Tree of Life; in many cultures, Christ is said to have hung on a “tree.” In fact, it was legendarily the dogwood tree, which is now stunted, so it cannot be used as such again. The five leaves represent the five wounds, and the red center, the blood shed for our redemption. The tree also figures predominantly in the fall of man, when Adam and Eve ate the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. The Chinese have the Pearl of Omnipotence, which is their version of the “magic ball.” The crystal ball of mediums and seers is similar. Rings, or circles, have always represented infinity and rebirth. In all cultures, in all eras, there have been legends surrounding the warriors’ weapons and rituals.

### **Native Americans of the West Coast**

The Klamath warrior’s head-dress used material of tule stems, woven by a twining process. Aggressive activities included intertribal conflicts, which later influenced the Spanish culture. Women warriors were renowned for defending their communities, and could be considered Native American “Amazons.”

The Seneca used a form of body hardening techniques, which allowed them to take many strong blows, just as the Okinawan *Goju-ryu* stylists. Again, these techniques, in addition to being practical in combat, were also used in the rituals for planting.

### **Answers to Questions Concerning *Kata***

Chris Deleon asked about the following:

Tae Baek is a Korean Poomse (*kata*) for 3<sup>rd</sup> Dan. It is based on the mythological founding of Korea on Mount Taebaek some 4,300 years ago. As near as I can determine it means “mountain of light.”

*Ananko* (*Ananku*) is an Okinawan *kata* brought from Taiwan by Kyan Chotoku. It translates as “Light from the South.”

*Wanchin*, which would translate, literally, as “King’s Battles,” is a *kata* used by *Seibukan Karate*.

*Shuri-te* and *Tomari-te* both used *Wandan* (*Wanduan*).

The name of Okinawa’s greatest king, *Wankan* (*Wankuan* AKA *Matsukaze*), translated as “King’s Crown,” gave us the form of the same name.

*Wansu* (AKA *Empi*), was the name of a Chinese envoy.

*Uechi-ryu* uses *Kanchin* (*Konchin*), which was recently created by Uechi Kanei sometime after 1960. It precedes the classical *Sanseiru kata* and is used for 3<sup>rd</sup> Dan. It translates as “Competitive Battles.”

Era Tao I have no information – not even a legitimate guess. However, a SWAG would be a misprinting of the “era of Tao[ism].”

Julie Haskins asked about the following:

The *Sochin* stance was one of the oldest stances and is believed to have the best qualities of *Zenkutsu-dachi* and *kiba dachi*. Its original name, *fudo-dachi*, gives the qualities it was supposed to have. *Fudo* means immovable, and *dachi* -- of course -- means stance.

*Sochin dachi* became the term due to its use in *Sochin Kata* as almost two-thirds of the stances are *fudo/sochin*). The idea was that one could attack forward – *zenkutsu dachi*'s raison d'être – and the stability of *kiba dachi*. Ideally, *sochin-dachi* was strong to both the front (*zenkutsu dachi*) and to the sides (*kiba-dachi*). It was designed to be effective against strong attack, followed by an immediate counter-attack due to its mobility.

The finger strikes may be used against the hollow in the collar bone (a pressing attack), the solar plexus (the angle of the strike shows to hit downward at a 45o angle, which is best against this target, or a combined release/joint attack against a one-handed grip (among many other applications).

Your *hanshi* emeritus seems to be the only living person who likes *Chinte*! One theory is that Funakoshi Yoshitaka did not fully learn the *kata* and added the three hops to get back to the starting position -- rather silly, when you think about it. Another far-fetched theory is that one is jumping over the rows in a rice-paddy -- even sillier... The hops are used to show a dramatic shift in downward pressure in an attack, usually against the neck, but also against the elbow. The first withdrawal (right foot to left) causes *kuzushi*. The remaining hops create tremendous torque against the joint (neck or elbow)! Remember -- there are no superfluous moves in *kata*. Each movement has purpose, and until you know the purpose, you don't know the *kata*.

### **Okinawan Te**

Baker *Hanshi* sent me a statement by D'veed Natan. Natan contends that the terms *Shuri te*, *Naha te*, and *Tomari te* were made up names, originated by a festival committee to celebrate Crown Prince Hirohito's visit to Okinawa in the early 1900s. Shuri, Naha and Tomari were separated by less than an hour's walk, and today, they are all in Naha City. The reason for the names was to eliminate the Chinese connection to the arts; and was arbitrarily assigned to the various styles based on the participants' training locations. This has echoes of the naming of *Hanko-ryu* aka *Goju-ryu*. The representative of that style quickly made up a name (*hanko-ryu*, or Half-hard style), as the Japanese panel expected such. The Okinawan *karateka* were originally concerned with practicality over style. Funakoshi referred to his art simply as *karate*, and insisted they were all basically the same. The Japanese, concerned with lineage (style) beyond anything else, would have not been impressed by a nameless art.

### **Terminology**

Although it is common to hear “*soke*” used to mean “founder,” the correct Japanese word for “founder” is “*genso*.”

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